

*Doing Ethos-Work: Exploring Group Ethos Among Indie Musicians*

BY

Jon D. Warnock

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Communication Studies  
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

Committee Members \* \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\_\_\_\_\_ \*

Date defended: \_\_\_\_\_

The Thesis Committee for Jon. D. Warnock certifies  
that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

*Doing Ethos-Work: Exploring Group Ethos Among Indie Musicians*

Committee:

---

Chairperson \*

---

---

Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals for their counsel and advice, steadfast support and enduring patience during the completion of this thesis project:

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor and committee chair Dr. Nancy Baym for countless hours and her invaluable guidance throughout this project. I would also like to thank the esteemed members of my thesis committee, Dr. Kristine Bruss and Dr. Adrienne Kunkel for their invaluable counsel and time. I would like to thank Dr. Donn Parson and Dr. Scott Harris for the opportunity to develop this project through work in their seminars. I would like to thank those friends and faculty at the University of Kansas who contributed to this project through moral support and conversation including, but not limited to: Pete Knutson, Carl Walz, Ryan Milner, Jacob Stutzman, Brett Craig, Mike Anderson, Greta Wendelin, John Fackler, Kiley Larson, and Ryan Shepard.

I would like to thank my mother Sandra J. Warnock and the Warnock, Hanneman and Hupp families for a lifetime of support, reassurance and patience.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the group of artists who contributed their words, thoughts and their ethos to this study, without which I would have nothing but a blank page.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Sara for quite simply, everything.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv-v
Abstract.....	vi
Ch. 1: Introduction.....	1-18
Ethos and Music.....	6
Independent Music and the Indie Ethos.....	10
Preview of Literature Review.....	17
Ch. 2: Literature Review.....	19-37
Understanding Ethos: Aristotle and the Ancients.....	19
Aristotle & Burke: Dramatism & the ‘character’ of our ‘Character’.....	22
Ethos-Work: Goffman and the Performance of Ethos in Everyday Life.....	25
Understanding Ethos: Contemporary conceptions.....	29
Group Ethos.....	32
Creativity and the ‘Artistic Ethos’.....	34
Ch. 3: Method.....	38-56
Research site & sample.....	38
Interviews.....	45
Photo Elicitation.....	47
Participant Observations.....	48
Transcription Process.....	48
Analysis.....	50
Analysis: Transcription as analysis.....	51
Analysis: Parsing Grounded Theory: Emergence and induction.....	51
Analysis: Heroes & Villains / Thou Shalt’s & Thou Shalt Not’s.....	53
Analysis: Goffman and Three Spheres of Ethos.....	55
Ch. 4: Results and Discussion Part 1.....	57-114
Individual vs. Group Ethos: Perception and performance.....	57
The Seven Primary Value Domains.....	59
Persona & Attitude.....	63
Live Performance.....	70

Songcraft & Artistry.....	76
The Relationship.....	85
The Business of Music.....	92
External Aesthetics.....	101
External Audiences.....	106
Chapter 4 Summary.....	113
Ch. 5: Results and Discussion Part II.....	115-135
The Functions of Ethos: Ethos-Work – Management and negotiation.....	115
Talking about it without talking about ‘It:’ The (Un) Spoken Nature of Group Ethos.....	126
The Functions of Ethos: Formation and foundation.....	130
Chapter 5 Summary.....	135
Ch. 6: Conclusion.....	136-142
Findings & Implications.....	136
Limitations.....	139
Final Thoughts.....	141
References.....	143-148
Appendix 1.....	149-150
Individual Interview Question Protocol.....	149
Group Interview Question Protocol.....	150
Appendix 2: Tables.....	151-161

## ABSTRACT

Utilizing the perspectives of Goffman, Aristotle and Burke this study investigated the concepts of ethos and group ethos in three case studies of indie music artists as discursive performances of *character in action through discourse*. Through discourse analysis, seven primary value domains were established to better understand the range of topics and discourses used by these artists to manifest the virtues and ethics of the group and its members. The study also shows how these artists are mobilizing these moral discourses functionally to form, reproduce and manage their group ethos.

*Key words: ethos / group ethos / character / performance / indie / music / Goffman / Aristotle*

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

“I had a mate at school who was called Ivan, Ivan Vaughn. And we were born on exactly the same day in Liverpool, so we were great mates. And one day he said: ‘Do want to come to the Woolton Village fete?’ So, I said yeah, alright. So, we went along one Saturday afternoon. And I remember coming into the field where they had the fete and just a bit over there, there was a wagon. And on the back of this, or on a little stage or something. Up on this stage there was a few lads around. And there was one particular guy I noticed at the front who had a sort of checked shirt. Sort of blondish kind of hair a little bit curly, sideboards, looking pretty cool. And he was playing sort of one of these guitars guaranteed not to crack. You know, not a very good one, but he was making a very good job of it. And I remember being quite impressed. And, he was doing a song by the Dell Vikings called “Come Go with Me.” And, the thing about it was he obviously didn’t know the words, but he was pulling in lyrics from blues songs. So, instead of going: ‘Come little darlin’ come and go with me,’ which is right. He’d then go: ‘Down, down, down to the penitentiary.’ And he’d be doing sort of little stuff he’d heard on Big Bill Brunsy records and stuff. So, I thought that’s clever. He’s pretty good. That was John.”

– *Paul McCartney, 2003*

What forces lead individuals to ‘band’ together with others to form a partnership? What specific qualities and characteristics are being assessed and *used* by those who seek to form a group to determine who gets in and who is left out? How do those markers differ for groups whose unified artistic goals require personal and emotional investments to be wagered at considerably higher stakes?

In the testimony above, we are not witnessing just any big bang in the history of group origins. We are instead looking at the moment when John Lennon first met Paul McCartney, a ‘coming together’ that arguably represents the single most important meeting and subsequent partnership in the history of popular music. What was communicated in those brief moments that became the impetus for a conversation, an audition and an offer to McCartney to join Lennon’s skiffle group The Quarrymen?

While it might be reasonable to assume that the union was the result of lengthy discussions about the technical particulars of music, the influence of a mutual friend or by complete chance, it is evident from McCartney's account that The Beatles coming together was due in large part to something else. For all humans, rock stars or otherwise, assessments of the character of others, i.e., a person's ethics, or what Aristotle calls the "moral qualities of agents," are among the very first things that occur when we encounter new people. In our everyday lives we are also in the business of regularly re-evaluating the character of those we have known for a lifetime. McCartney's initial character assessments of Lennon included his hair, his personal style, his persona and attitude, the type of guitar he was playing and perhaps most importantly his musical influences and performance. In short, Lennon's *ethos*.

Michael Halloran (1982) says this about the communication phenomenon known as ethos: "To have ethos is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks...." (p. 62). This study proceeds from Halloran's perspectives on ethos and through this foundation seeks to better understand the ways in which the "virtues" of musicians are "manifested" and performed through discourse.

In America's celebrity culture, we are fascinated by the lives of musicians and public figures. On a basic level we see evidence of the influence of the ethos of celebrities and artists reflected in our culture in a host of ways. The most obvious is in popular fashion and style. For example, the punk fashions of the late 70s, the Madonna-a-like trend of the mid-80s, and the Kurt Cobain inspired flannel phase of the early 90s, have all later done time on the rack at American department stores. American culture looks to artists to drive and move our cultural and personal identities, just as both American and British culture of the early sixties did for two lads from Liverpool. The choices artists reveal through performances of ethos have quantifiable

effects on the sub-cultures they influence as other in-group members assimilate those choices into their own presentations of self. As sub-cultural norms become co-opted into the larger culture, the ethoi of artists have the potential to influence far beyond the sub-cultures they *speak to and for*.

The concept of ethos has been a presence in the study of communication and persuasion since ancient Greece, albeit with varying degrees of prominence. Aristotle introduced *ethos* in his practical handbook for orators the *Rhetoric* as one of three “artistic” proofs available to a speaker. For Aristotle, ethos was the audience’s perception of the character of any speaker within the context of a given speaking situation (1356a).

Other prominent scholars of ancient Greece and Rome debated the importance of character to the rhetor. In addition to Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero and Quintilian each expressed differing notions of ethos or character, but a close examination of their various positions reveals that all four of these titans of rhetorical wisdom agreed on at least one critical detail: rhetorical success is contingent upon a positive ethos and as such, it may be “the most potent of all the means to persuasion” (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a).

In the eras since the classical period, ethos has come to be seen as both an internal and external assessment of character, not only what is presented in the speech itself, but also the prior reputation and the moral character of the person or persons communicating. Modern scholarship has expanded our understanding of rhetoric and communication to encompass all types of speakers and speaking situations, the everyday rhetoric of interpersonal communication and all manner of formal communication situations with audiences from a single person to millions. As it was for Aristotle, ethos remains a determination made by an audience, but modern thinkers (cf. Epstein, 1978; Swearingen, 1994) have expanded the definition of *audience* to recognize the

internal audience and the importance of ethos as a component in the making and negotiation of one's self concept.

Getting a handle on the notion of ethos is no easy task, and there is no *correct* definition. Aristotle's concept experiment called ethos has escaped the lab and spun itself into an intricate and slippery web of definitions and uses which permeate both scholarly work and popular texts. For example, the term ethos is a brand of bottled water; is ubiquitous in loose and ephemeral descriptions of people, places and things; a mainstay in the terminology of eminent scholars like Michel Foucault (1988) and Gregory Bateson (1958); deployed precisely and carelessly. Nonetheless, it is a term with incredible value for scholars of discourse in the quest to understand the communication behaviors of individuals and groups. Because of its dynamic and elusive nature it is best to conceive of ethos as an exemplar of what Blumer (1954) called a 'sensitizing concept.' Blumer (1954) argues:

Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look. The hundreds of our concepts – like culture, institutions, social structure, mores and personality – are not definitive concepts but are sensitizing in nature. (p. 7)

Still, it is important to establish a foundation for the concept of ethos as it is to be deployed in this research. Illustrating the remarkable complexity and challenge of containing ethos, Hyde (2004) argues: "It is a matter, at the very least, of character, ethics, Being, space and time, emotion, truth, rhetorical competence, and everyday situations that are contextualized within the dwelling place of human being" (p. xxi). Epstein (1978) offers this compelling argument about the nature of ethos including significant implications for the ethos of a group:

I refer to the identifiable thread of continuity of a group as its ethos, the structure of

assumptions, values, and meanings which underlie particular and varying expressions of cultural behavior; and just as in the case of the individual the notion of personality is accompanied at the level of self-perception by the sense of ego-identity, so ethos has as its counterpart the sense of collective identity, the consciousness of belonging to a group that exists in time. (p. 122)

Lindquist (2002) states simply: “the notion of ethos encourages an examination of rhetorical authority as a dialectic between social role and communicative practice” (p. 9).

While there are many useful and valid conceptions of ethos at play in communication scholarship, this study finds its specific jumping off point in the work of S. M. Halloran. In addition to the primary construction above, Halloran’s work contributes the following additional two grounding perspectives for this study: First, Halloran (1982) states: “The word ethos has both an individual and a collective meaning. It makes sense to speak of ethos of this or that person, but it makes equally good sense to speak of the ethos of a particular type of person, of a professional group, or a culture, or an era in history” (p. 62). Secondly, Halloran (1975) posits: “If rhetoric...is the means whereby the self and its world are constituted, ethos is the measure of one’s willingness to risk one’s self and world by a rigorous and open articulation of them in the presence of the other” (p. 628). Thus, ethos is a symbolic action. It is a “risk,” and it is a “manifestation” of character in discourse for both individuals and groups. In *using* ethos we are “openly articulating” the “virtues” of ourselves and of the groups and cultures to which we belong “in the presence” of an audience. Following Halloran, I contend that at its core ethos is *our character in action through discourse*.

In the introduction to *Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory* (1994), James S. Baumlin asks: “Does ethos remain, in any way, a definable (or defensible) rhetorical concept?”

Is it at all useful?” (xxvii). Despite the diffuse and highly contested definitions of ethos, it is readily apparent that the phenomenon of ethos is a presence in all forms of communication. This study seeks to offer another voice to the centuries-old conversation of ethos and to answer Baumlin’s challenge with a resounding ‘Yes!’

The role of ethos for musicians must be understood in relationship to the individual, the groups and cultures to which they belong and to the artistic process itself. Previous research has studied both group identity and ethos, but remarkably little work has been done to explore the role of ethos as it relates specifically to the perception and performance of a group ethos. This study sheds a light on the dynamic intersections between individual and group ethos in an effort to better understand how the construction, maintenance and negotiation of a group ethos functions rhetorically and interpersonally for music artists.

This study examines the ways small groups of musicians work together to engage in the persuasive act of performing a unified group ethos. Through a close analysis of the dynamic discourses of three groups of professional music artists, this study shows the ways in which a thoughtful investigation of a group ethos can provide an essential and substantive component to any ethnographic inquiry into the communication practices of groups of all types. Identifying the discourses of character through which a group ethos is formed, managed and reproduced can assist researchers in interpreting the reasons why various collaborations, artistic or otherwise, work or fail, survive or crumble, sustain or dissolve.

### *Ethos and Music*

“It is evident from all these considerations that music has the power to produce a certain quality in the character of our souls”

- Aristotle, *Politics*, 1340b10-14

If, as Aristotle states, music does in fact have “the power” to influence the “character of

our souls” what then must the impact of making music be on the souls and “virtues” of those who endeavor to create it? Implicated in this investigation of group ethos is the question: What challenges of character must face those who choose to make music and how are those challenges constrained or enhanced by collaboration rather than isolation?

In cultures around the world, exposure to the arts is included in discussions of liberal primary education and what elements contribute most to the strong foundation of character in youth. Music is also implicated in social development. McCarthy et al. (1999) claim “the social functions of music include: the formation and cultural reproduction of identities, the development of a sense of place and social context, and the organization and management of feelings” (p. 7). It requires only a cursory glance to see evidence of a lineage of significant connections across the topics of music, character and ethos.

Performance and negotiation of ethos is an essential communication function for all human beings. Whether in the context of office mates, faculty and staff in an academic department or of friends within social or cultural groups, we are all constantly engaged in the *use* and negotiation of ethos. Because ethos is necessarily more highly defined for individuals who make their living – or at least their art – in the public eye, the artist community represents an exciting scene through which to better understand the *how* and *why* of this fundamental aspect of human communication.

Whether music artists are conscious of it or not, their chosen profession and resulting public persona requires them to perceive and perform their ethos more explicitly than the average person on the street. Additionally, the metaphor of music as a universal language speaks to the fact that music itself is a powerful type of multifaceted communication. The metaphor also implies that artists themselves might be seen as communication experts of a sort, capable of

profound persuasion through performances of ethos. Simon Frith (1978) insists that: “rock is a crucial contemporary form of mass communication” (p. 1). This research utilizes case studies of musicians in an attempt to better understand how the communication of ethos functions for small groups and for the individuals that constitute them. Adopting the performance theory of Goffman (1959), which holds that the presentation of the discourses of self can be effectively understood as performative, this study examines ethos as both a performative process and as a single component necessary in any consideration of the broader concept of ‘the self.’

In the contemporary contexts of modern music, ethos may represent the single most important aspect of any music artists’ professional and personal self-construction. Popular music punch lines like Vanilla Ice, MC Hammer, Milli Vanilli, and Ashlee Simpson are all exemplars of the tenuous nature of ethos as it relates to commercial viability and longevity in the eyes of a mass mediated public audience. What remains to be considered is how ethos functions on the ground level as individuals come together to form groups, tying their fates, fortunes, emotions and creative identities together, how they perceive and perform ethos to stay together, and how they *use* ethos to manage and negotiate differences.

As is evidenced by Paul McCartney’s comments above, long before musicians gather for the first time in cramped and musty garages to write and rehearse songs, they have already engaged – and with pervasive and powerful implications – in the consideration of their own and each other’s ethos. Consciously or unconsciously, asking questions about “virtues” of character which this study confirms, run the gamut from aesthetics to ethics and back again; probing within the discourse for answers to questions of character such as: What kind of guitars do you play? Who are your influences? What record label do you want to be on? Would you sell your songs to a car commercial?

For music artists, ethos plays a critical role in identity construction and maintenance. Any person whose career involves the gaze of the public eye knows this heightened sense of ethos and the importance of protecting it. A healthy or damaged ethos may mean the gain or loss of both social and financial status, each with interpersonal and professional ramifications.

To find evidence of the impact and significance of a damaged ethos for groups of musicians we needn't look far. For example, at the height of 'Beatlemania' in March of 1966, John Lennon candidly remarked to an interviewer: "We're more popular than Jesus now" ("Beatles," 2008). That 'God gaffe' was taken wildly out of context and ignited a firestorm of international press and Christian condemnation that threatened, at least for a few brief moments, to derail the fervor of The Beatles' success in the United States. In 1996, American metal icons Metallica made the seemingly inconsequential decision to cut their hair. This aesthetic adjustment was so controversial that it resulted in rampant news stories and fan outcry, all of which is evidenced by the fact that the "hair incident" features prominently in their *Rolling Stone* biography which quips: "Not all fans were pleased." Natalie Maines, the lead singer of country radio darlings the Dixie Chicks, committed a country music 'no-no' when she made now infamous remarks about the George W. Bush administration at the outset of the ongoing Iraq war. The incident caused the Chicks to fall out of favor in Nashville and around the country as they were unceremoniously pulled from mainstream country radio. The story of the subsequent fallout became the subject of the 2007 documentary film, *Shut Up and Sing*. The film followed the band from the initial incident in London through to the release of their follow up record *Taking the Long Way*, a record which not insignificantly was produced by edgy hip-hop/rock icon Rick Rubin and which featured the crossover hit single "Not Ready to Make Nice," a not-so-subtle, or conventionally country music response to their damaged ethos. In each of these

cases the credibility of the entire group was threatened by a specific and entirely non-musical action, and in each case all members of the group were held responsible for the repair and negotiation of that damage; no individual shouldered the impact alone.

### *Independent Music and the Indie Ethos*

The artists under investigation in this study are members of the *indie* music community. What exactly is *indie* and why does it represent a dynamic site for the investigation of group ethos? In *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music* Wendy Fonarow (2006) discusses the inherent difficulty in defining the heterogeneous sub-culture known simply as indie: “indie is not a thing at all and is therefore not describable in the same manner as a stable object...the discourse and practices around the multiple descriptions and definitions of indie detail a set of principles that reveal the values and issues at stake for the community” (p. 26). Discovery of the specific “virtues” that constitute Fonarow’s “set of principles” stands at the heart of this investigation and analysis. It is precisely this diversity of “principles,” and the prominence of indie “virtues” within its discourses, that make it a compelling site within which to investigate group ethos.

Despite the difficulty, Fonarow (2006) offers the following description of indie as a highly contested discourse with at minimum five major definitional elements:

Indie music has been considered by insiders to be: (1) a type of musical production affiliated with small independent record labels with a distinctive mode of independent distribution; (2) a genre of music that has a particular sound and stylistic conventions; (3) music that communicates a particular ethos; (4) a category of critical assessment; and (5) music that can be contrasted with other genres, such as mainstream pop, dance, blues, country, or classical. The indie community’s arguments over membership deal with the

nature of the ownership of musical recordings and their mode of distribution to the larger public, the nature of musical production practices and their relationship to musical forms, and the relationship between audience members and the music. I consider indie to be precisely this discourse, and the activities that produce and are produced by this discourse, as well as the artistic productions and community members who participate in and contribute to this discourse. (p. 26)

One of the key factors in Fonarow's (2006) construction of indie is the "discriminating" sense of morality which pervades, and in many ways unifies, the indie community through its discourses: "Indie conceives of itself as discriminating...indie is a mode of evaluation...not merely a sound with generic conventions but a discursive practice of critical judgment..." (p. 57). Fonarow (2006) cites one indie fan who articulates a sense of indie as an almost spiritual, or extrasensory, perception through which determinations of character are based on one's internal moral compass: "I don't know how to describe it, but I know it when I hear it (p. 25).

In *Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes*, author Holly Kruse (2003) articulates the rich history of the indie music scene. In her findings, Kruse identifies the following conundrum within indie discourses: "Independent pop/rock music was in part constituted by self-identifications and personal narratives that attempted to position their subjects as part of a tradition of expression that came from the mainstream, but whose situated practices and histories existed outside of the mainstream" (p. 119). Fonarow (2006) also responds to this contradiction stating:

For each of the general principles there have been bands that defy the conventions and are still considered indie. There are indie bands that top the mainstream charts, indie bands on major labels, indie bands with major distribution, indie bands that utilize

complex studio-produced sounds that cannot be played live, and indie bands that make eight-minute songs...If indie is a genre of music recognizable by a sound or mode of distribution, then how are bands that defy these conventions incorporated into the category? (p. 51)

Fonarow (2006) makes further sense of this tension, and the many others that complicate indie discourses, by conceiving of indie not as a concrete or stable category, but rather as “an ethos” or “a way of life” (p. 51). For Fonarow, indie, while in many ways nebulous and unstable, finds its grounding through a set of shared values or “virtues;” in other words, indie is best described as an ethos or a “morality”; as a search for “the experience of ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ music” (p. 28). Fonarow is not alone in recognizing the utility of qualifying indie as an ethos. In *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinity and 80’s Indie Rock*, Bannister (2006) repeatedly uses the phrase “indie ethos” to contain the notion of indie, here referring to the aesthetics of studio sound production for Minneapolis indie band Hüsker Dü: “Some Hüsker songs suffer from a ridiculously murky mix (which was, after all, part of the indie ethos) but here the vocals cut through and touch you” (p. 165).

This study seeks to better understand indie discourses and to unpack the specific “manifested virtues” which are most essential for artists who belong to the indie music community. It is necessary to consider the ways in which performances of group indie ethos deploy the “virtues” of the indie community through a host of various *ethos-markers* including a groups’ networking and associations, as well as all manner of cultural knowledge indicating awareness of the sanctioned values and norms of indie.

Indie discourses are full of symbolic markers that indicate membership in that community as an artist, a fan, or both, including clothing, preferred sound aesthetics and quality, gear,

favorite bands, collections of vinyl records and many, many more, all of which can be considered examples of what Bourdieu (1986) calls “cultural capital.” Of Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” Gracyk (2001) states: “it can be broadly understood to be education in and facility with the codes that permit individuals to gain social status” (p. 243). Gracyk (2001) goes on to argue that because “codes” for capital are gained both formally and informally, as it pertains to the sub-culture of indie, we can “also speak of sub-cultural capital” (p. 243).

Another way to better understand the deployment of ethos-markers in these inherently moralistic performances of indie discourse is as a type of *consubstantiality*, or a type of *identification* described by Kenneth Burke (1969) as the ‘common sensations, concepts, images, ideas and attitudes’ that are shared by people when they communicate (p. 21). Of identification Burke (1969) states: “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his” (p. 55). In thinking back to the testimony of Paul McCartney, we can recognize his descriptions of Lennon’s ethos - his irreverent attitude, hair style, type of guitar and his musical influences - as both important ethos-markers and signs of consubstantiality; the words and ideas that implicitly or explicitly, communicate similarity and establish an immediate connection between two or more individuals and necessary for the formation of any considerable group. Consubstantiality is the recognition that: ‘You are like me. You are one of us.’ In the context of indie discourses, this ability to pick up on, and to deploy, approved ethos-markers of consubstantiality represents an obvious extension of the morally charged message of Fonarow’s anonymous fan: “I know it when I see it.”

With its highly articulated sense of morality, the sub-cultural landscape of indie music provides a fertile environment within which to study *group ethos*. Among its most essential and

dominant themes are indie's oppositional struggle with commercial success and the need to protect and control your art. "For many, indie is the spirit of independence, being free from control, dependence, or interference" (Fonarow, 2006, p. 51). There is no doubt that the same strain of individualism that runs through the center of indie discourses – demanding overt performances of an ethos of authenticity and oppositionality – stems from the same rejection of the mainstream status quo which informed the rock n' roll movement of the 50s and 60s and the punk/D.I.Y. ('Do It Yourself') movement which emerged in the waning hours of the 70s.

Fonarow (2006) states:

Self-reliance, not depending on the authority of others, has been the guiding value of indie music, as has the autonomy of the artist...Independence in music means actively eschewing a centralized corporate hierarchy where decisions are made by distant executive bodies...Independence, the notion of self-expression and self-control, pervade all aspects of the indie community. (p. 51)

In his investigation of the "Punk Rhetoric" of the DC area band *The Make-Up*, Matula (2007) addresses indie's "opposition" to the mainstream as it relates to ethos: "Authenticity is constructed in post-punk scenes through production of sounds that are clearly differentiated from whatever happens to be the mainstream, as music symbolically constructs a space that opposes the rules and order imposed by a straight, uptight and oppressive society" (p. 25).

The tensions addressed by Fonarow, Kruse, Matula and Bannister no doubt play a critical role in the ethos of any indie band, but in 2010 what it means to be indie is as contested as ever. As it is with any movement, indie has evolved dramatically from its coalescence in the 80s until now, becoming ever more diffuse and difficult to pin down. Just as the term 'alternative' once represented those genres of music that stood in opposition to the mainstream and were eventually

co-opted into the mainstream system it openly eschewed, indie has experienced a similar dispersion. Today it is not at all uncommon for *indie bands* to make records for major labels (cf. Kruse, 2003), to tour in buses or make expensive and heavily produced albums. These apparent shifts in indie ethos have prompted some to wonder if indie remains at this point a cohesive community or idea at all (cf. Andrews, 2006). Bands such as Fall Out Boy and Death Cab For Cutie are indie acts of the modern variety, who headline major sponsored concert tours, ride in style and comfort on tour buses and make high-gloss radio-ready records, yet somehow still manage to retain the essential elements of the indie ethos they established early in their careers.

It is apparent in the indie discourses collected for this study that the indie ethos is alive and kicking, and profoundly influencing the group ethos of today's indie acts. It is also apparent here that the meaning of indie has continued to evolve over time, becoming even more diffuse as artists re-imagine and push the boundaries of what it means to 'be indie' (cf. Andrews, 2006). While there are numerous and significant similarities, there is no doubt that what it means to be indie is somewhat different for each group of artists. Among the potential shifts in indie discourse is the concept of "selling out."

The concepts of the 'sell out' and the act of 'selling out' are not new in the American lexicon. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary and Dictionary.com, both the term sell out: "a person who betrays a cause, organization, or the like; traitor; a person who compromises his or her personal values, integrity, talent, or the like, for money or personal advancement;" and selling out: "the prostitution of one's ideals or talents;" can be traced back to the mid-late nineteenth century. Selling out is not the exclusive right of individuals with public personas. In the process of socially constructing and reflecting our own sense of reality and understanding our place in it, all humans engage in the social creation of self and seek to align ourselves with what

Goffman (1959) calls “in-groups.” It is within the context of ethos making and negotiation that identification with certain cultures and in-groups allows us to establish our own notion of a code of ethics; a character that must be performed in order to remain a part of those groups and avoid violating important norms for participation. Once we have a sense of ethos, all humans be they students, doctors, professors, secretaries and rock stars alike, can sell out. However, for musicians this issue represents a consideration of singular importance. Green Day bassist Mike Dirnt responded to critics who have questioned that band’s integrity, commenting to Baird of the *Las Vegas Sun* in July 2001:

“If there's a formula to selling out, I think every band in the world would be doing it," he said. "The fact that you write good songs and you sell too many of them, if everybody in the world knew how to do that they'd do it. It's not something we chose to do....We had to make a decision: either break up or remove ourselves from that element. And I'll be damned if I was going to flip (expletive) burgers. I do what I do best. Selling out is compromising your musical intention and I don't even know how to do that.” (Baird)

For indie artists the specter of selling out used to be ever-present, with far reaching implications for group ethos and for building and maintaining a fan base. This particular concern of character is tied to indie’s traditional opposition to mainstream commercialism and harkens back to Fonarow’s (2006) argument that indie discourses reproduce a heightened sense of morality, the ability of members of the sub-culture to discern and question the intentions of discursive actions, their own or those of others.

Further evidence of the fluidity of the indie ethos can be seen in the fact that since the publication of Kruse’s *Site and Sound* (2003) and Fonarow’s *Empire of Dirt* (2006), what it means to be indie has continued to shift and evolve. Locations of 80s and 90s indie rock

discourse such as record stores and radio stations (cf. Kruse, 2003) have all but gone away. In the age of the digital download, record stores have nearly all disappeared, and the presence of indie music on commercial radio stations is intermittent and artist dependent. Internet radio options, including sites like Pandora and Last FM, make indie music more accessible, but at the same time harder to find because of the massive diversity of choices available online. While the live show remains the quintessential location for indie discourses, band websites including record label pages, official band pages, and artist pages on social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook represent a new and increasingly dominant location for indie discourses. Additionally, modern computer software has made it possible for indie music artists to gain access to affordable and high quality home recording set-ups which have resulted in increased variation in the aesthetics of sound and production, one of Fonarow's (2006) "general principle(s)" which once played a more articulated role in notions of indie. This technological advancement has complicated once-important auditory aesthetic distinctions like 'high-fi' and 'lo-fi' (Fonarow 2006), once more altering earlier notions of the indie ethos.

#### *Preview of Literature Review*

In order to further establish the theoretical basis for the present study, the next chapter will explore in-depth the relevant literature on the concept of ethos and dramatic perspectives of performance theory. I begin with a closer look at Aristotle and the ancient Greek and Roman scholars in whose hands the concept of ethos was born and shaped. We then turn to the concept of character and explore Aristotle's theories regarding the 'character of our Character.' According to Kenneth Burke (1969) Aristotle's approach to the study of communication is "thoroughly dramatist," a notion which paves the way for a series of important connections to the performance theory of Erving Goffman (1959).

Goffman's performance lens provides the dominant analytical tool for this investigation and ultimately represents the primary theoretical move of this report. It is my contention that Goffman's theories regarding 'impression management' and the 'performance of self' which emanate from *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), and his subsequent related theories including the notion of *face-work* (2006) must all be reexamined for their significant contributions to the ongoing conversation on the topic of ethos. In short, ethos is "impression management." I propose that while Goffman does not overtly invoke the term *ethos* to describe the deployment of character through discourse, his theories consistently offer substantive thoughts on the ways ethos functions through performance to manifest the complex and various elements of character required for membership and successful social movement within the in-groups that we claim.

I will then look at the understudied concept, central to this thesis, of group ethos. First, I will establish foundations for a definition of group ethos and then discuss the dearth of research available on this critical area of interest. From there, I provide a brief overview of the contemporary conceptions of ethos that inform the theories which undergird this investigation. Finally, in closing, I will explore the relationship of ethos to 'the self' in an effort to identify how the inherently "artistic," creative and inventive nature of ethos more generally informs the foundations of character for all individuals, artistic or otherwise.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### *Understanding Ethos: Aristotle and the Ancients*

Since the time of the *Rhetoric* in the mid-late 300s B.C., considerations of ethos have played an essential role in attempts to understand the power and influence of rhetoric in everyday life. After considering both ancient and modern conceptions of ethos, I contend that it remains fundamentally *character in action through discourse*, performed through symbols and perceived by both the symbol user and a given audience. To further establish how I arrive at this conception of ethos the following discussion will review the relevant literature by tracking the historical trajectory of ethos from ancient Greece through to modern scholarship on the subject.

In his pragmatic treatise for rhetoricians the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle conceived of ethos as one of three ‘artistic’ proofs or means of persuasion, calling it simply “the character of the speaker” (1356a, 1960). For Aristotle, ethos is a function of choice, expressed through the performance of symbolic acts: “Character is manifested in choice [in what men choose to do or avoid]” (1366a, 1960). Halloran (1982) contends that Aristotle viewed ethos as “habituation” or “proper habits, and hence character, are formed by performing virtuous actions” (pp. 60-61). In Aristotle’s construction, ethos was a process of invention that did not necessarily include the true moral character of the rhetor. Aristotle confined ethos to the character presented and perceived within a single speaking situation, rather than an “antecedent impression that the speaker is this or that kind of man” (Aristotle, 1356a, 1960). In this sense Aristotle’s notion of ethos was dramatic and reliant upon notions of the kind of capital “C” *Characters* we think of in a dramatic framework. Aristotle was concerned with ‘types’ of Characters and with the *character of that*

*Character* in a given speech or *scene*. Although I leave it momentarily, I will return shortly to a far more detailed exploration of Aristotle's dramatist tendencies.

Aristotelian ethos includes three central components: "As for the speakers themselves, the sources of our trust in them are three, for apart from the argument [in a speech] there are three things that gain our belief, namely, intelligence, character and good will" (*Rhetoric*, 1378a). In examining contemporary contexts, each of Aristotle's components of ethos can, with careful consideration, be translated into rubrics for the consideration of the "manifested virtues" of a given culture or group, e.g., the sub-culture of indie. As we have established, indie's morality requires the performance of moral character in a host of ways. Intelligence can be measured by someone's ability to properly perform the indie ethos, e.g., musical "taste" and opinions regarding "current topics" such as the use of pre-recorded material live, digital downloading or the use of MySpace for promotion. Lastly, good will towards an indie audience can be measured by the stewardship of the indie ethos each person or group displays in their performances of it in interactions with indie audiences or other indie artists giving similar performances which Goffman (1959) refers to as "colleagues."

Greek philosopher Isocrates and Roman thinker Quintilian conceived of ethos beyond the isolated speaking situation, contradicting Aristotle by explicitly including the previous reputation or "antecedent impressions" of the speaker as well as their *true* character.

Although he does not use the term ethos explicitly, Isocrates makes a clear case in *Antidosis* for true moral character across multiple rhetorical situations: "for who does not know that words carry a greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words? (278).

Quintilian's contribution to ethos is most often tied to his claim that an orator need be a "good man, speaking well": "I hold that no one can be a true orator unless he is a good man..." (IO, I, I, 3). It is important to note, however, that neither Quintilian nor Aristotle before him conceived of ethos as a tool or concept for the everyman. Both were focused exclusively on elite property owners and gave no thought to ethos as a facet of interpersonal communication or as pertaining to commoners, women or slaves. Although implicit in his discussions of ethos, Quintilian's "good man" was about true moral character, but notably had much to do with the accepted social values - including gender - of the day. In his handbook for orators *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian offers this perspective on ethos: "For as everything treated by the orator may be regarded from the ethical standpoint, we may apply the word ethos whenever he speaks of what is honorable and expedient or of what ought or ought not to be done" (IO, VI, ii, 11).

Quintessential Roman legal thinker Cicero also weighed in on the importance of ethos. May (1988) states: "Character was an extremely important element in the social and political milieu of Republican Rome and exerted a considerable amount of influence on native Roman oratory" (p. 6). Cicero was particularly interested in the ways in which the character of both the speaker and client could be fashioned and emphasized in discursive action to meet rhetorical needs. In Book 2 of *De Oratore* Cicero, through the words of Antonius, situates the role of character in persuasion:

A potent factor in success, then, is for the characters, principles, conduct and course of life, both of those who are to plead cases and of their clients, to be approved, and conversely those of their opponents condemned; and for the feelings of the tribunal to be won over, as far as possible, to goodwill towards the advocate and the advocate's client as well. Now feelings are won over by a man's

merit, achievements or reputable life, qualifications easier to embellish, if only they are real, than to fabricate where non-existent.... It is very helpful to display the tokens of good-nature, kindness, calmness, loyalty and a disposition that is pleasing and not grasping or covetous, and all the qualities belonging to men who are upright...while the want of them estranges it from such as do not possess them.” (DO, II, xliii, 182)

Although it is Aristotle’s definition of ethos that remains dominant today, particularly in textbooks on oratory and public speaking (cf. Zarefsky, 2008), classical perspectives on ethos, as we will see below, have given way to divergent modern theories that explore the impact of character for both the speaker and the audience.

*Artistotle & Burke: Dramatism & the ‘character’ of our ‘Character’*

In light of the brief overview of Aristotelian and classical ethos, what remains is to determine what is meant by *character* and to establish its place in the work of Aristotle and to modern theories of performance.

As stated previously, May (1988) claims: “every verbal undertaking aimed at producing conviction involves, implicitly or explicitly, the presentation of character” (p. 1). Aristotle’s commitment to the idea that the ethos of a rhetor was restricted to the speech at hand and not “left” to what he calls “antecedent impressions,” can be recast as a focus on the character traits displayed by an orator in a given *scene*. In the context of his *Poetics*, Aristotle offers the following definition of character: “Character is what makes us ascribe certain moral qualities to the agents” (*Poetics*, 1450a5). He continues, claiming: “whenever such-and-such a personage says or does such-and-such a thing, it shall be the necessary or probable outcome of his character” (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1454a35-37). These notions of character are not terribly dissimilar

from those in the *Rhetoric* where Aristotle articulates character as a function of action, discursive or otherwise: “Character is manifested in choice [in what men choose to do or avoid]” (1366a, 1960). Worman (2002) makes the following connection between Aristotle’s thoughts on character in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*:

In the *Poetics* the references to ethos similarly indicate that Aristotle conceives of it as inhering not in any particular person but rather in any speech that delineates a set of behaviors or attitudes (e.g., 1450b8). Ethos constitutes an aspect of each type (genos) of person, which may be communicated in speech or action (1454a15-16). This idea indicates the importance of social categories to Aristotle’s analysis of character, as well as suggesting the interchangeability of type that is central to dramatic mimesis, which would clearly suggest moral issues for the orator. This underlying problem may account for Aristotle’s treatment of ethos in the *Rhetoric* being so much more limited and elliptical than one might expect. He recommends, for example, that the orator take care to hide the artificiality and plasticity of the performance of type (Rhet. 1404b18-19). The statement itself indicates an awareness that the orator’s mutability in this regard resembles that of the dramatic actor. (pp. 34-35)

In reflecting on the totality of Aristotle’s work and approach to the study of communication Kenneth Burke (1969) concludes: “For however strong Aristotle’s bias towards science may have been, it was always modified by a highly dramatistic context. His rhetoric is thoroughly dramatist in its insights” (p. 64). Accepting Burke’s position on Aristotle’s *dramatistic* approach, it follows that Aristotle’s notion of ethos is absolutely performative in nature. Through discursive choices, we perform the “virtues” and values of the culture’s to which we belong, seek to move within, and maintain membership to. Here Baumlin (1994) connects

discourse, ethos and character, but unnecessarily limits discourse to verbal and linguistic representations: “More than an expression of individual psychology or an intersection of societal forces, ethos is, as Aristotle himself suggests, quintessentially a linguistic phenomenon, a verbal manifestation or representation of human character” (p. xxiii). In order to consider adequately the discourses through which a person or group perform their ethos we must replace Baumlin’s term *linguistic* with the term *discourse* by which I mean all manner of sign systems, both verbal and nonverbal. We can then re-cast ethos as a *quintessentially discursive phenomenon* and pursue its study on those grounds.

In the area of dramatism Kenneth Burke lends at least one more invaluable insight to the study of ethos. In considering ethos as a discursive phenomenon we are not in pursuit of a perfect representation of an individual or group ethos itself. If ethos is a discourse, then it is by nature determined differently by each audience of individuals to whom it is deployed. Instead of a static representation of ethos we are after the ways in which ethos is being *used* by a given communicator. Communicators are using their ethos in discourse to influence the perceptions of others within or outside of the group. As part of a discussion on the poetic function of dramatic dialogue Burke (1966) states:

Where the topics are reflected in actual *statements* on the part of the characters, I would incline to feel that, as far as possible, all such dialogue should be treated as *poetic functions* rather than *philosophic* or *religious* ‘truths.’ That is to say: As far as possible, one should treat a play not as ‘about’ religion or fate, and such (in the sense of being contributions to theology, science, history, and the like), but as *using* religion or fate or revolt and such for the production of poetic effects.” (*original emphasis included*, p. 297)

Following Burke, ethos is something we *use* in discourse which is reflective of our own

perception of that ethos. In the dramatist framework of Burke and Aristotle ethos might be best viewed as ‘the character of our Character,’ a construction with profound connections to the highly influential theories of self-presentation and performance of twentieth century thinker Erving Goffman.

*Ethos-Work: Goffman and The Performance of Ethos in Everyday Life*

“Every person lives in a world of social encounters, involving him either in face-to-face or mediated contact with other participants. In each of these contacts, he tends to act out what is sometimes called a line – that is, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself”

- Erving Goffman, 2006, p. 299

The performance theory of Erving Goffman (1959) provides a useful framework for the study of the elements of identity<sup>1</sup> and specifically those related to character, i.e., ethos. In his landmark book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) uses the metaphor of stage ‘performance’ to conceptualize self-presentation: “A ‘performance’ may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (pp. 15). Goffman (1959) goes on to add: “The individual tends to treat the others present on the basis of the impression they give now about the past and the future. It is here that communicative acts are translated into moral ones.” (p. 250).

I have illustrated how Aristotle’s ethos was informed in large part by a dramatist screen.

This study also proceeds inversely from the theoretical position that Goffman’s dramatic

---

<sup>1</sup> While identity research is implicated strongly in this thesis, I wish to remain focused soundly on the topics at hand which are the performance of ethos and group ethos. While there is a dearth of research on group ethos, identity research is positively massive and I do not have time to adequately address it here, or to situate ethos within that body of work. I have opted instead to tentatively situate ethos as but one aspect of self-concept or identity, by which I mean as Epstein (1978) suggests: “the process by which the person seeks to integrate his various statuses and roles, as well as his diverse experiences, into a coherent image of self” (p. 101). Epstein’s definition is helpful because it clearly implies that identity is not static; different identities are enacted for different in-groups and out-groups, and individuals constantly engage in the negotiation of their various self concepts.

performance theory is equally concerned with ethos. While Goffman does not explicitly use the term *ethos*, much of his work on the presentation and performance of self can be read as stout contribution to the centuries-old conversation regarding ethos. Compare the following Goffman passage to the first of three grounding definitions of ethos previously stated from Halloran (1982): “To have ethos is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks....” (p. 62). Goffman (1959) states: “To *be* a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one’s social grouping attaches thereto” (p. 75). Consider also the following passage from Goffman (1959) in relation to both ethos and the morality implicated so strongly in the “indie ethos” described by Fonarow (2006):

We come now to the basic dialectic. In their capacity as performers, individuals will be concerned with maintaining the impression that they are living up to the many standards by which they and their products are judged. Because these standards are so numerous and so persuasive, the individuals who are performers dwell more than we might think in a moral world...As performers we are merchants of morality. Our day is given over to immediate contact with the goods we display and our minds are filled with intimate understandings of them; but it may well be that the more attention we give to these goods, then the more distant we feel from them and from those who are believing enough to buy them. To use a different imagery, the very obligation and profitability of appearing always in a steady moral light, of being a socialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who is practiced in the ways of the stage. (Goffman, 1959, p. 251)

The performance of ethos is consistent with Goffman’s (1959) notion of “impression management,” of which he states: “Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express

himself in a particular way, but because the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression” (p. 6). In the lengthy passage below Goffman (1959) articulates still another clear and compelling concern for the performance of character in discourse:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc....For those present, many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or ‘sign-vehicles’) become available for conveying this information. If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him. They can also assume from past experience that only individuals of a particular kind are likely to be found in a given social setting. They can rely on what the individual says about himself or on documentary evidence he provides as to who and what he is. If they know, or know of, the individual by virtue of experience prior to the interaction, they can rely on assumptions as to the persistence and generality of psychological traits as a means of predicting his present and future behavior. (p. 1)

Goffman’s concepts of *face-work* (2006), *lines* and *footing* (1981) can also be read as theories of the protection and performance of ethos. Of face-work, Goffman (2006) proposes: “By face-work I mean to designate the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face-work serves to counteract ‘incidents’ – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face” (Goffman, 2006, p. 302). In a obvious reinterpretation of

Goffman in his own words, I have thus adopted the term *ethos-work* to describe “the actions taken by a person, or persons, to make whatever he/they are doing consistent with their ethos. Ethos-work serves to counteract ‘incidents’ – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten ethos.”

In the following passage Goffman (1959) describes how the ethos of an entire establishment, in this case a hospital in contrast to a professional music organization, would suffer ethos damage in the face of errors on the part of the individuals who represent it:

In a sense these larger social units – teams, establishments, etc. – become committed every time the individual performs his routine; with each performance the legitimacy of these units will tend to be tested anew and their permanent reputation put at stake....Thus, when a surgeon and his nurse both turn from the operating table and the anesthetized patient accidentally rolls off the table to his death, not only is the operation disrupted in an embarrassing way, but the reputation of the doctor, as a doctor and as a man, and also the reputation of the hospital may be weakened...Finally, we often find that the individual may deeply involve his ego in his identification with a particular part, establishment, and group, and in his self-conception as someone who does not disrupt social interaction or let down the social units which depend upon that interaction. When a disruption occurs, then, we may find that the self-conceptions around which his personality has been built may become discredited. (pp. 242-243)

Goffman’s work provides additional concepts which inform the framework of observation and analysis for this study, chiefly among them are the notion of “front stage” and “back stage,” or the notion of a delineated public and private, or public and semi-public performance of ethos. Some aspects of one’s identity are performed for everyone and other

aspects are hidden and only performed for certain group members called “teammates” or members of the broader sub-cultural group, in this case the fans and artists, and other indie musicians who Goffman calls “colleagues.” Other useful concepts from Goffman’s (1959) typologies include: 1) “in-group/out groups” (p. 162); and 2) the term “team performance” (p. 82) which offers a lens to view the perception, invention and performance of a group ethos as a team of bandmates working together to achieve definable goals while maintaining a unified performance of ethos.

Despite my firm assertion that Goffman’s self-presentation theories have far more than a tangential relationship to the ongoing conversation about ethos, Goffman (1959) himself warns would be ethos scholars not to interpret performances solely as indications of moral character:

In thinking about a performance it is easy to assume that the content of the presentation is merely an expressive extension of the character of the performer and to see the function of the performance in these personal terms. This is a limited view and can obscure important differences in the function of the performance for the interaction as a whole. (p. 77)

Goffman’s dramatist metaphor provides a constructive path for the study of group ethos and the presentation of self via discourse, but his warning is well taken. While my theoretical intentions are to utilize Goffman’s dramatist lens to view and interpret the data collected for this study, I concede that performance theory, like all theory, represents what Burke (1966) calls a ‘terministic screen;’ a single view point which simultaneously serves to “select, reflect and deflect” information (p. 45).

### *Understanding Ethos: Contemporary Conceptions*

The term ethos remained relatively unchanged from those dominant constructions found

in ancient Greece and Rome until the twentieth century, when modern scholars attempted to better understand the classical conceptions of ethos for themselves, but also set about the task of recasting ethos as an interpersonal and intrapersonal concern, a level at which ethos can be seen as a factor in our ‘daily lives’ in perceptions, and borrowing Goffman’s terminology, ‘presentations of the self.’

In his consideration of classical notions, Sattler (1947) distinguishes the term ethos from “mores” insisting: “In short, ethos may be defined as ‘totality of characteristic traits,’ rather than in terms of mere custom or morally approved habits” (p. 55). In *The Derivation of Ethos*, Corts (1967) criticizes Sattler’s progressive take on ethos and argues that a fundamental misunderstanding of ethos exists, “blurred by [the] confusion of two Greek terms;” *ēthos* “meaning only ‘custom or habit’” (pronounced: *éthos*) and *ἦθος* “meaning ‘custom, disposition, character, delineation of character, bearing’” (pronounced: *èthos*). Corts concludes that Aristotle used the term *ἦθος* and that this “derivation” may be “responsible for a nebulous understanding of ancient rhetoricians’ concepts of ethos” (p. 201). In yet another early effort to qualify ethos in a modern context, McCroskey (1966) conceived of ethos as “credibility or prestige” and proposed a set of much maligned scales to measure ethos which have subsequently been many times revised. Contemporary rhetorical scholars have contributed to the broadened definitions of ethos at play in rhetorical scholarship. Baumlin (1994) offers the following post-Aristotelian construction:

I would suggest, broadly and rather tentatively, that ethos concerns the problematic relation between human character and discourse; more specifically, it raises questions concerning the inclusion of the speaker’s character as an aspect of discourse, the representation of that character in discourse, and the role of that character in persuasion.

(p. xvii)

James May (1988) asserts this overtly sensitizing construction of ethos:

Ethos (defined broadly as “character”) is an abiding and essential element in the art of verbal persuasion. Indeed, every verbal undertaking aimed at producing conviction involves, implicitly or explicitly, the presentation of character, an advancement of a persona capable of influencing an audience to no small degree. (p. 1)

At its core, modern conceptions of ethos can be taken to mean, as it did for Aristotle, the “character” of the speaker, but the ongoing evolution of the concept has produced a diverse tradition steeped in controversy, confusion and disagreement.

Contemporary scholars of communication have posited a direct connection between ethos and identity, addressing the limitations of Aristotle’s original definition. Sattler (1947) affirms Aristotle’s ethos of internal invention, stating: “Ethos is primarily developed by Aristotle as a function of rhetorical invention; secondarily, through style and delivery” (p. 64). Swearingen (1994) argues: “We look at questions of identity, voice, self and authenticity as intrinsic to ethos. Classical thinkers...did not” (p. 115). The shifting of ethos away from something which is perceived solely by an external audience to a concept central to ‘the self,’ solidifies the critical relationship between ethos and self-making.

Aristotle posited a notion that provides for just such a connection: “to master all three [artistic proofs] obviously calls for a man who can reason logically, can analyze the types of human character, along with the virtues, and, thirdly, can analyze the emotions – the nature and quality of each...” (1356a, 1960). Of Aristotle’s suggestion Cooper (1960) argues “...the speaker must know the whole range of human ethos, since he must understand all human motives and emotions, and their consequences” (p. xxiii). If we accept Cooper’s interpretation we

acknowledge that as we communicate we are constantly assessing the ethos of others to “know human motives and emotions.” It follows that individuals are also regularly assessing their own ethos; a process I have argued has profound implications for the creation of a self-concept and for its presentation. Thus, ethos is the aspect of self that is constantly in the process of perceiving and evaluating character. This area of interest leads me to ask the following question:

*RQ 1: How do individual indie music artists perceive and perform their ethos?*

### *Group Ethos*

While interest in the concept of ethos has been vast, far too little investigation has been done to better understand how the process of ethos-making occurs at the group or cultural levels. Indeed, the primary impetus driving the study presented here is the need for a body of research on the concept of *group ethos*.

Although recent definitions of ethos nearly always, implicitly or explicitly, encompass entities beyond the individual, i.e., groups, sub-cultures, cultures, eras of time, etc., more work is required to discover the functions, nuance and differences associated with a collective ethos in comparison to the myriad thoughts on the ethos of a single person.

A foundation for theories regarding a group ethos can be found in spite of the lack of research explicitly investigating it. As previously stated, Epstein (1978) claims: “just as in the case of the individual the notion of personality is accompanied at the level of self-perception by the sense of ego-identity, so ethos has as its counterpart the sense of collective identity, the consciousness of belonging to a group that exists in time” (p. 122). Campbell (1982) asserts: “In its widest modern usage, ethos refers not to the character or personality of an individual but to ‘the disposition, character or attitude peculiar to a specific people, culture or group that distinguishes it from other peoples or groups’” (p. 122). Baumlin (1994) implicates the ethos of

the groups and cultures to which we belong as part of the formation and performance of an individual ethos:

Here again we must assert the relevance of such an idea to the study of ethos: like the ‘subjective psyche’ that it seeks to represent, ethos exists ‘somewhere between the organism and the outside world,’ this ‘somewhere between’ being none other than a discourse whose language is in part one’s own but in equal part a possession of one’s time and culture. (p. xxii)

As Epstein’s, Campbell’s and Baumlin’s claims suggest, a group of individuals – from the smallest to the largest types – with conjoined motives and intentions, operating under common assumptions and for a common good, can coalesce into a sort of singular entity. In a rare article pertaining overtly to “group ethos,” Brian A. Patrick (2006) proposes in the context of “social action groups” the notion of three ‘modes’ of group ethos, including “(a) pluralistic, associated with a pragmatic style of communication, (b) social-movement, and (c) administrative-technical” (p. 425). Patrick (2006) argues: “Pluralism is a political theory in which interest forms the core social ethic of the group” (p. 432); he adds, “Through observations of behaviors individual communication behaviors are tallied and treated as signs or probabilistic indicators of ethos” (Patrick, 2006, p. 426). While his “pluralistic” category of group ethos bears some relation to the group ethos of the indie musicians investigated here, the ‘social action’ elements of Patrick’s research prevent his models from having more than a tangential connection to the present study of group ethos.

Halloran (1982) also speaks of the formation of a constitutive group ethos: “Aristotle’s idea that habituation is the means by which ethos develops in the individual suggests a similar explanation for the development of ethos in its broader cultural sense; the ritual acts that

manifest our group identity or ethos are the very same acts that form it” (p. 63).

Although some might consider the choice to study group ethos in the discourses of indie bands abstract or even whimsical, music groups represent a fascinating population within which to study group communication. Because of the emphasis the artistic communities and cultures necessarily place on character, the formation, re-production and performance of a group ethos for any band of musicians is inevitable.

Not unlike the wealth of useful studies which examine marriage, small group and organizational communication, research into group ethos has tremendous implications for scholars of all types of interpersonal and group communication. To be certain, bands are a marriage of sorts and business organizations – even if their indie ethos requires them to fight tooth and nail to reject that notion and perform otherwise. Associated musicians offer a unique opportunity to study character in action through the dynamic and various discourses of small groups. This fundamental area of inquiry leads me to ask the question:

*RQ 2: How do indie music groups work together to perceive and perform a group ethos?*

#### *Creativity and the ‘Artistic Ethos’*

“Humans are just the sort of organisms that interpret and modify their agency through their conceptions of themselves... The fullest analysis of the concept of person would investigate the biologically adaptive functions of the various cultural grafts: the obsessions with unification and choice, salvation and simplicity, isolated integrity and achievement.”

- Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 1976, p. 323

It is clear that surprisingly little research has been done pertaining specifically to group ethos. Similarly, only a scant few scholars have posited theories that place creativity, artists and ethos together. It is my contention that the modern scholarly community is overdue to expand its

consideration of how ethos itself might be viewed as a form of creativity.

In her discussion of the problematic nature of Western thought on ethos for female African American artists, Pittman (2007) argues: “The idea that an orator needed to convince audiences that he had good sense, good moral character, and good will in the Agora is also applicable to writers of texts in American society” (p. 44). Pittman’s study shines a light on the pervasive power of ethos for artists as she concludes: “deviation from a so-called established norm could place an intellectual and emotional distance between writer and audience” (p. 44). Still others have connected ethos directly to creativity itself. Evans (1989) insists, “Ethos is the environmental laboratory within which creativity, whether positive or negative, roots and is nurtured” (p. 29).

Perhaps the most significant connection between the creativity implied through a process of invention and ethos comes from Aristotle himself. Following the Lane Cooper (1960) translation of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle situates ethos within the realm of internal invention, defining it as one of the three “artistic” modes of proof (1355b). Positioning ethos in opposition to “non-artistic” proof suggests that Aristotle saw ethos as an internal process of invention, a move which opens the door to modern perspectives that rightly construct ethos as an inherently artistic or cognitive creative process, a faculty for the perception, invention and performance of character based on symbolic acts verbal and nonverbal, conscious and unconscious, which plays an integral role in self making for all people, overtly artistic or otherwise. In this discussion of ethos, Baumlin (1994) implies the creative interplay between discourse and self-concept: “ethos exists ‘somewhere between the organism and the outside world,’ this ‘somewhere between’ being none other than a discourse whose language is in part one’s own, but in equal part a possession of one’s time and culture” (p. xxii).

While this study *is* focused on profoundly creative people who are openly manifesting their creative self-making abilities which makes them an excellent population to study, the type of ‘artistic ethos’ proposed here is not limited to those who make art. Too often creativity is perceived as extraordinary – as something relative only to artistic ability, thus ignoring the creative abilities of common peoples to style, fashion or perform discourses of the self. It is my position that through a re-thinking of creativity as a universal, we shift our understanding of creativity from that of a rarified artistic ability to what Maslow has called ‘primary creativity’ or “the kind a person uses to become self-actualized” or more succinctly a socially influenced micro-cognitive process available across the spectrum of human selves (Sternberg, 2003, pp. 104-105). From this perspective ethos is a project of self. As socially constructed selves we are constituted in discourse, but through ethos, and other means of creativity, we are producers of the dominant discourses not only of ourselves, but also as we will see in the indie discourses examined below, of our in-groups and cultures.

Contemporary conceptions of ethos bring into focus the value of ethos as *character in action through discourse*. As Halloran has suggested, ethos is a “risk,” it is an “open articulation” and it is a “manifestation” of the “virtues” most valued by a person or the groups and cultures “to and for which they speak.”

In closing, I return yet again to the work S. M. Halloran (1975) who reminds us that rhetoric, and therefore discourse, represents the symbolic performance through which ethos is manifest and through which we might discover an individual or their groups and cultures “in their own words”:

Language is always a disclosure – more or less deliberate, profound, and honest – of the one who speaks, of his personal view of the world. There is always a dimension of ethos

in language, even when it is the evasive ethos of bureaucratic language or the dispassionate ethos of science...The concept of ethos is crucial to rhetoric because the object of rhetoric is man speaking. The end of rhetorical analysis is to discover a man in his words, whether that man is the Ciceronian Orator or the lonely modern anti-hero.

(1975)

## CHAPTER THREE

### Method

*RQ 1: How do individual indie music artists perceive and perform their ethos?*

*RQ 2: How do indie music groups work together to perceive and perform a group ethos?*

#### *Methodology: Research Site and Sample*

In order to address the research questions articulated above stemming from the investigation of literature and to better understand the phenomenon of ethos and group ethos, the following analysis looks at three case studies of indie music groups. The inspiration for this study is in large part due to my own experience negotiating and performing ethos throughout a 21-year career as a professional musician.

In over two decades of work as a professional indie music artist, I recall the impact of what I now know to be ethos upon the process of music-making and group dynamics on a daily basis. I have witnessed firsthand the power of a unified group ethos and the disaster that ensues when conflicts in ethos are irresolvable. As a “complete-participant” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) in the same indie music scene as the bands recruited for this study, I was able to utilize an extensive social network to solicit research subjects. The bands selected for the study all qualify as members of the indie community, by which I mean they self-identify as indie or qualify on the basis that they are currently signed to independent labels, are actively releasing material themselves or present information on official websites, Facebook or MySpace pages that explicitly identifies them as such.

An initial pilot study was conducted in an effort to test the feasibility of the study and to

refine interview questions. The pilot consisted of three individual interviews with male indie colleagues. Several excerpts from the pilot are included below. In data collection for the full study I interviewed a total of eleven individuals across three bands. Despite failed attempts to recruit bands with at least one female member, all participants were male. Rock n' roll has always suffered a gender bias and while the indie community includes many remarkable female artists, it remains far more common to see all male bands than those with multi-gendered line-ups.

Although the sample for this study is admittedly small, each group represents a different tradition within indie and each performs a unique indie ethos. But, as I will show in the analysis section, each bands' performance of group ethos reflects deep connections to the traditional virtues of indie, while also presenting evidence of fluidity and changes to the current moral imperatives salient to today's indie community.

The descriptions of each group in the introductions below are purposefully evasive. Participation in the study was contingent upon their permanent anonymity. In exchange for their trust and "insider" access I promised each of these artists my best effort to protect their anonymity through the removal of names and any and all distinguishing identifiers. Because the same ethos I seek to investigate could be easily damaged if the observations and thoughts collected were openly attributed, each group and each band member were given pseudonyms for the purpose of analysis and discussion. Otherwise pertinent details such as the instruments each member plays, individual ages and even the most subtle indications of locality have been omitted in an effort to protect the ethos and identities of the case study artists. Still, I attempt below to provide some background information to better establish the groups of music artists who so generously consented to participate in the study.

To introduce and give context to each group I have selected what Burke (1945) in his dramatist frame calls a “representative anecdote,” a type of synecdoche in which a single example provides a glimpse into the larger picture and dominant ethos markers of each act.

Burke (1945) states:

Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful reflections of reality...Dramatism suggests a procedure to be followed in the development of a given calculus, or terminology. It involves the search for a ‘representative anecdote,’ to be used as a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed. (p. 59)

### *Big Eyes*

The indie power pop band Big Eyes has been together since 2004. The bands’ elder statesmen Mike and Dave first met while living in the same small Midwestern college town. They toured together extensively, both nationally and internationally, as a part of a popular indie act, recording and releasing four well-received albums before disbanding in the early 00s. Mike is both the oldest member and the most outspoken member of the group. Despite his dominance, the other three members worked actively to participate in the interview. Mike made frequent and open references to the fact that the band is limited by his unwillingness to go on tour – in effect, stifling the band’s opportunities for self-promotion beyond regional shows and internet promotion. Dave describes himself as the “hall monitor” in the band, an intermediary between the dynamic personalities and diverse ambitions of the group. Ken and Jon also cut their teeth together while working in a previous band, releasing two records and touring modestly in the states. After both pairs moved separately to a nearby town they joined forces to form Big Eyes. Taking musical and ethos cues from bands like The Beatles, The Replacements, Big Star, and Cheap Trick, Big Eyes are all about “melody” and “hooks” and as such are representative of the

power pop or “Indie pop” tradition of indie music heavily influenced by the music of the 1960s (cf. Bannister, 2006). Considerably younger than their cohorts, Ken and Jon are the principal songwriters, and while both sing extensively on most songs, they divide the songwriting responsibilities fairly evenly between them, with the principal songwriter usually taking the lead vocal – like The Beatles.

As the analysis will show, the dominant ethos markers of Big Eyes include high energy live performance, “adventurous” and high quality songcraft in the tradition of pop music with strong “hooks” and “melody,” conscious rejection of the business side of music, and unpretentiousness. Each of these dominant markers are reflected in the following statement by Mike, who catches himself articulating for the first time aloud a summation of the genetic coding that informs the band’s group ethos:

Mike: I mean you could probably trace The Beatles, KISS and The Replacements back to all three of those things. The Beatles for songwriting, KISS for performance and The Replacements for attitude. [in a startled tone] I’ve **never** said that out loud before. And I’ve never thought about it before, but if those are the three staples of what makes a band perfect for me, or what makes me want to be in a band..Those are probably the three bands that I’ve, that those ideas have come from..more than anything else.

### *The Mazinaw*

While they descend from an entirely different tradition within indie, strong melodies and musical hooks also pervade the music of The Mazinaw. The Mazinaw proudly perform a group ethos of “hard work” and “family” in the post-punk thread of indie. The only group in the study to include relatives, the metaphor of *family* and the virtues of survival and “bonding” permeate

the bands' discourses. Ranging in age from 29 – 33, The Mazinaw put on high energy rock shows with the kind of snarl associated with the finest traditions of punk rock and the visceral intensity of a prize fight. Senior band member Joe asserts: “No one’s going to catch us having a bad night.”

Joe, Topper (Top) and Paul have been playing together for over a decade. They have toured extensively throughout the U.S., Canada and parts of Europe. Through numerous personnel changes and starts and stops to the band, The Mazinaw has endured to release several albums in recent years. Mick is the newest member of the band and brings a different set of musical influences to the group including an open appreciation for arena rock and big stage performances. They pride themselves on “work ethic,” with each member filling whatever role is required of them within the team framework. Several members articulated those roles within the group, placing Joe as the leader, Mick as responsible for artwork and merchandising concepts and design, Paul as social ambassador and Topper as business manager, with organizational responsibilities that include booking shows and settling with club managers at the end of each night on tour. Joe was the dominant voice in our group interview, but each member asserted himself at various points, displaying the unified performance of an equalitarian and collaborative group ethos.

Unlike Big Eyes and the third band Ontario, The Mazinaw appear less focused on writing groundbreaking songs that push boundaries in terms of songcraft and artistry, and far more interested in the big picture which includes music, but also incorporates heartfelt and entertaining live shows, “smart business” and a core bonded relationship.

The Mazinaw’s dominant ethos markers include “hard work” and “work ethic,” *family*, longevity and persistence. In the following excerpt Joe sums up what he calls the group’s

“bonafides.” Pay particular attention to the lessened emphasis on songs and songwriting, in favor of a ‘whole package’ perspective:

Joe: Well, just the like. . .you know, the dues are paid. There’s no. . .We’re not. . .There’s no way in which we are wet behind the ears, you know. There’s no area of. . .our business or the music or entertainment business itself in which we are totally inexperienced and, you know. It’s like, we really have been there and we have a deep pool to draw from and. . .regardless of how any of those. . . you know, how any of those experiences in the past. . . worked out like, sort of like I said, we emerged from it and people still. . . you know, we emerged from it with our. . . you know, dignity and the respect of our peers or whatever. And. . . yeah, it’s like nobody’s ever. . . nobody’s ever going to catch us having a bad night or having an off night like. Nobody’s ever gonna you know. . . I mean we’ve never made the record that was just so piss poor that nobody could get behind it, like. . .it’s you know, it’s legit in all the way s it needs to be . . . . There’s good songs, there’s good attitude, there’s great energy, there’s a.. you know, a solid performance.

### *Ontario*

By far the youngest, most recently formed and least experienced of the bands in the study, Ontario is a three piece indie band consisting of members Stewart, Gordon and Andy, who range in age from 23 – 26. Despite limited national touring experience and only one release, of the three bands, Ontario is by far the most driven to musical and professional achievements. Calling the band “aggressive artists” and “landscape pioneers,” Stewart finds it a source of pride that his individual ethos is subsumed by the group ethos to form a collective “entity” beyond the three members themselves. Ontario’s live performances by comparison are far more technical

and elaborate than Big Eyes or The Mazinaw, including the incorporation of click tracks (a recorded metronome or clicking sound for time keeping) and pre-recorded material, which Big Eyes ironically identifies as an overt violation of their group ethos. Like Ken and Jon of Big Eyes, Andy and Gordon appear to be the principal songwriters and split vocal duties. Ontario's music draws on a much wider range of musical influences than either Big Eyes or The Mazinaw, experimenting with multiple instruments and musical styles resulting in a diverse modern presentation of indie more in keeping with The Postal Service, The Shins or Arcade Fire than the power pop stylings of Big Eyes or indie-punk influences of The Mazinaw.

Andy gave the following anecdote explicitly stating how he would like outsiders to perceive the group:

Andy: I hope that that's what people are perceiving you know, just solid musicianship and really good songwriting and three people that are really passionate about doing it... At all costs.

Ontario's dominant ethos markers consist of musical artistry, "prideful" achievement, deep and "bonded" friendship, the need to "communicate" and lastly, "passion" and freedom from "jadedness."

Of the three acts, there is only one group I had not met prior to the study. As such, they were the only band in the study recruited indirectly through an intermediary and outside of my direct pool of colleagues. The other groups were recruited directly for the study based on previous friendships. One group includes members who, in a previous outfit, I toured with extensively over several years in the late 90s and early 00s. Another is the only band in the study with a member that I have personally played with in a full time indie band.

### *Methodology: Interviews*

In an effort to account for perceptions and performance of ethos in discourse this study relies primarily on qualitative methods of interview. “Qualitative interviews are a storytelling zone par excellence in which people are given complete license to craft their selves in language” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). Of specific concern is the difficulty distinguishing the performance of ethos when it occurs in discourse. Since the central components necessary for the performance of ethos include perception, intention and motivation, this study looks to what Kruse (2003) describes as the “lived experiences of ordinary people” through a blend of *semi-structured* and *open-ended* interviews (Silverman, 2006). Each band sat for an initial group interview lasting approximately one to one-and-a-half hours. Subsequently, interviews were conducted individually with each member, the shortest of which lasted for just 12 minutes, the longest clocked in at 55 minutes. Ken and Jon of Big Eyes were the only members of any group unable to sit for a face-to-face interview. In place of an in-person interview both Ken and Jon completed a brief open-ended questionnaire via email. Across both individual and group settings I collected approximately 8 hours of interview data for transcription.

Both group and individual interviews began with a standard set of questions (see Appendix 1). An adherence to the semi-structured/open-ended style also allowed me to deviate from the protocol when respondents provided relevant data with minimal prompts. Semi-structured/open-ended interviews also permitted the artists a variety of ways in which to articulate their own rich descriptions of their “lived experiences” and to offer their perceptions of their own individual ethos, the ethos of their specific group and the ethos of indie culture. Interviews were strategically designed to increase the chance of “sighting” the phenomenon of ethos at work by allowing the artists themselves produce a wealth of rhetoric for analysis. As

Lindlof and Taylor contend: “Qualitative interviewing is predicated on the idea that interview talk is the rhetoric of socially situated speakers” (2002, p. 172).

Silverman (2006) argues the benefit of ‘naturally-occurring data’ or ‘texts’ in contrast to a sole reliance on interview methods of data collection. “I use ‘text’ to identify data consisting of words and/or images which have become recorded without the intervention of a researcher” (Silverman, 2006, p. 153). While I share Silverman’s affinity for ‘naturally-occurring’ data, I opted to focus on interview data because it provides the most efficient and data rich method for the collection of the indie discourses of music artists.

Group interviews or “focus groups” took place first (cf. Babbie, 2004). Fontana and Frey argue: “Group interviews can also be used successfully to aid respondents’ recall or to stimulate embellished descriptions of specific events or experiences shared by group members” (2008, p. 127). Group interviews gave me the opportunity to establish a connection to the bands and to attempt to elicit an articulation of the “party line” or perceived ethos “shared by group members.” This “party line” then helped inform the individual interviews and allowed respondents to articulate any deviations or contradictions to the stated group perception of ethos.

Group interviews consisted of two parts. Part one included a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit the *use* of ethos through broad questions about the origins of the band and the common “virtues” i.e., values, beliefs and associations that brought them together.

Part two of the interview began with a question aimed explicitly at the focus of the study: *How would you describe your band’s code of honor?* This line of questioning was an attempt to expose more explicitly the intentions of the study and to elicit more focused responses that assured the collection of relevant data.

In addition to questions designed to better understand ethos as it relates to perceptions of

character, the protocol of open-ended questions in the group interviews includes a series of inquiries looking to prompt the artists to identify specific violations of ethos. Questions at this stage included: What are some things that your band would never do? What are some things you've seen other bands do that your band would never do? This area of emphasis was based on the idea that artists could identify violations of ethos more readily and that those perceptions might be more highly defined. This assumption proved to be true as this style of question provoked some of the most insightful, straightforward and valuable discourses acquired during the study.

#### *Methodology: Photo Elicitation*

The strategy of *photo elicitation* (Harper, 2008) was utilized in part two of the group interviews as a way to “stimulate memories” or in this case thoughts and ideas regarding the perception and performance of ethos “that word-based interviewing did not” (p. 197) and to “trigger comments about concrete aspects of a cultural scene” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 201). Initially 21 photos were gathered via a ‘Google images’ search for “indie bands” and “indie rock bands.” From that random series, a set of five photos were selected via a random number sequence generated from *random.org* a website which provides online tools for the randomizing of information . One of the original photo selections was omitted due to poor image quality and replaced with the next acceptable photo in the numeric random sequence. The photos were then enlarged, printed and mounted on foam board to create a clean and professional look for the study. During the photo elicitation phase of the interview the subjects were asked to work together to rank the bands from least credible to most credible and come to a consensus as a group – no specific criteria was provided to qualify the concept of credibility; the ensuing dialogue consistently resulted in valuable sequences of ‘naturally-occurring’ talk. Respondents

were then asked to unpack their decisions and elaborate on the motivations behind their choices.

*Methodology: Participant Observation*

The third method of data collection for this project was informal participant observations in the field. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) assert that: “no other method can provide the detailed understanding that comes from directly observing people and listening to what they have to say” (p. 79). Observations were used to document the interactions between interviewees as well as any interactions with other members of their organization, “colleagues” in other bands, or with fans of the band as they happened to occur before, during or after live performances. The function of these informal observations was primarily to augment the interviews, allowing me on several occasions to tailor interview questions to the specific artists and their experiences, as the study progressed.

Additionally, participant observations served, along with interview data and the personal experiences of the researcher as a “complete-participant” (Spradley, 1980, p.61) as a type of triangulation. Silverman (2006) argues citing the work of Denzin and Lincoln: “Triangulation, from this perspective, is not a way of obtaining a ‘true’ reading but ‘is best understood as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry’” (p. 292).

*Methodology: Transcription process*

Transcription of all interview data was conducted by the researcher. Interviews were recorded using two digital voice recorders. Silverman (2006) argues that quality recordings of discourse have the benefit of being “public record,” can be “replayed and transcripts improved” and serve to “preserve sequences of talk” (p. 204).

By comparison, discourse analysis of the data was conducted on a broader level than the micro-level analysis associated with an ethnomethodological approach or conventional

conversation analysis (cf. Jaworski & Coupland, 2008). The variety of discourse analysis utilized here required a minimal, but accurate notation system which initially included nearly all audible utterances and pauses.

For this study, I was not so much interested in how sentence turn structure or specific types of utterances function at a conversational level, but rather how ethos is socially constructed, reproduced and performed through talk, a strategy that has resulted in a detailed discourse analysis process with transcription procedures similar to those described here by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), who argue: “Although the notations used by conversation analysts can be precise and extensive, those used by interpretive scholars tend to be more minimal” (p. 206). This transcription style was dictated by the analytical goals of the research in keeping with Silverman (2006), who contends: “we cannot assume that transcripts which do not record such details as length of pause are necessarily imperfect...Everything depends upon what you are trying to do in the analysis” (p. 236).

In the transcriptions of interview data I employ a limited set of transcription notations based on the work of Jefferson (Atkinson & Heritage, 2008). Specifically, all pauses were carefully estimated and documented in transcription. Brief pauses are noted with single spaced periods “...”; longer pauses are noted with double spaced periods, each representing one second of elapsed time: “. . . .”; and some pauses lasting in excess of five seconds were noted in brackets as follows: e.g., [20 sec]. During analysis it became clear that this raw style of transcription was needed to capture deployed markers of ethos including the frequency and extent of pauses which were often indicative of the difficulty these artists experienced in attempting to articulate the virtues of the group. This strategy further illustrates one of the primary findings of this study discussed in detail below, that group ethos is a tacit constitutive process.

While only a basic transcription notation system was required, accuracy in transcription was of the utmost importance. During the transcription process I remained keenly aware of the potential danger inherent in omitting any valuable data during transcription. Although I am confident in my efforts towards accuracy and reliability, I concede that transcription is not neutral (cf. Fontana & Frey, 2008; Ochs, 2008). As such, I was committed to the initial transcription of all utterances. After the initial transcription process was concluded and analysis conducted, transcribed excerpts were minimally edited to remove those utterances deemed to be repetitive or inconsequential to the meaning of a given interaction. Of this reduction process Schegloff (1982) states: "...some DA researchers may treat particles like 'mm' and 'uh-huh' as 'conversational "detritus" apparently lacking semantic content, and not contributing to the substance of what the discourse ends up having said (p. 74)" (as cited by Silverman, 2006, p. 235). All eventual edits to transcripts were thoughtfully considered while keeping in mind as Silverman (2006) states: "...when people's activities are tape-recorded and transcribed, the reliability of the interpretation of transcripts may be gravely weakened by a failure to transcribe apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps" (p. 287).

#### *Analysis:*

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe analysis of qualitative data as: "the process of labeling and breaking down (or decontextualizing) raw data and reconstituting them into patterns, themes, concepts, and propositions" (p. 210). The discourse analytics for this project consists of three major components: 1) transcription as analysis, 2) an inductive and emergent analysis processes of open coding and constant comparative method informed by Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and 3) theoretically informed analysis emanating from the previously summarized lexicon of concepts from Goffman's (1959) performance theory.

*Analysis: Transcription as Analysis*

The time consuming and detailed process of transcription is, in and of itself, a process of immersion in one's data, which according to Silverman (2005), "often reveal(s) previously unnoted recurring features of the organization of talk" represents the first stage of analysis (p. 184). Because transcription by the researcher provides grounds for a closer examination of the discourse, often revealing "themes, issues or contradictions that may not have been noticed in real time," Lindlof and Taylor (2002) argue that transcription itself "can serve as a portal to the process of data analysis" (p. 205). This was certainly the case for the present study, as the transcription process produced the first round of memos, notes and themes which were then used in the secondary stages of analysis.

*Analysis: Parsing Grounded Theory, emergence and induction.*

The analysis and data collection for this study were guided by a selection of the tenets of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory, a method described by Babbie (2004) as: "An inductive approach to research in which theories are generated solely from an examination of data rather than being derived deductively" (p. 372). Grounded theory is far too often misappropriated to varying degrees in social science research (cf. Suddaby, 2006). As such, I have utilized concepts from grounded theory to conduct emic research grounded in data and sensitive to emergent possibilities. I am not, however, claiming to have conducted a true grounded theory analysis.

As a result of the fully articulated research questions, my status as a 'complete participant' and a modestly exhaustive attempt to discover any relevant literature, this research cannot claim to be proceeding with a "classic" grounded theory analysis without inviting well-founded accusations of "forcing" the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Instead, I have conducted an

interpretive process which is in line with less rigid interpretations of grounded analysis like that of Giles and Mrowicki (2005) where: “Theory is developed from data. It means that no specific coding frame is used to analyze the interview data, thus allowing participants to provide their own organization for their experiences” (p. 2).

By discourse analysis I mean “the systematic analysis of transcribed data” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 265) which “treats all accounts as socially constructed” (Silverman, 2005, p. 121) or “the study of talk (or text) in context, where research reports use excerpts of their analysis as the central means to make scholarly arguments” (Tracy, 2001, pp. 726-727). Van Dijk (1997) further elaborates on discourse analysis as a method to study the socially and contextually situated accounts of speakers:

Indeed, if we want to explain what discourse is all about... We need to account for the fact that discourse as social action is being engaged in within the framework of understanding, communication and interaction which is in turn part of broader sociocultural structures and processes. (p. 21)

As part of this process grounded in data, the transcripts were carefully scrutinized in order to conceptualize categories which then lead to the establishment of codes and themes for the analysis of both interview data and participant observation field notes. During the analysis I utilized an *open coding system* (cf. Glaser, 1992). “Open coding allows the analyst the full range of theoretical sensitivity as it allows him to take chances on trying to generate codes that may fit and work” (Glaser, 2004, 3.6). Additional coding was done using *in vivo* coding or “terms used by the social actors themselves...done at the same time as open coding (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 220).

*Analysis: Heroes & Villains / Thou Shalt's and Thou Shalt Not's*

During the initial analysis, I noticed the deployment of numerous god and devil terms as the interviewees responded to questions regarding artists who serve as models of what to do, and what not to do. In an attempt to develop a basic system for coding, I focused on the narrative elements which I refer to as heroes and villains, or any person or persons to whom a positive or negative assessment was deployed in the discourse which can be viewed as a marker of ethos. Additionally, in the midst of the analysis my continuing literature research provided an added coding scheme inspired by Burke's (1966) observation that the "dramatistic approach puts the primary stress upon such horatory expressions as 'thou shalt, or thou shalt not'" (p. 44); as a result, I began coding for statements that reflected moral judgments on the part of the participants towards actions and ideas rather than specific persons. Lastly, coding was conducted more broadly for *ethos-markers* or symbols indicating the "virtues" valued by the individual or group, types of ethos (e.g. "an ethos of friendship," or "an ethos of musicianship") and any additional *in vivo* themes related to ethos and character. For instance, each member of Big Eyes, The Mazinaw and Ontario were asked to respond to the questions: *What are five words that describe what (for example: Big Eyes) are? And, what are five words that describe what Big Eyes are not?* Complete lists of their responses are catalogued in Appendix 2<sup>2</sup>.

As stated above, one of the primary strategies developed during the analysis process follows from the dramatist approach of Burke (1966), whose claim that "man is the inventor of the negative" holds that humans often define themselves as much in terms of what 'we are not,' as we do 'what we are.' Burke (1966) asserts:

---

<sup>2</sup> The tables provide a complete list of responses. For each respondent's answers, the descriptor is matched to one of the seven primary value domains identified in the analysis section below, which I argue these artists use to perceive and perform their group indie ethos. They are: Persona & Attitude, Live Performance, Songcraft & Artistry, The Relationship, The Business of Music, External Aesthetics, and External Audiences.

We need not now decide whether, in such paired opposites, the positive or the negative member of the pair is to be considered as essentially prior. We can settle for the indubitable fact that all moral terms are of this polar sort. And we can settle merely for the fact that such positives and negatives imply each other. (pp. 11-12)

Bannister (2006) confirms the utility of this analytical proposition for discourses of the indie ethos: “indie’s oppositionality was part of its identity... it was in some ways negatively defined, by avoiding certain styles and connotations” (p. 86). For the value domains identified in the results section below, I have utilized the moral imperatives embodied in the categories of ‘thou shalt’s’ and ‘thou shalt not’s’ to frame and discuss the dominant themes within each value domain.

As I will discuss in the analysis, seven value domains around and within which artists constructed indie ethos were identified. These included Persona & Attitude, Live Performance, Songcraft & Artistry, The Relationship, The Business of Music, External Aesthetics and External Audience. For each of these a corresponding table is presented in Appendix 2 charting a selection of the dominant positive or negative ethos-markers pertaining to persons which I call ‘heroes’ and ‘villains,’ and the dominant positive or negative ethos-markers pertaining to actions which I call ‘thou shalt’s’ and ‘thou shalt not’s.’

Furthermore, throughout the analysis I utilized Glaser and Strauss’ concept of “constant comparative analysis,” meaning that data collection and analysis occur concurrently which is meant to “enable[s] the generation of theory through systematic....coding and analytic procedures (Glaser, 2004, 3.8). Of the constant comparative method, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue: “In this procedure, the analyst examines each item of data coded in terms of a particular category, and notes its similarities or differences to other data that have been similarly

categorized” (p. 213).

*Analysis Methodology: Goffman and the Three Spheres of Ethos.*

While the method of analysis for this project consists of the emergent thematic process described above, analysis is also in part theoretically driven. Two theoretical positions inform this analysis, the aforementioned performance theory of Erving Goffman (1959) and the researcher’s idea that ethos can be viewed as operating on at least three different levels or spheres: 1) an individual level, 2) a small group level, and 3) a grand, cultural or sub-cultural level.

As previously stated, Goffman’s (1959) performance theory offers a rich lexicon of terms and theoretical concepts for the analysis and interpretation of the interview data collected which Lindlof and Taylor (2002) once again call “the rhetoric of socially situated speakers” (p. 172). Of Goffman’s work, Philipsen (1990) states: “Goffman (1959) provided a precedent for studying everyday performances *in situ* and a way to think about performances as constituted by and constitutive of situations” (p. 21).

The second theoretical position informing this study and which provided an initial basis of categories for analysis is the proposition sufficiently demonstrated by the literature review, that there are at minimum three spheres of ethos at work in a given rhetorical situation – the individual, the group and the cultural or sub-cultural levels of ethos. Beginning with Aristotle we have located ethos as an individual act, modern scholars like Halloran (1975) and Patrick (2006) have confirmed the role of a group ethos, and finally, countless scholars have used the term ethos to describe the “virtues” or shared meanings and values of a culture or sub-culture. As noted above, Halloran (1982) contends: “It makes sense to speak of ethos of this or that person, but it makes equally good sense to speak of the ethos of a particular type of person, of a professional

group, or a culture, or an era in history” (p. 62). Although no major findings resulted relating to the three spheres of ethos, it was helpful during the analysis of the following indie discourses to question from which level of ethos, or combination of levels of ethos, a particular performance was being deployed.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### Results and Discussion

#### *Individual vs. Group Ethos: Perception and performance*

Two research questions emerged from the earlier exploration of previous and relevant literature. Those initial questions were designed to guide this investigation in its efforts to better understand the nature of ethos and group ethos: *RQ 1: How do individual music artists perceive and perform their ethos?*; *RQ 2: How do indie music groups work together to perceive and perform their ethos?* During analysis, however, I discovered that at least in the context of the interview data collected here, individual ethos and group ethos cannot be meaningfully separated.

Performances of individual ethos were consistently subsumed by the performances of group ethos. Which is not to say that individual ethos was not present, quite the opposite. It is precisely because group ethos is constituted through the building blocks of conversation and consubstantiality that distinguishing individual from group ethoi becomes so complicated. Exceptions to this finding are limited and most evident in instances of overt ethos-work in which a member of the group's deployment of a specific message threatens the group ethos in some way. Those exceptional instances and the subsequent ethos-work used to negotiate those specific threats are discussed at length below. However, for the purposes of this investigation, and again, only in the context of the discourses generated for these particular case studies, I propose that individual and group ethos are so connected that attempting to look at them separately is a distinction without substantial reward. As a result, I have collapsed the initial questions to reflect the preceding proposition. The results that follow proceed from a single composite research

question:

*RQ 1a: How do the individuals that constitute indie music groups work together to perceive and perform their ethos?*

While I believe the difficulty to effectively separate individual and group ethos represents a significant clue regarding the nature of a unified performance of group ethos, I must concede this pattern was to some degree influenced by the nature of the study. With rare exception, the participants remained in the group frame throughout both the individual and group interviews. This pattern may be in part a result of the request to participate as a group in scientific research or an effect of the group framework inherent in the wording of the interview questions. That said, I do find substantive support to confirm the integration of individual and group ethos found within these indie discourses. The following two excerpts from my interview with Joe (The Mazinaw) suggests the presence of an explanatory and deep symbiosis between creativity, identity and the presence and *use* of an individual and/or group ethos:

- [1] Joe: everybody is using the band identity to. . sort of shape their own identity. So, like you know, in some small part, you know, who you are in the band is you know, who the band is, is you know, one of the things you use to create your. . you know to create yourself. And um. . so that's, I mean. . there's probably a lot of that. And I'm sure it happens on all kinds of different levels.
- [2] Joe: Yeah, it's like I said, you can't help but have your identity be informed by that. And informed by your own creative experience. . And, having had experience with lots of [laughs]...having had experience with lot of like..as a really young person who did that, and now as an older person who does it and who creates stuff and is well aware that, you know, that what I'm creating says a lot to me about

who I am. . It's made it really fun to look at..you know, to watch other people who.. are kind of trying this on for size. You know are trying this life on for size or saying, "You know, I can be a rock star" or "I can be a musician" or whatever. And you . . it gives you x-ray vision as far as like their...or extrasensory perception or something as far as like their intentions and what kind of preconceived notions they brought you know, they brought..they brought with them.

Joe's powerful insights illustrate the depth of interplay between individual and group ethos. Others had similar observations regarding the blending of group and individual identities. For example, Ontario's Stewart remarked: "...everything we do is like a.. Like a collective. And not even three individuals, just like a [girlfriend: "an entity?"] An entity, yes."

#### *The Seven Primary Value Domains*

Through the process described above, a large number of thematic categories emerged and were developed based on the collected data. The array of potential categories were then collapsed into the seven primary value domains of indie ethos which together represent the rubrics used by these artists to reveal and discover consubstantiality or evidence that a potential band mate is "one of us."

The seven value domains used for this analysis stem directly from the *in vivo* categorization scheme presented by Mike of the band Big Eyes during his individual interview when asked to provide 5 words that represented the band's ethos. As the interview process continued it became clear that the elements Mike had identified resonated throughout the set of artists. In the interview Mike proceeded to break down what he considered to be the essential building blocks of any band: 1) "the music" a.k.a. *Songcraft & Artistry*, 2) live "performance," 3)

“persona or attitude,” and 4) “drive/ambition” or *The Business of Music*. I made adjustments to the language, but Mike’s basic system remains here essentially unchanged.

As analysis progressed, it was clear that although Mike’s scheme provided a good start, it was not a complete system. In order to accommodate the additional primary value domains which emerged through subsequent comparative analysis, I expanded the basic scheme to include: a) *The Relationship*, which encompasses those discourses related to the interpersonal relationships and communication of the collective, and b) *External Aesthetics*, meaning discourses related to aesthetic concerns other than those specifically pertaining to songs and music. These discourses include conversations about instruments and music gear, clubs or venues whose clientele and show rosters imply aesthetic concerns for a group ethos and finally, discourses of aesthetic image and clothing. The final addition to the sequence of high-order value domain categories addresses those discourses related to the sub-cultural groups to which these artists belong, i.e., members of the indie community, which includes music critics, the indie community and the record buying public, which includes those members of the indie audience often pejoratively referred to as ‘the kids.’ I refer to these topics as the value domain of c) *External Audience*.

#### *Persona & Attitude*

The value domain of Persona & Attitude once again, stems directly from Mike’s (Big Eyes) categorical scheme. Specifically, Mike described the Persona & Attitude of Big Eyes as similar to the “rebellious spirit of The Replacements.” Because meta-themes similar to Mike’s description of “rebellious spirit” emerged which address group character more broadly, a value domain was required to encompass ethos-markers indicative of overriding attitudes that defy the more specific categorization scheme that follows. In the resulting value domain of Persona &

Attitude I coded for instances when respondents negotiated virtues related to topics of general personality and demeanor or to broader level concerns of authenticity. These themes are not related so much to any one topic, but meant to be more all-purpose and include language style, general perceptions of the “spirit” of a group as either “real” or “contrived,” and discourses related to the perception of a group’s strangeness or distinctiveness. The persona and attitude of each band are certainly made even more evident throughout the subsequent six value domains; however, this category is designed to accommodate the meta-narratives regarding overarching perceptions of collective persona and general attitudes deployed in the performance of group ethos.

#### *Live Performance*

Discourses regarding Live Performance were plentiful. For this category I coded for statements in which the artists negotiated topical concerns related to the presentation of the band while on stage in the live setting. Topics of interest here included concern for the quality and control of live sounds and the audience’s ability to experience the music as the artists intend, salient differences in approach to the band’s songs in the live vs. studio settings, the energy level and style of presentation of stage performance, and the passive or active engagement of the band members during live performance.

#### *Songcraft & Artistry*

The value domain of Songcraft & Artistry is distinguished for its concern of the music itself. Statements coded in this value domain regard the moral imperatives espoused for the act of songwriting, the variety of collective and individual influences that impact that process, as well as overall creative achievement in songcraft and studio recording and musical aptitude. As musical influences and intentions are expressed through songwriting styles these artists use

discourses regarding Songcraft & Artistry to negotiate not only what influences are consubstantial, but what influences are openly approved or disapproved. Likewise, musical style is a critical negotiation as it dictates what genre categories public audiences will associate with each act.

### *The Relationship*

In coding for the value domain of The Relationship, I attempted to identify the virtues of these artists pertaining to their interpersonal relationships including how they see themselves in relation to the other members, what terms are deployed to describe that relationship and how each group describes their attempts to negotiate difference and conflict. Beyond the consubstantiality of ethos that must occur at the point of formation, the making of a ‘musical We’ requires a commitment to communicate with one another, and to work and stay together.

### *The Business of Music*

The diverse moral imperatives regarding the relationship between art and commerce are the subject of the discourses in the value domain of The Business of Music. Here I attempted to account for explicit deployment of professional concerns for these artists. This highly contested area of topics includes what standards these artists use to guide their business practices, the wide range of professional goals and ambitions, the parameters each group uses to include or exclude external parties from their organizations and whether the group sees their band as a business or job at all.

### *External Aesthetics*

The value domain of External Aesthetics refers to those discourses related to image. For this category of manifested virtues I coded for statements of moral imperative pertaining to clothing, grooming, types and brands of instruments and musical gear, and types of venues for

live performances. This category houses all manner of concerns related to external cues or markers of ethos evident through discourses of choice that fall outside purely musical aesthetics.

### *External Audiences*

Coding for the value domain of External Audiences accounted for statements that indicate the artists' virtues regarding audiences outside of the group itself or, as Halloran (1982) states, the groups "to and for whom they speak." Here I coded for attempts to situate the group within the local, region or national indie scene, the deployment of opinions regarding indie and the indie community, as well as trends within the discourses and behaviors of those communities that the artists regard as significant.

### *Persona & Attitude*

"In our own Anglo-American culture there seems to be two common-sense models according to which we formulate our conceptions of behavior: the real, sincere, or honest performance; and the false one that thorough fabricators assemble for us, whether meant to be taken unseriously, as in the work of stage actors, or seriously, as in the work of confidence men. We tend to see real performances as something not purposely put together at all, being an unintentional product of the individual's unself-conscious response to the facts in his situation. And contrived performances we tend to see as something painstakingly pasted together, one false item on another, since there is no reality to which the items of behavior could be a direct response"

- Erving Goffman, 1959, p. 70

Discourses related to the value domain of Persona & Attitude revolve around each group's overall "spirit" or approach to the presentation of the collective self and their general shared dispositions towards the host of issues and concerns that face working indie artists. In the category of *Persona & Attitude* we find four dominant themes: 1) The tendency amongst these artists to 'talk indie' through constant and overt deployment of expletives; 2) Evidence of concern for the *virtue* of authenticity "manifested" through the persistent deployment of words like "organic," "natural," "actual" and "real" in opposition to ethos-markers that are "contrived," "fake," "manufactured" and "homogenized;" 3) The rejection of popular trends in favor of the

path less traveled; and 4) The perception of uniqueness or “weirdness” that separates each group of artists from other acts.

*Swear you’re indie*

At the conversational level the virtues of indie are manifested in the communication style used by the artists sampled. Indie music groups are a type of professional organization, but the style of communication evident here is distinctly antithetical to traditional professional language decorum. Expletives are frequently and variously deployed by these artists as a linguistic strategy which signifies their opposition to traditional mainstream virtues. With rare exceptions the extracts used to illustrate the dominant themes across these seven value domains show how these artists adhere to the oppositional language of rock n’ roll. The fact that these artists understood they were participating in academic research and chose to articulate themselves this way is a clear indication of the utility of cursing as an ethos-marker for authentic indie speak.<sup>3</sup>

*Thou Shalt: Be a “real band”*

A prominent theme in the discourses of *Persona & Attitude* was the necessity to be perceived as a “real” or “actual;” to be “from somewhere” as opposed to being produced in a metaphorical “factory” of new bands. In this passage, Paul of The Mazinaw articulates a clear distinction between “real” bands and those whose failure to perform an ethos of authenticity can be spotted with little effort. Note also Paul’s performance of the central tenet of indie ethos to control your art by writing your own songs:

Paul: ... So, it just seems a lot more homogenized. . now it’s like in L.A. there’s just a factory where these bands get cranked out. And . . none of them sound very good and no one writes songs anymore. . it’s more about like. . . how the t-shirt looks

---

<sup>3</sup> This observation also stands as disclaimer to all readers regarding the style of language they will encounter while reading the excerpts of data presented in this analysis.

and what the guy screams through. And it's just not... it's just a homogenized sound and like everything is. . .And you. . like if a record comes out today and it's by a real band, you can tell. Like you can tell by looking at a picture of them and listening to the first three songs. Like, these guys are from somewhere. Like I saw that dude from Swervedriver play last night at [A local club] and from the first song in the set I could tell this guy was fucking from somewhere. His songs were good and it sounded good, they were older. And.... There's just not a lot of that left. There's all kinds of new bands, it's too hard to keep up with. I just don't buy anyone's... I don't buy it. . .from anybody, you know. They all sound just like shit. No one's got any game anymore, you know.

Perhaps no comment more perfectly captures the dichotomy between a real and contrived band than this extract from Stewart (Ontario) who lays out a three tiered system illuminating the degrees of authenticity in today's music:

Stew: If you take the category of real bands. Real bands that suck real bad. And then like rip-off bands. Like, even the real bands that suck real bad are still interesting to me, because they're still..like...it's like...[audible sigh] You know, like I've never even heard that. Like when we first moved to [this town] we went and saw [Boo and Boo Too & Baby Birds Don't Drink Milk] and stuff and like I hate both those bands, but...like I've never heard that before, you know what I mean, I don't necessarily ... Especially being classically trained I don't really get off on watching people bash stuff and freak out for twenty minutes and then that's it, but . . they don't sound like Death Cab or you know Blink 182. Like, I'd much rather go watch [them] then watch like an 18 year old you know, Blink 182 band that's

trying to start up, like I'd much rather watch something that I haven't seen or that's interesting and new than a copy written like, you know, thing.

*Thou Shalt Not: Be the "flavor of the moment."*

Although certain elements of the indie ethos may have shifted in recent years, any move perceived by an indie audience as a deliberate attempt to "fit the scheme" or conform to the "flavor of the moment" remains a tenet which cannot be violated. This type of infraction represents a potentially massive hit to any indie artist's credibility. Artists who chase trends, whether musically or professionally, were over and over again lambasted for their attitudes of inauthenticity. In the subsequent excerpts from The Mazinaw's group interview the members discuss the danger inherent in attempting to hitch your horse to any particular bandwagon:

[1] Joe: We'll never chase the trend of the moment.

Mick: yeah

Top: yeah

Joe: Whatever the trend of the moment is like, we're never going to get both arms around that and hold on for dear life.

Top: Frosted tips.

Joe: But that's just out of self interest, because the minute you do that you suck. Like, you're never coming back from it, you know. But ah.. the stuff that other bands do that we would never do.

[2] Paul: yeah, so there's lots of like..

Top: Flavor of the moment.

Paul: there's lots of like these stupid flavor of the moment things that we don't participate in. we're like a good tattoo you know. The classics never die. You

know? Like, You walk into the bar and we're playing and it's a good time.

Mick: We are the mom tattoo.

Paul: We didn't used to wear plaid in the 80s or anything.

It is apparent in the data that artists who violate an ethos of authenticity make it harder on everyone else because it gets harder and harder to tell who is or isn't the "real" thing. As Goffman (1959) notes "a collegial renegade is a kind of traitor or turncoat" (p. 160). A shared strain of thought for The Mazinaw and Ontario pertains to the issue of artists who impersonate other artists as a way to steal audiences and eschew responsibility to the indie virtues of originality and organic naturalism. Topper (The Mazinaw) details in the following extract the ethos crushing in-runs made by those who take the 'easy road' by opting to follow a well-worn pattern instead of forging their own path:

Top: It's just weird. I think the problem is...I think the problem is that we don't . . . know how to market ourselves, you know? It's kind of weird. I don't understand how this shit works. We just try to be like, creative and then it seems like the bands who have more of a gimmick end up..you know, with the easy sell, like: "Oh, you play '77 style punk rock, well that means you follow exactly these rules. And you DO NOT compromise following these rules. And EVERYONE who likes '77 style punk rock likes your band. [me: laughs] "oh!, OK?" Like, "oh, no if you're going to be a reggae band, you have to be either this kind, this kind or this kind of reggae band. And as long as you follow those rules and you DO NOT compromise, everyone else who's into that . . . is into you. And it's true! If you do that...it fucking works. . .like, scary... But every now and then a band slips through the cracks and it gives us hope.

Ontario's Stewart makes a remarkably similar argument as he rails on the popular indie act Owl City in this extract for nearly identical reasons:

Stew: Now, the Owl City dude literally, dude sounds.. Literally talks, he's like: "Hey, like this is Jeremiah, I'm from Owl City" [In a low pitched guttural tone] And then he get's up there and he sings like a 15 year old Ben Gibbard. Like he sings. He sounds beautiful. He sings just like Ben Gibbard, but he like exaggerates... He's trying to sound like somebody who has made it. And he's also just taking... People are like taking avenues.. Like, we, we talk a lot about how like, we formed a band because we wanted to write our own music. Not like we all three liked [a prog rock band] so we started a Prog Rock band. Like, we've got all these people who are becoming famous because . . . "These three bands that I am ripping off are all famous, so now I'm famous because I have all of their fans like immediately." And that's fucking crazy to me. Like that shit is insane. Because... Yeah, like Owl City, that is literally one dude and a laptop. That's how he got famous. He has no band.

*Thou Shalt: Be "weird."*

In their efforts to cast themselves as groups that do not "fit the mold" at least one member of each band expressed the feeling that their band was unusual or "weird." The belief that something about your band sets you apart from the experience of everyone else tracks with the normal feelings of anyone who imagines that *they* and *they alone* know how different they feel from everyone else on the planet. In terms of the value domain of Persona & Attitude this self-perception of strangeness and singularity plays out in a number of statements. In the following two passages The Mazinaw offers a unified performance of their group ethos of distinctiveness

through comments in response to the question: *What is your band's DNA?:*

[1] Joe: yeah, not to keep going back to where we were before, but like, we know we're weird... I know we're weird because you can smell it on other bands. Like even bands that make a fuck-pile more money than us, or that are a fuck-pile more successful, or however it is you want to measure it. Like, other bands... you can smell them when they're comparing themselves to us. Like when we're on tour with them. And usually there's areas in which they are patently fucking envious. And usually... Then the other thing you can smell on them is when their relationships aren't so awesome. And like, that's usually what they zero in on is like "man, you guys get along so well" and it's like yeah, uh-huh.

Mick: yeah

Joe: ah-huh [snotty kind of rubbing it in tone]

Paul: And when the local road crew, the road crew for the headliner gets pissed at us because we have a great show [Joe: yeah] and they're pissed off because their headliner has to go on [Topper laughs]. And like we didn't, phone it in enough.

[2] Joe: ... "when you throw us into like a scrum of bands or whatever we...

Top: we stick out

Joe: we stick the fuck out.

Top: We're like the cycloptic bearded lady with the lobster claw. [Joe: yeah (laughing)]We do not blend in.

Paul: But most people want a piece. Like we're a band's band.

Within the value domain of Persona & Attitude all three acts shared the ethos-marker of

authentic indie talk through the frequent use of expletives. They also shared a tendency to qualify some artists, including themselves, as “real” or “actual” in contrast to artists who lack authenticity or substance. Ethos-markers of contrivance and lack of history or depth were unanimously eschewed, while ideas like “real bands” and being a “band’s band” were heralded as virtuous. Similarly, all three bands explicitly rejected the notion of chasing popular trends as a path to success. While each band expressed the idea differently, they articulated the various ways in which they stand outside the norm and “don’t fit the mold.”

### *Live Performance*

“As countless variations on the soul of music and the music of the soul bear witness, music is bound up with ‘interiority’ of the ‘deepest’ sort and all concerts are sacred”  
 - Pierre Bourdieu, 1984, p. 19

For fans of music of all kinds, and most certainly indie fans, the live setting represents an intimate and personal interaction with the music and artists you love. In the context of live performance, there is no veil between the artists and their fans; no webpage, album cover or magazine intermediates the direct communication of the “musical We” to those audience members who have come to witness the show. A common concern for the discourses of live performance was prominent in the data collected in all three case studies. Across my conversations with these three indie acts, perspectives on live performance were numerous and varied, indicating their importance and featured position in the formation and reproduction an indie group ethos. Three dominant themes emerged in the value domain of Live Performance: 1) The virtue of putting on an entertaining and exciting “show” in opposition to the live performances perceived to be pretentious, disaffected or passive; 2) The moral imperative for each member of the group to perform with feeling and honesty; and 3) The need for control and quality of sound in the live setting.

*Thou shalt: Put on “a show.”*

One recurring ethos-marker related to Live Performance is the need to put on shows that give audiences their money’s worth. Of particular concern for Big Eyes and The Mazinaw were putting on “shows” with great energy, charisma and excitement in contrast to a purely musical experience that allows audience members the option of passive engagement. In this extract, Big Eyes addresses the tensions and duality of songwriting in the studio setting versus performing those songs live, i.e., putting on a “show” complete with the entertainment value befitting the tradition of arena rock.

Ken: There’s this element of us.. we have kind of a dichotomy where there’s this element of us, where we’re like let’s write music that our.. write music that maybe our influences would enjoy listening to. That’s a like a fucking goal. But, when you get on stage you’re like, fuck it..

Mike: Let’s rock

Ken: I want to be like when I looked up, as a kid to like Nugent or whoever the fuck it was.

In this excerpt, Mick (The Mazinaw) challenges the type of bare bones live shows valued by many in the old guard of indie. Not only does he reject the notion that indie can’t be energetic, but like Big Eyes above, invokes the influence of glam rock and metal as an acceptable model for live performance.

Mick: “you know like with indie and like all like the shit that came in like, say like grunge and all that stuff you know, took a lot. . I mean great stuff’s been done within those realms of music, but it also took a lot of fun out of it I think. I mean, you know.. I want to go to a show and I want to be fucking entertained. I want to

fucking.. I wanna see some shit. I want Queen, you know?. I want, you know... I want Motley Crue. You know, I want fire balls and shit like that so,.. you go, you're going and happening into a club or playing a bill where it's you know like: "Oh, what's this band like?" and then they're just basically, they've got the diggery-do out or whatever, and they're like singing some Juno-esque soundtrack shit, really doesn't pump my nads at all.

The Mazinaw's Joe affirms the group's commitment to a stage presentation that is active rather than passive; and even implies a competition across indie acts to bring the most energy and passion to the live setting. Additionally, this statement clearly exhibits The Mazinaw's emphasis on music as only one part of the bigger picture and as an element skewed towards the context of Live Performance rather than Songcraft/Artistry:

Joe: ...this band would not exist were it not for cock swinging live performances.

Like, that's about the only reason to make an album is to justify the next year and a half of strutting and cock swinging [Mick chuckles].. I mean.. am I wrong?

Mick: no, not at all

Top: well, yeah that's.. [Topper agrees, but his tone communicates a reluctance to qualify Joe's statement as 100% of the justification for the band]

Joe: There is no greater joy than knowing that you just stomped all over your headliners throat. Like, you know.. no great[er] joy.

While in varying degrees, and notably far less for Ontario, this trend towards entertainment value through dramatic and active live shows was discovered in the discourse of all three acts. This pattern suggests an important shift may have occurred to the indie ethos in terms of live performance aesthetics since the time of Kruse (2003) and Fonarow's (2006)

studies.

*Thou shalt not: "Phone it in."*

Another common sentiment expressed across all three groups was the belief that the quality of live performance was related to an earnest commitment to leave it all on the floor. In response to the question: *What is your band's code of honor?* Big Eyes's Mike quipped:

"Melody before all else and... song writing. And then everybody play it like you mean it."

Similarly, The Mazinaw returned repeatedly to this theme, defiantly identifying "phoning it in" as nothing short of a cardinal sin for all aspects of their band's process:

Joe: Yeah, I mean we function best when everybody is like thrown in. You know and... what else would be like in a code of honor? Fucking.. never ever phone it in.

Mick: yeah

Joe: Like, we just... it's like there's no more despicable act than fucking phoning it in.

Top: Yeah, it's like a shark man. If we stop swimming we die. [quiet laughs]

Paul: Hard work, good music.

Top: You gotta keep trying. When we stop trying shit stops happening.

Joe: yeah

Top: You know, keep trying.

*Thou shalt: Strive to "sound good" live.*

One final area of interest under the category of Live Performance is the desire to present a superior auditory experience; or live shows that "sound good." Here Andy and Gordon of Ontario discuss live sound quality in the context of their efforts to surround themselves with

people who have the same level of “passion” for their music and who can be “trusted” to assist them in executing live shows that demonstrate their commitment to dynamic sound as an extension of the studio and songwriting process:

Andy: He’s another person that we can rely on, because he’s equally passionate about our band and our ambition. What we’re trying to accomplish in a live setting. We want to sound as good as we can. We go to great lengths in our arrangements to make everything sound as good on our end and all we need is somebody to like project that in the front of the house you know, for us.

Gord: yeah.

Andy: Without having to you know, worry about it.

During participant observations, I was struck each time at how closely the group ethos markers deployed in the live setting resembled the group ethos revealed at the conversational level. The dominant ethos markers of the individual bands were clearly evident as they used their group ethos in discourses of live interactions, e.g., stage banter, costuming, stage presentation, etc. Big Eyes deployed its commitment to melodies and “the show” through prominent dual vocal performances and in your face arena rock performance moves. Likewise, they displayed their lack of concern for The Business of Music by ignoring any obvious concern for aesthetics or rehearsed stage banter, in spite of an atypical context at an extraordinarily high exposure gig opening for a major national act.

The Mazinaw were the epitome of a ‘hard working’ band on stage. In a forty plus minute performance there wasn’t moment where any member of the group relented from a “work ethic” of high energy, visceral performance. It stands as punctuation that their live performance was representative despite the illness of their lead singer and an uncommonly low turnout at a

less than premiere venue.

In keeping with the theme, Ontario's insistence on an emotional and highly artistic performance befitting their adventurous musical spirit resulted in technical difficulties at the first of two shows in contrast to the sonic fireworks of the second. Ontario also deployed the markers of their group ethos of smart and savvy music business with a progressive merchandising operation and in tasteful, but unabashed self-promotion in on-stage banter.

In all three cases, the bands deployed a rejection of an ethos of pretentiousness through gracious on stage 'thank you's' to the clubs and acts that shared the bills, as well as a willingness to chat exhaustively with fans and friends before and after the shows.

In contrast to the Persona and Attitude domain, in which the three bands agreed, there are points of both agreement and disagreement within the value domain of Live Performance which shows similarity and difference across the three bands, with each act defining differently what moral imperatives dictate an appropriate live "show." Big Eyes and The Mazinaw are consonantly committed to live performances that recall the big production shows of acts like KISS and Queen with the unifying caveat that everyone "play it like you mean it" and that no one may "phone in" their performance. Ontario on the other hand are equally concerned with the live show, but employ entirely different criteria. Ontario's live performances are nuanced and carefully produced with the inclusion of pre-recordings and sound technicians whose job it is to assist them in realizing their vision of dynamic live sound. For Big Eyes and The Mazinaw the live setting is an entirely different beast from the studio setting. As such, songs are performed *based* on studio versions, but tend to be more aggressive and up tempo as a result of the preference for action and excitement. In contrast, Ontario views the live setting as a direct extension of the studio and songwriting process. For Ontario the best live performance is one that

fully captures and expands upon the creative achievements evident in recordings in a different context.

*Song Craft & Artistry*

“It is evident, however, that melodies themselves contain representations of the components of character”

- Aristotle, *Politics*, 1340a38

“Rhythm alone, without harmony, is the means in the dancer’s imitations; for even he, by the rhythms of his attitudes, may represent men’s characters, as well as what they do and suffer”

- Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447a25

To be a songwriter is first and foremost to be a fan of music. In order to make music you must be a “music lover” (Ken, *Big Eyes*). Indie’s discerning morality qualifies indie music fans as experts, not just of *who* or *what* is indie, but also of what they deem to be good and bad, including what musical influences constitute a form of positive cultural capital in contrast to those that stand too far outside accepted norms. Simon Frith (1988) speaks to the depth and breadth of the “music lover” tradition and what it means to be discerning music fan:

Rock n’roll was from the start, then, constituted not simply as music, but also as knowledge. To be a rock fan is not just to like something, but also to know something, to share a secret with one’s fellow fans, to take for granted the ignorance of non-fans... In a world in which everyone is an expert – everyone knows what makes their music significant, other people’s music vacuous – self-proclaimed expertise is despised. Rock critics despise rock academics, rock musicians despise critics, rock fans despise each other. (pp. 4-5)

The value domain of Songcraft & Artistry includes all concerns for the creation of music and song as well as the stalwart indie value to write and craft your own songs. In this domain, four primary themes emerged including: 1) The conflicting need for a shared or diverse set of

musical influences; 2) The virtue of artistic ambition and drive to make your mark; 3) The moral imperative of quality and skillful achievement in the studio setting; and 4) The possession of just the right amount of musical aptitude, as too little skill and too much skill both present problems.

*Thou Shalt: Have a “shared musical worldview.”*

“nothing more clearly affirms one’s ‘class,’ nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music. This is of course because, by virtue of the rarity of the conditions for acquiring the corresponding dispositions, there is no more ‘classifactory’ practice than concert-going or playing a ‘noble’ instrument...But it is also because the flaunting of ‘musical culture’ is not a cultural display like others: as regards its social definition, ‘musical culture’ is something other than a quantity of knowledge and experiences combined with the capacity to talk about them. Music is the most ‘spiritual’ of the arts of the spirit and a love of music is a guarantee of ‘spirituality’”

- Pierre Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 18-19

When it comes to ethos markers in music oriented discourses it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of musical influences. Across my conversations with these three bands two prominent and converse perspectives were deployed: one a preference for commonality, the other for difference. In the following two excerpts Big Eyes rallies around Mike’s insistence on the importance of shared influences:

[1] Mike: it’s like we already have this shared collective kind of mind about music so, that when we get together, we’re, we’re past 90% of.. the bullshit that bands who don’t know each other very well, or don’t know [Jon: “yeah, exactly”] each other’s musical tastes are already...we don’t even need to have those discussions, that’s like move on, we’ve already had them. We may not have been in bands together, but we’ve already had them.

Jon: That’s like over half the battle right there.

[2]: Mike: um..for me it’s, it’s um...anybody that I play in a band with has, has to have the same.... worldview, about ‘the world’ of music. You know what I mean...like

friendship is extremely important and obviously getting along with people in all the weird situations that you get put in when your put in a band is very important. But if [they] had alarmingly different opinions on music from me then I wouldn't be playing with them.

Jon: exactly

Mike: ..and I won't ever...play in a band seriously, because that's what I like to do... with anybody that doesn't have, ah.. similar tastes and ideas about what gets them off about music. If it wasn't for.. all of the, the shared ideas about music that we have, then I don't think that the band would work. And, it probably...

Jon: it would be just too much work.

The Mazinaw and Ontario openly espouse an alternate path of diverse rather than similar influences, which on the surface appears to be an incompatible position, but upon closer inspection is revealed to share more with Big Eyes' perspective than it does not. Both The Mazinaw and Ontario overtly celebrate respecting "differences" and diversity in musical tastes, but simultaneously affirm the utility of consubstantiality and the importance of influences to the process of performing a group ethos. In this excerpt, The Mazinaw deploys a mix of messages that both reifies the importance of musical influence to group cohesion and The Relationship, but also reflects an apparently shared value of plurality, evident in what Paul calls "your right as a human" to like what you like:

Paul: I think that we all have very different opinions on our favorite..

Joe: On music?

Paul: ..on music, our favorite music. On what's cool and what's not. It's your right as a human.

Top: I think that we agree on.. A FUCKING LOT. I think that we're on the same page about most things. We'll have debates about shit sometimes one person will like something that the other person likes or whatever, but it's not a big deal. But, it's a completely different situation and it causes a completely different chemistry within a group when you have .. Like, we've been out plenty of times and seen that like hired gun dude, whether he's a member of the crew touring with the band, or a member of the band who's just been hired to like "play guitar on this tour." In most of those cases it's like "oh, you're playing in this, in this metal band like, yeah this is retarded I'm a country guy I'm not a metal head" or "All I listen to is Hip Hop, and I'm playing fucking country music all night"

Paul: yeah

Top: .. or whatever, I mean it's a paycheck, but the dudes fucking hate each other and they can't hangout and have a good time together.

Mick: yeah

Similarly, during their group interview each member of Ontario espoused the importance of influences, but deviated overtly from the perspective that 'commonality is a necessity' which was posited with equal clarity by Big Eyes. In the following three passages the individual members of Ontario argue firmly for the value of "difference":

[1] Stew: Yeah, kind of like what Gordon said. . . We do all share some, at least on the musical side of it. It's really easy for me to just take all these questions and run with it musically, so that's what I'm going to do. . But, um. . like, we all obviously like a lot of the same bands, like everybody in this room probably loves Radiohead. You know, certain things like that. But, I think it's the differences,

that, that really kind of help us shape some of our stuff.

- [2] Gord: I totally agree that it's like.. Sort of the diff... I think that in some of my past bands I was always looking to play with people that were in the same mind set as me, because I felt like you know, you'd get a sort of more of a well oiled machine I guess if you were all of the same mind set. And I think, looking back on that now that was, was sort of stupid in that... Not that I.. if I already think about it this way why do I? Do I just need people to affirm what I'm believing, you know? Like that doesn't really make sense. It has made a huge to difference to play with people that think differently than me..

- [3] Andy: I think the biggest musical influence that permeates the band is the fact. . that we've gone to great lengths to avoid inhibiting ourselves, or putting perimeters around like what we're supposed to sound like.

While both The Mazinaw and Ontario explicitly state their preference for a diversity of influences, it is significant that musical taste is the one area where both of those bands actively perform explicit ethos-work. In the course of the group interview process Mick (The Mazinaw) and Stewart (Ontario) each articulated influences that were treated as potential threats to the group ethos. I will explore in depth both of these specific conflicts in ethos momentarily, but in the meantime, take note of the fact that Topper in the following remarks regarding the value of diverse musical influences, curiously neglects to mention Mick's influences:

- Top: Um, musically . . you know, what we listen to and what we're influenced, who we're influenced by . .um, definitely shapes the way we play together and the way that we function as a musical . . entity. Ah, Paul listens to.. lots of reggae and rap and. .um, I'm a sucker for reggae and ska and soul music and pop music. Joe is

like wild about pop music. We all just kind of end up bringing shit, bringing in different little weird influences. And, and most of the time we all like each other's shit, we just.. listen, we individually listen to one thing more than the other person does, but ah. The way that it works together is, is kind of cool.

*Thou Shalt: Be "aggressive artists."*

Another moral imperative related to Songcraft & Artistry deployed by Big Eyes and Ontario was a commitment to artistic ambition in songwriting. Jon of Big Eyes described the band as "relentless" and "talented" regarding their efforts to craft songs rife with "hooks" and befitting of Mike's previously invoked motto: "Melody before all else and... song writing. And then everybody play it like you mean it." In the following passage Stewart of Ontario implicates Gordon's songwriting abilities as a motive for his joining the group:

Stew: I was already in a band with Gordon and ah.. I've been in several.. I've been in music in other various bands and other various capacities of music and just his songwriting ability was.. just above and beyond anything I'd ever seen. Because I don't really care about lyrics that much, but like... When I start[ed] playing with Gordon and I kind of understood that that's where like he kind of prides himself, as among other things you know... lyrics are something very important to him. And so like, I started to listen to lyrics more and more and I realized how bad most other bands were at lyrics. And so that was a big thing, as well as just his..kind of..His ideas and also just his willingness to say you know: "Fuck the norm" or whatever..."

Ontario returned time and time again to statements about general artistic drive. Stewart used the phrases "aggressive artists" and "landscape pioneers" to describe Ontario's collective

will towards creative accomplishment. The following statement from Gordon exemplifies Ontario's lofty artistic goals:

Gord: On the art side of things like I... I ah, I mean I ah... I really ... This is really funny to say out loud, but I really at some point want to make like the best album ever [laughs]. Like, just in general.. Like I really want to do that. So, I mean that's pretty ambitious to have that as a goal, you know? I don't think I'll feel like a failure if I never top Abbey Road, but..but, dammit I'll try, you know what I mean?

*Thou Shalt Not: make mediocre recordings.*

The components of artistic ambition include the artistry of studio recording. The dichotomy of studio versus live represents a common trope amongst music artists of all genres. While The Mazinaw displayed little overt concern for studio accomplishments, Big Eyes and Ontario openly acknowledged the virtue of well made recordings and creativity in the studio. In this extract Gordon (Ontario) bemoans the availability of home recording software which has led to a trend of diminished quality in the recordings of indie artists:

Gord: There's a huge amount of... ah, like just... ah..[sighs] really like just mediocre recordings. Like a ton of bands with just like.. mediocre recordings that.. because it's really affordable to record yourself. And I think a lot of people... I personally am a firm believer in... in like ah, an engineer or producer, but just like an objective set of ears that isn't so wrapped up in the song, that can help shape it a little bit, you know what I mean? And I think that that's missing a lot. And, in, in the whole like MySpace, everybody just records a song in their bedroom and throws it up on MySpace. And it's.. ah, it's just really easy to dismiss bands

now..because you don't ever get to the point where you just see this really cool live thing. Where you actually get to hear what the songs sound like you know.

*Thou Shalt Not: be a "hack."*

One final topic of discourses related to artistry common across all three bands were references to musical aptitude as an ethos-marker of credibility. There has always been a tenuous distinction between the minimal musical skills often required to perform certain types of rock n' roll, punk or indie music, and a desirable degree of aptitude which does not lean too far in the direction of overly trained and technical musicians. Bourdieu's reference to music as a form of 'spirituality' is well embodied in this dilemma. Classically trained musicians may be technically superior, but artists often fear a loss of 'the soul' of their music to technical proficiency and notes on a page. I certainly struggled with this particular tension, openly admonishing virtuosity in exemplars like Steve Vai or John Mayer to project and protect my indie ethos, while secretly coveting their skill set and knowledge base.

While many indie musicians have received some training they are often, like myself, primarily self-taught, eschewing technical proficiency in favor of feel and what Mike (Big Eyes) calls musical "honesty." This particular line in the sand is well represented by Ken's (Big Eyes) argument 'we are not "musicians,"' in response to the question: *What are five words that describe what you are not?* Ken's use of "musicians" as a pejorative refers to a specific type of musician i.e., mechanical virtuosos who value technique over substance.

Ken's band mate Dave also grappled openly with concerns of musical aptitude. The following passage further demonstrates the tension between artistic credibility and musical skill:

Dave: I mean I'm better now because I've gone down the path I wanted to go down and I'm more in tune with music and my instrument and what I DO. But, when you

get right down to it, the kid that was 21, 22 going to college.. that guy has more credit than I have because he at least .. practiced, you know four hours a day.. read music, knew all of these different jazz standards and stuff like that. So, I guess tell you the truth, I just kind of just became a rock and roll dude. It's kind of weird, you know, if I kind of rewind I don't think that that guy is any better than I am, but he's more credible than I am. He can do more than this guy now.. and that's weird.

Curiously, at least one member of each band mentioned the ethos-marker of playing ability as a salient character trait. Showing that while too much skill and training threatens the indie ethos, too little is also a problem. In the following quotations Joe of The Mazinaw and Andy of Ontario express their fear of falling behind their in-group peers in terms of musical ability:

[1] Joe: But, what did fuck me up was.. I was like "Fuck, I'm not musician enough for this." You know, I felt like we were.. I felt like I was being given this huge opportunity and that I wasn't good enough for it, and that I hadn't earned it..yet. Or that at least my.. you know, my talents weren't..weren't there yet or that I was not prepped out enough. And so, I went through this period of like um. .you just like 5 different kinds of music lessons at once, just because I was like: "I have got to get caught up with...at least just some kind of basic level of understanding about you know.. about you know technique and theory and whatever." And so I was doing that, a lot of that.. And that was my little freak out, you know. It was like: "I'm not as good as anybody else that's signed to the same label that we just signed to." Like: "They're all like, splendid musicians and I'm a fucking hack."

[2] Andy: Stewart is a fantastic musician. Gordon is growing to be with one of the best musicians I've ever played with and I get really... And I mean that because..[a little ssh laugh] I get really anxious. I get really anxious about it because I'm just really. I love playing music, um I don't practice my instruments nearly as much of either of these two do. Like, I'm just not as into it, I've always been a songwriter. So, my biggest fear is that, you know, like one day like. . you know I'm going to be just sitting there just like doing my little bass run, just doing my little funky like stupid shit that I do and Stewart's going to be like: "Dude, ah.. you know, we picked up so and so, like..."

Across the value domain of Songcraft & Artistry we see some difference in perspective occurring in the debate over the "shared musical worldview" a moral absolute for Big Eyes, and the diverse and potentially conflicting musical influences valued by The Mazinaw and Ontario. While The Mazinaw most certainly value songcraft, they do not place the same degree of emphasis on songwriting as a process, or achievement in the recording studio, as do Big Eyes or Ontario. All three acts do, however, perform and share an affinity for the fundamental tenet of indie ethos which makes control over your art through the creation and craft of songwriting a moral imperative of the highest order.

### *The Relationship*

"It is apparent that individuals who are members of the same team will find themselves, by virtue of this fact, in an important relationship to one another"

– Erving Goffman, 1959, pp. 82

"So powerful is the desire to make music with others that one is tempted to conceive of music-making as an emergent, radical engagement with consciousness; an engagement which can 'rattle' the hegemony of everyday life and open up the possibility of a common ground where differences might, meet, mingle and engage one another. Indeed, it is possible for one to speculate as to the formation of distinct musical identities located within the nexus of activities involved in the making of music and community – in the

making of a musical ‘We’”

- Hudak, 1999, p. 447

“For the many, who are not as individuals excellent men, nevertheless can, when they have come together, be better than the few best people, not individually but collectively, just as feasts to which many contribute are better than feasts provided at one person’s expense. For being many, each of them can have some part of virtue and practical wisdom, and when they come together, the multitude is just like a single human being, with many feet, hands, and senses, and so too for their character traits and wisdom”

- Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1281a41-1281b6

The formation of a “musical We” as Hudak (1999) calls it above, involve far more than purely musical concerns. I have argued many times to laymen that the only common relationship that stands as an acceptable analogy to the band relationship is a marriage. Being in a band requires a profound investment of emotion, creativity and self, thus it also demands a willingness to sacrifice and compromise. It is not hard to understand artists who choose to side step these tensions and opt instead for solitude over collaboration. Vincent Van Gogh never asked a colleague to step in and paint a tree. Artists are by nature singular beings. The choice to collaborate with other artists comes with many risks and benefits. The value domain of The Relationship for these artists reveals themes of ‘friendship,’ ‘bonding,’ ‘family,’ the formation of a collective ‘entity’ that exists beyond the individuals themselves and in some cases the communication required to negotiate the complicated process of amalgamation. Coding for the value domain of The Relationship resulted in the emergence of three dominant themes: 1) The moral imperative of friendship; 2) The virtue of association with people you enjoy hanging out with; and, 3) The virtue of longevity and survival embodied by the metaphors of “family” and “bonding.”

*Thou Shalt: Be “friends.”*

One common theme across these texts suggests: It’s not enough to be band mates, in order to be a successful collaboration you must also be friends. For instance, Dave (Big Eyes)

states : “YEAH, we like all the same kind of musics, but to me this whole band is just kinda straight out friendship.” In the following excerpt The Mazinaw discusses the importance of a genuine group connection:

*- What qualities about each other drew you together? What are the characteristics that brought you together?[In setting up this question I introduced the idea of a band as a type of marriage, Joe’s comments below are in reaction to that established analogy.]*

Joe: I don’t know anybody who’s friends with their band mates.. [room laughs in agreement, some scatters yeahs].

Paul: When we have friends come to town, like when [a professional musician friend] comes and jams with us he’s like: “You guys are so fucking lucky” cause like, “I’ve lived [somewhere else] for a couple years now, but you guys know how lucky you guys are that you have each other.” You know, he’s had it all, and he’s had it all taken away.

Joe: That’s a good example.

Paul: You know, cause’ bands break up.

Joe: But, it’s ah, you know... I don’t know like the group dynamic has functioned with varying degrees of efficacy over the years, based on the varying people that have been introduced into it. And um, and the changes that those people go through once they become part of some shit like this and once they start asking... And it’s GOT to be remarkably similar to a marriage in that sense.

In this passage Gordon of Ontario describes the ‘inside’ nature of their in-group/band relationship:

Gord: All three of us definitely share sort of the same.. sense of humor and ah. . . .

[interruption] All three of us share the same sense of humor and we have a tendency to get stuck on the..on some really inside jokes. And so a lot of times people that don't know us as well, or even our friends REALLY. . Will have no idea what half of the things that we're saying mean.

*Thou Shalt Not: Be a bad "hang."*

During the photo elicitation experiment, Gordon of Ontario sought criteria through which the group could organize the five photos in front of them from 'least' to 'most' credible. The quality they selected to emphasize was a notion deployed frequently and unanimously by all three acts - the ability to 'hangout':

- *And so what makes them most credible then?*

Gord: I just... I just don't think I would want to.. I know I wouldn't want to hang out with them [black]. I bet these guys are real nice little kids [pink] but they're just kind of you know, just younger you know and eager.

Andy: They're putting on.. they are putting on like no airs about like who the hell they are. They're just like some dudes like wanting to

Gord: Wanting to play some music

Andy: Some dudes wanting to play some music and there's probably like some real good musicians in there and they look like they probably smile on stage when they play [Gordon: laughs] And regardless of whether we would like their music or not those are just the people that we'd probably get down on more.

Gord: Is that ...[can't make out comment]

Stew: And also, and time out wait. They would probably like us.

This theme recurred in all three groups. As The Mazinaw contemplated what groups they

regarded as examples of what “to do” they clearly valued the longevity and friendship implied in the ability to just ‘hang out’ with your band mates; Topper remarked: “I’ll bet that AC/DC like, hang out and talk shit.” The ritual of drinking, a mainstay across many discourses and genres of music, was also implicated as part of this notion of ‘hanging out’ in all three data sets. For example, Gordon (Ontario) states: “Alright, night time it’s going to be these guys cause you can drink with them.”

*Thou Shalt: Be “family” & “bonded.”*

Of the acts studied, The Mazinaw was the only group that included relatives.

Unsurprisingly, the metaphor of *family* was deployed frequently by The Mazinaw to describe the dynamics of their band relationship:

Joe: Bands that, like...those two, have like, have managed to make music that’s consistent with...they’ve managed to make really consistent music. It’s still rooted in some kind of underground or alternative sensibility or whatever so it’s like inherently “credible” [uses air quotes around “credible”] and, but they’ve managed to A) stay professional enough to be above the fray and you know... B) those bands clearly like each other. Like everybody in those bands is like obviously..

Top: yeah, they’re a family.

Joe: Yeah, they’re obviously close knit. Whereas there are plenty of other bands that are just fucking not at all.

Ontario did not employ the metaphor of “family” to describe their connection, but expressed a similar sentiment through the notion of “bonding.” Notice marriage metaphor deployed in this quotation: Andy: “I guess the last thing that we really may really be at this point

is... bonded. [*“bonded?”*] Yeah, for better or for worse. . Bonded in a real way...”

The Relationship as qualified by the strength of its bonds was also reflected in the discourse of The Mazinaw:

Top: I think that at the bottom of the root of the how and why we all decided to do this and with each other, or to do this with each other, uh, was... I think that it's born out of a desire to bond with each other. I think that's probably the way it is for most musicians who really click well together.

Paul: It's therapy making an album a year and worrying about it.

This ethos-marker of familial bonding continues as Stewart describes Ontario as an “entity” distinct from the individuals who constitute it:

Stew: ...everything we do is like a.. Like a collective, like a.. And not even three individuals, just like a [girlfriend: “an entity”] An entity, yes. A [band name] entity. Andy said one time that.. [our band name] is a superhero who manifests himself through our music, so that's probably one of my favorite things that explains who we are.

Finally, discourses in the value domain of The Relationship reveal the necessity of effective group communication to the survival and success of a group and its ethos. The act of being in a band is shown to be a complicated communication process. In response to the question: “*What is your band's code of honor?*” Andy and Gordon of The Mazinaw offered the following response:

Andy: Striving to communicate. Like, and if there is any one word that like I think we've all just been.. always striving, striving, pushing more in the direction of is just communication.

Gord: yeah. Absolutely. And I think that's something that when starting out we were extremely poor at. Um, but we're a lot better at it now [chuckling].

Evidence of the virtues tied to the indie ethos and to their group ethos of a commitment to longevity and a commitment to each other, are exemplified in this lengthy excerpt from The Mazinaw's Joe; note Joe's acknowledgement of the influence of external indie discourses:

Joe: Fucking on the very first tour we ever did, or the first real tour we ever did, I remember [a member of another band] pulled me aside and I was like the 21 year old kid or 20 year old kid and I was all twisted up in knots about you know, what it is we should be doing and what our priorities should be. And I was.. I was completely spun on the whole.. because we'd just been scooped up and we made an album, and it had come out, and people actually heard it, and bought it, and we were on a tour, and it was a big fucking deal, and we were playing in front of people, and some of them were cute, and it was fucked up. And um, I remember I was having some 20 year old existential crisis about it like "what the fuck does it all mean, and what should we be doing. And what should we be worrying about?" And I remember [this guy] pulling me aside and just being like "You guys don't have anything to worry about, just don't break up, EVER and you're going to be fine." It seemed like the weirdest fucking thing because he went straight to the worst case scenario. It's like picking up your infant child and [whispering] just going "Just, don't get cancer." And then putting it back in the crib, you know [laughs] [room laughs] like right to the worst case you know. But, it was fucking smart and it put things in

perspective, you know, and uh, you know so , like a lot of it is letting shit that is smaller than breaking up roll off your back. . maybe. You know, just rolling with those punches...”

It is evident in these excerpts that becoming and remaining a “musical ‘We’” is anything but easy. The lack of conflict in these virtues and the frequency of moral imperatives related to the domain of The Relationship across the groups show the significance of this type of value marker for the perception and performance of group ethos. Through these discourses groups develop and negotiate the various ties that bind and hold them together. Although each group articulated it differently, they all openly expressed the need for strong personal and character connections beyond surface level associations as bandmates. Friendship, the ability to hang out and the fundamental requirement of deeply “bonded” interpersonal connections resonated across the discourse of all three groups.

### *The Business of Music*

“To have a career as a musician is to have a quality of self-obsession, an intensity of ambition, that can survive whatever crassness the businessmen put it through”  
– Simon Frith, 1978, p. 169

Discourses in the value domain of The Business of Music are numerous enough to warrant their own separate study. As such, there are far too many themes to adequately address here; however, there are several major themes of such importance to the perception and performance of indie ethos they require attention even if too briefly. Coding for the value domain of The Business of Music produced four primary themes for analysis: 1) The primary debate between business and music and the value of “smart business;” 2) The virtue of “making a living playing music;” 3) The value of a self-contained organization in comparison to expanded organizations that include participants outside the core band members; and, 4) Contemporary

perspectives on the act of selling out.

*Thou Shalt: Practice “smart business.”*

Music and business make strange bedfellows. The often contradictory goals of these two worlds constitute a classic and universal conundrum which pits art and commerce against one another in a battle for authenticity and credibility. As you might expect this tension represents one of the most pronounced areas of diversity and difference that emerged in the discourses of these three indie bands. While the members of The Mazinaw and Ontario advocate the virtues of being a progressive ‘music business,’ Big Eyes were the only group who refuse to willingly and fully integrate The Business of Music into their group ethos.

The Mazinaw and Ontario clearly endorse what Joe (The Mazinaw) calls “smart business.” For example, Ontario openly laments the lack of effort by many indie colleagues who place too little value on “flyering” shows and presenting their merchandise in a professional manner. The Mazinaw’s Topper reprimands acts who see garden variety professional challenges and setbacks as anything other than “fuel on the fire.” In this excerpt Ontario’s Gordon talks about the consubstantiality he found with Andy’s progressive take on ‘the business of being a band’ which played a key role in their coming together:

Gord: And I think, you know that was something we recognized and we’re both on the same page that was like well: “Let’s not just go into starting a new band with .. doing like the same old stuff. Let’s sort of re-think...you know, how to start a band in the first place.” And like different ways of like promoting your music and putting yourself out there. Which.. that was really refreshing.. I thought.

Big Eyes approaches business from a profoundly different lens. They do not necessarily censure other indie colleagues for the ability or desire to wear the professional hat, but they

openly conceive of professional ambition and The Business of Music as a ‘necessary evil’ rather than a tool for savvy artists to be situated harmoniously alongside musical ambitions.

Ken: We’re not anything we want to be, [chuckles] business wise.

Mike: No, from the business end we’re the worst

Dave: But, who would you look up to? Who’s done it well?

Ken: The Beatles did it right. They’re one of the most successful bands of all time.  
And they did it by being amazing and pushing...

Jon: Well, there’s some questionable business stuff.

Ken: and constantly pushing themselves to change.

Mike: um mm..

Ken: When bands don’t push themselves to change they fall apart.

Mike: they also wore suits because Brian Epstein told them to..

Ken: Yeah, **exactly**... no, they had fucking... they had.. You have to have the right people, because you can’t expect a band to be creatively there and also businessly... you know, every aspect of a fucking giant, mega business. To have that all within the group.

Based on their responses, The Mazinaw and Ontario would openly disagree with the idea that great musical minds cannot also be great business minds. In fact, The Mazinaw and Ontario pride themselves on the same “work ethic” and “smart,” “progressive” business tendencies that Big Eyes pushes so hard to resist.

*Thou Shalt: Be self-contained vs. Thou Shalt: Work with the right people.*

The two bands that openly regard business as a positive, The Mazinaw and Ontario, invoked two separate, but not overtly contrary, perspectives on how to approach the professional

side of music: 1) a push for self-reliance; 2) a push to create an extended organization that includes the ‘right’ people. The Mazinaw’s approach is one of self-containment and self-reliance:

Mick: yeah, yeah... well I mean.. It’s definitely work ethic, is a big major factor to it. I mean cause like going back to everyone steps up and plays a role that needs to be covered in some regard and without that, I mean the band is just going to fall to shit. You get bands out there and they just formed and then they get scooped up and everyone does everything for them. And then when the eventual fucking rug gets pulled out from under them, they’re all just like reeling like “What do we do?” you know, it’s like.. you know if you had a hand in your shit you would know what to do. [laughs]

Paul: yeah

Top: TCB

Mick: yeah

Joe: yeah

Paul: We’re a hard working band.

Joe: yeah, I mean. Nobody stands around and does nothing. If it looks like one of us is standing around doing nothing it just means we’re doing something different you know.

Ontario expressed a belief in the virtue of a broader organization that includes “producers and engineers” and live “sound” people, but with the caveat that those extended members of the team are capable of giving a unified performance consistent with the “passionate” ethos of the group:

Gord: One thing I just thought of too, is something that Andy brought up to me is like..

ah, about a band earlier. There's a lot of bands that'll play shows with bands or... will play shows or just work in general in whatever capacity with people that they don't really believe in. They'll book shows with bands that they don't really care about. Or, ah. . . you know, like whatever. Down to the people we have like design our flyers or like the artwork for our album. Or the bands we play shows with. Or like [our producer] or [their sound guy] like he [Andy] brought up. Like all of these people are people that like we really, really believe in ah... what they do. And how good they are. And it's like their passion as well.

*Thou Shalt: "Make a living playing music."*

"Because at the end of the day, you know, we just want to earn a living playing music"  
– Topper (The Mazinaw)

The theme that unites all three of these acts in the value domain of The Business of Music is a belief that indie artists should be allowed to 'make a living' playing music. All three acts espoused this apparently shifting marker of the indie ethos. This potentially new virtue of indie reflects an unexpected affinity with a strain of working class ethos more consonant with the blue collar discourses of America pop rock heroes like Bruce Springsteen and John Mellencamp in the 80s rather than the D.I.Y. ethics espoused by the more traditional elements of the indie community. Based on this modest sample, it is clear that further research on contemporary indie discourse is needed to address the possibility that today's indie artists may view formerly threatening moves like tour buses, sponsorship for tours and shows, major labels and commercial endorsements as nothing more than a means to the end, part of a new indie ethos that values the ability to create indie music as a method of "working for a living."

In this excerpt Mike and Jon articulate Big Eyes' position on making music for a living:

Mike: The first thing is: These days sellout is really fucked up. Because the music industry's changed so much that bands now make more money getting their songs in commercials and on TV shows, and what constitutes a sellout **now** is a lot different from what constituted one even **ten years ago**.

Jon: You can have your song on a commercial and it's almost like having a music video.

Mike: yep! It's not a sellout now. It's what you do ...to make a living.. playing the music that you love. Because that song wasn't written for a commercial. That song was re-appropriated by somebody.

Here Ontario's Gordon illustrates the connection between the hard work artists put in and the value of the end product to music buying publics:

Gord: One thing that I don't agree with, is like. There is like ah... especially in indie music there is like a pretty.. large section of ..people that have this sort of like faux like, I don't know like, not. . . Like, you sort of get looked down upon if you want to do music as a career because inherently with that, that means like you're seeking money, you know along with it. And, um I... I .. that upsets me quite a bit, because I feel like you know. I feel that there's so much work that gets put into it – as you know – [chuckles] Like, there's so much work that gets put into like making a record that you're proud of, or touring, or any of those things that it's like you know, like I, I don't have time to work a real job, you know what I mean. I do need money to be able to pay for some place to live. And that does bother me when it just like you know: “Just for the music man.” I mean, yeah that's why you play music because you love it, but there needs to be something,

you know what I mean.

This recurrent sentiment of the right to sustainability is echoed across the data sets, but one deviant case suggests some conflict exists even amongst those who see music as a way to make a living. In the context of the individual interview Big Eyes's Dave expressed the following opinion on the tension inherent in taking the 'music as your job' model too far: "You know, because really, when you get down to it.. it's your job, but the whole reason you do this is so you don't have a job."

While Dave did not begrudge others the right to music as a 9 to 5 he remarked: "I'm more of a get in the van, find directions.. the adventure of the road.. ah, sleeping on somebody's floor and, you know what I mean.. I'm way more of that guy than the bus guy."

*Selling Out Isn't What it Used to Be.*

Inherent in the belief that making music as a living is not only acceptable but a kind of right or moral imperative shows a disconnection between these acts and other members of the indie community who still view commercialism in all its forms as an anathema. The attitudes of these three acts towards selling out reflect three themes: 1) making money for music no longer poses an automatic threat to a group's indie ethos; 2) the term selling out is antiquated and has lost both prominence in the discourse and clarity of meaning within the indie community; and 3) the shared belief that only the artists themselves can determine whether they have sold out, not external audiences on the outside looking in.

In the following conversation extract The Mazinaw confirms the three themes proposed above:

Joe: So, if Camel, or Exxon or whatever offered us 20,000\$ for a song, you know to use a song in a commercial like that's a fucking piss squirt of money. Like,

20,000, the guy who fixes our van makes more than that in a year, you know, so, you're going to offer us 20,000.. YES we're going to take the 20 thousand...

Paul: Damn straight.

Joe: And we're not going to feel like we just pulled the great Rock and Roll swindle and that we're like... we're not set up for life on that 20 thousand dollar sink or whatever.

Top: Well, one of our goals is to earn a living playing music, so, so...

Joe: yeah

Top: So, to succeed is not selling out. Now, if you were Fugazi and part of the mission of the band was to not support big tobacco or alcohol and Camel offered you a million dollars and you said "Oh, a million dollars well fuck my ethics! Let's do it!" Then yeah, that's selling out. You know, they throw away this thing that was supposed to be important to them and they cashed it in, but.. just to be successful when that's your goal.. that's...

Paul: That's a great thing.

Top: That's not selling out, it just isn't.

Joe: Yeah, selling out means something entirely different. Selling out means a compromising of principle in exchange for money. Like, jurors sell out when they get bought by mafia. Politicians sell out when they get bought by insurance lobbyists. Musicians do not sell out when they take money for a Honda commercial. No, that's absolutely not it. Like, musicians.. it would be a sell out if somebody paid us to never play again. That's a sell out. That's a compromise of principle, you know, but.. as long as we're playing...

This quote from Big Eyes's Ken affirms The Mazinaw's construction of a contemporary definition of selling out:

Ken: To me a sellout is... you're not selling out unless you change how you're making your music..in order to create competitive gains, you know? If you're writing your song and you're adding a line about McDonald's because you want to get it played in a McDonald's commercial then you're selling out, but if you, if somebody starts throwing money at you and you're still writing songs that you're proud of, and that you like and that are just songs you write... then I don't see any problem.

While these three acts generally agreed that the term selling out has lost its previous potency and is no longer an ominous specter, these conversations reveal numerous ways in which these acts could compromise their own ethics.

Within the value domain of The Business of Music these indie artists seek and find consubstantiality or difference from which to assess the character of the group and negotiate the party line on the myriad decisions related to commerce. Clearly Big Eyes stands alone as the only act that views the business side of music as a necessary evil, openly admitting not only a lack of interest, but an admonishment of the burden that business elements place on the process of being a musician. The Mazinaw and Ontario represent a more progressive take as indie artists who embrace the "smart" business side of things as a way to exert more control over their art and their collective destinies. All three acts hold the right to make music for a living as a virtue of the highest order. Additionally, these acts contest in unison the relevance of the formerly persuasive idea of selling out in light of contemporary contexts.

### *External Aesthetics*

Any experienced musician can tell you that one side effect of being a performer involves considerations not just of *who* you play with, but of *what* you wear, *where* you play and *what* you play with. Even if those decisions over time are made from a place so deeply internalized they appear to be unconscious, a violation in any of those areas will not likely go unnoticed by that individual or the group - especially if the violation threatens the unified performance of the band's ethos.

For the domain of External Aesthetics three dominant themes emerged, including: 1) Instruments and gear; 2) Venues and clubs; and 3) Costuming and clothes. After briefly discussing the photo elicitation experiment, I will explore each area of interest in more depth.

Curiously, concerns of External Aesthetics were not often deployed during the regular course of group or individual interviews. By contrast, they did become highly prevalent during the photo elicitation exercise at the conclusion of the group interview as groups struggled to rank 5 photographs of indie bands in order of credibility. As public speaking textbooks often warn, ethos is determined extremely quickly, and in the absence of other cues is often initially based on visual ethos markers (cf. Zarefsky, 2008). As the artists debated the rankings, the litany of comments during three debates illustrated the significance of the discourses of External Aesthetics to in-group membership and ethos.

It is noteworthy that of the eleven artists who participated in the photo experiment only The Mazinaw's Paul and Ontario's Gordon openly expressed apprehension and perhaps even dismay at the prospect of basing any determination of credibility on a single photograph. The discomfort I perceived from Paul and Gordon did not prevent either of them, or anyone else in the three groups, from making rapid and highly detailed judgments about the character of the

bands pictured based solely on visual ethos-markers.

*Thou Shalt: Play the right gear.*

In the pilot phase of this study one respondent introduced the term “cachet” to describe how the use of a particular brand or vintage of guitar, bass, drums or amplifier represented a type of “cultural capital” within indie discourses:

But, there’s even like cachet too, at least in the area of music that we [he and I] play in vintage gear, right? If you have a black face Fender super reverb or something like that, and that’s cooler than having a brand new Bassman 59’ reissue, and I don’t know if that feeds into credibility or not,... it’s just cooler...right...it sounds better too, but the normal listener can’t tell right, I mean I can’t always tell...honestly...and it’s recorded now.

Likewise, during the photo elicitation remarks were consistently made flagging the presence of acoustic guitars and a piano in the only band photo that included instruments. In each of the following two instances, the instruments were directly implicated in the determinations of credibility and representative of a type of indie “cachet”:

[The Mazinaw] Mick: they’ve got an acoustic guitar that’s pretty credible.

Joe: laughs

Top: really, that’s cred?

[Big Eyes] Andy: They look awfully smug, yeah.

Gord: He’s got a nice guitar though.

*Thou Shalt Not: play the wrong club.*

Discourses regarding venues and clubs were present only in a limited capacity during the primary data sets. However, based on personal experience and the comments of the same

respondent from the pilot study, discourses of venue have a place in discourses of External Aesthetics. In the following extract pilot study respondent describes the concern of venue in response to a question regarding the impact of the idea of credibility on his career:

I think it generally means not being second guessed for something [long pause] god, I'm trying to figure out how to word it...Not being overlooked or second guessed or for something stupid. . . . There's credibility in playing some clubs. If you see a band that's playing these other kinds of clubs you're like...."OH, it's "that" kind of band." Right? They're willing to play Joe's Crab Shack or, you know what ever club, [a local example club known for amateur and metal shows], that's the one I'm thinking of...yeah...which we [referring to he and I working together in a tribute band] are willing to do. But if we were an original band you'd say ... that's the line. I wouldn't play that place. I'd play a lot of places, but I wouldn't play that place. And I don't know if that's for yourself, or for the fans, or if that's for just the other musicians that you play with. I don't know, my reservation with playing places like that, I don't know if it's because I don't want to play there, or if I don't think it's going to be worthwhile, or if I just think people are going to think we're an uncool band if we play [the same exemplar club].

Notably, in the group interview The Mazinaw's Topper referred to the same local club as the pilot respondent in the same pejorative fashion:

Top: These guys look like they play [the example club].

Mick: We're talking about credibility, not popularity.

*Thou Shalt Not: "wear shorts on stage."*

The traditional indie ethos, stemming from the late 80s and early 90s iterations, dictates a style in dress that might be described as 'come as you are.' In contrast to the typical rock,

country or metal acts, indie bands often wear the same clothes before, during and even after the show – an implicit argument to their audiences that they don't care about their image per se. Outsiders may accurately assume that costuming plays a prominent role in the process of negotiating a group ethos for all music acts, and it does, but like so many aspects of the indie ethos this process of sanctioning costumes is conducted implicitly unless a potential violation is present. Indie morality suggests that if you have to ask what to wear, then you don't know. If you admit in a 'front stage' performance to considering what you wear, you risk a violation of ethos. I have witnessed enough 'back stage' performances regarding costuming to conclude that those conversations do happen, but never in a 'front stage' context and only when a potential threat to ethos is detected.

Questioning the ethos of indie 'colleagues' on the other hand, often happens explicitly and very much out loud. I will attest to the fact that 'back-stage' sniping on indie colleagues is a time-honored pastime. Given the opportunity and based solely on the available visual cues, the artists interviewed made numerous determinations about moral character, musical character, musical aptitude, commitment and ambition. One of the more amusing excerpts finds Joe and Mick of The Mazinaw discussing the implications of "sloppiness" and "shorts" to an "actual" band's group ethos:

Joe: It's non pretentious and it's non sloppy. Like they actually look like musicians kinda, ah, they other. . the kids in the shorts there. . I mean number one he actually wore shorts to the band photo shoot. Which, like. . unless you're in NOFX and they're like joke shorts or unless you're.. or unless you're trying to take a funny picture which they clearly are not, like shorts are not working. .and they just.. the whole style part of them ..

Mick: They're not together.

Joe: ...they look awful, yeah.

In this passage the members of Ontario come to an agreement about the musical aptitude of one of the pictured bands. Note the open sanctioning of Stewart in this extract which constitutes an example of ethos-work as Andy and Gordon needle Stewart overtly in an effort to distance him; an action which stems from an earlier admission of unsanctioned musical influences:

Gord: I don't, I... You might... You guys might completely.

Stew: That band is good as shit I guarantee.

Andy: Cause they're probably...

Stew: That band is tight as fuck.

Gord: That's what I was going to say.. You guys might disagree, but these are the best musicians [band w/green shirt].

Stew: yeah

Andy: Ok there's like two good musicians. At least two out of the five are like legitimate ass. Like Stewart-bros musicians. . . Um...

The wealth of topics addressed within the value domain of External Aesthetics certainly function amongst the most essential components for the formation and reproduction of a group ethos. They also represent the type of truly 'back stage' performance which would be difficult to elicit without a strong foundation of trust due to the revealing and seemingly superficial nature of these concerns of proper "sign-equipment" (Goffman, 1959) or 'cachet.'" Of all the admissions I acquired from this study, I believe those related to External Aesthetics to be the most contingent upon the promise of anonymity. It is important to recognize that these determinations bespeak the importance of a positive ethos and the ability to "manifest the virtues" of the groups 'to and

for whom one speaks.’ It does not, however, indicate that these musicians are somehow atypical or exceptional in making snap decisions based on aesthetics. Humans of all varieties of moral and personal character make these kinds of assessments regardless of the fact that most of us would adamantly agree with the adage ‘you should not judge a book by its cover.’

While in other value domains the groups have tended to share a good deal of common ground, in terms of their own External Aesthetics the three acts are quite different. Big Eyes appear to have little concern for their own external aesthetics regarding costuming and venues, but a great premium is placed on gear with vintage and name brand cachet. The Mazinaw are the most unified in terms of costuming aesthetic; they share Big Eyes’ concern for the ‘right’ gear, displaying a wide array of indie approved guitars, amplifiers and drums. With regards to venue, The Mazinaw are clearly aware of venues of ill-repute as an ethos-marker, but based on the location of the performance I observed, they are not inclined to turn down a gig unless the threat to group ethos is severe enough to warrant it. Like Ontario’s influences and musical style their External Aesthetics are diverse. The band displays a mixture of “cachet” and happenstance in its gear onstage, as well as a diversity of costuming across any number of acceptable indie clothing traditions. On the other hand, Ontario has a far more articulate sense of what venues it will and will not play and how often it is appropriate to play them.

#### *External Audiences*

“...when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole”

– Erving Goffman, 1959, p. 35

Goffman (1959) offers the following insight into how ever present external audiences might impact the performance of a group ethos:

When a performer guides his private activity in accordance with incorporated moral standards, he may associate these standards with a reference group of some kind, thus creating a non-present audience for his activity. This possibility leads us to consider a further one. The individual may privately maintain standards of behavior which he does not personally believe in, maintaining these standards because of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present who will punish deviations from these standards. In other works, an individual may be his own audience or may imagine an audience to be present... This should make us go on to see that a team itself may stage a performance for an audience that is not present in the flesh to witness the show (pp. 81-81).

With the discerning nature of indie morality firmly established by Fonarow (2006) and others, it is not difficult to imagine the ways which the virtues of the indie community might impact the perception and performance of group ethos for these acts. In this final value domain, I attempted to account for any statements that expressly state feelings or opinions regarding the indie community at large. In consideration of External Audiences three principle themes merit discussion: 1) The impact of indie discourses on group ethos and efforts to situate the group within those indie discourses; 2) The element of the indie audience referred to as “the kids;” and, 3) The trend of passive vs. active music fans.

*Thou Shalt: Speak “to and for” indie*

For music artists, audiences ‘out there’ are a constant presence and a constant influence upon the spectrum of musical and professional choices. In this extract Ontario’s Stewart confirms the depth and weight of an ever present indie scene and culture upon the band’s decisions:

Stew: It’s really weird, because we have to like think about it from people’s points of

view. And we also have to anticipate what people are going to do or think um, based upon like street cred or the indie scene or you know whatever, we have to literally like, like be like: “Ok, well, you know...” The indie kids or, or the ‘whomevers’..are going to.. really like this, but if we do this they’re probably not going to like us so, let’s not do that in [our town] or let’s not do that in [a nearby city] or let’s not do that in [a nearby major city]... That literally infiltrates . . . [audible sigh] everything that we do we have to completely... We have to think about it in all the different little mindsets of all the different..you know. . cliques or groups or how people would, you know..

The broader indie community consists of a multitude of fans with various interpretations of indie. It also includes “colleagues,” who are required to give similar performances of indie ethos and “share a community of fate.” Goffman (1959) notes: “In having to put on the same kind of performance, they come to know each other’s difficulties and points of view’ whatever their tongues, they come to speak the same social language” (p. 160). As a result of this recognition Goffman (1959) notes it is difficult to “hide” the strategies and intentions in the performance of a group ethos from other colleagues. Being accountable not just to indie audiences, but to other musicians within the community weighs heavily on group decision making and plays into the perceived credibility of a group. Despite the added pressure this function of keeping each other honest is interpreted as a contribution to the health of the community by some including Ontario’s Gordon. In the following extract he espouses the commonly held position that it is too often the critics within the community rather than the musicians whose perceptions are used to gauge a group’s indie ethos:

Gord: I feel like so much of credibility is. . is made up by.. by people that aren’t even

really.. making the music. And that sounds sort of condescending cause obviously I don't.. I don't mean that in the way that just only musicians are smart or anything like that. But, you know what I mean? I feel like a lot of.. judgment.. of credibility..on music is made by people that don't..aren't actually necessarily involved in it, you know.

Across the three data sets only Ontario expressed a strong connection to the indie scene itself. While indie audiences played key role in the discourses of each group's ethos, ownership of the indie scene per se was made explicit only by Ontario. Ontario's Stewart expresses his frustration with audiences in his local indie scene:

Stew: People want to BE indie or follow the indie scene, or be an indie musician or you know indie whatever, but they don't actually like support it all. Like, they're not going to shows. They're being indie by wear..looking indie and standing there at an indie person's house talking about indie music that they haven't ever seen live. And they're not buying CD's you know.

*Thou Shalt Not: pander to the "kids."*

In contrast, to Ontario's open concern for the well being of the indie scene and prescriptive thoughts on how it ought to work, the other two bands kept 'the scene' at arm's length. Their efforts to distance the scene did not prevent Big Eyes and The Mazinaw from making frequent references to the element of the indie community variously described as "the kids," "emo kids" and "punk rock children." First, Mike discusses a musical decision and its relationship to "the kids." Second, The Mazinaw rejects any desire to be popular with mainstream indie audiences or "little kids."

[1] Mike: But all of the sudden we have a song with a disco beat in it because that

worked for that song. So, that's one thing that I would probably have said before that I would never have done, but organically we did it because it was best for the song. And not because we were like 'hey, the kids like the disco beat.'

[2] Paul: bands liked us. People within [the industry] liked us..

Top: We never actually sold any albums though.

Paul: it wasn't like mainstream, like little kids loving us ever.

Mick: yeah

Joe: yeah

*Thou Shalt Not: Be a "passive" music fan.*

One theme in the value domain of External Audiences that emerged across the conversations with all three bands was a concern that audiences of all types of music have become far less engaged with their music. Musicians are among the most fervent of "music lovers" and fans; the established indie morality only adds to the degree of moral frameworks invoked in these discussions about the need for 'active' participation with music. The artists expressed a concern that in the era of digital music the 'active' fandom of eras gone by has been replaced with 'passive' forms of interaction. Where indie discourses of the past were located at shows and in the release of tangible artifacts like vinyl LP's and 7" singles, cassettes and CD's, today's music fans experience music almost entirely digitally. In this passage Ontario's Stewart laments the passing of the physical connection between music and the people who love it:

Stew: It's just really weird, like, we.. um, the [media group] who's with [our label] kind of that we're looking at whatever, you know, um he doesn't want to release our physical record cause' he thinks that CD's are completely done. And I think that

sucks. Like, I mean, that's.. Maybe not necessarily CD's, but I like, you know, like I don't want it to just become all just digital. Like, I want to have the artifact. That's our seven inch. [framed and hung on the wall] That's why I have that. I mean that's what I want.

His band mate Andy concurs:

Andy: I really enjoy having something physical in my hands. I feel like I have more of a relationship with something that I can hold on to. With some art work that was put together and some lyrics that were you know, typed out and printed for me to be able to ..to read and...and.. to experience, umm. . Yeah, obviously that's happening a lot less. . I feel like the average music listener today or today's... today's perhaps younger listener that's more savvy with the way technology and music are sort of coinciding. . Are having a more, a more passive relationship with music than I ever imagined being.. anybody would.

In this excerpt Mike and Jon discuss their previously stated commitment to putting on energetic live shows as a way to counteract 'passive' audiences of the digital music generation who engage music in the "background" rather than placing a foreground importance on it:

Jon: And, I think a lot of the music that's popular is for that reason and it acts like background music than anything. And, we try to make music that is, like, engaging and you can really get into because that's the music we like.

Mike: That's a really good point, because last night I noticed the crowd..We were talking about this... we were like, you know these guys sound great on stage, the music that they're making I respect and I enjoy it. But, I'm really, really glad that I play in bands like [UFB/DG], who...who make people have fun at shows. Who

get people excited about music, because I'm watching this crowd because they're just standing there. And, they're appreciative, and they're happy to listen to the music, but it almost seems as if...

Jon: Cause' there's some good ideas, there are good things going on..

Mike: There is, they are really mature songwriters and everything, but the excitement.

**The live excitement** isn't there. And I think that music has become more of a passive thing now. And that may be because of the availability of iPods and digital...

Jon: Yeah, a lot of the mystique is gone.

Mike: Yeah, and people are always listening to music. At work it's in the background. And the car. It's always in the background.

Jon: It actually makes me think of something you said once, which was.. when you buy a record or when actually pay for something you become more invested in it. You like try to like it a little more. And I think maybe that's why people are just kind of like ahh [sound that indicates apathetic] now, because people get shit for free now.

Unlike Ontario, Big Eyes and The Mazinaw made no effort to claim ownership of the idea of indie; showing no stake in the open negotiation of the term instead remaining connected to the community implicitly. One key discourse that connects Big Eyes and The Mazinaw to the broader indie discourse is the prevalent theme of passivity. There is a strong sense for all three groups of artists that the External Audiences they interact with have shifted in the wrong direction; from a framework of deep appreciation of music as an essential and very personal investment to ephemeral contact with a ubiquitous form of commercial entertainment which has

only a casual connection to their lives and is easily dismissed. Gordon of Ontario fears that MySpace, which he calls “the worst thing that ever happened to music,” has led to “pre-conceived notions” about bands before audiences get a chance to see them live. In this way, audiences can take a test drive on online before coming out to the live shows, perverting the forum that once was the first exposure and interaction between a band and their potential fans. Across all three bands, these artists fear that in recent years it has become too “accessible,” and too easy to be a casual music fan. Each act in its own way conveyed a longing for the days when the only people more committed to a band than its fans, were its members.

#### *Chapter Summary*

As I have shown, these seven value domains: Persona & Attitude, Live Performance, Songcraft & Artistry, The Relationship, The Business of Music, External Aesthetics and External Audiences, provide a framework to identify the dominant ethos-markers through which a group ethos is formed, negotiated and reproduced. This system of categories represents the specific rubrics these indie artists are using to perceive and perform their band’s group ethos, to “manifest the virtues most valued” by the groups and culture “to and for which they speak.” These value domains also illustrate the virtues that these artists use to weigh a potential threat to the group ethos including those significant enough to represent a selling out for financial gain.

Through these seven value domains, I have shown evidence of the dominant ethos-markers of each group. Big Eyes group ethos consists of the virtues of high energy live performance; “adventurous” and high quality songcraft in the tradition of pop music with strong “hooks” and “melody”; conscious rejection of the business side of music; and, unpretentiousness. The Mazinaw’s group ethos is marked by the dominant virtues of “hard work” and “work ethic,” *family*, longevity and persistence. The group ethos of Ontario includes the dominant virtues of

musical artistry, “prideful” achievement, deep and “bonded” friendship, the need to “communicate” and lastly, “passion” and freedom from “jadedness.”

As I have shown there are significant similarities and differences across the discourses and group ethoi of Big Eyes, The Mazinaw and Ontario. While songwriting and artistry are at the forefront of the group ethos of Big Eyes and Ontario, The Mazinaw situate musical achievement more generally. While The Mazinaw and Ontario both take pride in their status as “smart” progressive business operations, Big Eyes openly acknowledges their failure to successfully integrate business as a virtue into their moral imperatives, and yet, each unique set of character makers represents a valid construction of a contemporary indie group ethos. If I were to interview a dozen more bands I am confident I would have a dozen more equally compelling performances of group ethos and of indie, as each of those artists would manifest the additional values they are using to produce their group ethos. While the specific virtues and moral imperatives differ for each indie act, these seven primary value domains offer a stable system of categories with which to pursue further study of group ethos regardless of musical genre.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Results and Discussion Part II

*The Functions of Ethos*

As I established in the previous chapter, the process of analysis lead to the development of seven primary value domains, each of which helps to explain how these artists are perceiving and performing, or “manifesting,” individual and group ethos. In addition to the establishment of these high-order categories it became apparent that once those ethoi were formed, the artists were mobilizing their group character functionally in performances to meet some specific goals. Which lead me to ask: Beyond performing and reproducing their various ethoi, once artists have a group ethos what do they do with it? Additionally, a critical theme emerged as the artists repeatedly noted that explicit discussions of their group’s code of honor or ethos were at most uncommon and in some cases, had never taken place before.

In this final chapter, I explore the ways in which group ethos is deployed as a tool for multiple purposes including negotiation, exemption and management of threats to the group ethos or ethos-work, to facilitate the formation of new groups, and to provide the foundation through which solidarity and longevity are achieved. Additionally, I will investigate the possibility that group ethos is formed and reproduced through implicit rather than explicit means.

*The Functions of Ethos: Ethos-Work – Management and negotiation*

“A teammate is someone whose dramaturgical co-operation one is dependent upon in fostering a given definition of the situation; if such a person comes to be beyond the pale of informal sanctions and insists on giving the show away or forcing it to take a particular turn, he is none the less part of the team. In fact, it is just because he is part of the team that he can cause this kind of trouble”

– Erving Goffman, 1959, p. 83

As stated above, adapted from Goffman (2006), ethos-work refers to “actions taken by a

person, or persons, to make whatever he/they are doing consistent with their ethos. Ethos-work serves to counteract ‘incidents’ – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten ethos.” It is significant that all three bands consistently performed a unified group ethos throughout our conversations, but in each case there was evidence of discursive action taken to “counteract ‘incidents’” that occurred which left unchecked could have the potential to damage it. In the following paragraphs I will explore four types of ethos-work performed by these artists to manage or repair threats to group ethos through strategies I refer to as: 1) distancing and non-acceptance; 2) open sanction and rebuke; 3) acceptance and defense; and, 4) exemption through ethos<sup>4</sup>.

One of the more prominent examples of explicit ethos-work to manage potential damage to group ethos comes out of a conflict over Big Eyes’ willingness to participate in televised game shows. The initial excerpt is from the group conversation on the subject, the second excerpt is Dave’s explicit attempt in the follow-up individual interview to walk back and in effect distancing the group ethos from Ken’s, and to a lesser degree Mike’s, statements during the group interview that illustrate their apparent willingness to sell out.

[1] Dave: I would never go on.. *American Idol* slash *Bands on the Run*.

Ken: We almost did!

Jon : We almost were on that band American Idol.

Mike: I would do both of those things..

Dave: I would be out of the band.. I would be out of the band...

Ken: I would do both those things. I don’t care.

---

<sup>4</sup> The terms distancing, acceptance, non-acceptance, sanction, rebuke, defense and exemption used above are not stemming from any specific theoretical framework. While I am certain these terms have been utilized previously by scholars in other contexts, I have used these familiar terms in an attempt to best describe the various communication behaviors I believe are occurring in the data.

Dave: I would be out of the band in two seconds..

Mike: I would be on ..

Ken: I don't give a shit!

Mike: ..any TV show that exploits us and makes us look bad, because I believe our innate talent would "shine through" [said in a quiet whisper in a tone implying utopian-optimism].

*Was there anything since our last conversation that stuck in your craw or you thought about after the fact that stuck with you?*

[2] Dave: Not, not really, it's kind of funny because like.. since I know those guys so well that.. I already kind of knew what they would say before they even said it,... that's what's so weird. There were some interesting things like as far as.. the selling out, which was weird, because we all had like, kind of.. a different kind of opinion on the selling out, like, like well we don't really believe it exists, but.. you know, still.. people.. like Ken was like "hell yea, I'll sellout!" You know what I mean? It was weird. That was a just a weird question and it was kind of funny how the whole answers just got jumbled up and stuff. But, yeah no, I don't know I think that every answer was pretty much the way I thought it would go."

This is a clear instance of "ethos management" as Dave attempts to create a space where his teammate's responses can be understood as a reaction to a difficult, confusing or "weird" question. Dave's ethos-work is an attempt to reconcile both his individual ethos and that of the group with Ken and Mike's potentially damaging willingness to compromise. The larger level indie ethos is implicated as well, as Dave works to negotiate Ken and Mike's ethos violation in light of the group's responsibility to uphold indie's rejection of blatant commercialism and

mainstream means of exposure.

A second type of ethos-work is illustrated in the following excerpts from the group interview with Ontario. In response to a question early in the interview regarding what artists the band would point to as ‘exemplars’ of ‘the right way’ to be a band, an incident occurred that provoked some immediate ethos-work through open rebuke, as well as, additional reprimands throughout the remainder of the interview. In the following extract Andy and Gordon openly sanction Stewart for his appreciation of, and choice to mention, a progressive rock band they clearly do not find consubstantial. Note Andy’s apparent acceptance of this difference:

Stew: Oh, I was just going to say. Yeah, it’s... the first thing that popped into my mind was like with Gordon talking more of the business side of it. I’m a... I’m a huge [band name<sup>5</sup>] fan.

Gord: uhh[uncomfortable chuckle], I was waiting for that to come up.

Andy: right

Stew: Yeah, you were waiting for it... you know, Fuck it.

Gord: I was waiting for the [band name]. We should have taken bets.

Andy: it’s supposed to come up

Stewart continued to defend the unsanctioned group and their business practices resulting in further censure from Gordon:

Gord: That’s what I was going to say. . I was going to say their last record. They priced you out of man. You couldn’t do that one.

Stew: Yeah, I can’t afford their last record.

Gord: So, is that the right way?

---

<sup>5</sup> I have deliberately omitted the name of this well known group. My agreement with the artists stated that I would omit any distinctive information that would allow readers to identify the group or its members. The inclusion of this distinct influence would risk violation of anonymity for the members of Ontario.

During the photo elicitation experiment Stewart's incompatible influence and classically trained 'musicianship' are once again the impetus for open rebuke as Andy and Gordon act as stewards of the group ethos by distancing themselves from Stewart. The following two excerpts illustrate their attempts:

[1] Stew: I would put money on it that if these are real bands that this band [?] is probably better than that band. So, I would say that this is probably the least credible picture on the table.

Gord: See, I would go the other way, only because I think this one looks, looks like ah

Andy: A band you would be in Stewart.

[2] Andy: Some dudes wanting to play some music and there's probably like some real good musicians in there and they look like they probably smile on stage when they play [Gordon: laughs] And regardless of whether we would like they're music or not those are just the people that we'd probably get down on more.

Gord: Is that ...

Stew: And also, and time out wait. They would probably like us.

Gord: As people.. at least.

Andy: As people.

Stew: They'd probably like our band.

Andy: no, they'd probably like your drumming.

Gord: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. They wouldn't like me or Andy.

This example of reprimand within the group highlights the group's ability to manage internal threats to ethos without revoking membership or causing immediate permanent damage

to The Relationship. It remains to be seen whether or not Andy and Gordon's efforts to manage Stewart's failure in this regard to perform a unified group ethos in this regard will have any substantive effect on their collaboration over time. In the fourth strategy of ethos-work below, I will show how the ethos of an external hero can be similarly exempted in light of violations that would otherwise be inconsistent with the group's ethos.

A third strategy of ethos-work pertains to acknowledgement and defense. Threats to group ethos are not always met with distancing and reprimand, but instead are sometimes greeted with acceptance. As stated previously, the family metaphor functions powerfully for the members of The Mazinaw. In connection with their ethos of longevity and friendship, The Mazinaw several times performed ethos-work designed to accommodate potential threats to group ethos through a strength-in-numbers-style-strategy of collaboration.

In this passage Paul and Topper provide cover for Joe's potentially damaging admissions of musical tastes that fall outside of those likely to be authorized by the broader indie community. Through overt and immediate signs of solidarity they perform a unified group ethos even if a truly private 'back stage' performance might reveal more disparity than the group is willing to let on in the interview:

Joe: ...I'd say it's not THAT important, except that we have to like respect where everybody else is coming from. If you like somebody enough to respect them then you can.. like, apparently my band likes me enough and has enough respect for me that they can tolerate the gargantuan amounts of like Rhianna, Annie Lennox, Lady Gaga, uh.. Cyndi Lauper, etc... The Dixie Chicks, that I will play at top volume in the van, and I don't get a lot of shit for it. I mean I see Paul snickering sometimes in the rear view mirror, [Mick: chuckles] but like it's not, it's not like a

thing.

Paul: I like that music.

Top: That shit's great.

In a previously noted excerpt, The Mazinaw's Topper celebrates the band's acceptance of diversity in musical influences and quickly rattles off the genres of music Joe, Paul and Topper bring to the table. My perception of a potential incompatibility in the discourses of Songcraft & Artistry in addition to the notable omission of Mick's influences prompted me to ask Topper for his thoughts on the impact of Mick's musical perspective on the group. While he does acknowledge the potential disparity for a unified performance of ethos, a member of The Mazinaw here again invokes ethos-work through acceptance as Topper describes the assimilation of influences as a process the group is committed to working together to perform:

Top: He, he does, yeah. He's more into like... rock and classic rock and metal and... stuff and we all . . . REALLY enjoy a lot of that, but ahh.. yeah, but there's like some. . . a little bit of weirdness there, you know where like, you know because I was raised on a lot of like soul music and ska and reggae, I'll just have like natural tendencies to . . . you know if we're playing ROCK, but I'll have. .my . . in terms of like rhythm and feel, I just go one way and . . he doesn't go that way, you know. He's, he's been listening to Thin Lizzy and Iron Maiden, shit that I like too, but it's just different. And I think that that's just takes time to . . sort itself out.

*Making Exceptions: 'We Can Work it Out.'*

The final strategy of ethos-work shown in these three case studies is through exemption by which I mean case specific exceptions based on individual ethos and that member's ability to

give unified performances of the group ethos the vast majority of the time. As we have seen, when a violation of group ethos occurs, the member responsible may be sanctioned for the violation by other group members, but so long as that member has proven the ability to “perform properly” in the past, they are typically ultimately given a ‘free pass’ or exemption, because their greater individual ethos is strong enough to withstand the reprimand without being ejected from the group. This intergroup exemption qualifies as a type of ethos-work. A second type of ethos-work through exemption is used to explain and justify violations of ethos resulting from the open support within a group of those external heroes whose own ethos can be questioned on any grounds, including specific unsanctioned acts that would otherwise violate the group ethos.

For example, in my conversations with Big Eyes the group railed on artists who utilize pre-recorded material live, after citing the The Flaming Lips as a hero. “The Lips” were exempted for this violation of the virtues of Big Eyes because of the strength of their artistic ethos. The band defended the breach on the grounds that “The Lips” use of recordings was a necessary tool and an “organic” strategy of artistry and “survival.” KISS were exempted by Big Eyes for overt commercialism and “putting on airs” because of their adherence to an ethos of giving the audience “a show,” refusing to “be ignored” and not “boring” the audience. In the following excerpt Big Eyes discuss why they willingly permit Guided By Voices leader Robert Pollard to use a “fake British accent” only moments after condemning that specific move as an exemplar of *what they would never do*. This excerpt reflects a deviance from the potentially tacit nature of ethos as my questions prompted this overt discussion of the group’s ethos:

Ken: if any of us came to practice and started singing with a British accent...

Mike: Like Bob Pollard? [room laughs]

Jon: [laughing] Bob Pollard ain’t no asshole, man. [laughs] Actually he probably is.

Ken: We would kick em' in the fucking nuts before they finished the song, we'd be laughing so hard.

Mike: So, why does that work for Bob Pollard and not for us?

Ken: Well, because if you decide you're going to be that guy, but you also kick ass... then we'll let you get away with it. That's why we all love.... That's why we all love KISS.

Jon: Kicking ass is subjective.

Ken: Yeah, it's subjective.

Jon: People think Dave Matthews kicks ass.

Ken: It's music, **of course it's subjective**. Fuck everybody else's opinion, mine's awesome! [w/Jack Black-like intensity]

Mike: He's trying.. he's trying to figure out what makes.. you.. like.. Guided By Voices. When does it become ok for Bob Pollard to start singing with a, an English accent?

Ken: When the music has fucking soul and fucking meaning...

Dave: And, he believes it.

Jon: When he's ripping off The Who and not Kraftwerk. [room laughs]

Ken: Yeah, he believes it. That's a good point.

Mike: So, if you rip off band's that we like, we like you better?

Dave: YES!! [laughs]

Ken: Yes! [room laughs]

Mike: That's hot!

On a number of occasions the members of Ontario express a frustration with the tendency

in today's indie discourses for bands to deploy what they called a "faux modesty" or "false humility" regarding musical or professional achievements. The exemption of significance here occurs as Ontario unanimously identifies the British band Radiohead as a hero. For much of their career Radiohead were painfully and publically uncomfortable with their own successes (cf. Reynolds, 2008). While they may not be directly responsible for the trend in the discourse of some indie bands that Ontario explicitly laments, their well-documented attitude, which Deming (2010) describes as "unusually introspective and downbeat," has certainly inspired it, if not brought into fashion (cf. Reynold, 2008, Sullivan, 1999). Andy (Ontario) describes the influence of Radiohead and others on Ontario's "worldview":

Andy: So, I mean if that's something to be done right then I mean you know, Radiohead, Broken Social Scene, Death Cab for Cutie.. These are all bands that have influenced us and I feel like at various points in their career have expressed a desire to be just more human. To establish themselves as a more like, you know thought provoking or perhaps like, just impassioned project, you know. Especially, like with In Rainbows like I feel like that's a great example of..you know, Radiohead, not only musically, or you know turning towards more organic instrumentation, but just expressing some more like.. some less ah, ah stark themes I guess. Less isolated themes. Yeah. Um-hum.

It is clear that Radiohead's artistic ethos overrides any of the character flaws Andy and Gordon take umbrage with in this extract:

Gord: That's true. That's sort of what I was referencing earlier when I was saying that we had..that we have specific ideas about what we want to do. Yeah, like..just the way people schedule their shows and how people have like a sort of... I feel like a

lot, once again in the indie scene at least, you know there's a lot of faux modesty that goes with it. Where...

Andy: There's a lot of false humility.

Gord: ...you know, it's like once again I think if you work hard and you're proud of what you do you should be able to tell people, you know like: "Hey, we have this new band. We have this show booked it's really exciting. You know, like you guys should come check it out." As opposed to like: "Yeah, you know, it's alright." It's like, be excited about what you're doing.

Andy: It's almost like, yeah, like..it's like some people are falsely humble and, in that they just couldn't be bothered to put themselves through being that vulnerable to their friends or to strangers and saying: "Hey, this is something I'm really proud of I want to share with you. You should check it out. We worked really hard on it." And then sometimes, like people just like are lacking in confidence. And I know those are two different things, but at the end of the day..[laughs]..

Gord: It's the same result.

Andy: ..yeah, at the end of the day it's the same result.

This tool of exemption has a tremendous amount of utility to negotiate any instance in which the incorporation of external influences poses a threat to group ethos. This type of ethos-work offers a strategy to allow the strength of a single ethos to take precedent over a given violation or threat to the group ethos.

Ethos-work constitutes those strategies used to manage violations of group ethos of all varieties. I would hypothesize that frequent and excessive ethos-work -- particularly of the open rebuke variety -- would be suggestive of a lack of health. The clear examples of ethos-work

highlighted here, I believe, are indicative of the general positive health of the group ethoi I was fortunate to investigate for this report. The three bands who accepted my request to participate in this study have what I would commend, based on my personal experience, as a healthy shared group ethos. In each case the members of the bands were selected by each other because their individual ethoi were consubstantial, making each individual member capable of giving unified performances of group ethos and creating a basis for violation management and repair. Each group performed ethos-work only when in the course of their performances threats were detected and required attention. Ethos-work is surely not limited to the three strategies identified here and group's whose collective ethos is not so 'healthy' would likely experience far more threats and manage them through additional means. It is my hope that future investigations into group ethos might broaden our understanding of the types of ethos-work deployed by the endless array of groups communicating and "manifesting" the virtues of the groups they "speak to and for."

*Talking about it, without talking about 'It': The (Un) Spoken Nature of Group Ethos.*

In 2005 after an unsuccessful tour, I left my indie rock band and went back to school. Sometime early in my career as a graduate student I re-encountered Aristotle's concept of ethos. For years I struggled to understand the tidal push and pull that the morals of those indie bands had placed on nearly all of our group decisions. It also occurred to me that I could clearly articulate what those standards were for each and every band, but I could not recall conversations where pre-conceptions of group's ethics were discussed openly or explicitly. Could it be that group ethos is formed and reproduced entirely through implicit means? The impetus for this project was largely to discover how I, and my then teammates, could have such a concrete vision of our group ethos without ever articulating it overtly. The seven value domains identified above bring clear focus to the ethos-markers and corresponding virtues we used to produce and

reproduce those group ethoi, and prove that back then my cohorts and I were talking about our group ethos all the time; we just did not know it.

My proposition regarding the tacit nature of group ethos was repeatedly confirmed in my conversations with these three indie acts. When asked to describe their “code of honor” none of the three acts promptly spouted a prefabricated motto or vision statement indicating an explicit ‘code,’ this in spite of the fact that over the course of our conversations it was quite clear that these artists have a highly articulated sense of what virtues their groups’ ethos lives and dies by. Instead, each band, in its own way, fumbled through an open process of ‘thinking out loud’ with varying results, including overt remarks about how odd it was to talk about it openly. As a result of their exposing things normally hidden in the codes of their indie discourses, Big Eyes went so far as to describe their group interview as “marriage counseling”:

Mike: Are you getting the honest shit you were looking for?

Ken: Let’s start off this interview, suck each other’s dicks.

Mike: Well, these are the things... It’s interesting, cause’ we said at the beginning of the interview...

Jon: That’s some good conversation right there.

Mike: ... we said that we are in this together because we think the same way and now we’re actually discussing all the stuff we never discuss.

Ken: Yes.

Mike: Because we don’t have to.

Ken: This feels like marriage counseling for our band.

In their group conversation The Mazinaw’s Joe, unsure of the answer, asks the group directly if they had any problems accepting a paycheck from a corporate sponsor:

Joe: We don't have any rules like we would never do a sponsorship deal with like..  
Coors? Right?

Paul: Fuck no, I love their vented wide mouth can.

In our individual interview, Mike (Big Eyes) had this to say about the implicit nature his groups' ethos:

Mike: **These** are the things we don't have to talk about. I don't have to tell the guys to have energy on stage. We don't have to talk about efficiency.. we just make sure it goes down that way. WE don't have to talk about hooks it's understood.

For these musicians, group ethos is constituted primarily through an implicit process using the discourses and ethos-markers identified in the value domains outlined above which embody the values and beliefs of the group. In considering my own history with group ethoi, I searched my recollection and could not think of a time when any of the bands I have been in engaged openly in discussions of ethos, but as is often the case - I was wrong. These case studies revealed a circumstantial deviation from the implicitness that typifies the perception and performance of a group ethos. A group ethos can become explicit when a legitimate threat to ethos is detected and therefore demands negotiation in order for the group to move forward.

Despite Ontario's commitment to the belief that music should be an acceptable way to 'work for a living,' they provide an exemplar of an overt discussion of ethos in order to deal effectively with a potential threat to group ethos. This passage not only shows the band's awareness of their own group ethos, as well as what a significant violation would mean to their career, but it also shows the group delineating a point of no return, an active and open negotiation of ethos in the face of the possibility of selling out resulting from a specific impending threat. The following story was in response to a sponsorship deal that would have

contracted the band to promote a brand name product from the stage:

Andy: Gordon tell em' the number that we came up with that we didn't dare ask them.

Gord: That's so ridiculous.

Andy: We came up with a number and then we didn't ask them because we knew it was offensive.

Gord: No. Well, because we all sat down and talked about it when we got this email.

And it was sort of a joke, but also sort of serious. Ah, where we're like ok?

Andy: What would it take?

Gord: What would it take for us to actually be comfortable doing something... Like, how much money would you actually have to pay us to make up for the damage we would do ourselves by playing that show? And we were like ten.... Ten grand? I don't even remember what it. I don't even remember what we came up with.

Stew: I think it was like 50, because we all decided how much we needed.. We all decided how much we needed to get out of debt, buy a new van and then leave and go on tour.

Andy: That's a crazy-ass number.

Gord: I think, yeah.. It was...it was the amount that each of us would need to get out of debt and move away from here so, that we wouldn't be so embarrassed.

Andy: So, we could start over somewhere else.

Of the three acts, Ontario also appears to be the most likely to have open discussions related to the character of the group ethos. In this passage Andy mentions another explicit conversation regarding the group's ethos, but his response again implies that a threat of some

kind was present in order to spark the debate on what virtues would be upheld by the group:

Andy: The three of us are kind of torn on where our individual lines are. And that's sort of like something that we had concluded on Monday night on a ... in a different direction, you know. Talking about something else, but...

As the previous examples illustrate, a central tenet of indie ethos holds that in most cases to talk explicitly about a "shared worldview" or the character of the group is to violate it. Unlike the bands that many of these artists view as ostensibly produced in a "factory" and whose "manifested virtues" appear to be anything but natural, a Persona & Attitude of indie authenticity says that to openly construct a group ethos would be just the sort of contrivance that could permanently mar any groups' status as a "real" band. Only when a clear and present danger exists does the risk of overt discussion -- with its potential for conflict -- become necessary. The implicit nature of a band's ethos functions to make possible their various unified team performances without regularly exposing the insignificant disparities that exist within their individual, group and sub-cultural performances of it. The unspoken nature of group ethos permits conflicts and tensions to exist without being confronted or problematized unnecessarily, which might otherwise threaten unit cohesion or the perception and performance of 'the character of the group's Character.'

#### *The Functions of Ethos: Formation & Foundation*

With the tacit nature of ethos established, we turn next to the ways in which ethos is employed as a tool to accomplish certain tasks related to group formation, foundation and continuation. The remainder of this section will explore the ways in which ethos is *used* to bring artists of consonant character together, establish a foundation to keep them together and provide the platform from which the exemptions we have just seen are made.

*Unified Performance & Ethos as a tool to 'Come Together.'*

The examples discussed throughout stand clearly as evidence that ethos is used as a tool to establish consubstantiality and therefore compatibility, to bring together individuals who possess a similar ethos and who are capable of giving consistent performances of a constitutive group ethos. Goffman (1959) states: “It is apparent that if performers are concerned with maintaining a line they will select as teammates those who can be trusted to perform properly” (p. 91). Goffman (1959) further illustrates the importance of selecting members who can be counted on to consistently maintain a ‘unified performance’ of group ethos avoiding the deployment of “off key” notes:

Perhaps most important of all, we must note that a false impression maintained by an individual in any one of his routines may be a threat to the whole relationship or role of which the routine is only one part, for a discreditable disclosure in one area of an individual’s activity will throw doubt on the many areas of activity in which he may have nothing to conceal.” (pp. 64-65)

When faced with a new role such as membership in a band, Goffman (1959) argues that the individual members are given few “cues, hints, and stage directions,” but that as a result of their ability to recognize the consubstantial ethos-markers that are present: “The individual will already have a fair idea of what modesty, deference, or righteous indignation looks like, and can make a pass at playing these bits when necessary” (pp. 72-73).

When asked to describe what qualities or characteristics about each other brought them together to form a “musical We” the artists described assessments of consonant ethos across the seven primary discourses including having the “same head” about: (Big Eyes) - “friendship,” “shared musical worldview,” and shared “attitude”; (The Mazinaw) – “work ethic,” “to be

bonded,” and “similar goals, you want the same things”; (Ontario) – “songwriting ability,” “drive,” “their sense of how to be in the business of music,” “dedication,” and “comfortability.”

In this excerpt Stewart (Ontario) describes his initial assessments of the consonant ethoi of the two men who would become his bandmates:

Stew: ... Just like, not saying I am like a seasoned veteran at that point, but I’ve played with a lot of people and it was just like.. I kept .. I mean he..you know.. these two individuals in particular stuck out among everybody that I’d ever played or seen. Just their kind of drive. Their sense of not only playing .. playing music, writing music, but ..their kind of sense of how to be in the business of music Um, you know like.. what I told several people like: “Oh, like we’re starting this band and like between Andy and Gordon I think they know everybody, so like, like.. we’re set.” Like, just so many different levels. Not just like: “Oh, this guy’s a sweet guitar player, but like you know, what is this guy like for ideas or writing? Or, does he know people? Or, like how does this person work? And I think both of them, I just.. I liked where.. on every kind of.... On all levels of ..music they were exactly what I would want to be in a band with. So, it was just like kind of a no question type of thing. And that took some time and I mean we had to like talk and find out those things, but..you know, that was a big part of it for me.

*Foundation: ‘Let’s Stay Together.’*

As I look back at the bands I’ve been in, I realize that those that worked best shared a strong foundation and moral center which I now understand to be a unified group ethos. The groups that failed were those that came together under the pretense of consubstantiality and similar ethos, but discovered over time that certain members were consistently incapable of

“performing properly.” How many times have we heard the cliché “artistic differences” used to explain the break-up of a longstanding musical act? I now wonder how many of those differences could be more accurately described as “differences of ethos.”

Examples of sustainability as a function of group ethos were prevalent in the three data sets. Here Dave of Big Eyes describes how a unified group ethos contributes to success in the songwriting process:

Dave: I think that it plays a big factor. And that’s a lot of that unspoken thing that we don’t even talk about. But, like you know ah.. Ken will play some Badfinger riff, and it’s not really the Badfinger riff or whatever, but it’s totally something that sounds like that. And then pretty soon Jon comes up with another part that kind of sounds like Badfinger and then pretty soon Mike starts going with it, you know what I mean so it’s weird nobody’s saying “hey let’s do this” but, it’s kind of like you flow together [later in the interview] .. so when we all come together it’s kind of funny because it really shows you know, you can hear.. influences coming from people without ever saying a word. And it kind of forms where you’ve going a little bit.. And so it’s kind of like a weird wave, where you’re not really talking your just kind of playing and.. it’s pretty cool. Pretty cool.

In this excerpt Mick explains how the shared values of “work ethic” and “drive” keep the band together and the relationship healthy as they strive towards common goals:

Mick: Well, there’s like something in all three of us individually, call it wanderlust or drive or what have you. I mean all of us.....One of the major attractors for me is because all of us want something. All want the same thing and all willing to do you know the necessary.. sometimes even shittiest shit to get to the end result you

know like the carrot on the line out in front of us. And to find three other people that feel that passionate and exact about the end all objective is definitely you know.. you know it's a dream come true when you're a musician just because I've played in so many other bands where it wasn't [that way] and not everyone had that drive. And it just goes so far, and it's like you being the one that's like holding it together and the driving force and you're just trying to keep two things from ripping apart at once and then it just gets out of your hands. So, to actually find four people in the world that can get along and go after something all on the same wave length is pretty rare and that's a lot of the attraction to this band or my appreciation for it... comes from that kind of sentiment.

Big Eyes's Mike and Jon provide further confirmation of the utility of a unified group ethos at the foundational level as they deploy the implicit argument that a group with a fractured sense of ethos is not worth the "time" or trouble:

Mike: um..for me it's, it's um...anybody that I play in a band with has, has to have the same.... worldview, about 'the world' of music. You know what I mean...like friendship is extremely important and obviously getting along with people in all the weird situations that you get put in when your put in a band is very important. But if [they] had alarmingly different opinions on music from me then I wouldn't be playing with them.

Jon: exactly

Mike: ..and I won't ever...play in a band seriously, because that's what I like to do... with anybody that doesn't have, ah.. similar tastes and ideas about what gets them off about music. If it wasn't for.. all of the, the shared ideas about music that we

have, then I don't think that the band would work. And, it probably...

Jon: it would be just too much work.

### *Chapter Summary*

In this chapter, we have moved beyond the specific value domains and discourses being used by these artists to perceive and perform a constitutive ethos, in an effort to unpack the functional utilities available to groups once that ethos is formed; i.e., the ways in which ethos is a utility; *our character in action through discourse*. As we have seen in the example above of Ken's (Big Eyes) willingness to go on American Idol and Dave's subsequent work to address that potential threat, after group virtues have been formulated that same group ethos can be used as a discursive tool for the purpose of violation and threat management, which I have called ethos-work. Ethos is also used to move beyond initial identification and consubstantiality to establish the initial foundation required for the perception and performance of a new group's ethos; as we have seen in Stewart's (Ontario) recollection of the qualities that drew him to Andy and Gordon. And, finally as we see in Mike's (Big Eyes) concern for a "shared musical worldview," group ethos is used to unify and hold together the individual members of the group through sustained consubstantiality and re-negotiation throughout changes and permutations to the original group ethos. And, as the numerous comments above regarding the tacit nature of their virtues confirm, nearly all this work is done through implicit means, except when, as I have shown, specific threats or violations to ethos warrant the express discussion of group ethics and standards.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

#### *Findings and Implications*

This study began with the proposition that the sensitizing concept of ethos might be best seen as our *character in action through discourse*. For these indie music artists, group ethos is *their* character in action through discourse. Group ethos is socially constituted through a constant discursive articulation of the shared moral imperatives and virtues of the individuals. The members of these groups perceive their own ethos, and the ethos of their music groups, as they interpret and redeploy the ethos-markers used to define the dominant moral values of their collective. Members of the group then work in concert to give unified performances of that group ethos and negotiate challenges to its stability through the same discursive means that drew them together.

In this thesis I have shown evidence in support of at least four primary conclusions and with those findings a number of implications for future research. First, I have shown how Erving Goffman's theories of self-presentation and performance are a resource for scholars seeking to better understand the concepts of ethos and group ethos. Through the dramatic perspectives of Goffman, Aristotle and Burke, I have shown how the application of performance theory in the analysis of interview data is a useful framework for the discovery of 'the character of our Character,' or the virtues and moral imperatives driving the formation and reproduction of group ethos for the artists in this investigation.

*RQ 1: How do individual music artists perceive and perform their ethos?;*

*RQ 2: How do indie music groups work together to perceive and perform their ethos?*

Second, to answer my two primary research questions, I developed a set of seven high-

order value domain categories. I then used those value domains to identify the dominant ethos-markers and corresponding themes, virtues and moral imperatives used by these artists as a means to perceive and perform their group indie ethos. As previously stated the individual ethoi of the members of Big Eyes, The Mazinaw and Ontario, while present, were conjoined or subsumed entirely under the group ethos of each act. Unable to address them separately with any clarity, in the analysis stage I collapsed my initial dichotomous questions into one unified research question. *RQ 1a: How do the individuals that constitute indie music groups work together to perceive and perform their ethos?*

These value domains provide a place to begin studies investigating the ethos-markers and group ethoi not just of indie musicians, but music artists of all types. The value of establishing a set of primary value domains has implications far beyond this single study. These rubrics could be used to match artists with other artists of consonant ethos in order to create new collaborations with a greater chance of long term artistic and interpersonal success. Additionally, this exemplar of discourse analysis strategies could be similarly deployed to assess “the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks....” of any “group,” be they constituted for the purpose of social movements, small businesses or other unified artistic endeavors (Halloran, 1982, p. 62).

Third, I have shown that group ethos is perceived and performed primarily through implicit means. With little exception, only when the group ethos is threatened, are the ethics, values and morals of a group discussed out in the open. Group ethos is largely an unspoken process achieved through constitutive discursive performances of the virtues held by the group, deployed as ethos-markers and moral imperatives. The evidence presented here shows how my attempts to make explicit the group ethos of Big Eyes, The Mazinaw and Ontario often resulted in remarks about the exceptional nature of that express discussion of the codes that motivate

group behavior and cohesion.

Fourth, I have shown that as these artists are using their *character in action through discourse*, it serves multiple functions. Ethos is more than a static determination of ‘the character of our Character’; it is also a discursive tool which is being *used*. This analysis has shown how management and reparations to group ethos in the face of potential threats and violation constitutes ethos-work, evident in a group’s ability to adapt to and exempt those group members and external heroes whose various failures to “perform properly” might otherwise create potential threats and violations for a given group ethos. Ethos also functions as a tool for identification and the consubstantiality of character and values, which act to bring individuals together to form groups and their subsequent group ethos. In turn, lastly, group ethos provides the core of morals and “virtues” that binds artists together in meaningful ways which contribute to the survival and longevity of the group.

Additionally, this modest sample of indie talk illustrates the richness of opportunity within that discourse community for scholars of communication. I have shown how core indie values of control of your music and career, oppositionality to mainstream business and commercialism and the open rejection of popular trends are alive in the language style, ethos-markers and indie morals of these artists. With its assortment of morally charged discourses, indie represents a compelling research site, rife with topics for future investigation. For those who claim indie “evolves,” this study has shown compelling evidence, both implicitly and explicitly, of recent shifts in the broader indie ethos (cf. Andrews, 2006). I shown that these artists espouse a variety of diverse ethics that sometimes conflict with each other and with broader or more traditional notions of indie, such as feelings about sponsorship and endorsement, acceptance of business as a tool for increased control of your art and the moral imperative that

indie musicians have the right to make a living doing what they do. These potentially tectonic movements indicate that additional research into indie discourses is required to update and augment the work of authors like Fonarow (2006) and Kruse (2003) whose thoughtful scholarship and appreciation of this sub-culture known as indie grounded this research.

The findings of this thesis also support the larger proposition that an investigation of group ethos is essential to any ethnographic research. Understanding the discourses through which the “virtues” of a given group or culture, ‘the character of a collective Character,’ or more simply, a group’s ethos, are “manifested,” communicated and reproduced, has been shown here to offer a revealing glimpse into the moralities at the center of collaborative group communication; as well as a framework to unpack the communication breakdowns that have the potential to become the grounds where collaborations fail on a character level – or ‘differences of ethos.’ A clearer understanding of the virtues and moral imperatives behind any group’s ethos can only serve to enhance any analysis of group oriented discourses.

#### *Limitations*

Perhaps the biggest limitation of this study is its modest sample size. This study is neither prescriptive nor definitive. Instead, it represents one humble step in the larger project to investigate ethos, group ethos and indie. That being said, this sample was not easy to come by. Recruiting and interviewing a matched group of three or four research subjects once all together, and once individually, proved to be logistically challenging. Future research based on this study might investigate larger samples of music groups, samples from around the country rather than one metropolitan area and alternate genres of music such as country, hip-hop or metal. Additionally, a survey using quantitative measures based on the seven value domains identified in this analysis could potentially offer future studies access to a much wider sample without the

logistical complications of a solely qualitative approach.

While I hope this study confirms the utility of the performance lens provided by Goffman, Aristotle and Burke, I must concede that like any frame it is but a single tool in a box of many that can be used to illuminate and analyze discourse. Burke's notion of "terministic screen" is helpful to summarize the utility and limitations of any theoretical perspective. The "dramatistic" or "performance" screen I have employed in this analysis is at once a "reflection of reality... a selection of reality; and... a deflection of reality" (1966, p. 45). Additionally, as Goffman points out these discourses are not the performances of stage actors, but of real people using ethos to deploy their *character in action through discourse* consciously and unconsciously for various ends: "The stage presents things that are make-believe; presumably life presents things that are real and sometimes not well rehearsed" (Goffman, 1959, p. x).

As a practitioner of qualitative research I have argued the benefits of "the rhetoric of socially situated speakers" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Interviews allowed me to analyze rich data that I hope has led to what Geertz called "thick description" which is too often lost in purely quantitative measures. However, I agree with Fontana and Frey's (2008) contention that interview data and its transcription are not neutral, but are instead a "contextually bound and mutually created story" (p. 116). Silverman (2006) reminds us, the phenomena always 'escapes': "Interviews do not tell us directly about people's 'experiences' but instead offer indirect 'representations' of those experiences" (p. 117). Throughout this study I attempted to remain cognizant of the ways in which my biases function on the data, and I acknowledge that my role as a researcher affected the responses of interviewees and my analysis of them. My acquaintance and friendship with the artists and my role as an indie colleague no doubt afforded me insider access and helped to elicit the "back stage" performances contained here. As an insider, I was

able to collect data that an “out-group” researcher would likely not gain access to. But, there can be no doubt that the interviews themselves constitute both interactions and constructions where the “interviewer and interviewee actively construct some version of the world appropriate to what we take to be self-evident about the person to whom we are speaking and the context of the question” (Silverman, 2006, p. 118).

Throughout this investigation I was many times “surprised” by my data, which Silverman (2006) commends as “a good test of a successful, non-partisan study” (p. 359). While I am confident in my efforts to distance myself and to put my “preconceptions” aside allowing my observations to be grounded first and foremost in the data, I have no illusions about the impact of my own experiences on this project as a “terministic screen” which functions as both a benefit and – albeit unintended – detriment of the project. No discourse, or discourse analysis, is neutral or free of personal biases and this one is no exception.

#### *Final Thoughts*

In closing, it is my hope that this thesis serves at least one final purpose – to provide a resounding “Yes!” to James Baumlin’s (1994) challenge: “Does ethos remain, in any way, a definable (or defensible) rhetorical concept? Is it at all useful?” (xxvii). I have shown that even if definable only in a sensitizing capacity, ethos is both a defensible and useful concept. I would be satisfied if this analysis contributes in some small but meaningful way to the conversation of ethos alongside the voices of Aristotle, Halloran and Goffman. And, I challenge others to investigate the utility and potential that ethos and group ethos holds for communication scholarship.

In contrast to the body of theory and diversity of thought on the ethos of individuals, a cursory glance at the available literature shows that there is a startling lack of research on the

indispensable concept of group ethos. The music artists who so graciously provided the data for this analysis are only a few examples of individuals and groups using their ethoi together. As communicators, using our *characters in action through discourse* we all feel the presence of our various group ethoi on a daily basis as they influence, constrain and enhance our communication behaviors. As scholars of communication we owe it to ourselves to discover more about this substantial phenomenon of human communication.

## References

- Andrews, C. (2006). If it's cool, creative and different, it's indie. *CNN*. Retrieved March 28, 2010 from: [http://edition.cnn.com/2006/SHOWBIZ/Music/09/19/indie.overview/index.html?section=edition\\_entertainment](http://edition.cnn.com/2006/SHOWBIZ/Music/09/19/indie.overview/index.html?section=edition_entertainment)
- Aristotle. (2001). *Poetics*. In R. Mc Keon (Ed.) & C.D.C. Reeve (Trans.), *The basic works of Aristotle*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Aristotle. (1988). *Politics*. C.D.C. Reeve (Trans.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Aristotle. (1960). *The rhetoric of Aristotle* (Trans L. Cooper). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Aspinal, N., Chipperfield, C., Storck, S. [Producers], Smeaton, B., Wonfor, G. [Directors]. (2003, April). *The Beatles anthology: 1&2* [Motion Picture]. United States: Capitol, UK: Apple Corps.
- Babbie, E. (2004). *The practice of social research*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Baird, K. (2001, July 20). 'Warning' – don't call Green Day a sellout. *Las Vegas Sun*. Retrieved Oct. 9, 2009 from: <http://lasvegassun.com/news/2001/Jul/20/>.
- Bannister, M. (2006). *White boys, white noise: Masculinities and 1980s indie guitar rock*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Bateson, G. (1958). *Naven*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Baumlin, J. (1994). Introduction: Positioning ethos in historical and contemporary theory. In J.S. Baumlin & T. F. Baumlin (Eds.), *Ethos: New essays in rhetorical and critical theory*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press.
- (2008). Beatles' John Lennon 'forgiven' for 'Jesus' claim. *NME News*, November 23, 2008. Retrieved Dec. 4, 2008 from: <http://www.nme.com/news/the-beatles/41232>

- Blumer, H. (1954). What is wrong with social theory? *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 3-10, February, 1954.
- Burke, K. (1945). *A grammar of motives*. New York: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Burke, K. (1966). *Language as symbolic action: Essays on life, literature and method*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Burke, K. (1969). *A rhetoric of motives*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Cicero. (1942). *De oratore*, Books I & II (E.W. Sutton, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Corts, T.E. (1968). Special report: The derivation of ethos. *Speech Monographs*, Vol. 35 Issue 2, p201, 2p; (AN 9935900)
- Deming, M. (n.d.). Meeting people is easy (1999). *New York Times*. Retrieved March 18, 2010 from: <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/177943/Meeting-People-is-Easy/overview>
- Epstein, A. L. (1978). *Ethos and identity*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Evans, M. (1989). Ethos and creativity: The impulse as malleable. In D.Hoppe (Ed.), *Where we live: Essays about Indiana*, (pp. 28-44). Bloomington/Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press.
- Fonarow, W. (2006). *Empire of Dirt: The aesthetics and rituals of British indie music*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Fontana, A. & Frey, J. (2008). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative material*, pp. 115-160. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1988). The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom (trans. J.D. Gauthier). In J. Bernauer & D. Rasmussen (Eds.), *The Final Foucault*, pp. 1-20.

Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Frith, S. (1978). *The sociology of rock*. London: Constable.

Frith, S. (1988). Introduction. In S. Frith (Ed.), *Facing the music*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of cultures*, pp. 3-30. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Giles, D. & Mrowicki, J. (2005). Desire and motivation for fame in group of aspiring musicians: A qualitative study. *Conference Papers - International Communication Association, 2005 Annual Meeting*, pp. 1-21. New York, NY: International Communication Association.

Glaser, B. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Mill Valley, CA.: Sociology Press

Glaser, B. (2004). Remodeling grounded theory. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research Sozialforschung*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Art. 4.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.

Goffman, E. (1981). Footing. In E. Goffman, *Forms of talk*, pp. 124-159. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Goffman, E. (2006). On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. In A. Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), *The discourse reader (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*. New York: Routledge.

Gracyk, T. (2001). *I wanna be me: Rock music and the politics of identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Halloran, S.M. (1975). On the end of rhetoric, classical and modern. *College English*, Vol. 36, pp. 621-631, Feb. 1975.

- Halloran, S. M. (1982). Aristotle's concept of ethos, or if not his somebody else's. *Rhetoric Review, Vol. 1, No. 1, September, 1982.*
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). The process of analysis. In *Ethnography: Principles in practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)*, pp. 205-238. London: Routledge.
- Harper, D. (2008). What's new visually. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative material*, pp. 185-204. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Hudak, G. (1999). The 'sound' identity: Music-making & schooling. In C. McCarthy, G. Hudak, S. Miklaucic & P. Saukko (Eds.), *Sound identities: Popular music and the cultural politics of education*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Hyde, M. (2004). Introduction. In M. Hyde (Ed.). *The ethos of rhetoric*, pp. xi-xxviii. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press.
- Isocrates. (1928). Antidosis. In *Isocrates: Loeb Classical Library Vol. 2.* (Trans. G. Norlin). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Jaworski, A., & Coupland, N. (2008). Introduction: Perspectives on discourse analysis. In A. Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), *The discourse reader*, pp. 1-37. London: Routledge.
- Kohrs Campbell, K. (1982). *The rhetorical act*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Kruse, H. (2003). *Site and sound: Understanding independent music scenes*. New York : Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Lindlof, T. & Taylor, B. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods (2nd Ed.)*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lindquist, J. (2002). *A place to stand: Politics and persuasion in a working-class bar*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Matula, T. (2007, Feb.). Pow! to the people: The Make-up's reorganization of punk rhetoric. *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 19-38.
- May, J. (1988). *Trials of character: The eloquence of Ciceronian ethos*. Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press.
- McCroskey, J.C. (1966). Special report: Scales for the measurement of ethos. *Speech Monographs*, Mar66, Vol. 33 Issue 1, p65, 8p; (AN 9935006).
- McCarthy et al. (1999). Introduction. In C. McCarthy, G. Hudak, S. Miklaucic & P. Saukko (Eds.), *Sound identities: Popular music and the cultural politics of education*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- (n.d.). Biography: Metallica. *Rollingstone.com*. Retrieved Dec. 3, 2008 from: <http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/metallica/biography>.
- Ochs, E. (2008). Transcription as theory. In A. Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), *The discourse reader*, pp. 166-178. London: Routledge.
- Oskenberg Rorty, A. (1976). *Identities of persons*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Patrick, B. (2006). Group ethos and the communication of social action. *Small Group Research*, Vol. 37, No. 5, pp. 425-458.
- Pittmann, C. (2007). Black women writers and the trouble with ethos: Harriet Jacobs, Billie Holiday, and Sister Souljah. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 37: 48-70, 2007.
- Quintilian. (1980). *The institutio oratoria of Quintilian* (H.E. Butler, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Reynolds, S. (2008, Feb. 9). Yorke slams Radiohead 'best of' LP. *Digitalspy.com*. Retrieved March 18, 2010 from: <http://www.digitalspy.co.uk/music/a95605/yorke-slams-radiohead-best-of-lp.html?rss>.

- Sattler, W. (1947). Conceptions of ethos in ancient rhetoric. *Speech Monographs*, Vol. 14, pp. 55-65, 1947.
- sellout. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved September 17, 2009, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sellout>.
- sell-out. (n.d.). *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved September 17, 2009, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sell-out>.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Spradley, J.P. (1980). Doing participant observation. In *Participant Observation*, pp. 53-62. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace.
- Swearingen, C.J. (1994). Ethos: Imitation, impersonation and voice. In J. B. Baumlin & T. F. Baumlin (Eds.), *Ethos: New essays in rhetorical and critical theory*, pp. 115-148. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press.
- Taylor, B. & Bogdan. (1984). Chapter 4: In-depth interviewing. In *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Tracy, K. (2001). Discourse analysis in communication. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H.E. Hamilton (Eds.) *The handbook of discourse analysis*, pp. 725-749. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). The study of discourse. In A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as structures and process* (pp. 1-33). London: Sage.
- Worman, N. (2002). *The cast of character: Style in Greek literature*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Zarefsky, D. (2008). *Public speaking: Strategies for success* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Boston: Pearson.

## APPENDIX

## 1

*Group Interview Question Protocol*

1. Thinking back to the origins of this band, what characteristics and qualities about each other individually brought you together to form a band? Ultimately, what I want to understand is how and why are the three of you playing together?
2. How important to the formation and function of this band are your individual influences? For the music? For group dynamic and cohesion?
3. What is the DNA of this band?
4. Are there any artists that you think have “done it right?” Are there any artists that you regard as examples of what to do? First, artistically and second, professionally.
5. What would this band never do?
6. What things have you seen other artists do that this band would never do?
7. What ideas and concepts would you say constitute the “code of honor” of this band?
8. Has anyone ever questioned your credibility or implied/accused you of selling out?
9. Please closely examine these five photos and then as a group please discuss amongst yourselves how you would like to rank them in order from least credible to most credible?
10. Why did you select this band as most credible?
11. Why did you select this band as least credible?

*Individual Interview Question Protocol*

1. How do you think the individual identities in your band work together to form the band's identity?
2. When you think about the issue area of "credibility, street cred, indie cred" how has that element of this process impacted your career and experience as a band and as a musician?
3. Are there any labels out there currently that you would really like to work with? And if so, why?
4. What are five words that describe what this band is?
5. What are five words that describe what this band is not?
6. The musical landscape is ever changing. What are your thoughts on the difference between the way things are right now from the time you started playing music and being "on the scene" *per se*? What does it mean to be "indie" these days?
7. Is it possible to "sell out" in 2010?

## APPENDIX

## 2

## Tables

*Value Domains, themes and sub-themes*

<b>Value Domains and themes:</b>	<b>Sub-themes:</b>
<b>Persona &amp; Attitude:</b> Virtues related to the topics of general demeanor and authenticity.	Swear you're indie Thou Shalt be "A real band" Thou Shalt Not be "the flavor of the moment" Thou Shalt Be "Weird"
<b>Live Performance:</b> Virtues related to the presentation of the band while on stage in the live setting.	Thou Shalt "Put on a show" Thou Shalt Not "Phone it in" Thou Shalt Strive to "Sound Good" Live
<b>Songcraft &amp; Artistry:</b> Virtues related to songwriting, musical influences, creative achievement in both songs and studio recording and musical aptitude.	Thou Shalt Have a "Shared Musical Worldview" Thou Shalt Be "Aggressive Artists" Thou Shalt Not Make "Mediocre Recordings" Thou Shalt Not Be "A Hack"
<b>The Relationship:</b> Virtues related to interpersonal relationships and attempts to negotiate difference and conflict.	Thou Shalt Be "Friends" Thou Shalt Not Be A Bad "Hang" Thou Shalt Be "family" and "bonded"
<b>The Business of Music:</b> Virtues related to professional ambitions and business practices.	Thou Shalt Practice "smart business" Thou Shalt Be "self-contained" vs "Work with the right people" Thou Shalt "Make a Living Playing Music" Selling Out Isn't What it Used to Be
<b>External Aesthetics:</b> Virtues related to clothing, grooming, concert venues, instruments and equipment.	Thou Shalt "Play the right gear" Thou Shalt Not "Play the wrong clubs" Thou Shalt Not "Wear shorts on stage"
<b>External Audiences:</b> Virtues related to audiences outside the group itself, primarily the indie music scene and artist community.	Thou Shalt "Speak To and For" Indie Thou Shalt Not Pander to "the Kids" Thou Shalt Not Be a "Passive" music fan

*Big Eyes: Are & Are Not's*

<p><b>Big Eyes 'are':</b></p> <p><i>Live Performance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"fun"</li> <li>"loud"</li> <li>"energetic"</li> <li>"A fucking show"</li> </ul> <p><i>Songcraft/Artistry:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"music lovers"</li> <li>"power pop"</li> <li>"relentless"</li> <li>"talented" – Jon</li> <li>"talented" – Mike</li> <li>"hooks"</li> <li>"efficient"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Relationship:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"individuals"</li> <li>"friends"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Business of Music:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"relentless"</li> <li>"selectively motivated"</li> <li>"persistent"</li> </ul> <p><i>External Aesthetics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"fat"</li> <li>"old"</li> </ul> <p><i>Persona/Attitude:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"jaded"</li> <li>"fun"</li> <li>"honest"</li> </ul>	<p><b>Big Eyes 'are not':</b></p> <p><i>Songcraft/Artistry:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"musicians"</li> <li>"reluctant"</li> <li>"grand statements"</li> <li>"you've heard before"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Relationship:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"doormats"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Business of Music:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"diligent workers"</li> <li>"doormats"</li> <li>"marketable"</li> <li>"overly serious"</li> <li>"ambit[ous]"</li> <li>"good work ethic"</li> </ul> <p><i>External Aesthetics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"skinny" – Jon</li> <li>"skinny" - Mike</li> </ul> <p><i>External Audiences:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"popular"</li> <li>"fashionable" – Jon</li> <li>"fashionable" – Mike</li> </ul> <p><i>Persona/Attitude:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"pretentious" - Ken</li> <li>"fake"</li> <li>"pretentious" - Jon</li> <li>"lame"</li> <li>"pretentious" – Dave</li> <li>"putting on airs"</li> </ul>
--	---

*The Mazinaw: Are & Are Not's*

<p><b>The Mazinaw 'are':</b></p> <p><i>Live Performance:</i>  "fun"  "hard"</p> <p><i>Songcraft/Artistry:</i>  "bonafide"</p> <p><i>The Relationship:</i>  "family"</p> <p><i>The Business of Music:</i>  "smart"  "tenacious"  "bonafide"  "hard working"  "stubborn"  "dedicated"  "hungry"  "committed"  "smarter than we used to be"  "focused"</p> <p><i>External Audiences:</i>  "respected"</p> <p><i>Persona/Attitude:</i>  "noble"  "For the people"  "romantic"  "excited"  "passionate"  "genuine"  "humble"</p>	<p><b>The Mazinaw 'are not':</b></p> <p><i>Songcraft/Artistry:</i>  "gimmicky"  "afraid"</p> <p><i>The Business of Music:</i>  "flaky"  "content"  "under-achievers"  "lazy"  "very lucky"  "wealthy"  "gimmicky"  "lazy"  "unmotivated"</p> <p><i>External Audiences:</i>  "particularly trendy"  "Flavor of the week"</p> <p><i>Persona/Attitude:</i>  "effete"  "contrived"  "privileged"  "ungrateful"  "conformists"  "silly"  "sad"  "untouchable"</p>
---	--

*Ontario: Are & Are Not's*

<p><b>Ontario 'are':</b></p> <p><i>Songcraft/Artistry:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"impassioned"</li> <li>"driven"</li> <li>"hungry"</li> <li>"ambitious"</li> <li>"goal-oriented"</li> <li>"ambitious"</li> <li>"aggressive artists"</li> <li>"landscape pioneers"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Relationship:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"bonded"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Business of Music:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"driven"</li> <li>"hungry"</li> <li>"eager"</li> <li>"diligent"</li> <li>"goal-oriented"</li> </ul> <p><i>Persona/Attitude:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"goofy"</li> <li>"appreciative"</li> <li>"prideful"</li> <li>"friendly"</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ontario 'are not':</b></p> <p><i>Songcraft/Artistry:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"satisfied" – Gordon</li> <li>"satisfied" – Andy</li> <li>"laid back"</li> <li>"simple"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Relationship:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"simple"</li> <li>"individuals"</li> <li>"selfish"</li> </ul> <p><i>The Business of Music:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"satisfied" - Gordon</li> <li>"passive"</li> <li>"satisfied" – Andy</li> <li>"laid back"</li> <li>"money driven"</li> </ul> <p><i>External Audiences:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"narrow-minded"</li> </ul> <p><i>Persona/Attitude:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"pretentious"</li> <li>"unenthusiastic"</li> <li>"egocentric"</li> <li>"jaded"</li> <li>"hedonistic"</li> <li>"humble-less"</li> </ul>
--	---

*Persona & Attitude: Heroes & Villains/Thou Shalt's & Thou Shalt Not's*

<p><b>Heroes &amp; Thou Shalt's:</b></p> <p><b>Heroes:</b>          "The Replacements" – Big Eyes          "The Rolling Stones" – The Mazinaw          "actual musicians" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Those who are "not burned out yet" – Ontario: Gordon          "actual musician" – Ontario: Gordon</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt:</b>          Have a "sense of humor" – Big Eyes          Treat your "crew" with respect – The Mazinaw          "work hard" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Be a "real band" – The Mazinaw: Paul          Do it "at all costs" – Ontario: Andy          Be able to "drink" – Ontario</p>	<p><b>Villains &amp; Thou Shalt Not's:</b></p> <p><b>Villains:</b>          "cheesedicks" – Big Eyes          "Republican Party" – The Mazinaw: Topper          "Radiohead" – The Mazinaw: Topper          Bands who are "over it" – The Mazinaw: Topper          "celebrity [musicians]" – Ontario: Gordon</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt Not:</b>          Take yourselves "too seriously" – Big Eyes: Ken          Attempt to "fit the scheme" – Big Eyes          Be "chumps" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "disrespect" or "embarrass the band" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Be "pretentious" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Be "cocky" &amp; "arrogant" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Be "difficult to handle" – The Mazinaw: Mick          Perform "faux modesty" – Ontario</p>
---	--

*Live Performance: Heroes & Villains/Thou Shalt's & Thou Shalt Not's*

<p><b>Heroes &amp; Thou Shalt's:</b></p> <p><b>Heroes:</b>          "KISS" – Big Eyes: Mike          "Queen" – The Mazinaw: Mick          "Motley Crue" – The Mazinaw: Mick</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt:</b>          Give the audience "their money's worth" – Ontario: Stewart          "sound as good as we can" – Ontario: Gordon</p>	<p><b>Villains &amp; Thou Shalt Not's:</b></p> <p><b>Villains:</b>          "MySpace" &amp; "pre-conceived notions about a band" – Ontario: Gordon</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt Not:</b>          Be "pretentious" live – Big Eyes          Play "Juno-esque Soundtrack" music in a bar – The Mazinaw: Mick          "spit water on the crowd" – Ontario: Gordon          Be "over-exposed" – Ontario: Gordon</p>
--	---

*Songcraft & Artistry: Heroes & Villains/Thou Shalt's & Thou Shalt Not's*

<p><b>Heroes &amp; Thou Shalt's:</b></p> <p><b>Heroes:</b>          "The Beatles" – Big Eyes          "Cheap Trick" – Big Eyes          "splendid musicians" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "Cheap Trick" – The Mazinaw: Mick          "Green Day &amp; Weezer" – The Mazinaw: Paul          "Ben Gibbard" &amp; "Death Cab for Cutie" Ontario: Stewart / Andy          "The Beatles" – Ontario: Gordon          "The Beach Boys" – Ontario: Gordon          "differences" – Ontario          "Radiohead" – Ontario: Andy &amp; Stewart          "Broken Social Scene" – Ontario: Andy</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt:</b>          Have "melody" &amp; "hooks" – Big Eyes: Mike          Look back for musical influences – Big Eyes          Be "street" &amp; "raw" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Make "good records" – The Mazinaw: Mick          Make "good songs" – The Mazinaw: Mick          Make music that "means something" – The Mazinaw: Paul          "Create something new" – Ontario: Gordon          "Fuck the norm" – Ontario: Stewart          Be "just more human" – Ontario: Andy</p>	<p><b>Villains &amp; Thou Shalt Not's:</b></p> <p><b>Villains:</b>          "Art Alexakis (Everclear)" – Big Eyes          Make "background music" – Big Eyes: Jon          Make "old bastard music" – The Mazinaw: Topper          "fucking hack(s)" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "art project" bands – The Mazinaw: Joe          "pure art" &amp; "avant garde" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "Blast Beat/Dance Core" – The Mazinaw: Paul &amp; Topper          "Owl City" – Ontario: Stewart          Those who "sound the part" – Ontario: Stewart          "Dave Matthews Band" – Ontario: Stewart</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt Not:</b>          Use "pre-recorded material" live – Big Eyes          Be "overdeveloped" &amp; "over-sculpted" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Be "the trend of the moment" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Use an "auto tuner" – The Mazinaw: Topper          "outsource music" – Ontario: Stewart          "sound really young" – Ontario: Stewart          Look back for musical influences – Ontario</p>
---	---

*The Relationship: Heroes & Villains/Thou Shalt's & Thou Shalt Not's*

<p><b>Heroes &amp; Thou Shalt's:</b></p> <p><b>Heroes:</b>          "Pearl Jam" – The Mazinaw          "Green Day" – The Mazinaw          "Foo Fighters" – The Mazinaw          "Beastie Boys" – The Mazinaw          "AC/DC" – The Mazinaw: Topper</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt:</b>          "work together" - The Mazinaw: Topper          Be "an entity" – Ontario: Stewart          Be "good friends" – Ontario: Gordon          Be a "person you can rely on" &amp; "trust" – Ontario: Gordon          "work together" &amp; "hang out" – Ontario</p>	<p><b>Villains &amp; Thou Shalt Not's:</b></p> <p><b>Villains:</b>          "hired guns" – The Mazinaw: Topper</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt Not:</b>          "Break up, ever" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Stop "striving to communicate" – Ontario: Andy</p>
---	---

*The Business of Music: Heroes & Villains/Thou Shalt's & Thou Shalt Not's*

<p><b>Heroes &amp; Thou Shalt's:</b></p> <p><b>Heroes:</b>          "Wilco" – Big Eyes          "The Beatles" – Big Eyes          "The Replacements" – Big Eyes          "working stiffs" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "lower class" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "Sub Pop" – Ontario: Stewart          "Nonesuch" – Ontario: Stewart          "Of Montreal" &amp; "Death Cab for Cutie" – Ontario: Andy          "Saddle Creek" – Ontario: Andy</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt:</b>          Be "organic" in business practices – Big Eyes          "earn a living playing music" – The Mazinaw: Topper          "smart business"          "pay" your "dues" – The Mazinaw: Topper          "Do what you love for a living" – Ontario: Gordon          Be "organized" – Ontario: Gordon          Have the "same head" – Ontario: Gordon          Be "self-reliant" – Ontario: Andy          "make a living" – Ontario: Andy</p>	<p><b>Villains &amp; Thou Shalt Not's:</b></p> <p><b>Villains:</b>          "puppets" – Big Eyes          "gimmicky" – The Mazinaw: Topper          "upper class" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "rich people" – The Mazinaw: Joe          "Western capitalism" – The Mazinaw: Joe</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt Not:</b>          Be "calculating" in business practices – Big Eyes          Have "dumb business practices" – The Mazinaw: Joe          Be "the flavor of the moment" – The Mazinaw: Paul          Be "homogenized" &amp; "factory" – The Mazinaw: Paul          Work from a "purely business perspective" – Ontario: Gordon</p>
--	---

*External Aesthetics: Heroes & Villains/Thou Shalt's & Thou Shalt Not's*

<p><b>Heroes &amp; Thou Shalt's:</b></p> <p><b>Heroes:</b> "road worn black t-shirts" – Ontario: Stewart</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt:</b> "smile" – Big Eyes "put on no airs" – Ontario: Andy "smile on stage" – Ontario: Andy</p>	<p><b>Villains &amp; Thou Shalt Not's:</b></p> <p><b>Villains:</b> "cliques" &amp; "groups" – Ontario: Stewart Those who "look the part" – Ontario: Stewart</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt Not:</b> Wear "blush" / "make-up" – Big Eyes Try to "look tough" – Big Eyes Try to look "fresh out of the salon" – Big Eyes Be a band "that little kids love" – The Mazinaw: Paul Wear "pink eye shadow" – The Mazinaw: Joe Be "sloppy" – The Mazinaw: Joe</p>
---	---

*External Audiences: Heroes & Villains/Thou Shalt's & Thou Shalt Not's*

<p><b>Heroes &amp; Thou Shalt's:</b></p> <p><b>Heroes:</b> Those who "see it live" – Ontario: Stewart</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt:</b> Be those who "go to shows" &amp; "support" indie – Ontario: Stewart Be those who are "buying CD's" and own "the artifact" – Ontario: Stewart</p>	<p><b>Villains &amp; Thou Shalt Not's:</b></p> <p><b>Villains:</b> "punk rock children" – The Mazinaw: Topper Those in the scene who "look indie" – Ontario: Stewart</p> <p><b>Thou Shalt Not:</b> Go "just digital" – Ontario: Stewart</p>
--	---