

**"I'm not sure how much this was about music:" Networks, Locations and Rituals of
Identity in Pittsburgh's Grassroots Music and Arts Scene**

by

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Scenes are dynamic social relationships and experiences that are comprised of networks, locations, and rituals. Scene networks form in recognizable meeting places around activities such as live music shows, bike collectives, drag performances and gambling rings. This paper explores how cultural producers (i.e. band members, DJs, event organizers) perceive and use networks, locations and rituals in Pittsburgh's grassroots music and arts scenes. Whereas previous research examines the experience of a single scene, this study explores the many ways that cultural producers activate a variety of scenes under the same umbrella. This study examines how predominately white scene networks perceive and benefit from gentrification while also attending to how gender and sexual identity affect where scene events are held. Women and queer identified artists do not have the same options as their heterosexual male counterparts when it comes to creating scene events in places opened by urban revitalization projects. This study also demonstrates that the rituals cultural producers engage are particular to the identities they seek to enact. Cultural producers use rituals of identity to deconstruct hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality. Through performance rituals, participants empower stigmatized social identities.

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

My study explores grassroots music and arts scenes in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's East End. In this section, I describe three white grassroots music scenes enacted by women cultural producers to show the myriad ways women activate such scenes.

***Smells Like Gina*: “Women work harder to get less far”**

“The show is starting. Come in now!” screams a young woman from the basement entryway. This woman wearing a suit jacket, bowtie and bleached mohawk is ecstatic about the *Smells Like Gina* “reunion” show. The show costs a \$5 “donation” and features an all local female line-up that includes the acoustic singer/songwriter, *She Feels Like Pittsburgh*, Indie-rockers *Flotilla Way*, and self-proclaimed Riot Grrrl punks, *Smells Like Gina*. Two of the *Smells Like Gina* members have moved away for college. Tonight, they are reuniting with friends.

The show is in the basement of a Victorian apartment building in Pittsburgh's East End, just a block from the emerging Penn Avenue Arts District corridor. Throughout the evening, band members and friends feel their way through the dark musty room, balancing sound equipment and instruments on top of plaster containers and paint cans. They make space happen where no space is available yet never voice frustration. Besides, basement shows epitomize do-it-yourself punk rock.



Figure 1: *Smells Like Gina* "Peeling Back the Beef Curtains" debut album cover.

"Who in here loves Gina?" screams the lead singer of *Smells Like Gina* when the band finally takes the floor. Tickled, a group of women laugh as they shout in response, "Woo Hoo!" and "I do!" Excitement is thick in the gritty basement air as *Smells Like Gina* play *Bikini Kill* covers and their feminist anthem "Women work harder to get less far" song. Young women in their late teens and early 20s wear big smiles as they dance with their girlfriends, sing and mosh with their friends. Several women have dyed hair, mini mohawks and punk mullets. Many dress in thrift store chic, chain wallets and dark-rimmed glasses. When *Smells Like Gina* ends their set, the audience begs for more. A group of women dancing within feet of the band exclaim "We don't care what it is. Just make up something!" A short pause fills the room when a young

woman shouts in an amusing tone, “Women *do* work harder to get less far,” a comment that is once again met with ear ringing cheers of elation.

My Niece Denise: “We’re so punk that we aren’t punk”

“Wipe those fucking smirks off your face!” is the first thing I hear while climbing the staircase at the Brillo Box, a swank music lounge located on Penn Avenue in Pittsburgh’s East End. While paying the \$4 door charge, I realize it is the lead singer of *My Niece Denise* teasing the audience. From her body language, she seems to enjoy the audience’s unimpressed reception as she prompts them at the end of a song, “Clap now!” Her relaxed shoulders and broad grin signal to the men congregated at the far end of the room that she is not there to please, she is there to have a good time. A number of audience members laugh at the singer’s satirical humor while others watch her with a dismissive gaze. The audience is predominately male; most are in their early 20s to mid-30s, sporting beards and clean-shaven faces. Some dress in a punk style with dark rimmed glasses and tight jeans, others wear conventionally plaid button-ups and loose fitting pants.

The cohort of men breaks their indifferent silence as one guy yells a lukewarm directive, “Play a fucking song!” Undisturbed, the drummer, bassist and guitar player hold their instruments and wait patiently for the singer as she responds to the man with something like, “You want to fuck me? Eat my pussy!” Even those men showing their enjoyment through dancing are subject to her verbal punishments. The singer confronts a young man dressed like a 1960s Rolling Stones throwback for dancing with a woman “just to get laid.”

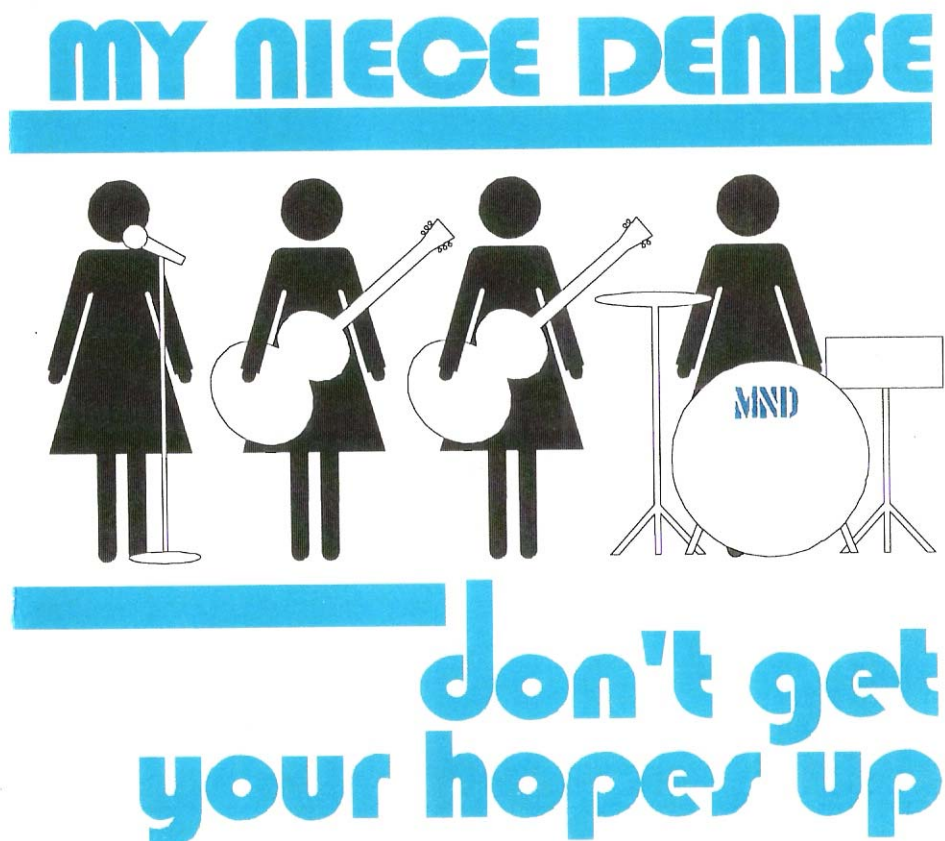


Figure 2: *My Niece Denise* "Don't Get Your Hopes Up" debut album cover.

On this particular night, it is *My Niece Denise*'s CD release for their first album, "Don't Get Your Hopes Up" –an apt title: not because they are unimpressive, but because their whole image is based on the perpetual pre-emptive strike. Musically speaking, the band's sound is a mix of garage, punk, and Goth; it is not aggressive, nor sentimental. The band's nonchalant air can be attributed to the age of the members who are in their mid-30s, an age bracket considered mature in grassroots music and arts scenes. They wear casual sweaters, t-shirts, jeans and long hair. They are not Riot Grrrls nor are they sweet or sexy. As the bassist put it, "we are so punk that we aren't punk."

Operation Sappho: “A good times scene”

“Do you know where you’re going?” an athletic doorman asks when I enter Remedy, Lawrenceville’s newest “workingmen’s pub” turned “hipster bar and grill” (Hopper 2007). My female friend’s short hair and boy’s polo in combination with my asymmetrical hair cut and leopard print cat hat signal to the doorman that we are there for the monthly *Operation Sappho*¹ “queer-lesbro²” dance party. I reply “Yes” and proceed to the second floor staircase where the dance party is held. As I pass through the 1st floor bar, I observe casually dressed young and middle aged adults, conversing over cocktails and cigarettes. Upon reaching the second floor, I pay \$3 to a young woman with a funky haircut and fuzzy cat ears. The DJs who organize and spin for the *Operation Sappho* dance party made “Furry” the dance party dress theme. Most of the 70 plus people, including myself (hence, the cat hat), have taken the opportunity to get the \$1 discount and visibly stylize themselves as part of the network.

¹ Sappho, Jess explains, “is a lesbian feminist poem.”

² Lesbro commonly refers to a man who prefers the company of lesbians over heterosexual women.



Figure 3: *Operation Sappho* "Furry" dance party flyer.

The *Operation Sappho* dance party DJs aim to make a space where queer women and allies can come together to create a "good times scene" (Hopper 2007). Tonight, the dance appears to be a success. Women are having a great time dancing in couples and groups of three to four on the central dance floor. I am having fun too. I enjoy dancing but seldom do so in

public. All my smooth moves are usually kept at home but the comfort of being surrounded by women is refreshing, it is a feeling that moves my feet.

Nearing 2am, the music and dancing has been going on for hours and yet no one near me on the narrow dance floor appears tired or weary of the next song. Sweat perspires from our bodies as we dance vigorously to an eclectic mix of punk, Hip Hop, electronica and 80s pop. By the time the bartenders blink the lights to signal closing time, the crowd responds with a collective hum of disappointment. When the fluorescent light is turned off, we resume our dance of collective celebration.

1.1 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The primary aim of my study is to illuminate the dynamic experiential quality of social scenes by examining grassroots music and arts scenes. I focus in particular on how cultural producers (i.e. musicians, DJs, slam poets and event organizers) perceive and activate these scenes.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A limited but growing body of literature focuses on the experiential quality of social scenes. In this chapter, I explore what the scholarship reveals about these dynamic and deliberately loosely defined arenas of social experience and relations. In the first section, I review scholarship on the most salient characteristics of scenes. In the second section, I examine what differentiates scenes from subcultures. In the third section, I explore the literature on music scenes, particularly studies that highlight how solidarity is shaped and nurtured in music scenes.

2.1 SCENES

Scholars find that scenes are composed of networks, locations, and rituals (Bennett & Peterson 2004; Haenfler 2006; Haunss & Leach 2004; Irwin 1977). In this section, I explore what the literature uncovers about these aspects of scenes.

2.1.1 Networks

Scenes are dynamic overlapping social networks of the “like-minded” who share common convictions and are actively engaged in sustaining the scene (Haenfler 2006; Haunss & Leach

2006). The term “scene” was first used by journalists in the 1940s to characterize the marginal and bohemian ways of life of those associated with the demiworld of jazz (Bennett & Peterson 2004: 2). The concept is characteristically used to describe “informal assemblages” (Bennett & Peterson 2004: 4) that “have their own culture” (Haunss & Leach 2004: 5). Thus, scenes typically “share distinct codes, styles, patterns of behavior, and sets of knowledge that differ from those of the surrounding society” (Haunss & Leach 2004: 5).

Scenes are “expressive and leisure social worlds” wherein people seek to overcome urban alienation and satisfy the need for collective action by jointly making meaning through the shared experience of an “activity system” (Irwin 1977: 27). According to John Irwin, an “activity system” is a social engagement formed around a “leisure activity or set of activities” such as a live music show, skateboarding, transcendental meditation, cooking or car racing (1977: 27). Irwin argues that scenes are different from mere entertainment because scenes supply urban culture with its “new primary meanings” (1977: 23). Entertainment activities that do not provide strangers and friends with a social venue to interact are not considered scenes because they do not “satisfy collective, expressive human needs” (Irwin 1977: 25).

Hanging out is what distinguishes scenes from other aspects of social institutions such as family, work and school. But, like work and school, these networks are formed around recognized meeting places such as bars, cafés, and music venues (Haenfler 2004; Haunss & Leach 2004; Irwin 1977; Williams 2006). In these locations, scenes are physically experienced and the “cultural signifiers of membership” enacted (Haunss & Leach 2006: 5). Knowing where to go for the advertisement and experience of scene events is itself a symbol of network membership.

Scenes are not closed networks; scenes are public settings in which the “activity system must be available” (Irwin 1977:29). Scenes entail partial involvement; participants are involved and committed to scenes at differing levels (Haunss & Leach 2004; Irwin 1977; Unruh 1980). David Unruh argues that social actors can only be involved in a portion of the total “goings-on” of any “social world” (1980: 278). In his analysis, people can have only a limited involvement or knowledge of even small “social worlds” like taxi-dance halls. Unruh derives his analysis from Howard Becker’s (1982) notion of “art worlds.” Becker says art worlds do not have boundaries around them that differentiate one art world from another. Instead, art worlds are “groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they call art” (1982: 35). Art worlds are networks of cooperation.

Scenes are thematically focused voluntary networks of cooperation (Haunss & Leach 2004; Irwin 1977; Unruh 1980). Voluntary involvement means any scene member can leave or join at any time. However, the social pressures to join or leave are tremendous because individuals are often connected to various scenes through groups of friends (Haunss & Leach 2004). Scenes are commonly structured around core participants who invest substantial energy and time into making scenes happen. These “organizational elites,” as Sebastian Haunss and Darcy Leach (2004: 5) term them, may be event organizers such as live music show promoters or dance party DJs. However, since there are no official leadership roles or membership rules in scenes, the transition between periphery and core participation is fluid. Since scenes are voluntary, available and entail partial involvement, they are fragile and action oriented (Haunss & Leach 2004).

In scenes, networks of the “like minded” generate symbolic boundaries that nurture and reinforce feelings of connectedness and shared meanings. Michelle Lamont (2002: 168) defines

symbolic boundaries as “conceptualized distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space” (2002: 168). Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Lamont 2002). Scenes are not merely collections of individuals; scenes are “networks of groups” (Haunss & Leach 2004: 5). These groups nourish shared meanings through networks of association and membership.

2.1.2 Locations

Andy Bennet and Richard Peterson (2004) discuss three types of music scenes, which include the local, translocal and virtual. Spatial and temporal dimensions of scenes consist of “clusters of producers, musicians, and fans” who use “music and cultural signs often appropriated from other places, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene” (Bennett and Peterson 2004:8). Bennett and Peterson argue that a local music scene “takes place in a delimited space over a specific span of time” (2004:8). A “translocal scene” connects local scenes that are geographically separated through the exchange of cultural production such as zines,³ recordings and bands. Chatrooms, Internet communications and fanzines characterize the nature of the virtual scene wherein “Net-mediated person-to-person communication between fans” controls the scene (Bennett & Peterson 2004: 11). The local scene differs from the virtual

³ Independently self-published newsletters/fanzines. Zines are commonly associated with the punk Do-It-Yourself ethos. A zine’s content is determined by the person who makes it. Zines usually include personal narratives, album reviews, and political satire and opinion columns.

and translocal scene in that the local scene involves repeated face-to-face contact that reinforces a “sense of belonging to a particular scene” (Bennett & Peterson 2004: 11).

Scene scholars traditionally emphasize the geographic quality of social experience (Haenfler 2006; Haunss & Leach 2004; Irwin 1977). In a study of a virtual straightedge chatroom, Patrick Williams (2006) finds that scene elites argue that a person cannot be an authentically straightedge unless one participates in a local straightedge music scene. The geographically bound face-to-face experience of a straightedge scene, Williams discovers, is integral to straightedge identity. This emphasis on collective engagement of scene rituals reveals that locations are an important component of scenes. As Haunss and Leach note (2004: 3), “A scene is a network of people who identify as part of a group and share a certain belief system or set of convictions. But it is also necessarily centered around a certain location or set of locations that are understood to be where members of the scene hang out and are welcome.” Likewise, Irwin (1977) notes that “hangouts” are elemental to hanging out. Therefore, geographic location is essential to belonging.

Scenes typically emerge in cities where “most people one meets, passes, or finds oneself among are total strangers” (Irwin 1977: 25). Individuals in urban settings are often anonymous, making the need for collective action difficult to satisfy. Robert E. Park says the city is an important locale for the investigation of human behavior because “every section and quarter of the city takes on something of the character and quality of its inhabitants” (cited in Gelder & Thornton 1997: 17). In the city, Park contends, the intimate relations of the primary group and traditional institutions such as the church, school, and family are weakened because the structure of community is modified (in Gelder & Thornton 1997: 23). In the city, creating an association

with others becomes a moral support system. Hence, familiar meeting places are central to a scene's development.

Richard Florida's (2002) says that the key to urban economic growth lies in a city's ability to attract the "creative class." He defines the creative class as "a fast growing, highly educated and well-paid segment of the workforce on whose efforts corporate profits and economic growth increasingly depend (2002:3)." According to Florida, the members of the creative class are involved in a variety of industries such as technology, entertainment, journalism, finance, and arts and share a "common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit" (2002: 3). Pittsburgh, Florida points out, has launched multiple programs to diversify the region's economy. The city earnestly tries to move its economy from heavy industry to high technology. Despite these efforts, Florida contends, Pittsburgh has not done enough to satisfy the creative class's desire for arts and entertainment and therefore continues to lose rather than gain the creative class once they graduate from the city's prestigious Universities. Creative young people, Florida explains, want a thriving music scene, ethnic and cultural diversity and a great nightlife.

Richard Lloyd (2002), building on a notion of a creative class, posits that economic trends in post-industrial American cities open new spaces for predominately white neo-bohemian scenes. Global economic trends allow United States urban entrepreneurs to "fill the spaces left vacant by the flight of productive capital" (Lloyd 2002: 518). A steady decline in manufacturing employment and growth of the service sector is followed by a new elite economy featuring workers employed in finance, producer services, information technology, and media production (Florida 2002; Lloyd & Clark 2000). These elite, which Florida terms the "creative class," are educated consumers who have a cosmopolitan edge and seek cultural amenities that produce a

“quality of life.” Lloyd and Clark (2000: 5) point out that the local amenities they seek are no longer only churches and schools:

A residential population of young professionals with high levels of education and lower incidence of children creates a social profile geared toward recreation and consumption concerns. They value the city over other forms of settlement space because of its responsiveness to a wide array of aesthetic concerns, because it can become a cultural center offering diverse, sophisticated and cosmopolitan entertainment lacking elsewhere.

Taking a structural cultural approach, they claim the city is an “Entertainment Machine” that is strategically produced through political and economic activity (2000: 1).

Policy makers and community developers recognize the economic potentials of the “new” class’s cultural thirst and seek to satisfy it by publicly subsidizing spatial practices of artists. In making these artistic investments, policy makers contribute to the revalorization of old industrial space and destitute neighborhoods (Florida 2002; Lloyd & Clark 2000). Lloyd’s research on Neo-Bohemian cultural practice in Chicago’s Wicker Park explores the intersection of fringe traditions and economic development. He finds that Neo-bohemia supports residential gentrification, the concentration of entertainment and new media enterprises which creates the context for the redevelopment of former industrial spaces in Chicago (2002). Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan’s article “The Fine Art of Gentrification” (1984) explores the relationship between Reaganomics and the development of an arts scene in New York’s Lower East Side. They point out that gentrification is a process of impoverishment that creates “neighborhoods

and housing that only the white-collar labor force can afford” (1984: 96). New York’s Lower East Side became the focus of the city’s cultural renaissance plan. An impoverished to moderate income African American and Latino neighborhood was transformed to be the home of art galleries and white residents. These galleries and artists pushed rents to new heights and in the process, displaced poor residents who had raised families and built community there. The relationship between art and gentrification, Deutsche and Ryan claim, is often ignored if not all together silenced in academic, artistic and media circles.

White, artistic, educated, politically progressive scenes are usually the ones that benefit from artistic endowments and cultural development policies. Will Straw (2005: 419) argues that cultural scenes actively shape revitalized urban spaces in their “own creative quest for expressive opportunity.” Public space is necessary for face-to-face interaction, making the places opened by “entertainment machine” policies keen sites for scene spaces that are created by white artistic networks.

2.1.3 Rituals

Groups go to scene venues to engage in activities, meet new people, and share the meanings of the scene with friends and strangers. By becoming involved in “collective expression” they move onto the “public stage” to “make the scene” (Irwin 1977: 27). In scenes, a person self-consciously presents her or himself in front of an audience. Scene participants are performers because they actively present themselves before a particular set of observers and intend to have some influence on the observers (Goffman 1959: 22). Scene locations are where social actors take part in rituals and engage their roles as “performer” and “audience.”

Scenes involve rituals (Bennett & Peterson 2004; Futrell et al. 2006). The ritual is the “activity system” that Irwin argues is the focus of scene experience (1977). James Jasper (1998: 184-5) points out, “Rituals are symbolic embodiments” that generate collective emotions and identities because they make a performance “special.” Through rituals, scene participants symbolically express conflict, pleasure and “communicate meanings about social relationships in relatively dramatic ways” (Futrell et al. 2006: 277). Randall Collins (2004) indicates rituals can focus “attention space” by heightening participants’ “emotional energy.” Within the collective focus of attention, the individual is made to feel stronger as a member of the group thus harnessing cognitive and moral unity (Collins 2001: 28-29). The collective experience of scene rituals may create “world views” that unite social actors in terms of “practices, procedures and behaviors” (Unruh 1980: 272). Jasper argues that the collective engagement of pleasurable cultural rituals “can be satisfying even when done with strangers.” The pleasure resulting from performance rituals such as “losing oneself in collective motion or song,” makes strangers no longer feel like strangers (Jasper 1998: 188). Thus, scene rituals can “bind participants together” (Jasper 1998: 184).

2.2 SCENES VS. SUBCULTURES

Subculture studies emphasize a variance from *the* culture, a larger collectivity that is problematically “positioned as normal, average and dominant” (Thornton 1997: 5). Hence, subcultures are typically characterized as a subset of the “parent” culture (Clarke et al. 1975). Traditionally, subculture scholarship has paid attention to cultures that are dismissed as “deviant” by dominant social actors. Sarah Thornton (1997: 4) says the prefix ‘sub,’ gives clues

to the assumptions of subculture scholarship: 1) subculture groups are often considered “deviant;” and 2) subcultures are perceived as “lower down the social ladder” such as the cultures of Black, Hispanic, working-class, poor and young people. Whereas subculture scholars emphasize marginalized culture and groups, Haunss and Leach (2004: 8) argue that “the prefix ‘sub’ merely indicates that the subculture is a subset of the larger dominant culture—that is, it is contained within the larger culture, emerges from it, and is in some way distinguishable from it, but without any necessary implication of pathology.” They argue that subculture adherents represent an alternative to the dominant culture but one that is “tolerant” and “interested in establishing a basis for peaceful coexistence.” Regardless of whether or not subcultures are indeed “deviant,” the concept connotes fixed cultural boundaries. The static nature the “sub” implies gives clues as to why early Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) scholars argue that subcultures take shape around “distinctive activities and focal concerns” which can be “tightly bounded” (Clarke et al.1975: 14).

Unlike subcultures, scenes do not have tight boundaries (Haunss & Leach 2004). Scenes are voluntary whereas subcultures are typically studied as social organizations wherein “the child growing up in a particular sub-culture feels its impact as a unit” (Gordon 1997 [1947]: 41). To clarify, the subculture concept is commonly applied to social situations that encompass a combination of influential factors such as class status, ethnic background and urban residence. Pioneering subculture scholars are concerned with how a “unit” of experiences and values intersect and impact individuals and groups.

The partial rather than totalizing character of scenes is what distinguishes them from subcultures. The subculture concept excludes the commonality between subcultures and implies lines of division that are easy to determine (Bennett 1999). Scenes usually contain one or more

subcultures and scene networks can “plug into” a variety of scenes. Scenes, unlike subcultures, are characteristically permeable and overlapping networks of experience. A group of friends may be active in the “bike scene” and the “art scene” but not be involved in the “punk scene” in which friends from the bike and art scenes engage.

Subculture scholars also presume that all a participant’s actions are governed by the same subcultural standards; the scene perspective does not make this assumption (Bennett and Peterson 2004). Even the pioneers of subculture scholarship recognize that dominant culture has a dialectical relationship with subculture formation, practices and rituals. More specifically, “cultures always stand in relations of domination—and subordination—to one another, are always, in some sense, in struggle with one another” (Clarke et al. 1975: 12). Hence, systems of domination are likely to be repeated in subculture practices (LeBlanc 2000; McRobbie & Garber 1976). Punk is no exception to the rule (LeBlanc 2000). The differential treatment that women and queer artists experience in the punk subculture, for example, exposes that subculture participants are not governed by the same standards. “Scene,” on the other hand, is a fruitful yet underdeveloped concept for understanding how worldviews, symbolic boundaries and shared meanings are particular to and constructed through the networks that physically and socially experience an “activity system.”

2.3 MUSIC AND MUSIC SCENES

Most scene scholarship focuses on music scenes. Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson (2004: 3) point out that work on music scenes primarily focuses on performers, support amenities, and the fans that come together to create music for their own enjoyment. They suggest the music

industry relies on scene innovation to foster new forms of musical expression and give its products the veneer of authenticity.

Bennett and Peterson (2004) also note that some music scenes are created through cooperative “do-it-yourself” (DIY) cultural production. Punk music scenes are particularly noted for their do-it-yourself philosophy that insists anyone who wants to make art or music can (Moore 2007). New York’s CBGBs was the cornerstone of the low-rent underground rock scene that flourished in 1974. Garage bands such as Television, Ramones and the Dead Boys established a DIY atmosphere in the club (Leblanc 2000). In this environment, the term “punk” was established to name a generation of disgruntled youth who resisted buying into commercialized culture and set out to make their own (Leblanc 2000: 35). People with few options for publicizing their worldviews can speak their mind through independent cultural production. The DIY method of cultural production “offers genuine opportunities for cultural participation and creative expression” (Moore 2007).

Music is the subject of scene and social movement scholarship because it produces subjective and collective identity (Eyerman & Jamison 1998; Frith 1996; Futrell et al. 2006; Schilt 2004; Haenfler 2004; Williams 2006). Ron Eyerman (2002: 447) argues that music “can articulate as well as fuse a group, offering a sense of group belonging and collectivity as well as strength in trying situations, such as confronting violent resistance and repressive authority.” The collective engagement in Civil Rights Movement protest songs nurtured activists’ resilience and sense of belonging, particularly in the face of brutal state repression (Eyerman & Jamison 1998). Eyerman and Jamison (1998) claim that through music, traditions are reinvented, identities reformed, and value systems altered. Thus, they link music to social movements and argue that music and song can maintain a movement even when it no longer has a viable presence in the

form of organizations, leaders, and demonstrations. They suggest music can be a critical component of a new movement's materialization. Similarly, Vincent Roscigno and William Danaher (2001: 39) find that "symbolism, ritual, and discourse through music are crucial for maintaining solidarity among participants and for shaping the consciousness of non-participants so that they become sympathetic to, or are actually recruited into, the movement."

2.3.1 Music Scenes and Solidarity

The Queercore and Riot Grrrl movements are music scenes enacted by do-it-yourself (DIY) cultural producers who were systematically marginalized in the punk subculture. In these music scenes, networks create and nurture feminist and queer punk identity, art, music and community.

Queercore scenes were formed in response to the mainstream ideologies embedded in the punk subculture surrounding sexuality and gender norms. Judith Halberstam (2003) indicates that Queercore is a music scene of minority cultural production that seeks to both overthrow the dominant culture and modify the punk scene to which it is intimately connected. Queercore was launched sometime in the mid 1980s when queer punks got frustrated with being disenfranchised from punk scenes and started their own (DeChaine 1997). Through grassroots cultural production, queercore networks expanded and produced a collective identity that created and sustained queer-positive worldviews. Halberstam (2003) argues that in Queercore scenes hetero- and homo-normativity are rejected in favor of alternative temporalities that lie outside dominant, linear narratives of birth, marriage, reproduction and death. Likewise, Michael du Plessi and Kathleen Chapman (1997: 3) argue that "[i]n creating a compound of 'queer' or 'homo' and 'hardcore,' queercore and homocore not only signaled their allegiances to post-punk subculture, but also positioned themselves as equally distinct from lesbian and gay culture and the

masculinist tendencies of hardcore punk.” Like the Queercore scenes that preceded Riot Grrrl activation, Riot Grrrl networks used the collective experience and creation of do-it-yourself cultural production to enact and expand feminist networks, collective identity and worldviews.

Riot Grrrl is characterized as originating in recognition that punk and other cultural sites demean and inhibit women’s participation (Aapola et al. 2005; Garrison 2000; Kearney 1997; Rosenberg & Garafolo 1998; Schilt 2004). Riot Grrrl scenes developed from an increasing dissatisfaction with gender dynamics in the D.C. and Olympia, Washington punk scenes in the late 1980s. Riot Grrrl reached its height in the mid-1990s when bands such as *Bratmobile*, *Bikini Kill*, and *Heavens to Betsy* were pursuing a “Revolution Grrrl Style Now!” that included DIY music, zine publications, art, collectives and support groups for grrrls by grrrls. Some Riot Grrrl performers began their shows by rearranging the gendered spatial make-up of the audience. They demanded that men move to the back of the club and encouraged women to move closer to the stage. Pamphlets on date rape and sexual harassment were distributed at shows and many performers re-signified sexist slurs when they wrote “slut” or “dyke” across their bodies in an effort to turn demeaning symbols into symbols of empowerment (Garrison 2000; Kearney 1997). Mary Celeste Kearney (1997) points out that “the in your face political activism of riot grrrls—whether marching in feminist rallies, boycotting psychiatric institutions, volunteering at Rock for Choice concerts, sponsoring self-defense workshops or organizing gay youth groups—indicates that this community is a significant progression not only in the politics of youth...but in the politics of feminist as well.” Kearney (1997: 212) challenges those who argue that Riot Grrrls bands have “formed in reaction to patriarchy and sexism.” She asserts this kind of reactionary assessment “displaces discussions of female empowerment” and reproduces popular misconceptions of “feminism’s pro-woman stance as a form of ‘male bashing.’”

Riot Grrrl and Queercore scenes developed feminist and queer solidarity, particularly for white punks, through DIY cultural production and networks. Alberto Melucci (1996: 115) charges “solidarity is cultural in character and is located in the terrain of symbolic production in the everyday life.” Michelle Lamont (2002: 168) defines symbolic boundaries as “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space.” Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Lamont 2002). By activating new scene spaces through DIY cultural production, the Riot Grrrl and Queercore scenes created symbolic boundaries that enacted and sustained internal unity. The internal homogeneity of Riot Grrrl fostered shared meanings and values. While Riot Grrrl is notorious for critiquing “girlhood” and cultural misogyny, Gayle Wald (1998: 606) argues that this white U.S. women rock scene is rooted in a particular cultural circumstance and therefore its discourse of girlhood and “advocacy of girl culture” cannot assume to have “portability” in different cultural contexts. She asserts that the critiques Riot Grrrls inspire are “far from signifying a universal, biologically grounded condition of female experience, instead [girlhood] implies a relation to agency, visibility, and history that emerges within a particular discursive context” (1998: 606). Through the activation of symbolic boundaries, this scene created and nourished homogeneous assessments of femininity and feminism.

Scenes, as highlighted by the Riot Grrrl and Queercore movements, can provide participants with a “free space” (Polletta 1999) to build solidarity and shared meanings. In a study of a white power music (WPM) scene, Robert Futrell, Pete Simi and Simon Gottschalk (2006: 276) find that scene participants say their experiences in the scene evoke collective meanings that help anchor movement solidarity. They discover that while the WPM music scene

is a “highly politicized” social space, the scene contains a “sense of leisure that does not seem to require that attendees demonstrate the level of movement commitment expected in other WPM activities” (2006: 288). Thus, they argue the music scene not only reinforces dedicated activists’ sense of solidarity through pleasurable activity, but it also welcomes new generations of activists into the movement.

2.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Scenes consist of networks, locations, and rituals of identity. However, few studies adequately address the dynamic character of these aspects of scenes. Instead, like subcultures, scenes such as the Goth, rave, punk and straightedge scenes are studied as autonomous social creations and relations. While these kinds of studies reveal that identities and meanings are particular to social networks, locations and rituals, these works fall into the same “tight boundaries” trap for which subculture studies are criticized. My study takes seriously the “overlapping” and “dynamic” quality of these kinds of social relations, locations and experience. My research asks: How do cultural producers perceive and engage place, networks, and rituals of identity in grassroots music and arts scenes?

In order to enhance sociological understandings of how shared meanings and identities are constructed through networks of cultural production, I look at how scene participants “create labels through contrast and inclusion” (Lamont & Fournier 1984: 2). I examine race, gender, sexuality and age as they impact grassroots music and arts scenes. I locate my study in Pittsburgh’s East End because of its vibrant music and arts scene, culturally-based urban revitalization programs, and on-going debates concerning economic, racial and cultural

gentrification. My study focuses on female and queer identified persons because as W.E.B. Dubois (1995) argues, a subordinated group's interpretations and experiences yield a wider vantage point for understanding social phenomenon and power relations. Socially marginalized groups are better equipped to expose how social power and social identity impact and shape grassroots music and arts scenes. I focus on cultural producers because of their level of involvement in scenes. Cultural producers have unique insights regarding the dynamic quality of networks, locations and rituals of identity in these kinds of social scenes.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

To answer my research question, I use a number of epistemological stances: 1) triangulation method; 2) feminist standpoint; 3) interpretive; 4) focus on particularities of experiences; and 5) collaboration with subjects.

I implement the triangulation methodology of social research by combining one-on-one interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and content analysis of materials relating to the grassroots music and arts scenes I study (i.e. websites, event flyers, newspaper articles, art work, etc). Triangulation is a combination of methods or sources and is used to check insights gleaned from different sources of data (Taylor & Bogdan 1998: 80). For example, I conducted one-on-one interviews with two of the DJs who initiated and spin for the monthly “queer-lesbro” dance party; I conducted participant observations at four of their monthly dance parties and; I danced, observed and struck up casual conversation with partygoers. In addition to interviews and participant observation, I performed content analysis of the dance party’s Myspace website page, promotion flyers, and the newspaper articles and list-serves that reference the dance party. By drawing on a variety of data sources, I gained a clearer understanding of this dance party scene and the people committed to making it happen.

I put into practice a feminist stance by placing emphasis on the social realities from the standpoint of women involved in grassroots music and arts scenes. Feminist standpoint epistemology emphasizes that members of subordinated groups achieve a standpoint as an

outcome of their position in structures of domination (Rogers & Pemberton 2005). Feminist researchers aim to expose inequality and advocate social justice. Hence, feminist researchers are sometimes charged with having an “agenda” that seeks to implement a moral imperative while the “objective” social sciences are assumed to be value-free (Kleinman 2007: 2). Positivists claim that social research can and should be conducted from an objective standpoint. Positivist methodologists maintain that social science methods should be modeled after the natural sciences (Halfpenny 2005: 571). In a quest for scientific “Truth,” positivist methodologists seek the “facts or causes of social phenomena apart from the subjective states of individuals” (Taylor & Bogdan 1998: 3). Positivists maintain that once “social facts” are discovered, universal assumptions about social life are revealed. Hence, the quest for scientific “Truth” makes partiality seem inherently wrong without recognizing that universalism is inherently white, heterosexual and male (Calhoun 1995: 162-166). Feminist epistemologists reject institutionalized standpoints that naturalize universal and positivist approaches by aiming to “create systematic grounds for representations of social realities that are less false, partial and distorted” (Rogers & Pemberton 2005). I employ feminist standpoint epistemology in my research design and analysis by conducting most (87%) of my interviews with women, conducting focus groups with all-women bands, and observing scene events created by women. Sandra Harding says standpoint theory “claims that all knowledge attempts are socially situated and that some of these objective social locations are better than others for knowledge projects” (Olesen 2003: 345). I center my analysis on women, queer women especially, because a subordinated group’s interpretation yields a wider vantage point for understanding.

I employ an interpretive epistemological stance by analyzing social phenomena from the actor’s own perspective and examining how individual actors interpret their experiences of social

worlds (Taylor & Bogdan 1998: 3). The interpretivist, or phenomenological, theoretical perspective argues that the “important reality is what people perceive it to be” (Taylor & Bogdan 1998: 3). Thus, interpretivists and positivists seek different kinds of problems and answers. Interpretivists are concerned with the meanings people attach to things in their lives whereas positivists look for “social facts” with universal qualities (Denzin & Lincoln 2003; Taylor & Bogdan 1998).

I focus on the particularities of social actors’ experiences by using qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is inductive, meaning the “concepts, insights, and understandings of patterns in the data” are developed from the data rather than “collecting data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses, or theories” (Taylor & Bogdan 1998: 7). An example is my use of in-depth interviews. In these interviews, I do not assume the meaning of scenes. Instead, I ask interviewees to tell me how they characterize scenes, what scenes means to them, and how they experience the scenes they engage. In doing so, I examine how participants perceive scenes from their own subjective standpoint. I also conduct participant observations at events enacted by my interviewee participants. Participant observations “transpire in the value-laden and highly political context of human associations” (Jorgensen 1989: 38). Like feminist field research, this method challenges the idea that scientists can and should be value free, emphasizing that the researcher should become involved subjectively and personally with the phenomenon being studied (Jorgensen 1989).

In the process of collecting my data, I recognized that participants are not sources of information or repositories of knowledge; rather, the interview is a collaborative process of knowledge construction that involves the interviewee and interviewer. James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium (1995: 9) argue interviewers are “deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating

meaning that ostensibly resides within the respondents” and therefore “one cannot expect answers on one occasion to replicate those on another because they emerge from different circumstances of production.” For example, when I shared my observation that art galleries and newly established venues on Pittsburgh’s East End appear to lack racial and ethnic diversity, Jess pointed out that, “gentrification is happening in ways that are making it more racially diverse” and said African Americans are being pushed out of their homes. Later, when Jess talked about fighting “homophobic energy” and “racist energy,” she indicated that she wanted East End neighborhoods to be more “diverse.” Hence, Jess’s ideas about diversity, community, and gentrification are contingent on the “different circumstances of production” operating in our conversation at the time. I take a collaborative approach to my research by following leads of interviewees and encouraging them to define the direction of the interview. When I first contacted interviewees, I shared the general premise of the project but informed them that the interview would “not run like a question and answer session,” but rather that I wanted it to unfold “more like a conversation.” To do so, I prepared for the interview with a semi-structured list of questions but allowed for flexibility in the topics covered during the conversation. For example, in an interview with one of my focus groups, I had prepared to ask questions about the Pittsburgh music scene but soon discovered that these interviewees do not typically define scenes in terms of music. Instead, our conversation revealed that these women saw scenes as contingent on networks and activity (or activities), “not so much musical ventures,” as Monica put it. This interview was a turning point in my research and in our interview session. From there, we talked about what makes a scene and what characterizes the scenes they engage. From then on, I did not assume that music is central to people’s definition of scenes, even when the interviewees are musicians.

3.1 DEFINING THE SAMPLE

My study population is centered on “cultural producers” who I define as active participants who have or had a direct hand in organizing and/or performing in grassroots music and arts scene events (i.e. band members, DJs, slam poets and event organizers). Cultural producers are instrumental to my research because they are directly engaged in scenes and thus can see the networks, locations, and rituals of identity that operate in these scenes. Cultural producers play in bands, create dance parties, or organize events, but the line between producer and audience can be blurred in grassroots music and arts scenes that operate with a DIY (do-it-yourself) ethos.

3.1.1 The Places

Since scenes are geographically bound (Irwin 1977), I contacted cultural producers who perform and organize events in the adjoining Garfield, Bloomfield, Friendship and Lawrenceville neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania’s East End. On practically any day of the week, there is a live music show, dance party, karaoke, pub quiz night, poetry reading, or art show in this area. I conducted participant observation of grassroots music and art events in a range of places. I attended art show fundraisers in smoky bars, watched Indie-rock⁴ music in art galleries, attended a feminist slam poet event at a quaint café, participated in dance parties at hipster lounges, and observed punk rock shows in grimy basements. I selected events on the basis of my interview sample’s involvement in creating or performing in the event. 73% of the scene events I observed occurred in locations on the East End, in the neighborhoods mentioned above. 27% of the events

⁴ Indie is commonly used as an umbrella term in grassroots music scenes to reference artists that are unsigned or have signed to independent record labels.

I observed occurred in other established places such as Gooski's, a punk rock dive bar in Polish Hill, and Rea Coffeehouse, a student operated venue located in the all-women's Chatham College in Squirrel Hill (See Figure 4).

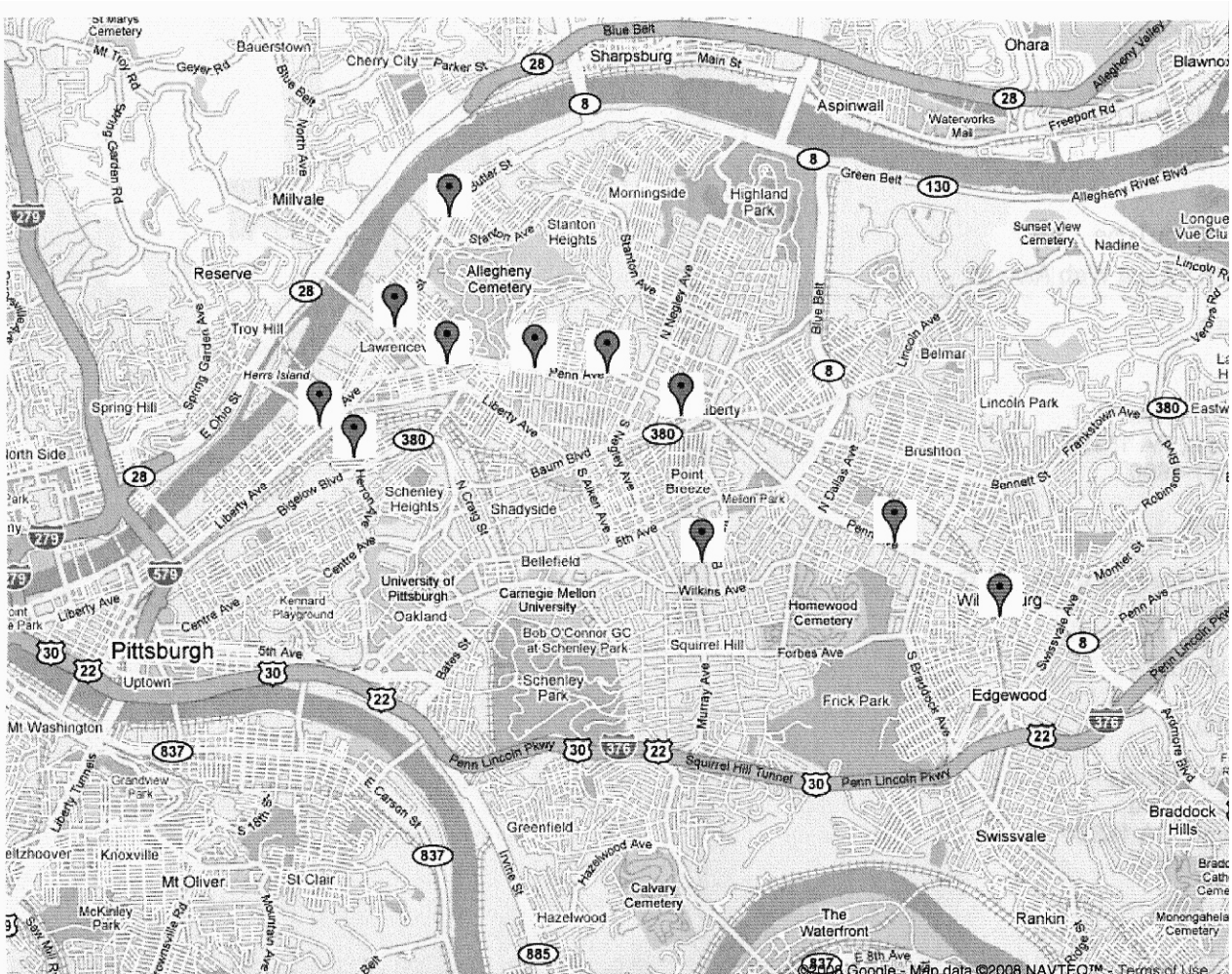


Figure 4: Map of places in which I observed scene events (excluding home basement shows). Note the cluster of locations in Pittsburgh's East End, especially along the Penn Avenue corridor.

I talked with people involved in events that happen on Pittsburgh's East End because of the lively grassroots music and arts scene in that area. When I moved to the Bloomfield neighborhood two years ago, I found many options for cultural experience but also noticed the dire straights of black poor residents living in the adjoining Garfield neighborhood. My first

apartment was located one block south from the Penn Avenue corridor where my landlord pointed out, “There is a lot do here.” Indeed, there is. In the area, I can walk to a vegetarian coffeehouse, grab dinner from an excellent Vietnamese restaurant, peruse a small art gallery at no charge, attend a live music show for \$5, and drink a whisky sour at a swank bar. The paradox is that on my way to these occasions I pass closed mom and pop businesses, dispossessed people, abandoned buildings, and unkempt homes. My previous landlord explained to me the neighborhood used to be “bad” but is becoming a “good neighborhood.” More people who care about their community and want to make it nice are moving in, he said. I presumed a white woman entering graduate school such as me embodied the qualities that make the area “good.” I became interested in what grassroots music and arts scenes look like in neighborhoods where “good” and “bad” are in a social tango.

3.1.2 The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative: Running the “ghost out of town”

Penn Avenue was once a business haven connecting Downtown Pittsburgh and East Liberty, but by 1981 the street had assumed the appearance of a “ghost town”

(http://www.pennavenuearts.org/about_f2.html/ 7/24/2008). Pittsburgh’s deteriorating steel mill economy had a devastating impact on the Penn Avenue business district and surrounding neighborhoods. Rising unemployment and job instability drastically decimated household purchasing power. By 1980, more than fifty small businesses closed their doors along the Penn Avenue corridor. These days, the Penn Avenue corridor is an urban revitalization target area.

In an effort to overturn almost three decades of post-industrial economic depression in Pittsburgh’s East End, the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) and the *Friendship Development Associates, Inc.* (FDA) formed the *Penn Avenue Arts Initiative* (PAAI) to “develop

space for artists” (<http://www.friendship-pgh.org/fda/about/> 7/30/2008). The *Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation* goal is to pull a “community spiraling downward from a decade of physical and economic decline” from its uncertain future (<http://www.bloomfield-garfield.org/> 7/30/2008). Along with operating one of the largest youth employment programs and publishing a monthly newspaper, the *Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation* builds new single-family homes and rental properties, renovates old houses and buildings, helps people locate financing, and is involved in upgrading the infrastructure along Penn Avenue (<http://www.bloomfield-garfield.org/> 7/30/2008). Similarly to the BGC, the *Friendship Development Associates, Inc.*’s mission is to revitalize the Friendship area through “strategic and responsible real estate development” (<http://www.friendship-pgh.org/fda/about/> 7/30/2008).

In an attempt to run the “ghost” out of town, the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative provides artists financial support to open galleries and establish residency in disadvantaged East End neighborhoods, along the Penn Avenue corridor. The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative spokespeople explain that the project “was created to transform the Penn Avenue corridor from a struggling business district into a quirky, thriving, multi-cultural business district with artists, arts organizations, arts-related businesses, ethnic restaurants and neighborhood-serving businesses” (http://www.pennavenuearts.org/about_f2.html/ 7/24/2008). In the first five years, the PAAI Artists Loan and Grant Fund (ALGF) Committee gave eight loans totaling over \$80,000, and eleven grants totaling over \$40,000 and leveraged over \$6 million in private arts-related investment to attract artists to the area. The PAAI website boasts that “over 30 artists, arts businesses, and arts organizations now call Penn Avenue home: 10 with an equity stake and more than 20 artists rent live/work spaces on Penn Avenue” (http://www.pennavenuearts.org/about_f3.html/ 7/24/2008).

Through arts investment, the PAAI says they can forge the “development of an innovative, diverse and cultural district in the East End of Pittsburgh” (http://www.pennavenuearts.org/about_f2.html / 7/24/2008). PAAI investment is evident along Penn Avenue; colorful modern art galleries, studios, renovated art-deco houses, ethnic restaurants, and gentrified bars thrive beside old taverns, dilapidated homes, graffiti covered buildings and abandoned structures. On the one side, the Penn Avenue corridor separates Bloomfield, a historically working class Italian neighborhood and Friendship, a white middle-class neighborhood, from Garfield, a working-poor African American neighborhood. To clarify, Bloomfield and Friendship are located on the south side of the street whereas Garfield is located on the north side. In a column titled, “Recreating a Neighborhood through Art,” Robert Isenberg says, “After decades of deterioration, what was once a slum, and the dividing line between Friendship and Garfield, has evolved over the last dozen years or so into the Penn Avenue Arts District, an epicenter for arts and culture” (2006). In this same article, developer Eve Picker compares Penn Avenue to the “Berlin Wall” because of the boundary she noticed the street symbolized when she moved to Pittsburgh twenty years ago. Although Picker stops short of specifying what exactly the Penn Avenue once separated, her poignant observation implies these boundaries were economic, racial and cultural. These days, Picker goes on to say, Penn Avenue is “the seam” that holds Friendship, Garfield and Bloomfield together.

In this study, I explore what grassroots music and arts scenes look like in gentrifying places. I conduct participant observation of scene events that occur on Penn Avenue (and ones that do not) and ask interviewees about their relationship to Penn Avenue’s arts development. By examining my interview participants’ perceptions of place, race and gentrification, I assess how interview participants experience and interpret physical and social scene boundaries.

3.1.3 The People

I selected interview participants based on their gender and sexual identity and their active participation in grassroots music and arts scenes in Pittsburgh's East End. I chose a sample of interview participants by using snowball sampling procedures. I made initial contacts with Lucy, a member of a local all-female feminist punk rock band, and Carrie, a local DJ who organizes and spins for a monthly "queer" dance party. I asked Lucy to talk with me because I was interested in exploring her experiences and interpretations of scenes in a music scene that appeared to be dominated by men. I gleaned from preliminary observations that Lucy identifies as a feminist and could direct me to other women in grassroots music and arts scenes who share a feminist identity. I believed that talking with cultural producers who exhibit feminist politics might help me understand the political nature of scene boundaries. I also started with Carrie, a DJ, artist and activist who is involved in a variety of grassroots music and arts scenes. Through preliminary conversations with local artists and musicians, Carrie's name came up time and again as a leading grassroots cultural producer. Several people told me that her insights would be invaluable to my research interests in women's experiences in scenes.

Although I informed my initial contacts of the criteria for participation, I did not set out to have a specific number of participants from a gender, sexual identity, or activity category. Instead, after each interview I asked the interviewee to direct me to someone they knew who would be helpful to my research project. I explained my interest in how heterosexual, queer women, and queer men who are cultural producers experience and perceive grassroots music and arts scenes. I asked interviewees to recommend a person who is currently involved in grassroots cultural production, such as a band member, a DJ, event promoter, or artist. Thus, while I did

provide my contacts with criteria for my selection of participants, my selection of interviewees was strongly influenced by initial interview participants' ideas about with whom I should speak.

Most of my participants are white women, between the ages of 26-33 years old, who identify as queer and see themselves as active “cultural producers.” In total, I interviewed 15 participants. Of the 15 people I interviewed, 87% (13) are women and 13% (2) are men. Most of are white (87% or 13). One woman said her race is “ambiguous” and another is a first generation Iranian immigrant. All are between the ages of 18-41. Twenty-seven percent (4) are between 18 and 24 years; 53% (8) are 26-33 years, and 20% (3) are 34-41 years of age. They identify sexually in a number of ways; 33% (5) identify as queer, 27% (4) as heterosexual, 20% (3) as bisexual, and 20% (3) in other ways, as a lesbian, “other,” and “straight in practice but queer in theory.” Eighty-seven percent (13) were active cultural producers, and 13% (2) were once involved in putting on shows, playing in bands and writing zines (independently published fanzines) but no longer were active cultural producers. I conducted one-on-one interviews with a total of 8 participants, 6 women and 2 men. I also conducted focus groups sessions with 2 different all women-bands; one focus group comprised all four band members and the other was comprised of all three band members.

Only one person refused to be interviewed. Jeff, I was told, is deeply involved in the grassroots music scene and has a reputation for putting on shows that are gender themed. A few of my interviewees said he puts bands with women on bills together despite musical incompatibility. When I met him at the music venue he established, he said he was “too busy” to be interviewed. In addition to this refusal, I had a feminist slam poet and a queer male DJ agree to be interviewed but when it came time to schedule an appointment, contacting these individuals

proved difficult. In total, I did not interview 17% (3) of the people I contacted for participation, meaning I had an 83% success rate.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

In interviews and focus groups, I talked casually with interviewees while also using a list of prepared questions to insure that each participant addressed core topics (Babbie 2005; Taylor and Bogdan 1998). I encouraged participants to talk about the kinds of events they are involved in and enjoy, discuss audience and venue preference, neighborhood development and describe the scenes they engage (see Appendix A). Since the goal of this project is to discover what these participants deem important, interview questions were altered in the course of the interaction (Holstein & Gubrium 1995; Jorgensen 1989). For example, if interviewees talked about what the scene looked like ten years ago, I encouraged that person to elaborate even though that was not included on my interview template.

One-on-one interviews allowed me to find out how individuals interpret scenes, and decipher where cultural producers overlap and differ in their meaning making process. They also gave me an opportunity to inquire about an individual's level of involvement and why they activate scenes. Interviews lasted approximately one hour in order to establish rapport, address a range of issues and be short enough to be interview friendly (Crang & Cook 2007). I loosely guided participants through topics while being mindful to ask for elaboration and clarification of responses (Babbie 2005: 300). I encouraged participants to pose new topics. I also followed up some of the formal interviews with informal conversation and inquiry.

When I contacted participants for an interview, I found that most of us live in adjoining neighborhoods, making a mutually accessible meeting place easy. I asked participants to pick a location of their choice where coffee or tea might be available and reminded each that the interview will be recorded anonymously, last approximately one hour and run more like an informal conversation than a question and answer session. Of the 8 one-on-one interviews, 63% (5) participants chose to meet at the Quiet Storm, a vegetarian coffeehouse on the East End of Pittsburgh, in Garfield. Through the course of my research, I came to understand that the Quiet Storm coffeehouse and restaurant is a networking space for many grassroots music and arts scenes. Of the remaining three participants, one picked the brillobox bar, a recognized East End grassroots music and arts scene hang out, one picked the locally-owned Crazy Mocha coffee shop, and one asked me to do the interview at his house as we had become friends prior to the interview. Other than this one participant, I was not personally acquainted with any of my interviewees prior to interviews.

I conducted two focus groups with 47% (7) of my interview sample, comprised of two already existing groups of women who were in a band together. Already existing groups gave me the opportunity to understand how issues are “normally” talked about in homogenous groups while also giving me insight as to what issues and interpretations are contested within a tight-knit group (Crang & Cook 2007). For the focus groups, I spearheaded the discussion by asking the band members to say how they all met, began playing together, whether or not they play often, and how easy it is to get shows in Pittsburgh. From there, I let the conversation unfold in the direction participants took it but at times returned to the foundational questions I posed during one-on-one interviews regarding scenes. Realizing that focus groups must be conducted and interpreted in regards to group dynamics, the focus groups tended to be more open-ended than

the one-on-one interviews (Taylor & Bogdan 1998). When I asked the groups via email where they preferred to hold the focus group, both bands requested that the interview occur in one of the band member's home. Both focus groups lasted approximately one hour in the home of one of the band members.

In addition to interviews, I specifically sought out events in which interview participants organized and participated. I conducted 22 participant observations at grassroots music and arts events (Appendix B) that my research participants either organized or in which they directly participated. I observed local independently produced rock shows, "outsider" art exhibits, fundraisers, dance parties, and poetry readings. All events featured at least one music performance such as a band, singer/songwriter or DJ. I entered the field in July of 2007 when I attended my first "queer live music show" and observed an average of three scene events per month until March 2008. I occasionally still attend live music shows and dance parties in Pittsburgh's East End for my own enjoyment. While conducting my field research, I recorded observations in a notebook when appropriate but most of the time I wrote extensive reflective field notes once returning home. In these notes, I highlighted the demographics of event participants in addition to the activities and social atmosphere of the event. On many occasions I was able to remember prominent quotes or situations.

Realizing that researchers bring "characteristics, a history, a gender, class, race, and social attributes" into the research setting (Olesen 2003: 350), I was reflexive about my standpoint as a 30 year old white woman who advocates feminist politics, enjoys Indie and punk rock music, and lives in the East End of Pittsburgh. I believe my characteristics in the field were best suited for gaining "insider" status because my age, race and semi-countercultural look reflect many of the people who participated in this project.

Content analysis is the third piece to the triangulation model mentioned earlier. I collected materials produced by or about cultural producers for content analysis purposes. When available, I collected brochures, pamphlets, and flyers that were distributed at scene events. I also purchased CDs of the bands that participated in this project in order to better comprehend the band's content and sound. Due to the original artwork on CD covers, these purchases were also important pieces of textual analysis. Websites, list serves, and newspaper articles were also analyzed as they pertained to the scenes and arts development in Pittsburgh's East End (Babbie 2005). Conducting content analysis allowed me to examine emerging themes of cultural production and the cultural producers' target audiences (Babbie 2005).

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Recognizing that data analysis is an on-going process (Taylor & Bogdan 1998), I searched for emerging themes each time I returned to the field, reviewed interview transcripts and analytic memos. I transcribed each interview immediately after it was conducted, keeping a participant's responses in mind for interviews to come. Oftentimes, a participant's responses informed the questions for interviews that followed. Once data collection was complete, I read and reread my field notes, transcriptions and documents. Carefully reading through the data enhanced my familiarity with the data inside and out (Taylor & Bogdan 1998). When thoroughly analyzing the texts for emerging themes, familiarity with the data proved beneficial. Initially, I noted themes that were more apparent than others but after reading texts again, I often found that new themes emerged that were more subtle but nonetheless conceptually significant. I used both physical and qualitative software techniques to code the data. I began by open coding in the Nvivo 7

qualitative software program. I read field notes and interviews line-by-line to identify and code the ideas, themes or issues they suggest, no matter how disparate (Emerson et al. 1995). I initially coded material in large blocks of texts and then re-read these texts to formulate more specific open codes. Once I finished coding the data in this manner, I created focused codes using physical coding methods. Focused coding involved structuring and elaborating analytically significant themes; I connected data by delineating subthemes that “distinguish variations within the broader topic” (Emerson et al. 1995). This technique consisted of highlighters, piles of paper and using a notebook to document patterns as I read through the text. Finally, I performed multivariate analysis by examining the relationship among several variables. I simultaneously analyzed the effects of gender, sexuality, age, and scene affiliation on interviewees’ perceptions of scenes.

3.4 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The time constraints of a Master’s Thesis limited the number of interviews that I could conduct for this research. If time allowed, I would continue my snowball sample and interview those persons recommended to me such as individuals involved in creating Pink Party Productions, a group of women who put on queer parties and music shows. Additionally, I would interview more queer men so that I could better understand how gender and sexual identity impact people’s perceptions of scenes. Due to time constraints, I do not claim that I became an *insider*. I recognize the limitations of my immersion and participation in the scenes I analyze. The community I studied comes together at different places and at different times making an immersion experience like those discussed in anthropology texts impossible (Crang & Cook

2007). Although I do not consider myself a member, my interview data and observation field notes confirm each other, which give me confidence in my analyses.

3.5 RESEARCH ETHICS

For this research, I received “exempt” status from the University of Pittsburgh’s Institutional Review Board. To ensure that high ethical standards were maintained during data collection, I implemented consistent research techniques. I collected all data for this project and informed each voluntary participant of her/his rights to refuse answering any questions and right to stop the interview at any time. My participant observations of scene events were conducted in public settings. My interviews were conducted in both public and private spaces per the request of the interviewee(s). Once participants were recruited, they were contacted by phone or email (their preference) to set up day and time of interview. Each participant was interviewed only once. No names or identifying codes were recorded with any data and all data are kept in my possession and only accessible by me.

4.0 SCENES: NETWORKS, LOCATIONS AND RITUALS

Prior scholarship finds that the most salient aspects of scenes are networks, locations, and rituals. In this chapter, I analyze these as they are perceived and used by cultural producers in Pittsburgh's grassroots music and arts scenes.

In the first section, I explore how cultural producers understand and engage scene locations. Most of the scene events I observe occur on Pittsburgh's East End where these scenes form recognizable meeting places. I analyze observations, documents, and interview material that pertain to music and arts scenes in the area. I find that regardless of scene affiliation, places sponsored by East End urban revitalization projects open opportunities for intersecting, predominately white, grassroots music and arts scene networks.

In the second section, I examine how cultural producers perceive and activate scene networks. I analyze the overlapping character of networks and show how networks cluster around particular activities and ideas about the meanings of scenes. By attending to how gender and sexual identity impacts scene networks, I also discuss how networks construct scenes through exclusionary practices. I discover that network overlap is often gendered and sexualized.

Lastly, I discuss the role performance rituals play in creating a sense of group membership and situationally defined collective identity. I show that through identity deployment, cultural producers enact different networks and places for cultural expression. The rituals of identity they engage intend to empower a collective identity that is otherwise

marginalized in the umbrella male dominated music and arts scene. Those I term “Rickety” networks often choose to subvert power relations in scenes whereas those I term “Political Punk” networks deploy gender and sexual identity in order to create a Feminist-Queer-positive scene. Through performance rituals, cultural producers create and alter scenes.

4.1 LOCATIONS

Scene scholars argue that location is integral to scenes because scenes are maintained through recognizable meeting places where the “cultural signifiers of membership” (Haunss & Leach 2004) are enacted. My interviews and observations indicate that space is an important resource in forming and sustaining scene networks (Irwin 1977; Bennett & Peterson 2004; Haunss & Leach 2004). The scenes I study regularly enact the “cultural signifiers of membership” in Pittsburgh’s East End where newly formed venues and art galleries have opened their doors to grassroots music and arts scenes.

4.1.1 Grassroots Music and Arts Scenes: Making a “small town” out of a big city

Several of my interview participants refer to Pittsburgh as “a small town” where, as Monica said, “Every corner of town is populated with people you know.” Likewise, Lori insists, “Pittsburgh is small. Once you like meet some people, everyone is kind of interconnected.” In saying that a city is a small town, these scene participants point to the overlapping “insular” character of social networks formed around this kind of grassroots cultural production. One of the ways scene

networks turn a big city into a “small town” is by creating recognizable meeting places where knowing where to go for scene events is itself “a badge of membership” (Haunss & Leach 2004).

A number of interviewees say that in the 1990s, they lived and networked in Oakland, where the University of Pittsburgh’s main campus is located. They indicate that the University’s medical campus expansions drove property rates to new heights and pushed independent venues out of the area. A Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article titled “Music Leaves Oakland” confirms that “For almost a decade, there was a Bermuda Triangle of Oakland clubs” but by 2000 the Indie triangle was gone and “somewhere in between, the Oakland Beehive and Club Laga [two renowned Indie music venues] also came and went” (<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/06157/695903-42.stm> / 8/02/2008). American Apparel, sports bars and apartment buildings now stand where prominent grassroots music clubs once flourished.

Upon the closing of Oakland venues, the punk and Indie scene no longer networked in a specified area of the city. Despite the odds, the DIY punk scene proved its vitality when committed cultural producers created places such as the Mr. Roboto Project, a cooperatively-run all ages music venue in Wilkinsburg, and 1877, an artist and activist space on the Penn Avenue corridor. Dedicated scene members, I was told, also refurbished abandoned warehouses, put on house shows and held events in the all-women’s Chatham College student-run Rea Coffeeshouse and the Carnegie Mellon University Women’s Center. At the same time, the Indie rock music scene looked to venues throughout the city and held events at the 31st Pub, a rockabilly punk venue in Lawrenceville, as well as the Bloomfield Bridge Tavern, a Polish bar complete with pierogies and dollar beers in Bloomfield (a.k.a. “Little Italy”).

My participants suggest that once cultural producers started opening warehouse spaces and abandoned buildings on the Penn Avenue corridor, the punk and Indie scenes re-energized.

However, it is not clear what came first along the Penn Avenue corridor: urban renewal projects or grassroots space initiatives. Nevertheless, the establishment of art galleries, music venues, trendy bars and a vegetarian coffeehouse is noticeably entwined with the vitality of the scenes I study.

People involved and attracted to this kind of grassroots cultural production now live, network and hold scene events in the East End, particularly in the adjoining Lawrenceville, Garfield, Bloomfield and Friendship neighborhoods. Manny Theiner, a columnist and local music promoter who runs Garfield Artworks—a small Penn Avenue music and arts venue--says “It’s a quiet change...There’s a real demographic shift of young people away from Oakland and Squirrel Hill and Shadyside over to here”

(<http://www.pittsburghcitypaper.ws/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A20308> / 8/03/2008).

In these urban locales, scene networks form pockets of cultural membership. These pockets are integral to obtaining the “small town” feeling that interviewees describe.

4.1.2 Neighborhood Changes: “It’s way more happening here now”

The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative claims they want to build community and promote the vitality of the East End through art. Jeffrey Dorsey, executive director of the Friendship Development Association and the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative, says,

We’re working with artists because they are our bigger connectors in the community. They bring other creative people to the community. They bring pride. They bring focus to the community in a way that helps people appreciate what we have here.

Dorsey considers arts related establishments “neighborhood servicing businesses” because galleries, studios and arts related structures “bring pride” to the community.

In an effort to build community pride, the PAAI hosts “Unblurred,” a Penn Avenue Arts exhibition. The PAAI says the purpose of Unblurred is to give “participants the opportunity to meet an eclectic array of art makers within walking distance of each other.” On the first Friday of every month, galleries, studios, theaters, music venues and a couple artsy homes open their doors to the community. At no charge, people have the option to watch a local punk band at Garfield Artworks, sit on the grass and listen to neo-bohemian music at the hippy Metamorphosis house, grab some barbeque chicken and dance to hip hop at Envy nightclub, observe performance art in window storefronts, or snack on wine and cheese while perusing small art galleries.

The PAAI says the Penn Avenue corridor hinges on “the interaction of individuals of diverse social, racial and economic backgrounds that come together along the avenue” (http://www.pennavenuearts.org/about_f1.html / 7/24/2008). While the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative claims the East End is “diverse” and in the process of “multicultural” unity, ethnographers of changing neighborhoods find that elites use terms like “diversity” and “multiculturalism” to encourage gentrification (Berrey 2005: 145). Ellen Berrey (2005: 144) argues “discourse about diversity can both illuminate and veil fundamental disagreements over race, class, and development in cities today.” Discourse about diversity and multiculturalism masks the fact that low income individuals and people of color generally do not benefit from urban revitalization policies. Furthermore, “diversity” and “multiculturalism” are often employed to curb discussions about racial colonization, particularly when whites move into minority

neighborhoods. The PAAI may be using “diversity” and “multiculturalism” to sidestep critical discussions about race, class and development inequality in Pittsburgh’s East End.

PAAI supporters claim that Unblurred brings diverse people together, but critics call the gallery crawl “white night” because on these Friday nights, white people’s presence prevails. Carrie, a white artist, DJ and activist, is conflicted about her association with the PAAI gallery crawl:

I don’t go to those Penn avenue gallery things if I can help it anymore because of the way it feels. I would see people who live in the neighborhood trying to walk down the sidewalk and like trying to get by and maybe they’d get mad or maybe they’d get laughed at. Like this really shitty lack of respect. And I’ve been a part of it too and I’ve been a part of events where that happens. I don’t really know what I think of the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation ‘cause like the art stuff is like an initiative they put forth because they were noticing there were a lot of artist living in the area already. So they were like, ‘oh, well maybe if we make things easier for artist to start businesses then we can advertise’...It was a classic trajectory of gentrification in that area.

Carrie indicates she “feels” regretful for being part of the Penn Avenue gallery scene. This art scene, she points out, ridicules and disrespects the “people who live in the neighborhood.” Carrie notes that low income Black residents, in particular, are deliberately and symbolically excluded from the gallery crawl. The PAAI arts endowments and artworks culturally cater to the white middle class. Carrie says that the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation was simply helping artists

already living in the area get established. The BGC understands that art and capital are complementary. Hence, Carrie pauses before asserting investments in the arts is a “classic trajectory of gentrification.”

The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative’s “Unblurred” gallery crawl is associated with the East End’s rising real estate value. One local media outlet invokes the Penn Avenue Arts District’s success in order to market the bordering Friendship neighborhood as a hipster haven:

Some newcomers are young artists, whose presence could be a result of the Arts Initiative’s conversion of more than 108,000 square feet of vacant property into artist workspace. With “Unblurred,” its art-related open house, PAAI is preserving the neighborhood’s right to party. The Quiet Storm coffeehouse, Attack Theater and Garfield Artworks are pulling young alternative musicians, dancers and artists to lofts and rentals. Feel free to show those tattoos—here’s where Friendship is fluid, energetically mixing it up with Bloomfield, Garfield and Lawrenceville

<http://www.wqed.org/mag/features/0706/neighborhoods2.shtml> / 7/26/2008).

The article points out that “some newcomers” are “young alternative musicians, dancers and artists” who are attracted to the area because of the venues and art galleries established by the PAAI. In these places, the columnist indicates, people can express themselves, show their tattoos, party and find an affordable place to live, all in the same place.

Housing costs and proximity to friends and scene events, as one interviewee put it, “keeps people here” and “attracts other people.” Lori says,

I was really attracted to what was happening in the neighborhood and a lot of my friends were slowly like moved here and they're just like, 'oh, I like being able to just walk to a friend's house.' You know, I was just ready for a change. It seemed like it was a nice fit.

Paul points out the East End appeals to grassroots arts and music scenes because it is affordable. He says, "I don't know if it will spread, but the real estate is cheap." Likewise, Angela explains,

Places are being fixed up all over the place. Friendship is still very expensive. Bloomfield has gotten expensive in part because of the hospital. But Garfield is still very reasonable. You can get a house one or two streets up [from Penn Avenue] very cheap and people are starting to do that.

Like most participants, Angela says cost of living is a deciding factor in her choice to establish residency in Garfield, a central Penn Avenue Arts Initiative locale. She declares that Bloomfield is too expensive because of the prospective employment opportunities in the forthcoming Children's Hospital. Hence, Garfield's low property costs in conjunction with its proximity to Friendship and Bloomfield make it an ideal setting for cultural amenities development.

Paul says he thinks the East End has changed because "this part of town is better than other parts, as far as the music and arts" goes. According to Paul, the "proprietors" in the area "are smarter, more world savvy" because they understand the need for "new sounds, new directions." He goes on to say,

It's not the East End that it once was. It's way more happening here now...Now it's becoming that kind of place where...there's a scene and maybe any scene in Pittsburgh is kind of bound to here now. It's just developing really, it's not like it ever was before...there are a lot of newcomers. There is just a lot more energy here than there ever was.

In saying there is "a lot more energy" in the area than there ever was, Paul points to the rise in grassroots music and arts scenes as well as Penn Avenue Arts development. Paul implies that predominately white artistic grassroots networks make the East End a more "happening" place. He contends "newcomers" are developing the area and says the newly established galleries and music venues have energized these neighborhoods. Like Paul, Angela welcomes the changes instituted by the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative. She likes having choices when it comes to playing and seeing live music shows. Angela recently purchased a home in Garfield and appreciates the close proximity of a variety of scene locations. She says, "I think that now that there are so many options up and down this [Penn Avenue] corridor, there isn't a reason to go anywhere else."

When I directly ask interviewees about grassroots arts and music scenes' relationship to Garfield and the surrounding area, most immediately acknowledge new development, neighborhood tensions, and gentrification. Janie says that the music show scene in Pittsburgh is not that different now than what it was in Oakland in the 1990s but says, "In terms of neighborhood, it's obviously completely different, you know. Oakland is a college neighborhood, mostly white kids. And Garfield is obviously a mostly black neighborhood and obviously a lot poorer of a neighborhood."

Janie suggests that urban development projects and predominately white grassroots music scenes have seized the opportunity to culturally colonize a low-income Black neighborhood. She says,

I don't think a lot of shows are interesting to like the people who live in Garfield. I don't think it's the music they like. Obviously, that's a complete generalization but judging from the music you hear playing in cars in Garfield, it's not the kind of music at Garfield Artworks.

Janie implies that Garfield Artworks, a centralized music and arts venue on Penn Avenue, is a contradiction in terms. "Garfield" is the name of a neighborhood that encompasses a demographic of people who are symbolically excluded from the "Artwork." In terms of music, the artwork at Garfield Artworks is almost exclusively culturally white, punk, Indie rock.

A conversation with Angela reveals that East End development is a source of neighborhood tension.

Angela: I think there's definitely a lot of resentment about the whole scene moving in and I think there's also a lot of welcoming here on Penn Avenue. I think it goes both ways

Amy (Interviewer): Resentment and welcoming from...

Angela: From the neighborhood. From the people who live here. You know, they feel it would be nice to have another grocery store instead of another art gallery. But the fact that people are coming to this part of Pittsburgh now that never even think it was dead, it was a ghost town for a while on this stretch of Penn Avenue. So the fact that people are coming here regularly, I think is good for everybody, whether they directly benefit or not. Just the fact that people are coming here and developing here.

Angela maintains that before the “scene moved in” the area was a “ghost town.” She uses the ghost town analogy to challenge the “people who live here” (a phrase used to signify low income Black neighborhood residents) who say they prefer grocery stores to art galleries. Angela argues that artistic development is good for everybody because it gives the neighborhood life. During our conversation at the Quiet Storm coffeehouse on Penn Avenue, Angela points across the street in the direction of a run-down building and remarks, “Almost all the buildings on Penn Avenue looked like that. Boarded up, that’s what was going on.”

A few interviewees express conflict about their role in contributing to gentrification.

Janie says,

I do actually live less than a block from Garfield Artworks, which I have pretty mixed feelings about. I definitely don’t think it’s right. Um, and...I don’t know. I do feel weird about it to the point where I’m definitely going to move when my lease is up. It just doesn’t feel right. But in a way it’s also obviously, it costs a lot of money to rent or buy a space.

Janie has “mixed feelings” about being a newcomer in a changing neighborhood. She plans to move but says affordable housing is hard to find. Carrie also expresses conflict about her decision to reside in the area. She says, “Like Garfield was and still is like predominately African American, like working class or like poverty level neighborhood. I live in that neighborhood and...it’s kind of shifting and starting to change but it’s still predominately that demographic.” She goes on to say,

I feel funny sometimes owning property there because it was like, ‘oh, this is what we can afford’ ... We were like the only white people living on our block, the people we bought the house from were the only white people on the block and the rest were African American so we were like, ok, we’re just replacing the white people who were already here like three generations ago.

Carrie feels “funny” about living in the area because she worries that her choice to buy a house in Garfield will contribute to rising housing costs and neighborhood whitening. Carrie then rationalizes her decision to reside in the area by pointing out she and her roommate merely replaced “the only white people on the block.”

Jess acknowledges economic and racial gentrification in the adjoining East Liberty and Garfield neighborhoods when she says,

East Liberty and Garfield and other areas are slowly turning into whiter communities because these are the people that can buy the houses and buy these businesses. There are a lot of black owned businesses but there are people, older

people, who have raised families in these houses and are unable to buy their property and they are being pushed to other areas. So gentrification is happening in ways that are making it more racially diverse. It's just a transition. It's turning from a black community to a more white community and it's disgusting.

Jess argues that these East End neighborhoods are becoming more “diverse” as a result of gentrification. She insists that community whitening is “disgusting,” but later says, “I would like it to be more diverse,” a statement that exposes her artistic ambitions and East End opportunities.

Jess expresses concern with activating white scene spaces in predominately black neighborhoods. When she started performing poetry at the newly established African American-owned Eva/Shadow Lounge in East Liberty she thinks she “was the only white person there” but it “didn't really seem like an issue.” Jess indicates she is good friends with the owner and appreciates the space's “culturally diverse” atmosphere. However, when she decided to hold *Operation Sappho* at the Lounge, she reflects,

I was afraid. I feel like our following now is predominately white and I was afraid that people wouldn't come because it was mostly black or whatever and there was some hesitation. I mean the first one wasn't super successful but after a while the word got out and emails got out and it was like, ‘yeah, this is great,’ and the Shadow Lounge is typically a black space. And um...there's this awesome predominately white gay party there. And that made it awesome. That was really cool. I wanted people to be there. I wanted people to know that East Liberty is a great area.

Jess's fear reveals that racial integration is not happening on the dance floor. Her comment suggests that white scene networks are most comfortable and accepting of new scene spaces when they dominate them. It was not until "word got out and emails got out" that the attendance of white scene networks grew. Moreover, Jess implies that she wanted white people to know that East Liberty is "a great area," a statement that reveals her desire for spaces that welcome queer networks. Once predominately white scenes successfully create spaces in black neighborhoods, more places are opened for the queer networks Jess enacts to meet and have a good time.

Community development initiatives grow with these grassroots arts and music scenes. On the cusp of the Garfield-Friendship art district is the emerging development of the "Eastside." "Eastside" is a refurbished name that fuses Shadyside, a predominately white upper-class neighborhood, with East Liberty, a predominately low-to-middle income black neighborhood. By interjecting "Side" of Shadyside in "East Liberty" to make "Eastside," community developers are making a name that appeal to newcomers. As one East Liberty activist puts it, the Eastside development is "just gentrification as usual" (Carpenter 2007).

A Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article titled, "Is Eastside Project Wedge or Bridge?" highlights the racial segregation and urban gentrification debates happening in these demographically distinct neighborhoods (Carpenter 2007). The article describes the Eastside project as a "wedge between two neighborhoods—one affluent, the other lower-income but undergoing change..." and the change is a "work in progress" of corporate development that already encompasses middle-class commercial amenities like Whole Foods, Trek Bike store, Starbucks, and Borders bookstore. The article indicates that newcomers like the idea of two communities "coming together," but some residents, those from long-standing Black

communities, are skeptical of corporate sponsored “multicultural unity.” Some neighborhood activists do not view the changes as a bridge that will end Black impoverishment but rather consider the changes a strategic wedge that pushes poor Blacks out of their communities for the benefit of whites and corporate infrastructure. A woman of the East Liberty Residents group argues, “This ‘Eastside’ thing has a lot of the residents that I talk with upset...There’s not anything over there that’s truly geared to the African American consumer. It just looks to us like the ‘suits’ are doing their best to make the area more appealing to white people.” Jess, a local DJ and slam poet, expresses conflict about these “Eastside” changes.

I like that shopping area. I like it being there but I don’t think it’s there for the development of the people in that area. Like you see a lot of families that I know are being pushed out of their homes and having to move to different areas that are suburban...and that’s inappropriate.

Jess is attracted to the shopping area and the art galleries on the East End but recognizes artistic venues and “big name places” are pushing “inner-city black families” from their homes. She, like many of the cultural producers I spoke with, indicates that East End development is a complex issue.

Lori, an artist and fashion designer, expresses an attraction to new “Eastside” development. She talks about how excited she is to have an Ethiopian restaurant in East Liberty because “Pittsburgh did not even have one before.” However, Lori asserts she is disappointed that corporate chains are opening alongside ethnic businesses and contends these developments

are intertwined with residential gentrification. Lori is conflicted about these neighborhood changes. She says,

There's horrible things happening in the neighborhood. There's wonderful things happening in the neighborhood. You know, there's all these galleries that have opened and you can finally get these great apartments and at the same time shit is happening also, for sure. And it's not cool. And how do you stop it? What do you do? I don't know.

Lori, like many of the people I spoke with, asks questions like, "How do you stop it?" By posing questions like this, interviewees sidestep critical reflections about their own choice to live and network in an area that is gentrified. She recognizes there are "horrible" and "wonderful" things happening in the East End. Historic buildings are being restored, roads re-paved, shopping plazas are booming and hang out spaces are opening. At the same time, real estate costs are rising and most of the newly established shopping and hang out spaces on this side of town are owned and supported by whites.

In sum, most of my interview participants express conflict about their role in the East End's development. On the one hand, some value affordable housing, accessibility to friends, walking and biking to scene events, as well as the convenience of new shopping plazas. On the other, many interviewees say they think, as one put it, "There are horrible things happening in the neighborhood." Interviewees point out that Black residents are being pushed out of their homes, a few direct their attention to how corporate infrastructure rides the coattails of grassroots artists, and others say they feel awkward about living in Garfield. Still, a few cultural producers,

namely those in their early 40s who have lived in Pittsburgh most of their lives such as Angela and Paul, do not talk about the problems of gentrification. Instead, they point out that the city was once a “ghost town” and that revitalizing the neighborhood through arts development benefits rather than hurts East End communities. Nonetheless, regardless of their stance, these participants utilize places that directly or indirectly benefit from urban revitalization projects in Pittsburgh’s East End. In this “small town,” as I show below, cultural, racial and physical boundaries are enacted, which establish the “cultural signifiers” (Haunss & Leach 2004) of scene membership.

4.1.3 The Quiet Storm Coffeehouse: “A community gathering place”

The Quiet Storm coffeehouse is a recognized renovated space that attracts predominately white intersecting scene networks to the East End. In my methods chapter, I noted that most of my one-on-one interview participants wanted to be interviewed in the Quiet Storm coffeehouse. The coffeehouse is located on Penn Avenue, on the edge of Friendship, in Garfield. Jason Vrael, manager of the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh,⁵ says the Quiet Storm coffeehouse “has radically changed the dynamics in that part of Penn Avenue” because it “stabilized that corner” of the Penn Avenue Arts District where Friendship and Garfield meet. He contends, “It’s a better place now because of the Quiet Storm” (Jones 2005).

The Quiet Storm coffeehouse is intimately connected to neighborhood development. The current owner, Jill MacDowell, says she decided to stop holding music shows there when she

⁵ Community Design Center of Pittsburgh is a non-profit organization that seeks to improve “quality of life” through the design of the built environment. The CDCP provides assistance through grants, education and technical assistance (http://www.cdcp.org/Mission_Vision.htm /7/30/2008).

learned that the Friendship Development Association, Inc. had invested \$650,000 in the butting back apartments (Theiner 2006). She says the apartments are “not going to college students” but implies that music shows were not a big loss. Since MacDowell stopped having live music shows there, she has expanded the menu, dining hours, and seating area. The Quiet Storm owner’s entrepreneurial spirit sits well with the Friendship Development Association. In December of 2006, a new five-year lease was negotiated to which FDA executive director Dorsey said, “We see them as a neighborhood servicing business, and we’re trying to give her the best deal we can” (Theiner 2006).

The Quiet Storm coffeehouse owner coins the coffeehouse “a community gathering place” where people “take their time” and “exchange ideas with other people” (http://www.pennavenuearts.org/video_f1.html /7/24/2008). MacDowell says the patrons are “hang around people” and “surmises that their endurance encourages occupation of other spaces in the neighborhood” (Jones 2006). She explains,

We have lots of musicians and artists and people who are trying to build anything in Pittsburgh. Whether it’s a small business or an arts scene or a gallery or a nightclub or people who are buying real estate and fixing it up so other people can live in this area (http://www.pennavenuearts.org/video_f1.html 7/24/2008).

In a Penn Avenue Arts Initiative video, the owner recognizes the coffeehouse’s centrality to artistic networking and neighborhood development. However, MacDowell does not acknowledge the fact that this “community gathering place” is a white pocket in a predominately Black neighborhood.

The building's expansive windows enclose groups of alternative white youth who dine on \$7 tofu sandwiches and \$3 lattes. On any day of the week there are punks, bikers, artists, graduate students and activists taking their time, sipping coffee and hanging out. In an article titled, "Boom and buzz: Can a coffeehouse save the neighborhood?" Diane Nelson Jones says the coffeehouse serves vegans, pierced and tattooed people, readers and laptop users (2006).

Several interviewees indicate that the Quiet Storm coffeehouse changed the East End for the better. Paul says, "This place opening was a pretty big deal" because it brought artistic scene networks to the area. According to Angela, before the "newcomers" moved in, the Quiet Storm was a "nuisance bar" and Paul says, "There would be shootings and knifings here weekly." Although the Quiet Storm's patrons have changed, the name stays the same. The "Quiet Storm" is a term commonly used to describe an R&B melodic style of music. When the bar was purchased by the Friendship Development Associates sometime around October of 2001, it was leased to an engineer named Ian Lipsky whose task was to reincarnate a "troubled" corner bar into the "peaceable Quiet Storm Coffeehouse and Restaurant" (Hayes 2001). The business has since changed hands to its current owner, Jill MacDowell. A plethora of derogatory terms are used to characterize the old Quiet Storm bar. Some say the bar was "loud and dangerous" others say the bar was "seedy" and many contend it was a "nuisance" bar where "pimps, prostitutes and pushers" congregate (Hayes 2001).

Whereas development enthusiasts consider the Quiet Storm a pioneer in arts growth, critics say this business is the cornerstone of gentrification. From the coffeehouse's south side location, "newcomers" can sit at the high countertop where they can watch the "people who live here" (a phrase interviewees use to describe 'original' Black residents) as they go about their daily lives, on the north side of the street. During my last visit to the coffeehouse on a desolate

Monday afternoon, I noticed an elderly Black man sitting near the entryway, on the couch, where I had observed another Black man sitting the last time I was there. This man lit a cigar, was asked to leave, and then finished his smoke outside, returned, and ordered a cup of coffee. While paying for his coffee with coins, a white middle-aged man and woman socializing with a laptop between them turned their eyes toward the man and laughed. After a couple sips, the man finished his coffee outside. Upon his leaving the perimeter of the building, this corner of Friendship and Garfield resumed its solid white character.

Newspaper articles and informal conversations suggest that at first the new Quiet Storm attracted “multiracial audiences to predominately African-American parts of town” and claim this newly established business was “on the cutting edge of slicing through Pittsburgh’s lingering racial barriers” (Hayes 2001). However, the Quiet Storm’s ability to slice through racial barriers is a contested issue. Jones, the “Boom and Buzz” author, references the Quiet Storm owner who says that early on the coffeehouse was burglarized, tagged, and had glass broken by vandals. Jones goes on to cite the coffeehouse owner who says the place has earned “a grudging respect” from neighborhood residents.

The coffeehouse’s weekly newspaper advertisement signals that the Quiet Storm coffeehouse is for the newcomers. The ad encourages symbolic racial boundaries that suggest the new Quiet Storm is culturally white. The nostalgic circa 1950s newspaper ad features a clean-cut white man wearing a golden boy smile as he clasps a steaming cup of coffee. Moreover, the coffeehouse’s vegetarian menu, neo-hippy meets punk rock aesthetic, and Indie music offset the venue’s history, location, and relationship to the Garfield neighborhood.

Lori says the Quiet Storm coffeehouse is commonly perceived as a protagonist in artistic development, both by outraged neighborhood residents and the grassroots arts scene that patron the coffeehouse.

People would be like, you know as soon as the art house, the art coffeehouse moved into the neighborhood, Quiet Storm was like the first thing to move into here, people were like, 'Oh, five years before the bulldozer comes,' and of course that's what's happening. That's the cycle. And it's not. I mean it's not the fault of artists. Like people who live here. You know you'll see graffiti that says 'art sucks' and it's like okay, yeah, artists moved into a neighborhood they could afford to do their art but then it attracts other people to the neighborhood and then you know big business comes in and it's like it's not the purpose in the beginning. The purpose is to make art and survive.

Lori says the Quiet Storm symbolizes neighborhood development. She explains that its vegan dishes, artwork, and retro furniture draw emerging artists to the neighborhood. Although Lori contends artists are not responsible for the expansion of big business, she is aware that art "attracts other people to the neighborhood." She understands corporate infrastructure follows art scenes but also argues neighborhood development cannot be attributed to art. Thus, Lori contends that the "people who live here" are misdirecting anger when they spray paint messages like "art sucks" on gallery buildings and windows. She implies the purpose is not the change the neighborhood, the purpose is "to make art and survive."

Places such as the Quiet Storm coffeehouse are central to the Penn Avenue Arts District development because the coffeehouse supplies predominately white grassroots music and arts scenes spatial resources for networking. In urban locales such as this, a variety of intersecting scene networks form recognizable meeting places and create symbolic boundaries which turn a big city into a “small town.”

4.2 NETWORKS

Scenes are overlapping permeable networks of cooperation and experience that engage “activity systems” (Irwin 1977) in recognizable meeting locations (Haunss & Leach 2004; Irwin 1977).

Although the networks I explore overlap and the groups and individuals engage a range of scenes, two networks emerge: the Political Punk and Rickety scenes. In this section, I explore how my interviewees define scenes. Next, I examine what characterizes the Political Punk and Rickety scenes. I follow by analyzing gender and sexuality exclusions and how impact grassroots music and arts scene networks.

4.2.1 Overlapping Networks: “I don’t think I can just like lock myself into one”

My interviewees talk about scenes in ways that suggests they see them, like scholars do, as dynamic, overlapping, and activity focused networks. They identify with multiple networks, a common aspect of the grassroots music and art scene.

Through active involvement in diverse scenes, participants bind multiple scenes together. When I ask Lori, an event organizer, if she identifies with a specific scene, she replies, “Hmm...I like to discover everything so I wouldn’t necessarily say that I identify with a particular scene...I don’t think I can just lock myself into one.” Similarly, Kim, a musician, argues there is not “A scene” because “It depends on where you are. Some people just like to go to a certain bar and they’ll see what’s there because they like to go there. That’s kind of a scene.” In pointing out there is not “A scene,” Kim asserts that scenes are flexible, rather than totalizing social structures of experience (Bennett & Peterson 2004; Haunns & Leach 2004; Irwin 1977; Unruh 1980). By going to a “certain bar” to see “what’s there,” people “plug into” (Irwin 1977) scenes and become involved in unique social experiences that are particular to networks, place and activity.

Jess’s involvement in arts, poetry, punk and hip hop scenes demonstrates how scenes are formed by dynamic networks that overlap thematically. She explains,

There are awesome artists, performers, and poetry. I think it’s really crazy to identify it. I mean there are different genres. Like a punk music community and like a rock and hip hop scene. I could name different people in different genres of music but I don’t think our music community is large enough to say that there’s a community that I identify with because I really enjoy it all.

Jess also indicates the music community is small, which she suggests makes for intersecting rather than discrete scenes. Angela, a musician, has a similar take on her involvement in grassroots music scenes:

I feel like the band I'm in now is definitely in the kind of experimental, rock genre, but I've been in pop bands and I've known a lot of people who've been in kinda straight ahead rock bands, metal bands, so I'm not, I don't feel like I identify...I like all kinds of music, I go see all kinds of bands, and I have friends that are in various different things, so, personally, I'm in kinda of an Indie scene, but it's not any particular genre.

Like Jess, Angela gives a response that diverges from most music scene scholarship that analyzes music scenes as fixed categories such as "Goth," "straightedge," and "hardcore." Angela says there is a lot of overlap among people engaged in grassroots music scenes. She notes that the Indie scene encompasses multiple music genres. Angela enjoys being simultaneously involved in a variety of scenes concerning music and emphasizes that grassroots music scenes often interconnect under the same umbrella.

Paul plays music in two different bands and says that although a younger crowd appreciates one of the bands more than the other, the crowds "do overlap." He explains, "There's a very strong creative scene here of musicians and artists and we support each other more than anybody else supports us. It's what we do." Grassroots music and arts networks do overlap, because, as Paul put it, these networks "support" each other. That is what they "do."

Overlapping networks cultivate, as one put it, a "feeling of family." Monica and Laura explain,

Monica: There's definitely an element of permeability where you can just go from here to here, where you can host this event at your house that used to be at this other person's house.

Laura: But I would say that, like, I wouldn't want to say that like there isn't a strong sense of like...I don't know, I definitely feel like I have a family in that larger group of like people who I am especially close to.

Monica and Laura indicate that network permeability makes for a friendly social scene that gives them a sense of familiarity and closeness. Laura emphasizes the fluid nature of scene networks when she says,

I feel there's a blurring between one community and another community. Like you can just say "the community" as a whole entity but I mean when you break it down, there are the activists, there are the art kids, the punk kids, the hardcore kids, the bike kids. I don't know, it's all over the place. But arguably, I would say we're under the same umbrella.

Laura argues that a blurring between one community and another occurs in the larger community because groups engage a variety of networks such as the "hardcore," "bike" and "activist" scene. She argues that these networks are "under the same umbrella," and in doing so, qualifies her point that this "larger group" feels like a "family." Paul says that one time he played a show in Lawrenceville at an art gallery and all these "East Sider creative people showed up" that he had

not seen before. He says that “since that time, we’ve [the band] been seeing a lot more people, but eventually, they’re close enough that they are friends.” He goes on to say, “It’s not like a lot of strangers popping in the scene.” Paul points to the overlapping familiar character of grassroots music and art networks and events. Through network affiliation and participation in music and arts events no one stays a stranger for long.

I find that the loose overlapping character of scene networks makes it easy for participants to engage various events. These permeable boundaries are situated in recognizable meeting locations around particular music and arts activities. The overlapping quality of scenes generates a social arena in which various networks intersect under the same “umbrella.” This umbrella is central to the familiar “small town” feeling participants in these intersecting grassroots music and arts networks describe.

4.2.2 Network Clusters: Political Punk and Rickety Scenes

While participants agree that scenes are dynamic and overlapping, two principal networks emerge in my study: the Rickety and Political Punk scenes. In this section, I discuss these scenes. I find that networks cluster around particular events and ideas about the purpose of scenes.

Political Punk participants invoke punk “for lack of a better word,” and political activism to describe their scene. I met this network through Carrie, a DJ, artist, zine publisher, event organizer and Anarchist Marching band member, who says the people she generally surrounds herself with “are political.” The Political Punk network is comprised of people who identify as queer, bisexual, and “straight but queer in theory.” In this cluster, all are women with the exception of Aaron, and in my sample, all are 18-31 years of age.

Political Punk participants de-emphasize music and indicate that their scene involves a politically punk ethos. Upon the closing of our interview, Carrie says in an apologetic tone, “I’m not sure how much of this was about music.” She feels the name of the community she belongs to is “like ten words long...punk, artists, activist, anarchist, scrapper, wing nut, subculture-esque.” Similarly, Diane, a musician and activist, says, “For me it’s the punk community, activist community, both of those communities together.” Aaron, a zine publisher and advocate of Leftist politics, says,

My life in punk rock has always been political. I don’t want to discredit other people for [my] disliking the music that they do or want to necessarily take away their label or identity of punk away but I am saying like, there is apolitical, to me, boring kinds of punk that I’m not willing to think about as punk. But they can if they want to.

Aaron does not consider apolitical people punk but explains that “they can [identify as punk] if they want to.” He says that a lot of people consider themselves punks that “haven’t been exposed to the really political part of punk rock.” When I ask Monica, a musician and artist, to identify the scene she belongs to, she responds,

The way I tend to mentally categorize people is where they have chosen to direct their energies. For example, person A, oh, person A is involved with the Big Idea, which is the anarchist bookshop. For example, person B. Person B is involved with the Union project or Free Ride which is the bike repair [cooperative] and

often times there is a lot of overlap. But that's how I categorize people, by what they've chosen to channel most of their time and energy into. Not so much their musical ventures.

Like other Political Punk participants, Monica does not categorize people according to "their musical ventures." Instead, she indicates scene membership is contingent on the kinds of politically centered group one engages, such as an anarchist bookstore, an environmentally conscious bike collective or activist project. Political Punk networks engage the scenes Monica mentions. Hence, there is network overlap and that overlap is themed Politically Punk.

According to Political Punk participants, feminist consciousness and punk ethos correspond. Aaron states,

I figured out through Riot Grrrl and reading different books about what feminism was and what that meant, what Unions were even and how they worked and why they're important and so yeah, really started fostering Leftist politics, if not radical politics.

Aaron says that Riot Grrrl music radicalized him politically. He asserts that in the larger punk community "there were like punk musicians and bands that were really political" but through Riot Grrrl, "punk rock as the institution was fully politicized as a movement." He says that Riot Grrrls "wanted to support each other as girls and women in the scene." Aaron explains that the movement "rejected capitalism in all its forms" and deployed a feminist Marxist strategy when

they became “operatives of every part” of cultural production. Lucy, a musician, says leading Riot Grrrl band *Bikini Kill* inspired her,

You know, I wanted to be like them. I wanted to say all the things I wanted to say too. I had like a bunch of ideas and I wanted to get them out and I really got into the whole idea of like girl bands, like strong women, you know. I like music and wanted to be a part of it and make it.

Lucy says Riot Grrrl inspires her to play music with other women and suggests that through punk music, she is able to express her feminist politics. Lucy says her involvement in cultural production carries over into her activism. She explains, “I like to go to a lot of protest. I don’t really like to start protest. I like being part of the dyke march...I like starting things for women.” Here, Lucy blurs the boundary between overt activism and “starting things for women.” Although she enjoys participating in protest, she does not start them. Instead, she likes to create art and music events that “only women can be at” because it “makes it easier for women to go.” Lucy says,

Maybe partly it’s political not to be into guy music as much. I want to support women. I want to support women artist because they’re struggling...it’s hard to be an artist because guys are like everywhere.

Lucy defines her political punk identity through feminism. She says it is important for women to support one another as artists and musicians because it is a “guy’s culture” and the scene is

“male dominated.” Like Lucy and Aaron, Carrie indicates her feminist and punk identity is interconnected.

I always had this idea that like I was a feminist but I didn't totally know exactly what that meant. I was just like women are equal to men and I want to do what I want to do. Boom! Like I want to do what I want to do and like wear pants and not wear make-up if I don't want to. Like these kind of basic ideas in my head since I was a kid, like there was no way to articulate that. I feel like when I found DIY punk and zines it was like this thing that I was looking for but didn't know what it was. But then I found it. It was like this is it! These things people have created, this way to communicate with people. I don't know, it was just really important to me.

Carrie says that DIY punk and zines raised her feminist consciousness. Through a politicized punk network, she communicates her conviction that women and men should be equal.

Rickety participants speak of their scene in terms of music, age, friends and partying. Most of the Rickety network is comprised of people who identify as heterosexual. One of my Rickety affiliated interviewees identifies as bisexual and another queer. In this cluster, all are women with the exception of Paul, and in my sample, all are 32-41 years of age. I discovered this network when I watched one of the Rickety scene's all-female bands play a show. The band is one of three all-female bands regularly playing at the time of my research in Pittsburgh's East End. I received their contact information from my all-female band focus group participants of the

Political Punk scene. When I asked these band members to talk about the scene they identify with, they respond,

Kim: Older people, older folk. [Everyone in the room is laughing] I love the Rickety scene and I think that's the best music in Pittsburgh and anywhere else I have ever lived.

Jennifer: It's damn fine music. That is true.

Kim: And that we, I think got to play with my favorite Rickety bands. And they totally supported us. They recorded our album, they book shows with us. You know, they just treated us really well. So that's the one I definitely identify with.

Kathy: We tend to, I don't know, like those are the only of like scenes of music, like I think I only know people who show up at Rickety-esque shows. I don't really feel like I know many people in the music scene outside of that. So I don't know, I think we tend to. I know I only go to shows where I know I'm going to like the band or I am going to like the crowd and like get to see my friends. I would go see my friends shows even if I had seen them seven times before and you know a lot of times they would do the same. So I think I would identify us more with that scene as well...if any.

Jennifer: Definitely with drinkers. We never got along or really pursued the [straight]edge scene in Pittsburgh.

These women charge that the Rickety scene is comprised of good music and good times. They say the scene is supportive of their musical endeavors and indicate that they enjoy going to shows that involve their friends' bands. Like those in Political Punk, Rickety participants stress the importance of supporting friends' artistic endeavors. Yet the Rickety band, unlike the Political Punk band, is engaged in a drinking scene.

The Rickety scene is a music-centered social scene. Angela says it all started in a shared house where "there were like four or five bands that either a member of the band lived in the house or all practiced in the garage there." Angela explains it was "kind of a little collective." She says that people living and visiting the house were always getting together to "jam" and a lot of bands grew out of that nurturing environment. The Rickety scene started its own record label in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Angela and Paul brought their Rickety creation with them when they moved back to Pittsburgh. Angela got involved in writing the newsletter that included a "Rickety Thursdays" monthly calendar, music show and album reviews.

The Rickety scene is not politically centered. These participants make a distinction between the "more political" and Indie rock music community. Paul, a musician and poet who often engages the Rickety scene, recognizes that the Political Punk scene is more supportive of his queer-identified band than his friends in the Rickety scene. He says that although there is a lot of overlap, different performances attract different audiences. Paul compares the two bands in which he plays by saying that "some friends of mine" are "comfortable with even the more

outlandish parts” of his all male folk rock band but they are “freaked out” by the “queer-identified” experimental rock band he created with Angela. Paul contends,

It’s easier for people to get comfortable with the [all male folk band] and at the same time, the younger crowd who is more into walking and biking and shopping in the co-op and going to protest are much more likely to see [queer-experimental band] because they think the [folk band] is a sell out band.

Angela, Paul’s band mate agrees that a more “political” audience sets limits on what bands they support. She asserts “I definitely think a political audience” will go see Anita Fix and Bam Bam, an experimental rock band that exhibits queer and anti-war themes, but not go to other shows “because it doesn’t interest them.” Angela indicates the Rickety scene shares a “DIY aesthetic” with the Political Punk scene but not its politics. She says the Rickety scene is “not punk rock in that way” yet contends the “overriding philosophy of Rickety is that if you want to do it, you can do it.”

4.2.3 Exclusionary Networks: “It’s kind of a social scene and social scene I just don’t feel comfortable in.”

Political Punk scene interviewees are not comfortable supporting music shows that marginalize people on the basis of gender and sexual identity. Carrie says she pulled back from the Pittsburgh music scene because “Being political and being conscious isn’t at the forefront as much as it used to be.” She elaborates,

I feel like the vibe at shows too just seems that other people are just interested in like the culture of music, like creating and consuming it, like buying records, playing in a band and partying but not so much about living like some of the ideas that maybe they would talk about in their songs. They're not really as interested in doing anything with it. It's kind of like a social scene and a social scene that I just don't feel comfortable in.

Carrie asserts that the male dominated punk music scene is contradictory. These networks, she claims, often espouse one thing and then do another. She feels like the music scene is concerned with creating and consuming music "But not so much about living some of the ideas" they talk about in their songs. Carrie argues that they "belittle consciousness or anyone challenging the male domination and patriarchy, like the status quo." The gap between ideas and practices makes for a social scene Carrie does not "feel comfortable in." She asserts, "I'm kinda like really jaded and fed up by the sausage party [a penis reference] that the Pittsburgh music scene can be. There are a lot of women making music but I feel like it's overwhelmingly like a lot more male visibility."

Many of the Political Punk participants I spoke with were once very involved in the Mr. Roboto Project. The Mr. Roboto Project is a cooperatively run DIY (do-it-yourself) music venue that has membership rules and fees. For \$25, members can be part of the decision making board, propose bands and receive admission discounts. Diane, a musician and Mr. Roboto pioneer says she got involved in establishing the venue because of its "political element." She says, "I think in itself, it is political because it's a cooperative and it was made for the kids by the kids. I don't think other musical things in town are like that." Diane explains that the Mr. Roboto Project is

built from a DIY punk ethos wherein people directly participate in making a space for their own cultural production. However, Diane is certain to point out that she “wouldn’t go as far as to say that everyone who goes there does activism.”

Carrie, who was also involved in establishing the Mr. Roboto Project says “there’s cool things about the way they do things” but asserts she has pulled back from the scene because “it doesn’t speak to me culturally.” She implies that Mr. Roboto is male-dominated and “the focus of that space has just shrunken to be mostly like certain kinds of music.” Monica, a musician and artist, was first introduced to the Mr. Roboto a few years after immigrating to the United States. She explains, “I hadn’t heard that such a thing could happen or that such music is being made and that it’s just this accessible” and so “I found it kind of intimidating but later kind of grew into it.” Over time, however, Monica says she lost interest in the venue and comments she is not sure if it is her or the scene that changed.

When I arrive at the Mr. Roboto Project, I know I am at the right place before seeing the address; white grungy young men and women wearing thrift store clothing, tattoos and messenger bags are hanging out on the street curb near the venue’s entrance. Collectively, they form a white pocket in the predominately African American Wilkinsburg neighborhood. Wilkinsburg is located on the outskirts of the Penn Avenue corridor on Pittsburgh’s East End. Independent businesses, fast food restaurants, vacant homes and deserted buildings are prominent in the area.

My style, skin color and 30 years of age fit the scene, but I am alone. I grow self-conscious after paying the \$5 door cover and realizing the show is delayed another 15 minutes. Unsure how to maintain an air of coolness, I pick up some pro-vegan and anti-war brochures and take them outside where I read the materials in a desperate attempt to look busy. Everyone there

appears to be part of the network; no one looks as uncomfortable as I feel. The ambiance is not the source of my awkwardness. Ten years of my life revolved around collecting records, live music shows and independent venues like this. I am insecure in my perceived isolation from the network.

Once the show starts, people gather near the band in a carpeted space the size of a modest living room. When the headlining all-man group takes the floor, a cluster of approximately eight men enclose the band in a semi-circle of fervor. They sing along and thrash their heads as the emocore⁶ singer screams within inches of their faces. Screeching at the top of his lungs, he arouses the male-dominated audience with his every gesture. But when an aggressive woman singer shouts in their faces, the audience is more sedate. During her set, many of the men stand further from the band, bobbing their heads with uneasy looks on their faces.

Monica, Joanna and Laura say they are not as involved in the Mr. Roboto scene as they once were.

Monica: It seems to me, like for me personally, the Roboto kind of got relegated to the type of venue that plays a very particular type of music that I have to be in a particular mood for. Therefore, I don't really go all that much because either I'm not really in the mood or I'm just not really familiar with what goes on there anymore, I think.

⁶ Emocore refers to emotional hardcore punk music. It is a style of music that started in the D.C. area when Dischord records bands like Rites of Spring started slowing down the pace and aggressiveness of political hardcore punk.

Laura: I feel like the scene maybe used to be very different though too. I feel like the music may have been the same but the attitude people approached it with was much more optimistic and joyous and it was about having a party and like dancing and making the walls sweat and the ground sweat a little too much. And I don't feel like when I go there anymore that it's that way and it might be because I'm older and maybe if I were with the other 18 year olds then I would be surrounded by that sort of energy again but I don't know, it's different now.

Diane: I feel like it's not necessarily that it's changed at all. It's just that we've changed.

Laura: Yeah.

Whereas Monica says she no longer goes to the Mr. Roboto because she is not in the "mood" for the music and unfamiliar with the scene, Laura says she feels like the scene has changed, or, as Joanna put it "we've changed." However, their disengagement with the Roboto scene may also be attributed to the fact Monica, Joanna and Laura play Indie-pop folk rock, a form of music not typically promoted at the venue. Moreover, both Carrie and Diane, two pioneering Mr. Roboto Project participants, say that when the venue first opened it had "other stuff" such as zine library, art exhibits and craft fairs. Over time, they point out, the space exclusively became a hardcore music venue, and one that my observations and conversations reveal is generally dominated by men.

The all-female Rickety band I reference earlier indicates they do not feel welcome at the Mr. Roboto Project. When I ask these four women, “How about the Roboto Project?” they contend,

Haley: I won't go there.

Jennifer: We haven't even tried to play there.

Kim: We won't try to play there.

Kathy: They're, do they attract a younger crowd?

Haley: No.

Kim: It's carpeted. It's just an uncomfortable place.

Jennifer: I just don't think we'd work well at the Roboto Project.

Shortly thereafter, Haley interjects that one time she went to Mr. Roboto and got a “twenty minute lecture on supporting the fucking music scene.” Kim affirms Haley's frustration,

They are self-righteous. They are really contrived. And I think that's, we were always insulting the contrived...like you know, that's what we are looking to

undo. By presenting ourselves as contrived and yet being really uncontrived, I guess. I think Roboto is, they have these “scene rules” and have this strong, you know, it’s a clique...it just doesn’t appeal to us, that kind of a scene.

Unlike the Political Punk scene participants, these Rickety women say the Roboto scene is a clique. Their exclusion from what they consider to be a “contrived” network is integrated in their performances. When playing a show, Haley, the lead singer, regularly dresses in tennis outfits, “soccer mom” or “professional lady” attire, the kinds of outfits the “contrived” scene despises. By visually stylizing herself in this manner, Haley teases exclusionary scene boundaries. She, like Carrie of the Political Punk scene, says the Roboto scene is characteristically contradictory. Haley contends, “They’re all talking about not being able to get girls and defending people, you know, women’s rights, but when you talk to them in person they talk to you like you’re a child.” She is “bummed” that women of her age are treated poorly in the scene and says the male dominated punk networks’ actions contradict their politically righteous messages.

4.2.4 Girl Bands: “The theme is breast”

Regardless of the bands’ respective scene standpoint, focus group participants indicate that gender tokenism is a common practice in a male dominated grassroots music scene. Diane of the Political Punk scene says her band is sometimes asked to play shows when they do not “fit the bill at all” and believes that when this occurs they are “just filling the diversity card.” Diane contends that although she is “totally a fan of diversifying the bill,” she asserts, “Sometimes it just doesn’t work. It’s very strange.” Her band reiterates Diane’s frustration with gender tokenism in the following exchange:

Monica: The tendency is to not want to jump up on your soap box and be like, you know what guys, this is not cool. But—

Diane: It can be cool.

Monica: But sometimes—

Laura: Yeah, mm hmm.

Diane: Sometimes, when it's just so striking, it's a little weird.

Although the band is reluctant to confront their male friends about gender marginalization, they indicate that sometimes discrimination is so “striking” that it is hard to overlook.

Whereas the Political Punk band trio indicates they do not appreciate being asked to “fill the diversity card,” members of the all-female Rickety scene welcome tokenism.

Amy (Interviewer): How has your reception been in Pittsburgh? Was it easy for you to get shows?

Kathy: Incredibly easy.

Jennifer: Everyone wanted to do a show with us. Every place wanted to have us play. It was very easy.

Kathy: We didn't, did we book any shows aside from Arsenal?

Jennifer: I don't think so.

Kathy: Everybody asked us.

Kim: You know. Everybody wanted the girl punk band to open for them.

Jennifer: Well, it wasn't always that. It was like the novelty of being all girls, definitely. But I think there was some novelty of like to see [Justin's] wife [Haley] sing cause I've heard about it.

Haley: Yeah, I think that was, I think that was a lot of it, yeah. All these guys that I've known for years, and I don't know, I don't think anybody...I was always somebody's wife or somebody's girlfriend and I think that surprised people that I actually did something.

Kim: Yes.

During our conversation, these women recognize gender tokenism yet imply that they choose to play shows in spite of the reasons men ask them to be on bills. They boast about how busy they are and indicate they play every venue they want to play, at least once. Their exchange also reveals that Haley, the singer, is a big draw because of her status in the scene as “somebody’s wife or somebody’s girlfriend.” Haley is married to a well-known local musician and says that people were surprised that she “actually did something” in the scene. She later says that before joining the band, she was not “really regarded as anything” and some choice men thought she was “stupid.”

Participants of both the Political Punk and Rickety scenes contend that gender grouping is a common form of sexualized segregation in grassroots music scenes.

The all-female Indie-pop trio of the Political Punk scene point out that women musicians are “grouped together.”

Laura: There’s like two bands that we generally get paired up with. And it’s always very funny how that happens cause sometimes it’s because it’s a deliberate effort by the bands to play together because we really enjoy like the crowd that comes to support you and then sometimes it’s because your songs match and just because—

Moncia: Mmm Hmm

Laura: You’re best buddies. And then sometimes it’s like there’s a promoter somewhere who thinks you should be grouped together.

Monica: Like, for example, you're all women, or –

Laura: Yeah, all women or you're not easily categorized so we'll put you in a show together. We run into that a lot because we don't really fit into a niche necessarily at this point. At least I'm going to flatter myself and say that I don't think we really fit into a niche yet. So it's not easy to say “oh, well, they're Riot Grrrl so put them with this band because they're Riot Grrrl or oh, well, they're Indie rock so put them here or, oh, well—

Monica: Yeah – [Laura and Monica laugh together]

Diane: It's always really interesting when people just say like, when they're putting together a show and they're not really linking up styles, and they're saying, “Oh, they're women they must go on this bill” and we totally don't fit the bill musically, it's ridiculous!

These three women suggest that male promoters consider their gender, rather than their music, when putting their band on show bills. They say bands featuring women, especially all-female bands, are habitually “grouped together.” Lucy, the lead singer/guitarist of an all-female feminist punk band of the Political Punk scene, also says that girl bands are “usually grouped together.” She explains, “It seems that if there's a minority, people are usually like ‘put them, put the

minority together.’” However, Lucy says, “I like it that way. I like being with a bunch of girls.” She asserts that she likes “playing with other girls” because she likes “hearing other girl music.”

Members of the all-female band of the Rickety scene also say they are generally paired with bands that contain female musicians.

Haley: I think it was a lot of guys saying “Oh, well there’s a girl band playing, let’s get another girl band”

[Everyone makes agreeable remarks – a few members mention a prominent promoter named “Jeff”]

Jennifer: [Jeff] booked us with completely different bands that have also had females or mostly girls and stuff and they couldn’t have been musically more different and horrible with us. I mean, it’s just like—

Haley: Sorry!

Jennifer: I mean we’ve definitely felt a big sorry to everyone in the crowd for that one—Enjoy! [Room fills with laughter]

I followed up their remarks by asking, “What kind of shows would you rather be playing?” to which I received the following replies—

Kim: Well, we've had this conversation with [Jeff], or I did...I kind of said, what's the deal with booking all girl bands that don't, that doesn't make for a good show, really. In my opinion, that's not why I would go see a show. I'd want to see something that compliments, some kind of music that compliments each other that's new and exciting, that's genre based, I guess. And really, for him, it was just thematic.

Kathy: The theme is breast. [everyone is laughing]

Jennifer: He [Jeff] puts us on a lot of shows and he's doing it like everyday of the week, even when nobody wants to go see shows and I think it becomes a default, an easy way, I really think it's more laziness than anything else.

Kim: Uh huh, but when I talked to him about it he said that that's what people, you know, "I know how people perceive these girl bands" and people who are into girl bands, they're going to see a bunch of girl bands.

Jennifer: Huh.

Kim: He thought that was a good way to sell tickets. Because people who see girl bands or enjoy girl bands enjoy them because they are girls and if there are a bunch of girls, in his opinion, he'll get those people. But I never found that was true.

My focus groups with these all-female bands from the Rickety and Political Punk scene reveal that women are recurrently “grouped together,” or group themselves together. Furthermore, both focus groups indicate that they do not appreciate promoters’ segregationist practices. They think bands should be billed according to musical style, not gender.

Whereas the musicians who play in all-female bands say they are “grouped together,” Angela, the drummer of a predominately male experimental Indie-rock band of the Rickety scene, says her band is generally put on bills that “make sense” to her. However, she recognizes that Jeff, the infamous promoter, often fails to put “an all-girl band with someone who is more musically similar.” Like Kim, Angela says that Jeff thinks he has the “formula” for a successful show but she does “not know that that’s always true.” Lucy, the musician who prefers to play shows with other women musicians recognizes it is not “equal in the entertainment business” and says the scene “kind of does set women apart from men.” She says women are viewed as “different” and gender difference “sets you apart from the music scene.” It is precisely the exclusionary practices of the male dominated music scene that push Lucy to enact scene spaces created by women for women.

Male dominated networks and music promoters consider “all girl” bands “different.” Women musicians are systematically marginalized and excluded from the larger male dominated Pittsburgh music scene where, as Monica exclaims, “There’s a really big nasty void of female musicians in town.” Consequently, this “big nasty void of female musicians” results in gendered scene overlap. Despite scene affiliation, musical genre, or choice, women musicians are often grouped together, segregated and tokenized. For women musicians, network overlap is often gendered.

4.2.5 Queer Networks: “It’s really isolating.”

Queer networks are symbolically excluded from the larger grassroots music and arts community.

A couple of my Political Punk participants indicate that since moving to Pittsburgh, they have not networked with many people involved in Pittsburgh’s grassroots music and arts scenes.

Aaron and Janie say their lack of scene participation can be attributed to the fact that they are “older now” and “busy” with college studies and work. However, both Janie and Aaron also reveal that their waning scene participation is due to limited connections with a queer punk network.

Aaron says the Pittsburgh queer scene is “really isolating.” When Aaron moved to Pittsburgh, he withdrew from the punk scene. He is more selective about shows and often craves the strong politically queer network he had in Portland, Oregon. He identifies with the events and ideas the Pittsburgh Political Punk scene engages but says he often feels excluded from the network. Aaron explains this feeling of exclusion is two fold:

I just don’t know that many like punk kids or like underground people who are active in underground cultural stuff. I just don’t know as many people here. And I feel like it’s less, it’s not as queer as it was in Portland so it makes me a little more or it makes me feel less welcome. I feel like it’s more male dominated here in a lot of ways. It’s like, just not as like friendly. People are more exclusive. They’ve all known each other for a long time and coming into that is not easy to make friends in the Pittsburgh kind of show scene.

According to Aaron, the punk show scene in Pittsburgh is more exclusive than it was in Portland. He tells me that since moving to Pittsburgh, he has not been able to attain a sense of queer community. In Portland, Aaron was active in a lively queer music scene where queer bands and shows were supported. Aaron says, “I would go to see other people that I knew who would be there because a lot of times I would have no idea who the band was.” In Portland, Aaron says a “feeling of community” and “safe space” drew him to shows, his participation was not just about rock n’ roll. He points out that in Pittsburgh the “punk community” is “more male dominated” and “not as friendly.” Heterosexist exclusivity, he explains, makes it more difficult to formulate friendships and community with other queer identified punks.

In Portland, Aaron looked to the punk scene for pleasure, but in Pittsburgh he acquired a much grimmer perspective on the meaning of punk community. He details an experience at a house show in Pittsburgh where he was harassed for sitting close to his partner, Daniel.

We were sitting really close together, we might have been holding hands or something and this bike messenger like jock guy got totally shitty drunk and was like [mocking his voice in a slow drunken way] “Are you guys together?” “Can I watch you kiss?” and blah blah blah. So [Daniel] and I just started making fun of him and were like you’re a tool and uh his friend was trying to make excuses for him and we were like no he’s being a homophobe...Like I tried to just make fun of the guy or whatever but it was just like symbolic of the thing that I hate [with emphasis] about punk culture is that this one guy could ruin it for me and [Daniel]. You know what I mean? Like we could go somewhere to have a good time and then like somebody with, who thinks that they’re allowed, to have this

attitude wherever they go and go to this house and make us feel like that. You know, does that make sense? That was one incident that really made me feel like I didn't want to pursue too much like getting involved with the community in Pittsburgh.

The bike messenger, Aaron explains, sought to establish boundaries around acceptable punk conduct by making a spectacle of same gender intimacy. When no one advocated on Aaron or his partner's behalf, he felt excluded from the network. He says, "my expectation" is that the "punk community" will "at least try to not be homophobic and when that expectation was violated at Carrie's house, it made me feel like, Whoah, my expectation about the punk community is wrong." Aaron goes on to say, "I don't go to shows as much because of what happened at Carrie's house and I also don't go to shows as much because I don't have the time."

Janie, a musician and zine publisher, says that when she moved back to Pittsburgh a couple years ago she was really excited to see *Smells Like Gina* playing but was disappointed to find they are "the only band that's super like queer, women-centered." Janie says she does not go to as many shows now that she lives in Pittsburgh because she does not have many friends involved in the music scene here. When Janie lived in Pittsburgh in the 90s, she was an active member of "a pretty good queercore music scene." She played in bands with other queer-identified women and says at the time there were a few bands proclaiming, "We're queer, we're women and we're really proud of that." Asserting gender and queer identity, Janie contends, "was the message." Janie explains that in the Bloomington, Indiana show scene, "everything was a lot more ambiguous...in terms of sexuality." There, she points out, "It was more like punk bands that were talking about you know, anti-war, pro-vegetarian, pro-riding your bike, you

know, that sort of thing.” Hence, when Janie moved to Pittsburgh and discovered the three-piece, “2/3 dyke” *Smells Like Gina* punk band, she was like “Wow! I can’t believe this is happening again!” In retrospect, she realizes *Smells Like Gina* is the only band that is “queer, women-centered,” and they even recently broke up.

When I ask Aaron if he thinks there is a strong queer punk community in Pittsburgh, he replies, “There’s a lot of people in the punk community who are really supportive of the queer community and there’s a lot of queer kids who are in the punk community but I don’t know if there is a queer punk scene. If there is, then I’m not a part of it.” He, like Janie, mentions that *Smells Like Gina* is the only queer punk band in Pittsburgh. The void of queer and women-centered punk bands in Pittsburgh compels Janie to assert, “If there’s a band coming through that’s outwardly queer, feminist, anything like that, I’ll make a point to go see them.”

Janie and Aaron suggest that supporting friends and artists who deploy a collective queer identity through cultural expression is synonymous with their scene participation. Both Aaron and Janie are not aware of a viable feminist queer punk music scene in Pittsburgh and point out, as Aaron puts it, that they do not have as many friends directly involved in “underground cultural stuff.” While Aaron expresses irritation with the male-dominated Pittsburgh music scene, Janie says she is disappointed that the queer, women-centered scene is not as vigorous as it once was but is happy that a few cultural producers enact scene events that target queer women’s participation.

Paul of the Rickety scenes says that in Pittsburgh, queer-identified people live in silence. He says,

I just keep quiet. And I think a lot of people do and a lot of people who are brave, a lot of people who are expressive. Like I said, flamboyant. They keep it to the places where they feel safe.

Paul's comment reveals that silencing results in a shrunken queer public where socializing is relegated to "safe" spaces. He, like Aaron and Janie, suggests that the queer scene is "isolating." Paul contends, "It's a rare treat for us to have somebody of our ilk, you know. It's mostly just rock n' roll."

Angela says that the first Rickety band "evolved out of this very bisexual hippy experience" and indicates that there "have always been sort of queer themes to a lot of the music but not necessarily queer people doing it." She explains that there was one Rickety band that everyone loved who "dressed in drag" but none of them were "actually queer." Angela says that was the "most political things ever got" but she "always felt weird about it." She suggest that at the time there were not a lot of queer bands playing and so feels it was inappropriate for an "all straight" band to appropriate a culture that they "don't belong to." Angela thinks there is "definitely an openness in the general Indie community, Indie punk community to queer politics, feminist politics, being expressed as blah blah blah art" but indicates that in her scene "it's not talked about" and she is not sure if that is "because it's not a big deal" or if that is because "people don't want to talk about it."

Cultural producers who enact queer identity argue Pittsburgh lacks "queer-positive" venues, especially for those networks interested in grassroots cultural expression which makes it difficult to plug into a queer network. Lori, a fashion designer and co-founder of the emerging

Queer Pittsburgh project, expresses frustration with the social obstacles of queer networking in the city. She asserts,

You know there's these [email] lists you can get on but if somebody new comes to the city you have to know somebody to get on the list to get emails or whatever. There's nothing there. It's like, Okay, I'm coming into this city. Where can I meet people? Where can I go out? Like, what is there to do? Nothing!

Lori contends places for queer networking are limited, if not outright nonexistent. Her frustration with the lack of queer space is the catalyst for her involvement with Queer Pittsburgh. Jess, Queer Pittsburgh's originator and *Operation Sappho* DJ, says that although Queer Pittsburgh has not officially been launched, she has big goals for its inception. The Queer Pittsburgh initiative, Jess explains, involves three things: "a logo, a website and events." The window logo will "go on any business that considers themselves to be queer positive and safe for the community and follow our anti-discrimination clause." Lori also says she feels there is a need for businesses to demonstrate they provide a "safe space" for the queer community. She says, "It's not like necessarily queer exclusive but it's a safe space, you know, like that kind of thing." Jess says that businesses that put the logo on their window must also "let us flyer for events that are a safe space for the queer community." She aims to target all kinds of businesses, from the Andy Warhol Museum to psychiatrist offices. The website will be a networking tool that the queer community can use to promote events. Jess says the purpose of Queer Pittsburgh is to "make the community feel more welcome" and she hopes "it's not only gay people who embrace promoting a space as queer positive."

Many queer, lesbian and bisexual cultural producers assert that Pittsburgh's queer visibility falls short in comparison to other cities. Some highlighted the lack of rainbow flags adorning buildings, safe space stickers on businesses, schools, universities, art galleries and bars and the need for queer-friendly establishments. Lori affirms, "Most cities have like little rainbows in the window or something of like 'safe spaces.' Like you know when you're in a queer neighborhood in any other city than Pittsburgh." Likewise, Jess says,

You go through Los Angeles and you walk through West Hollywood and you see these flags all over the neighborhood where there are rainbow flags on every corner. The community is the gay community. You go to West Village in New York and it's the same way. You go to Stone Wall and people are like crying outside of the bar. You know you're in the gay community.

Lori and Jess contend there is no designated "gay community" in Pittsburgh. Although these two women are committed to establishing more queer-positive venues, they do not want to designate a specific space a queer space. Jess says, "We don't want to make Garfield the gay space. We just want Pittsburgh to know we're here and just have that presence so that hopefully the community will become more active." Lori, on the other hand, suggests Pittsburgh is not festering with, as Jess put it, "homophobic energy." Lori says,

Whether Pittsburgh is homophobic or not, that's such a neighborhood thing. You have your old school yinzers⁷ that you know have their opinions and like the Steelers and yeah totally have that opinion, "fuck fags" but then you have the neighborhoods that are more expressive that are more like okay, whatever...I think there are definitely places in Pittsburgh that aren't homophobic.

Lori says that while there is not a designated queer neighborhood, she thinks there are areas of the city where queer expression is accepted. Lori indicates the East End is an area of town that is not homophobic. She recently moved to Friendship and loves the neighborhood because it is so "central." Lori says, "I was really attracted to what was happening in this neighborhood and a lot of my friends were slowly moving in here." She explains she likes "the idea of being able to just walk to a friend's house."

Some cultural producers say it is the lack of queer positive space that explains, as Jess put it, "why our community is not that strong." Jess contends,

I'm an active person in our community. And I *never* coming out, growing up and coming out, I never...there was no place for me to go. I didn't know of any coffee shop, I didn't know where to meet people.

Jess explains that as a teenager there was nowhere for her to go to meet women. She asserts, "I was dating men and I love the people that I dated but there was no other outlet...I felt

⁷ Yinzer references the Pittsburgh dialect's use of yinz as the plural of the second person pronoun you. Yinzer is itself a contraction of the Appalachian dialect's you-uns. Similar to United States southerner's dialect "y'all." People who do not speak with a "yinzer" accent often speak of "yinzers" in a derogatory fashion. Yinzer, in other words, is a social status laden term.

uncomfortable being with a woman...it was very strange.” Angela, a queer musician in her early 40s who has resided in Pittsburgh most of her life, says “there really never was a big queer presence in Pittsburgh, at all, besides like the very underground bars and things happening at people’s houses.” Angela says a few years ago, she would go to house parties and be astounded by the presence of “lots and lots of women.” Her reaction was, “What? Where are you all the rest of the time? I mean you never see women holding hands walking down the street.” The lack of queer space for women in Pittsburgh is captured in Jess’s discussion of gay bars. She says,

There are few gay bars. Um, the main girl bar being Donny’s, that is gross. I mean I don’t know people who go there. I would never eat a peanut from the bar, ever! Ha! I mean, it seems like a hole in the wall. It seems like a space where we are there because we can’t be anywhere else. And it’s inappropriate. It’s unacceptable.

Jess wants more options when she goes out with her girlfriend. She wants to hang out in a “nice classy space” that is not “a dive bar.” This lack of space is the catalyst for the time and energy she invests in the *Operation Sappho* dance party and the Queer Pittsburgh project. Jess believes “if there isn’t a space for you, you should make that space happen.” Another *Operation Sappho* DJ, Mary Mack, was interviewed by City Paper columnist Justin Hopper about her intentions in creating the dance party. In the article, DJ Mary Mack says she thinks it is important to create autonomous spaces “where it feels like the people that go really own them” (Hopper 2007). Mary Mack noticed a gap in Pittsburgh’s queer-oriented but straights welcome good-times scene (Hopper 2007). She indicates there is a lot more available for “mainstream lesbian and gays,” as

columnist Justin Hopper put it, but says an “intergenerational” queer scene that emphasizes women artists and punk ethos is lacking. This is the gap *Operation Sappho* DJs seek to fulfill.

My study confirms scene scholarship which argues scenes are dynamic overlapping networks. I also find that networks, such as the Rickety and Political Punk scenes cluster around particular activities and shared meanings. My research also shows that social actors shape scenes through exclusionary practices. I find that for female and queer identified cultural producers and participants, network overlap is often gendered and sexualized. Groups involved in the Rickety scene often get together with those involved in the Political Punk scene when playing an “all girl” music show or attending a queer slam poet performance. I discover that queer networks, in particular, are symbolically excluded from the larger “umbrella” grassroots music and arts scene. These networks are segregated both physically and socially. Grassroots queer scenes have unique spatial obstacles wherein queer meeting places is often relegated to specific places.

4.3 RITUALS

In grassroots music and arts scenes, social actors, like Alberto Melucci (1996: 93) describes, “construct their own identity as something not already given.” Scene identities are dynamic and unstable because these kinds of social identities are constructed through the networks formed around performance rituals. Rituals are experiences of repeated “cultural communication” in which those involved in and observing the interaction “share a mutual belief” in its “intention and content” (Alexander 2006: 29). Rituals energize participants because they attach them to each other (Alexander 2006; Collins 2001; Jasper 1998). Performance rituals are the “process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation”

(Alexander 2006: 32). Performances, Erving Goffman (1959) argues, are the fronts that social actors display in order to appear effective, believable and plausible. In this section, I illustrate that in grassroots music and arts scenes, performance rituals are a crucial component of interaction, solidarity and scene identity. I use “scene identity” to describe the collective identity participants construct in scenes. Collective identity refers to the “shared definition of a group that derives from its members’ common interests, experiences and solidarities” (Whooley 2007: 586). Like scene identity, collective identity is not predetermined but rather constructed in the course of interaction; it is derived from feelings of solidarity and group membership.

Scene identity is dynamic and therefore fundamentally situational. Situational identities are “contingent on the interaction” and are “usually not considered to be enduring or essential to those who enact them” (Vryan 2007: 2216). Situational identity is “the emergent structure of a localized, shared definition of a particular interactional situation” (Vryan 2007: 2217).

In scenes, social actors collectively create situational identities that are conditioned by the networks that engage a particular performance ritual such as a live music show, political puppet skit, or outsider art exhibit. Scenes are in motion because they are determined by interaction and experiences. Similarly, identities mirror the scene, in that they are not fixed but are determined by interaction and experiences. According to Randall Collins (2001: 28), a focus of attention at a live music show or outsider art exhibit becomes a “mutual focus of attention” that can result in feelings of solidarity. These feelings of solidarity are a critical component of shared meanings and identities. Performance rituals are a "mutual focus of attention" (Collins 2001: 28) that provide actors with a way of creating "mutual recognition" (Haunss & Leach 2004). Mutual recognition creates feelings of collective identity.

4.3.1 Situational Identity: “I don’t want to categorize anyone in a way”

In my discussion of “overlapping” networks, I demonstrated that individuals and groups engage and identify with a variety of intersecting scenes. Laura and Monica’s conversation establishes the problems with categorizing scene participants in totalizing ways. They argue that participants cannot be categorized because scenes are permeable social engagements that are contingent on time, place, networks and activity.

Laura: I don’t really want to categorize anyone in a way.

Monica: Yeah, totally.

Laura: Cause it’s totally permeable. Depending on the year, what job you have, what neighborhood you’re living in.

Monica: Mm Hmm.

Laura: What projects you’re involved in.

Monica: What band you’re in at any given point.

Laura: Yeah. Totally.

Monica and Laura argue that identities are not innate but rather constructed through social interactions and experiences. In an earlier section, I discussed Kim's assertion that there is not "a scene." The way she and others describe scenes suggests scenes are experiential and particular to network, location, and cultural ritual. Hence, scene identity is not essential or enduring. Instead, the networks and projects a person engages define scene identity.

4.3.2 Rituals of Identity: "A type of social workshop"

In these grassroots scenes, performance rituals are rituals of identity. In my study, the performance rituals cultural producers enact organize social interaction. These rituals shape and reinforce feelings of social connection. In scenes, cultural producers deploy rituals of identity in order to empower stigmatized social identities and build network solidarity. Mary Bernstein (1997: 535) defines identity deployment as "expressing identity such that the terrain of conflict becomes the individual person so that the values, categories, and practices of individuals become subject to debate." She argues that identity deployment is a strategy for empowerment that can "transform mainstream culture, its categories and values by providing alternative organizational forms" (1997: 536). Identity deployment contests stigmatized social identities for the purposes of empowerment, community growth, and at times, movement momentum.

Cultural producers suggest they create performance rituals to encourage shared meanings, community and good times. The performance rituals they create are contingent on the networks of people with whom they seek to communicate. Band mates Angela and Paul indicate that queer identity is not essential or enduring but rather situationally constructed through performance rituals. In an effort to forge a queer positive network, their band enacts the Rickety and Political Punk scenes. Angela explains,

We'll play a rock show with whoever, like a friend's band. And it's [being queer identified] still a part of what we are but it's not necessarily going to be the most important part at the time. Because we're not there because we're queer identified, we're there because we rock.

According to Angela, her band's queer identity is more salient in one scene opposed to the other. When playing with musicians and artists who deploy queer identity, they collectively enact a queer network. Likewise, Janie, a musician of the Political Punk scene, also indicates that the network artists seek to engage is entwined with rituals of identity. She reveals that situational identities are interaction and ritual oriented. Janie points out that when her band "didn't really identify as queer," the band was not considered "queercore," but when she played with other queer-identified women "a lot of our audience was like queercore girls."

Paul and Angela use song, style and performance to express queer identity. By visibly stylizing himself as "different," Paul intends to "take up a little more of the band width" and "make a different spectrum in the world." He performs a "bisexual" identity when he intends to enact queer, political and transgender networks. Paul says he never turns down a show featuring queer and transgender artists. He is attracted to music shows that "put gender issues at the forefront" because he "just love[s] meeting people and having people to feel connected with." Paul considers artistic expression that goes "outside the norm" a "type of social workshop" that builds "community."

When Paul's band played the Rea Coffeehouse, he wore red knee-highs and jean cut-off shorts. That evening, Paul's band played with a local all ladies band, and a touring acoustic

singer/songwriter to kick off Chatham College's campus transgender conference. My participants point out that the Rea (pronounced "ray") Coffeehouse is one punk rock music venue that enables and sustains queer women's punk scene membership. The coffeehouse is sponsored by the all women's Chatham College and operated by University students. It is located in the basement of a turn-of-the-century mansion on a pristine wooded campus. Graffiti covers every crack and crevice of the venue. The Coffeehouse's website says, "The mission of Rea Coffeehouse is to provide an all-ages venue for local and touring acts—primarily in the genres of punk, emo, hardcore and Indie rock—and to offer cheap shows and a sense of community. Rea promotes this unified atmosphere by showing no tolerance to bands or audience members who preach any kind of bigotry—be it racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. "

(http://www.myspace.com/rea_coffeehouse / 5/05/2008).

In taking "more of the band width," Paul and Angela intend to network with other individuals who deploy and share a queer identity. According to Paul, having events that put marginalized pictures of the world more into people's minds" is elemental to queer networking. Angela, the drummer, concurs, "For me, a large part of [our band] is about the queer identified, the queer identity of the band...I know that the visuals that [the projectionist] picks are pointedly queer identified and a lot of the lyrics are too." Paul explains why he is committed to enacting queer and transgender artistic scene networks. He says,

I'm committed to it. To having a scene. To meet people. To network. To share ideas. So when you get together you have a reason to go out. Sometimes it's just about having a reason to go out and get yourself out of the house. So if there's an entertainment event with like-minded people you go out and talk about things.

You talk about the world and you talk about changes and you just live also. You have people to share your lifestyle choices with.

Paul is devoted to “having a scene” because of the fulfillment he derives from a network of people with whom he can share ideas and lifestyle choices. His commitment to “having a scene” demonstrates that by physically and socially experiencing an entertainment event, meaningful social relationships are formed. Paul’s *true* self can come into being because in a scene he has an opportunity to communicate with “like-minded people.” The rewarding sense of belonging in the context of an appreciation for alternative cultural expression drives Paul’s scene devotion.

By enacting scene rituals that generate empowering spaces for women to pick up a guitar, produce art and make friends, Lucy of the Political Punk scene intends to make connections with others who are “woman-identified.” She explains, “being woman-identified is important because most people in the world are male identified. You know, they listen to male music, they um, they buy and support male run corporations and businesses.” The “Female-Identified Exhibit” Lucy initiated at Rea Coffeehouse invites artists who are “female-identified” to show and trade their artwork. The “Female-Identified” exhibition encourages all art forms. Artists are not required to submit their work beforehand or demonstrate artistic professionalism. The exhibition integrates rough sketches, screen-printed “Dyke Pride” stickers, hand-sewn crafts, acoustic performances, a Fair Food puppet show and Planned Parenthood information table. Approximately twenty-five women and eight men between 18-30 years of age are present at the event. Women wear short cropped hair, half mohawks, dreads, thick rimmed glasses, snow caps, piercings, chain wallets, dark and bright clothing. By creating a space wherein an eclectic mix of “female-identified”

artists display and trade their work, Lucy and her co-organizers seek to develop an “identify for empowerment and community growth” (Bernstein 1997: 539).

In scenes, social actors generate feelings of similarity and group membership through the experience of cultural expression. My first excursion into the “field” begins with a show I heard through word of mouth that was featuring “queer live music.” After giving a \$5 “donation” to an androgynously fashioned woman wearing a painter cap, chain wallet, and “Feminist” tattoo, I enter the orange-toned Earthstone Café. I am there for a punk show that is to feature “queer live music.” Unfamiliar with the scene, I look around to see a handful of men and roughly twenty women, between 18-30 years of age. Most are white, wearing colorful shaven heads, long groomed hair, tight jeans, sundresses, dark tank tops, piercings and tattoos. I order a cup of green tea and take a seat on a row of wooden chairs positioned in a theater style, approximately seven chairs long and three rows deep. The show begins when a local slam poet takes the floor. Her sharp-tongued rhymes tackle body image, fem/dyke sex, patriarchy, environmentalism and war. In one slam, she confronts men's accusations that feminists are man-haters, shouting

I've been traveling down this road for a very long time

And haven't seen much help come down from the other side

If you don't like the direction I'm headed, get the fuck off my ride!

To this, the crowd responds with cheers, applause and requests for more. The slam poet's performance is followed by the local all-girl *Smells Like Gina* band that plays *Bikini Kill* covers and their own “Throw Like a Girl” song. The crowd remains seated, tapping their toes and bobbing their heads. Most of the women there are familiar with the band's music and sing along

with *Smells Like Gina* when they shout, "Women work harder to get less far!" a phrase that stays in my head for weeks to come. In this scene, cultural producers intend to forge a collective feminist network. Through the joint experience of feminist cultural expression, a "mutual focus of attention" is generated and feminist queer identity nourished.

According to Haunss and Leach (2004: 5), an individual is a member of a scene "if and only if one identifies and is accepted as such by other members." The cultural producers who create the monthly *Operation Sappho* queer-lesbro dance party actively seek out spaces for queer persons and allies to come together and construct a "good times scene" (Hopper 2007). One of the DJs, Jess, says she uses the term "queer" because "it encompasses the community more than any other word. Lesbian is female specific and gay is male specific and queer encompasses people who aren't dating a same-sex person that are just queer in nature and look at sexuality as being non-traditional." Hence, according to Jess, queer identity is not contingent on a person's sex or sexuality. She implies that being "queer in nature" is being "non-traditional." Jess's outlook on queer identity resonates with her conviction that the monthly "queer-lesbro," or what is sometimes called a "queer-allies" dance party, be open to anyone who shares and practices a queer positive worldview. She and her partnering DJ Carrie intend to enact "queer-positive" space outside of gay bars. Jess and Carrie perform their monthly queer dance party in a newly renovated bar in Lawrenceville. The Remedy bar is not recognized for being a queer-positive venue, nor is it meeting space for the music scene, and this is precisely why Jess and Carrie enact the event there. She aims to send a message "that we're here and that we're part of the community and that these homophobic vibes don't need to happen." For a brief stint, the *Operation Sappho* DJs held the dance party at Cativo lounge, a newly opened gay and lesbian bar in Lawrenceville. Jess says,

As soon as we moved it to a gay bar, we lost so many people and it was more, it wasn't a diver bar, but it's more like uh rainbow flags and rainbow bandannas and like, you know, it's like a lot of [cigarette] smoke...and tables and chairs...and it was like not well lit and no windows and there were like rainbow bikes everywhere. I didn't feel comfortable dressed the way I dress. We lost almost all the men that we have and we lost almost the entire straight community. We lost that, it was cut in half.

Jess goes on to say, "You have to experiment with that, what the community wants and what the community feels safe with." Jess makes a reference to her own comfort and indicates that she does not feel welcome dressing femininely in the gay bar scene. She indicates that the *Operation Sappho* dance party is intended for an "eclectic" group of people. The dance party "lost momentum" when the DJs held the event at a gay bar but it emerged again strong when they started holding it at Remedy. Jess says the point of the party is to get out of gay and lesbian bars because having events in such spaces make people feel like they "have to be here" and the dance party is established to let people know they "can be somewhere else."

In this dance party scene, the "cultural signifiers of membership" (Haunss and Leach 2004) are enacted through outfit themes. Each month, the DJs who spin for the dance choose a theme such as "astrological sign" or "sweet seventeen" which partygoers interpret stylistically to receive a \$1 off the \$4 door cover. The attire does not need to be elaborate. For the "Isle of Lesbros" dance, my friends and I wore plastic flowers in our hair to receive the door cover discount. The \$1 off is an incentive to symbolically enact network membership and the

membership recognition garnered when dressing in the theme is invaluable. Through dress, partygoers visibly construct social boundaries that denote who is “queer” “allie” and “lesbro.” These visual cues sponsor casual conversation with strangers. Every time I participate in the dance party, I meet new people in the restroom line, on the dance floor, or at the bar. By wearing the theme and dancing the night away, a “very eclectic” group creates a “cool place to go.” In encouraging partygoers to unify thematically, the dance party producers seek to build community through stylistic conformity. According to Jess, the party is a success because women can “come in their blue jeans and leather jacket” or “in their stilettos and lipstick and feel welcome.” At the dance, a collective queer identity is nurtured in the process of pleasurable social experience.

The relationship between identity deployment and network is illuminated in my observation of one *Operation Sappho* dance party wherein a punk network converges with the queer network that generally participates in the dance party. One of the DJs invites a touring DIY punk band to play in the space before the dance party begins. When I arrive on this night, I am surprised to see a band playing forceful punk rock on the main dance floor. The front-woman screams into the microphone as men with straggly hair and full beards stand on top of amplifiers strumming electric guitars. My friends and I simultaneously check the time to see if we had arrived too early but it was nearing 10:30pm and the flyers say the dance starts at 10pm. The band’s audience is mainly made up of white men ranging from their early 20s to mid-30s, many of whom wear scruffy beards, dark cloth jackets and jeans. There are a couple women standing near the band that I often see at the dance party too. They are enthusiastically rocking out and cheering between songs with a group of men who are swirling around and singing along. After a couple songs, I go to the third floor with a group of women determined to find a dance party. When I approach a small empty room where another DJ booth stands, one of the DJs approaches

me charging, “The dance party is supposed to be about having a queer positive space for women and it sucks that when they enter they see men musically master-bating!” The band is playing on the central dance floor next to the entryway and their presence noticeably pushes many people upstairs in pursuit of the activity they had come for. After about thirty minutes of sporadic dancing in this desolate corner room, the show is over and the party begins. It is not too long before the usual *Operation Sappho* patrons take the central dance floor back. The men who came for the show are scattered about the room. Some are dancing casually while others stand propped on the sides and corners of the floor posed in a deadpan, stiff macho stance. As the night moves on, the sensation of a humid energetic crowd returns. Our dancing makes the floor shake. As the night moves on I notice a man and woman who were dancing to the punk band making intimate displays adjacent to the central DJ turntables. A few friends of mine look at them in disgust and comment later that they are unsure what is to come of the dance party. While this seemingly predominately heterosexual network is embraced by some, for others it symbolizes patriarchy and punk rock arrogance. The controversy the punk band provokes points to the fact that scenes are not purely “expressive and leisure social worlds” (Irwin 1977) but are also important social locales for marginalized groups to escape perceived and felt power relations. Moreover, this scene demonstrates that networks are enacted and changed in the course of cultural producer’s active identity deployment as “punk” and/or “queer.”

My Rickety all-girl band focus group participants’ heterosexual identity and scene affiliation informs their approach to rituals of identity. Some are the wives and girlfriends of prominent local musicians in Pittsburgh. A couple of the members learned to play instruments when they started the band, in their mid-30s. Through performance, this band subverts the male-dominated music scene to which they are intimately connected. Haley, the lead singer, contends

that she seeks to contest the idea that women musicians should be “sweet and sexy.” Haley regularly mocks the audience, slinging vulgarity amidst an otherwise un-confrontational punk music set. Jennifer says their band is “pathway to performance art” because the “music and the message” do not share a common thread. Haley, Kim explains, will be yelling at the audience, calling them “douche bags” and then the band will break into a song that is not “outrageous” at all. At one point in our conversation, Haley reveals, “I’d rather be called a cunt than like spoken to in baby talk. At least that implies that...[I’m] worthy of an insult.”

The bands’ provocative “Nipple Piercing” performance humorously challenges sexual objectification and gender marginalization. As the singer strips down to a cotton t-shirt, she shouts, “You wanna see these titties?!” to which the audience replies with cheers. About mid-way through the song, Haley begins stabbing blood-filled condoms that she has placed strategically atop her nipples. As the rings of blood spread across her shirt, the audience mumbles in disbelief. In making breasts into a grotesque showpiece, the band confronts the assumption that women musicians need be “girly.”

When I ask the band about their approach to performance, Haley says, “I think we always tried to not be so girly” to which Kim concurs,

Yeah. We had some conceptual nature to the band. We thought it was very entertaining and highly clever, you know, the fact that people were like what’s their deal? We didn’t really have a package for them that was um...that was one you can kind of just take a look at and say, “Oh, I know what they are all about.”

Haley says her performances were a “result of feedback...people had a lot of input and usually it was to be girlier.” The band indicates that Haley’s performance is treated as a spectacle. Hence, Haley makes a spectacle of her performance. She elaborates her age, gender, and scene marginalization through her professional woman dressing style and sarcastically-confrontational stage personae. The band even created “a totally fake beef [conflict]” with another girl band in Pittsburgh because they felt like “it just seemed perfect” that they be “bitchy” with another band.

A description of one of their favorite shows reveals that the band confronts sexism by making an exhibition of their gender performance and the gender performance of others.

Jennifer: [Random Suckers] were random guys driving by the area and they were moving in next door and they heard the band, of course, they heard the music and they were like “Rock n’ roll! Awesome!” and so they came in and were just like incredibly psyched.

Kathy: And they were psyched that it was a girl band.

Jennifer: Yeah, and so they were like “Wow, this is awesome! This is awesome! This is excellent! This is so excellent!

Kim: Fuck yeah man! Woo hoo!

Jennifer: So when the other band was breaking down, they we’re like “Yeah!” and our band was setting up and they were like “Yeah!”

Kim: “You can play that? Fuck Yeah!” [everyone in the room is laughing]

Jennifer: And then, like for some of our music they were like “Yeah!” and then they were like “Huh?”

Kim: They were like, “do I have to sit down fucking Indian style for this shit?”

Jennifer: And that was when [Haley], I don’t know what all the words were—

Haley: I don’t know how I did it. We joked about people saying “Show me your tits” so I was like “Show me your dick.”

Kim: Somebody did say show me your tits, right? Somebody said something—

Haley: Yeah, somehow I got him to show me his dick...and then, I got him to bend over.

Jennifer: Yeah, to pull his pants down and then you hit him. And it was a smack [everyone laughs] and then he bent over backwards and he showed us his shit covered—

Haley: Yeah, he spread them out [laughs].

Jennifer: That was a good show.

In making a mockery of that all too familiar phrase “show me your tits” that is shouted almost anytime a woman appears on stage, this band uses sexist remarks to alter the scene they engage. Through the deployment of their identity as an “all-girl” band, they contest sexism in music scenes.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Sociologists concerned with cultural life that is considered inferior by dominant social actors have studied subcultures. However, the subculture concept does not adequately address the fluid experiential quality of a social "scene." Unlike subcultures, a *scene* is something more dynamic and permeable. Scenes are thematically-focused overlapping social networks and relationships. Scenes are not closed communities. Scenes are partial, voluntary, and public, and are experienced locally, trans-locally, and/or virtually.

In my research, I look at the locations, networks, and rituals that define a grassroots music and arts scene. Whereas research that precedes this study focuses on the experience of a single scene, my study explores the myriad ways that cultural producers engage a variety of scenes under the same umbrella. The dynamic nature of scenes is evident in my inability to lock cultural participants in one scene opposed to another. In this grassroots music and arts scene, people may enact a queer or Riot Grrrl influenced music scene but they do not solely identify with a single scene. These findings depart from previous music scene studies which emphasize stable shared meanings, rituals, and identities.

Furthermore, the limited literature on scenes suggests that locations are important to scenes yet the places in which scenes are enacted are seldom considered. Other than a few studies (Lloyd 2002; Lloyd and Clark 2000; Straw 2005), scholars fail to account for the ways in which locational opportunities such as gentrifying neighborhoods are seized by grassroots

scenes. Moreover, few studies consider how scene participants perceive gentrification or urban development policies or the impact of gender and sexual identity on scene locations. Instead, most scholars assume that everyone involved in a scene has equal access to its places.

I find that white grassroots music and arts scenes benefit from gentrification. This finding has larger implications for understanding how scene boundaries and the “cultural signifiers of membership” (Haunss & Leach 2004) are formed. As new locations are made available for cultural expression, white scene participants are able to create new scenes in places such as Penn Avenue’s Modern Formations art gallery and the Quiet Storm coffeehouse and thereby reinforce race and class boundaries. My study highlights how participants construct scene identities by contrasting neighborhood membership through racial lenses. The “people who live here,” a phrase commonly invoked by participants to describe long-term African American residents, is contrasted to “newcomers,” a term they use to connote newly established white residents and scenes.

My study also reveals that rituals of identity are particular to locales and networks cultural producers enact. Certain networks and rituals of identity are symbolically excluded and marginalized in the places that are considered central to grassroots music and arts scenes. When queer networks come together for “queer live music” or a “queer-lesbro” dance party, their events are commonly held in the basements of a network member’s home or in a remote café or bar that is otherwise detached from the umbrella grassroots scene. The only long-term established grassroots space I found that recurrently welcomes and encourages queer and feminist artist is the Rea Coffeehouse, a University sponsored student-operated venue at the all-women’s Chatham College. Cultural producers use these locations, both private and public, to encourage and celebrate queer identified networks. I also find that male dominated networks

systematically segregate and tokenize all-women bands in the venues opened by urban revitalization projects. Male promoters typically book the shows at the galleries and bars along the corridor and many undermine women's cultural expression by asking women to perform in gender rather than music-themed ways. Although women contest sexism in a variety of ways, there is no clear solution or strategy for navigating patriarchy and heterosexism in grassroots music and arts scenes. Instead, the strategy for subversion is particular to and constituted in the course of interaction.

Finally, my study highlights how scenes are created through symbolic exclusions and rituals of identity. While scenes are conceptualized as permeable networks, my study shows that permeability is restricted. Through male dominated rituals of identity such as hardcore music show, punk rockers like Carrie and Aarron feel excluded from the network. Scenes are overlapping but they are also internally bounded. Erving Goffman (1959) argues that a person's "front" or "performance" is relative to the interaction. Thus, a person's identity as a doctor, musician or student is relative to the interaction taking place between the performer and audience. This means that identities are put on and taken off in accord to the given interaction and the impression one aims to fulfill. Goffman's (1959) analysis reveals that interactions are elemental to the meaning making process because the interaction generates situational identities. Music scene scholars Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson (2004) build on Goffman's theory of identity when they claim that scene participants "put on and take off scene identity." However, like Goffman, they do not account for the ways that systems of domination define and prohibit what identities are deemed "culturally intelligible" (Butler 1999). The only persons with an "intelligible" or recognizable identity are those who conform to existing norms of continuity which establish causal connections among "biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the

‘expression’ or ‘effect’ of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice” (Butler 1999: 23). In other words, a female who expresses femininity and whose desire is heterosexualized is deemed to have an intelligible identity.

In grassroots music and arts scenes, culturally intelligible identities such as “woman” and “man” constitute the interaction just as the interaction constitutes these identities. Hence, Judith Butler’s (1999) theory of performativity is most useful for understanding how power influences social interaction and rituals of identity in scenes. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1999: 44) says that the regulatory practices of gender performance reinforce, concretize and naturalize masculine and heterosexist power regimes. Her work illustrates that the gendered body has no “ontological status apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality” (1999: 173). She argues that gender is the “repeated stylization of the body” that produces the “appearance of substance” (1999: 43-44). Butler contends that agency comes in the form of what the deed is, what we perform. Once we understand that performance itself is defining and defined by the interaction, we can begin to reconfigure gender performativity and “trouble” heterosexist power regimes.

Through performance rituals, cultural producers deconstruct patriarchy and heterosexism in grassroots music and arts scenes. The album covers and event descriptions included in the introductory chapter illustrate this point. *Smells Like Gina’s* album (Figure 1) troubles gender through feminine drag, playful posturing and feminist politics. *My Niece Denise’s* album (Figure 2) uses a cultural symbol of girlhood to assert they are indeed a “girl band” yet their performance is anything but “girly.” Moreover, the “Female-Identified Exhibit” and the *Operation Sappho* “queer-lesbro” dance party scenes destabilize the ontological status of gender and sexuality because these performative interactions subvert the seemingly stable “nature” of gender and sexual identity. Through the activation of location and networks, cultural producers enact rituals

of identity that are described by Paul as a “type of social workshop.” In these types of social workshops, cultural producers perform rituals of identity that empower and inspire alternative identity practices.

Future studies must attend to the dynamic experiential quality of networks, locations, and rituals of identity in grassroots music and arts scenes. Moreover, it is critical that scholars examine the ways race, class, gender, sexuality, and age impacts these aspects of scenes. If forthcoming research fails to do so, scenes studies will repeat the same mistakes subculture scholars have made in the past: assuming that scenes are experienced by everyone in the same ways.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Demographics:

Age _____

Race/Ethnicity _____

Gender Identity _____

Sexual Identity _____

One-On-One Interview Template:

What kinds of music and arts events do you like attending? Why?

How do you typically hear about these events?

Can you describe the people that usually go to these events?

Where do these events usually happen? Can you describe those places?

What is the neighborhood like?

How did you get started (DJing, playing in a band, etc)?

Who do you like performing for?

Where do you most enjoy holding events? Why?

What scene do you identify with?

What is that scene like? Can you describe it?

What makes it different from other scenes?

Focus Group Interview Template:

How did you all meet?

How did you get started playing together?

How has your reception been in Pittsburgh?

Was it easy to get shows in Pittsburgh? Why or why not?

How do you decide what shows to play?

What kinds of shows do you like playing? Why?

What venues do you like playing? Why?

Can you tell me about your audience? What are they like?

Tell me about a show that you enjoyed.

What did you like about that show?

What scene does the group identify with?

What is that scene like? Can you describe it?

What makes it different from other scenes?

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPATION OBSERVATION TEMPLATE

Date of Observation _____

Type of Event _____

Number of Participants _____ (audience, band, sound, promoters, bar patrons)

How did I hear about the event? _____

Description of Event (Bands, Speakers, etc.):

Signs, Visuals:

Description of Performers:

Performance Description:

Audience:

Audience Response: (bored, fun, quiet, loud)

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