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KILLIN' IT ON CORPORATE GROUND: THE CULTURAL POLITICS
OF STREET PERFORMANCE IN A GENTRIFIED SPACE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Individual Studies

Performance and Urban Cultural Studies

by

Hillary Matson

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CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

KILLIN' IT ON CORPORATE GROUND: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF STREET PERFORMANCE IN A GENTRIFIED SPACE

by

Hillary Matson

Dec. 2015

On a weekend evening in San Diego's historic Eclipse district, several buskers capture the attention of passersby as they make their way through the bustling crowds to the nearest restaurant or nightclub. These buskers represent various subcultures within a gentrified entertainment district of urban renewal that caters to the middle class. This ethnographic study aims to examine the cultural politics of busker performances in a highly corporate, gentrified space. Are buskers able to maintain their independence from the market economy or are they unintentionally or willingly reinforcing this system? Through completion of an ethnographic study in the Eclipse district, this research analyzes the reactions, interactions, and dynamics that formulate the gentrified busker experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's hard to believe that this great adventure has finally come to an end. I would have never imagined when I started grad school at CWU that I would be granted the amazing opportunity to do this research. Since my undergraduate studies, I had aspired to complete anthropological fieldwork. However, nothing could have fully prepared me for the personal sacrifices and life changes that would follow. I can say now with full confidence that I would not trade this experience for anything in the world. Reflecting on this process, I realize that it would not have been possible without the love and support from so many individuals who each made an important contribution to this project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On a lively weekend evening, buskers or street performers squeeze past boisterous crowds to locate a prime spot to transform into their stage in San Diego's gentrified Eclipse district. The tradition of performing one's talents in public for tips is an ancient practice, yet this tradition faces new challenges as it is confronted with urban changes in the twenty-first century. For the Eclipse, these changes developed as the district underwent a major reorganization and gentrification process in the late 1980's. In the context of this research, I am referring to gentrification as a process of urban renewal in impoverished sectors of downtown through the reinvention of the landscape, into one that targets a wealthier class. This process has reorganized the business structure of the district, bringing in a new audience and ultimately transforming the busker experience.

There are a few key characteristics of the urban renewal process in the Eclipse district that especially affect the buskers that work there. The domination of space allows business owners or managers to intimidate or unofficially police buskers by threatening to remove them at their discretion. This occurs more frequently in the Eclipse as opposed to other areas because the security guards and managers at these establishments are instructed to maintain a particular image and crowd. The interactions and reactions buskers receive from both passersby and district workers illuminate these changes by reflecting the attitudes and opinions that circulate throughout the Eclipse. For example, the degree to which passersby respond or do not respond to buskers, also reveals how they are resisted, ignored, or supported in this district. Nearly all of the Eclipse's buskers claim to be independent performers, detached from the formal business structures

throughout the district. In what ways has the gentrification process of the Eclipse affected the busker's independence from the market economy and in what ways are buskers unintentionally or willingly reinforcing this system?

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to characterize the cultural politics of street performing in a gentrified district and ultimately reveal where buskers fall in relation to the market economy. By conducting an ethnographic study in the Eclipse, I was able to observe and participate in the busker experience first hand. I formulated three primary research objectives that allowed me to collect the appropriate data to analyze.

My first objective was to discover why certain buskers choose to perform within the Eclipse district as opposed to other areas in San Diego. This initial decision-making process buskers go through reflects attitudes and expectations for a place. Furthermore, it highlights and contrasts the key features of the Eclipse that are not present in other places. This objective also allows me to analyze the decision making process that each busker goes through in picking a particular spot to perform within the Eclipse and the politics of rights to space and control that follow.

My second objective was to understand what types of reactions buskers receive and what types of interactions they engage in with both passersby and those working within the Eclipse. This was analyzed in a number of ways from both observation of buskers and my own participant observation as a busker in the district. A wealth of information was uncovered by how often and how much the individual was tipped, the types of networks they created, and how they were responded to based on a number of

factors. I began to notice patterns of how buskers and other district workers formed relationships and created networks of trust.

Using the findings from my first two objectives, I was able to address my third research objective. My last objective was to understand to what extent the scenarios and networks that do occur are specific to a gentrified space like the Eclipse. The role of a busker's gender, sexuality, and ethnicity also came to light as the result of my findings. Do buskers have similar experiences in other areas that they perform in or are these experiences specific or intensified within the Eclipse? After addressing these three objectives I was able to summarize the busker experience in the Eclipse district and the cultural politics that follow.

Research Significance

This research outlines the unique role of buskers in a gentrified district, paying careful detail to their interdependence and overall influence in the market economy. Although the buskers of the Eclipse claim to be independent from city businesses and other features of the district, they are woven into the complex web of urban space, corporate control, and the network of relationships that form as a result. Often these details are subtle, hidden by a masked agenda and require data from ethnographic fieldwork to make visible. My research looks into the powerful influence that the market economy can have on a busker's creative expression and independence. Additionally, cultural resource managers, buskers, activists, and urban planners alike will be able to use the results of this study to better understand the cultural and socio-economic roles of buskers in gentrified areas.

Literature Review

This ethnographic study draws from former scholarly works that allow me to explore my keys themes of buskers, gentrification, and the elimination of public space. Within these themes I also pay careful attention to literature on Southern California and the moral economy. Each theme will be explored in further detail to demonstrate the scholarly work that has been completed and how it relates and applies to my current research.

Theme 1: Buskers

Central to my research is the work of Erving Goffman. Through his works such as *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, *Embarrassment and Social Organization*, and *The Nature of Deference and Demeanor*, I am able to critically examine the interactions between buskers, passersby, and workers in relationship to the Eclipse. Through his theoretical perspectives I am able to observe buskers and the meaning behind their interactions that would otherwise seem mundane.

Goffman(1973) explores the details and impacts of individual identity and group identity in relation to environment. Goffman's distinction between actor and recipient is largely applicable to buskers and passersby. However, there are instances in which the relationship is reversed. Goffman provides a broader understanding of what constitutes performance: One that encompasses day-to-day interactions that often follow a script (Goffman 1973:1-7).

Also central to this research is the literature of Pierre Bourdieu(1977). Bourdieu examines reality by looking at how individuals exist socially in relation to others. Differences between observed phenomena are what individuals use to define themselves.

This continuous process of differentiation occurs in what Bourdieu refers to as fields. In each field individuals compete for different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1977:170-174). The power relations in and between these fields help guide an individual's behavior. I examined buskers, security, workers, and passersby in the Eclipse through Bourdieu to understand how power relations can guide their behavior in the various fields of the Eclipse.

Bourdieu also looks at how an agent or individual's disposition can to an extent determine their potential courses of action. These courses of action are formed by what Bourdieu refers to as habitus, which consists of many forms of capital that guide one's behavior and thinking. Even though each person carries his or her own individual habitus, it is a process that is created socially (Bourdieu 1977:170-174). In this research, I examine how individuals in the Eclipse, compete for capital and how habitus guides their courses of action. Furthermore, I look at how distinctions in taste in the Eclipse have created an unconscious acceptance of social hierarchies (Bourdieu 1984:56-60).

Additionally, Sally Pepper and Patricia Campbell have contributed greatly to the understanding of the role of buskers in modern American society. They observed buskers in their day-to-day interactions with their audiences in major cities such as New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans. They have added considerably to the understanding of how buskers utilize public space and interact with their audience (Pepper 1991:18), and why buskers choose to perform on the street (Campbell and Belkin 1981:26).

Campbell and Belkin's research revealed that people choose to perform in the street for a wide variety of reasons and come from a multitude of backgrounds. For example, some buskers claimed to enjoy carrying on an ancient tradition while others felt

the need to freely express themselves in public. There were also those who became buskers as a means of getting by while others used it as a way to earn extra money alongside their regular day job. Finally, there were those who described street performing as their passion or guilty pleasure (Campbell and Belkin 1981:26).

Campbell and Pepper can be profitably read through the work of James Scott(1992), who discusses the concept of hidden transcripts. According to Scott, a public transcript is a form of overly polite, accommodating speech between an individual of a high position of power and a subordinate. In contrast, hidden transcripts are the emotions and opinions expressed behind the masked face (Scott 1992:2). The further the social gap is between the two individuals, the more intense the transcript becomes. At times, the hidden transcript takes the form of public micro-performances that indicate subversive takes on the social world. These are sometimes present in more subtle ways such as through a busker's clothing or gestures.

Buskers often play a dual role in gentrified places. On one hand, their presence can add to the atmosphere of an area, leading to a potential increase in nearby business sales. Sometimes buskers form tense relationships with business workers in gentrified spaces. They can be accused for problems such as blocking pedestrian traffic, scaring away potential customers, or taking away attention from a business. This research explores the specific characteristics of a busker that can lead to their acceptance or harassment in the district.

I also explore the different areas where moral economies function in relationship to the busker. At times this can be represented by the relationships between buskers and workers of the Eclipse district. Other times this is represented by crowds of passersby

around the busker through the support they show. This support is essential for the acceptance in a place and increases a busker's chances of popularity.

I examine through Marcel Mauss(1967) and Marshall Sahlins(1972) the types of exchange that take place between buskers and passersby as well as buskers and other workers of the district. Mauss explores how the practice of gifting is involuntary and comes with some degree of obligation (Mauss 1967:3-4). The process of gifting binds individuals together in the Eclipse. I also examine how tipping in the context of street performing represents a very tangled relationship between money and social relationships in society, as it is the point between purchase and friendship.

Lastly, I explore how gender and race play a significant role in the busker experience. I explore gender through Laura Mulvey's(1975) discussion on the male gaze in visual media. She argues that media such as cinema are presented from a male perspective bias. Women on screen function as the primary erotic object for both the audience and the film's characters. I explore the concept of the male gaze through the representation of women in the Eclipse's establishments and their promotional strategies in Chapter IV (Mulvey 1975:6-18).

Theme 2: Gentrification

In Landscapes of Power, Sharon Zukin(1991) explores how gentrification brings the middle class, who typically lives in the suburbs, into the city. One reason Zukin believes this occurs is because the middle class has an aspiration for the symbolic power that downtown has. By taking over, the Eclipse's planners try to boost an area's cultural value and enhance its economic power through the process of gentrification (Zukin 1991:186).

Underlying the basic assumptions of gentrification, Zukin(1991) argues that gentrification occurs as a result of the growth of international market culture. Although city planners strive to bring the middle class into the city, boost business, and build interest in specific areas, gentrified areas have not solved or slowed down some of the city's biggest issues, such as economic decline and income inequality. She sums up this point perfectly when she describes how the process of gentrification creates "islands of renewal in seas of decay" (Zukin 1991:188).

In *Under the Perfect Sun*, Davis, Mayhew, and Miller(2003) explore the reinvented spaces of Southern California. They deconstruct San Diego, looking at areas where the distinction between theme park and city is increasingly unclear (Davis et al. 2003:160). In turn, they explain how these themed zones act to cover the history and memory of the city. They argue that history is only used when it has a marketable advantage. They also describe how the construction of these themed zones acts as a mask to cover the city's labor disputes and class hierarchies (Davis et al. 2003:161). In turn, this mask is actually hiding conflict by making these zones appear friendlier than they are (Davis et al. 2003:162). The Eclipse also functions as a themed zone with a masked history. Various tourist websites boast of the district's notorious history, but fail to discuss former and current issues of political corruption and ethnic tension.

Don Mitchell(2003) explores how environments constructed by corporate planners give priority to security rather than interaction (138). This is why the Eclipse is promoted as a fun but orderly entertainment district. Gentrified spaces like the Eclipse, are therefore, transformed into commodified spectacles with the primary function of

selling themselves. They function not only to sell corporate interests, but also to sell San Diego as a city (Mitchell 2003:128).

I also draw from cultural theorists of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, such as Stuart Hall(1973). Hall explains reception theory through a process of encoding and decoding. He believes that there are three ways in which an audience interprets or decodes messages encoded by the media. These interpretations include dominant, negotiated, and oppositional (Hall 1973:92-95). In other words, an audience does not always interpret these messages with the hegemonic meaning the producer intended them to have. I explore how buskers decode these messages and what effects their position has on their experience.

Theme 3: The Elimination of Public Space

Also important to my research is the theme of the elimination of public space. Davis, et al. (2003) describe the ways in which the elite control the city by removing undesired populations. They explore how themed zones like the Eclipse are kept running by an influx of non-unionized, low-wage jobs. These types of service sector jobs keep the industry running for corporations. However, only the top elite receive the benefits while the majority of workers remain stuck in a perpetual cycle of poverty. When these groups rebel, they are brutally suppressed because they threaten to unveil this mask. Often large corporations benefit while the needs of the poor and segregated are unmet (Davis et al. 2003:168).

The situation in the Eclipse is similar to what Davis, et al. (2003)describe as a “top-down class war” (168). They use this top-down approach to understand class issues within Southern California. However in my research I would like to explore these issues

from a bottom-up perspective. This approach examines issues from the perspective of the busker, or on the level of the common social class, rather than by starting with those who have more economic social control and power.

In his analysis of Los Angeles, *City of Quartz*, Davis(1990) clearly explains how cities strategize to eliminate public space in order to maintain control and attempt to control who stays and who does not (Davis 1990:227). By doing so, they eliminate unwanted social groups such as the poor and ethnic minorities. Buskers rely on being able to create or occupy public space in order to make a living and perform. The more regulated the public space, the harder it is for buskers to perform, and the more likely tensions are to arise. In addition, Campbell points out the main forms of control over the space buskers occupy make it extralegal or open to interpretation by business owners, police, and spectators themselves (Campbell and Belkin 1981:233).

The Eclipse is a clear example of what Von Mahs(2011) describes as polarized populations that exist amongst each other in a continuous struggle for urban space. Those who are forcefully removed from urban spaces monopolized by corporate control are often pushed to areas that do little to advance their current living situation. Von Mahs describes this displacement as being sold as common interest for the revitalization of the area (Von Mahs 2011:926). In other words, the struggle to removal a particular subculture or ethnicity is presented to the public as the popular opinion of the residents. The result is an attempt to domesticate and regulate both individual and collective bodies.

Corporate structures precede both individual and collective autonomy. French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre explored the notion of the right to the city, including the right to inhabit public space, a concept that buskers as well as others struggle with

from city to city. For a city's inhabitants, the right to the city and to inhabit space translates to the right to organize and contest power (Mitchell 2003:22). As mentioned before, these rights are unstable and protect the privileged as opposed to the marginalized subcultures (Mitchell 2003:23).

Study Area

I use the pseudonym "the Eclipse district" for my study area in order to protect identity. This ethnographic study took place in San Diego, California, from July first through September second 2014. San Diego is California's second largest city with a population of 1.3 million and is situated alongside the Pacific Ocean coastline (United States Census Bureau 2014). California's largest city, Los Angeles, lies approximately 120 miles north. Directly below San Diego is Tijuana, just beyond the Mexican-American border. Southern California's temperate weather, beaches, SeaWorld, and the San Diego Zoo, are just a few of the features that make San Diego an attractive spot to tourists. In 2010 the city had over 32 million visitors (The City of San Diego 2011). The Eclipse district contributes to a large percentage of this tourism annually.

The Eclipse consists of approximately a little over a dozen blocks. A stylized archway extends across the street, designating the space beyond as a historic district. In the mix of upscale modern businesses are the remains of surviving Victorian style buildings, many of them refurbished. Although the Eclipse was my primary area of study, at times it was necessary to gather data from surrounding districts for comparison. More often than not, those who work in or visit the Eclipse live outside the district.

The crowd observers in my field site are largely characterized by middle to wealthier class men and women in their early twenties and thirties. In contrast, other popular street performing areas in San Diego, such as Balboa Park, receive a much more diverse audience from age range to socio-economic status. People visit the park or beach for a number of reasons whereas people go to the Eclipse district primarily to drink, dance, and eat. Crowds in the Eclipse are dense and boisterous, leaving little space for buskers to perform.

Groups with opposing or competing interests have circulated throughout the Eclipse district from its inception. Since the late 19th century, there have been consistent struggles between residents over the right to space as well as how that space is utilized. This began with an area that occupied a few blocks in the present Eclipse district. Once rampant with prostitution, drugs, and violence, residents of this area were consistently harassed by police and businesses that feared San Diego's reputation would be tarnished by their activities (Macphail 1974:8). Nearby residents and city officials strived to clean up the area in order to preserve the image of San Diego that they desired (Macphail 1974:9).

In its present state, the Eclipse is the example of a gentrified urban landscape. During the gentrification process, corporate investors strategized to place businesses in the district that would attract a select middle class population. In other words, they restructured the area to attract those within a higher economic bracket who could afford such luxuries. The rich nightlife formed from the reconstruction of the district also makes it an attractive spot for buskers to perform. At night, large volumes of lively crowds fill the streets. Nearly all of the Eclipse district's promotional marketing materials are

designed to entice visitors to stay and consume. This is also evident through the district's large array of hotels, restaurants, and evening entertainment options. The combination of these factors creates a promising audience from the busker's perspective. Although the Eclipse appeals to buskers, buskers do not always appeal to the businesses that are there unless they are judged to have value by attracting more customers to the businesses and district.

Buskers disperse themselves throughout the Eclipse district as in many other areas of San Diego. However in other popular busker areas such as Seaport Village and Balboa Park, regulations are much stricter. A busker is typically required to purchase and obtain a permit or even audition to earn the right to a specific performance space. The boundary lines for where one can perform and how long they can perform are clearly outlined and regulated. In contrast, in the Eclipse, space is created and utilized by the busker unless it is stopped or controlled by business and police discretion. Although this gives the busker more freedom, there is much more risk and unpredictability involved.

By observing how the public reacts to buskers, one can develop a sense of which acts are welcome and which are undesired. The array of mostly corporate businesses available for consumers in the district also communicates this. Discount stores and pawnshops that cater to the working poor are nearly non-existent. An overwhelming majority of the hotels in the quarter are four and five star, consisting of boutique hotels with luxurious amenities and other higher-end chain hotels. The juxtaposition of the Eclipse district as opposed to bordering neighborhoods is clear. Within just a few miles outside the quarter economy lodging is an option. It is apparent that the working poor cannot afford to lodge in the Eclipse district or be consumer of its businesses, but only

serve to keep the district functioning by employment within low-paying, service-sector jobs (Davis 2003). This is one clear example of how corporate developers and their planning allies try to imitate and represent a diverse place, but do not necessarily reflect the actual diversity of downtown San Diego.

Methods

My fieldwork includes observations of and interviews with ten different buskers within San Diego's Eclipse, of which five became my key informants. I dedicated hours each week observing their street performances and the social interactions that followed. I use pseudonyms to protect the identity of each of my informants. My five key informants include Rusko, a 31-year-old street magician, Eric, a 25-year-old variety show act, Brad, a 20-year-old drummer, Angelina a 22-year-old cello player, and Jason a 36-year-old guitar player.

The Eclipse district's buskers are a diverse group in a number of ways. Out of the ten buskers, ages ranging from 20 to 47, only two were female. Two have been performing their act in the quarter for years, while others had only been performing for just a few months or periodically. For two of my informants, street performing was their full-time endeavor. My other informants either worked a second job or pursued other types of freelance work to support themselves. Despite their differences, all of them enjoyed performing their act and enjoyed the energy of the Eclipse district nightlife. My informant Eric expressed this to me one night. "I was like, hey, I can make money doing this?" They all loved to share their outlandish stories from performing on the street,

although they were not always positive ones. My research also included interviews with various promoters, security guards, business managers, and business workers.

In order to discover the types of encounters buskers have in the Eclipse and how they are a reflection of the district as a whole, I formulated my methods to address my three primary objectives. My first objective was to understand why buskers chose to perform within the Eclipse district as opposed to other districts. For this objective I used a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews. My second objective was to discover what types of reactions buskers receive from passersby and those working in the district. I used participant observation as well as direct observation to address this. My third and final objective was to understand how these reactions are specific to the space of the Eclipse.

Method 1: Semi-Structured Interviews

My first few evenings in San Diego were devoted to locating the specific streets in the Eclipse district where buskers perform. In order to locate potential subjects, I visited the district during its busiest days and hours. The district is the busiest from Thursday through Saturday between 9pm and 2am. Unlike other popular busker areas in San Diego, the Eclipse district's buskers rarely perform during daylight hours. During my first few evenings in the district, I created a map that identifies where each busker was observed performing. I also made note of the types of businesses that bordered the street corners and whether or not they employed entertainers.

Semi-structured interviews were the first method I used to partially address my first and second research objectives. Each interview was structured to answer specific questions I had formulated prior, while also allowing me to ask questions that arose on

the spot. Interviews with buskers focused on finding out why they choose to perform in the Eclipse, how often they perform there, and the types of reactions and interactions they experience. Interviews with business owners and promoters focused on their personal experiences with buskers in the Eclipse. These interviews were conducted towards the end of the first week of research and continued throughout the extent of my stay in San Diego.

Interviews were scheduled for a time that was most convenient for the participant. A total of twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted, lasting from one to two hours each. Eight of these interviews were with buskers, and four were with businesses and their promoters located near the areas where buskers frequently perform. To participate, subjects had to meet the criteria of being at least eighteen years of age, speak and understand English, and work at least part time within the district. Most interviews were recorded with a handheld recording device. All subjects were notified of this in a prior consent form before the interview took place. Each subject was required to read and sign a consent form and verbally acknowledge that they fully understood the parameters of this research.

Method 2: Direct Observation

Direct observation was the second method I used to address my second objective. This included observing one to two buskers each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night between 9pm to 2am. Observations took place from both near and far distances in order to encompass the extended range of reactions. I first took note of general details such as each busker's age, sex, act, and act length. I constructed a time grid of ten-minute intervals to correspond with the notes I wrote down, paying careful attention to how

buskers interact with their audience and how their audience responds to and interacts with them. I began to develop a profile on the key buskers I repeatedly encountered.

Method 3: Participant Observation

Participation observation was one of the most essential methods I used to address my third objective: To understand how these reactions are specific to the space of the Eclipse. A permit was not required for me to busk in the Eclipse, but police discretion could have been used to confront me if I was judged to be soliciting, violating noise standards, or obstructing pedestrian traffic. Street performing in the district gave me an intimate perspective that I could not understand from the observation of other buskers alone. By the third week of my research, I had alternated participant observation nights with direct observation nights.

Participant Observation took place from 9pm to 2am one night per week when I was not occupied observing other subjects in this study. I performed as a busker in a particular space for no more than three hours, taking a thirty-minute rest break halfway through. Detailed observations, reactions and interactions were carefully recorded in my notebook during this break. I was careful to document where I was performing, other buskers that were nearby, and nearby businesses. I also lived alongside and spent time with the buskers I observed, getting to know them personally and understand their lifestyle. By week three I alternated participant observation nights with nights observing. This strategy allowed me to continue to develop new insights from observing over an extended period of time while also allowing me to begin to experience working as a busker.

I analyzed all of my data from my three primary methods to summarize my findings. During the daylight hours when I was not engaged in observing and street performing, I worked to transcribe each interview, reviewing and organizing my field notes. This data was coded and indexed based on recurring themes. Themes were pulled from discoveries from observations, interviews, and my own participant observation as a busker. Each data set was compared and contrasted to identify similarities and differences.

Positioning Myself As A Performer

The journey that led me to participant observation as a busker in the Eclipse district stemmed from an unlikely experience a couple years ago in my hometown. That day sparked my passion for street performing and the complexities of a world most people pay little attention to. Before I became a busker, I certainly would have never imagined that one day I would be performing for passersby for tips. I first decided to try street performing at a local fair for practice and feedback. I was an amateur performer of a self-taught hula hoop act that I had practiced a lot, but never performed for an audience. I used the fair as an opportunity to get used to performing in front of people I did not know and see what kind of a response I would receive. Without knowledge of street performing beforehand, I was clueless of where I should go and how to start. After scanning the grounds up and down, I found a small empty space near the side of the walkway. I set out a small, clear Tupperware jar, a portable speaker, and began my show.

When I finally received my first tip I felt a large weight lifted from my shoulders. The more tips I received, the stronger my sense of acceptance from the community grew.

I was not so concerned with how much passersby were tipping, but rather the simple gesture of responding positively to my performance. To this day I can say with confidence that I am more satisfied earning a dollar for an artistic performance than receiving a paycheck for something routine.

My first busker experience took me by surprise. I found that performing for a new crowd in a new environment was emotionally exhilarating and eye opening. Although I was putting on a show for an audience, I felt as though I was the one watching a show. After multiple occasions performing in the streets, I started to notice certain patterns develop amongst passerby. These behaviors included attitudes and opinions expressed both verbally and nonverbally. I began to notice subtle things that the average passerby would not be attuned to.

This was the start of my long journey as a busker and is the driving influence behind this ethnographic research. This experience and the ones that followed helped me easily adapt as a busker in the Eclipse. Without my prior knowledge about street performing or an act to perform, I would have struggled to adapt to the environment and the process of participant observation would have been much more difficult or non-existent. I would have also had more difficulty relating to other buskers and knowing which questions to ask during the interview process.

There were several prior expectations I had coming into the Eclipse district from my background as a busker. I understood that when buskers interests collide with others, there can be intense, heated encounters. This allowed me to hypothesize that in an upscale, corporate-dominated environment like the Eclipse, this would also be the case. I already knew from my own experience that even when a busker is within the bounds of

their full legal rights, various types of resistance towards them can occur. On two occasions I had been asked to leave a public sidewalk by security for detracting attention away from other business.

My former experience as a busker also taught me that passersby can provide warnings or hints that shed light on the overall degree of control of a place as well as what the norms are in that area. For example, once a passerby seemed very surprised by my presence, and asked me if I was allowed to be there. Another time a passerby told me that I was brave for performing where I was. I learned that questions like these answer my own questions about an area. These two examples demonstrate that residents are not used to seeing buskers in that place and are surprised that someone has not put a stop to it. This also demonstrates the degree of authority and control in the area. There are typically no laws or municipal codes outlining that businesses have the authority to decide what goes on in nearby public streets. However law enforcement is likely to side with private security due to a negative characterization of buskers. This makes threats from private security intimidating to buskers.

I also learned that there is another problem with being on bad terms with business, workers, and managers if you are a busker. The buskers I met told me they strive to avoid negative situations in order to preserve their reputation from being tarnished by rumors and word of mouth. Community support is essential for acceptance in a place and increases a busker's chance of popularity. Before the start of my fieldwork, I had made friends in Washington with a busker who had a public, heated argument with a vendor at a farmer's market over distracting customers from the vendor's business. The vendor complained to the manager and other vendors and the busker was told they were no

longer welcome to perform there. I quickly learned from this busker's mistake how community support is vital and not something to be trifled with. Before beginning my research I had been street performing for approximately a year and a half on the west coast of the US. I did this nearly every weekend in a wide array of settings from urban streets to rural community farmer's markets. An accumulation of this prior knowledge helped me know what to look for before I went into the field.

CHAPTER II

SPACE WARS: OWNERSHIP AND PUBLIC SPACE USE

“It takes time for people to warm up to you and realize you're not going to do anything wrong” (Angelina, Busker).

Perhaps the single most important factor for a busker’s success in the Eclipse district is their ability to seize and utilize a prime piece of public space for their own needs. This proves to be no small task, as a number of forces control, constrain, and limit where and when a busker performs. Interestingly, there are no strict laws or municipal codes in the district that prevent buskers from legally performing their act for tips on the sidewalks. The way space in the Eclipse is consumed unveils the competitive and controlling battleground of interests that play out on the streets.

Space utilization and success go hand-in-hand in the world of street performing in the Eclipse. Buskers call this finding a “hotspot” or a good spot. The ability to find and seize a good spot takes time and practice. Often times the best spots are already secured by another busker or they are too close to another busker. Besides having a good act, securing a good performance spot is the single most determining factor in whether or not a busker will stand out to passersby and make good tips.

There are several factors that make a space a prime spot. To determine these factors I questioned my key informants, spent time observing their success in relation to their performance space, and experimented by performing in different spaces and comparing and contrasting my results. The correlation between my observations, experiences, and my informant’s answers was striking. The space dramatically affected

the number of people who watched, how many tips the busker received, and how easily the busker was noticed.

The first factor that determines a prime busker spot is if there are places for passersby to sit and observe. This factor is discussed in William Whyte's (1988) film *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Whyte explores what makes urban spaces successful by studying how plaza use correlates with specific factors. He found that the correlation between places to sit and number of people using a space is significant. People will sit on just about anything from a wall to the curbside (Whyte 1988). Therefore, when my informants chose a spot that was overly crowded with few places to sit, they would not be visible in the traffic of passersby.

In order to transform sidewalk space into a stage, a busker must find ways to create an imaginary circle or some sort of border around them. This helps differentiate their performance space from the rest of the sidewalk. Whyte's study describes a similar feature of spaces called triangulation, or the part of a public space that brings people together and draws in a crowd (Whyte 1988). This invisible border becomes visible when a crowd starts to form around the perimeter, clearly defining the boundaries. I watched my informant Eric define the boundaries of his stage by placing objects at four different points. His tip jar marked the front of his space and his props marked the sides and back. The best busker spots tend to be larger and open so that it is easier to create an imaginary stage. This is the same reason why the Eclipse's buskers prefer to perform on larger, open street corners as opposed to random spots along the sidewalk.

The second factor that determines a prime busker spot is the availability of food nearby. This relates to the first factor in that where there is food, there are generally

places for passersby to sit. I found that the busker is granted a great opportunity to perform for passersby while they sit down or wait in line. Food was another important factor in Whyte's study that determined frequency of plaza use (Whyte 1988).

This overlaps with the third factor of selecting a prime spot: Finding a space where there is a lot of traffic. This correlates with how Whyte found that the most important part of a public space is its relationship to the street, which draws in more spectators. Interestingly Whyte's study also found that buskers and other spectacles also drew people into urban spaces or plazas (Whyte 1988). For this reason it is in a busker's best interest to perform near points of attraction such as statues or other landmarks that draw in curious passersby.

When I initially began this research, I was curious to understand how the spatial layout of the Eclipse affected its buskers and whether it was an asset or hindrance to their goals. A wealth of information was gathered from conversations I had with buskers who favored other spots over the Eclipse. They expressed that the environment was intimidating and uncomfortable. Further along in my fieldwork I revisited these themes, allowing my informants to express more clearly what sparked these perceptions. These buskers expressed that the overwhelming presence of corporate power and high-end entertainment venues, as well as the competition for attention, was intimidating.

Many buskers found the Eclipse district intimidating because of the types of establishments that they would have to perform beside. In the Eclipse there are a number of nightclubs in a concentrated space where security is situated directly outside. In other words, buskers are likely to perform directly next to security. In contrast, other popular busker areas in San Diego have security, but not as strongly of a perceived presence.

There is also more physical distance between security guards and the busker. Lastly, security is much more mobile in these areas, passing by every so often. In the Eclipse, security tends to stay still and watch space directly in front of businesses. Security and buskers are within closer proximity of each other.

Another major intimidating feature of performing in the Eclipse is the chaotic crowds that form on busy nights. Although crowds have the potential to benefit a busker, they can also be overwhelming and difficult to manage. “I love how there are so many people but sometimes it gets a little overwhelming. I have drunk people knocking my tip jar over, people running into me, and sometimes ten of them are trying to talk to me at once. Someone is trying to take a picture while someone else is trying to ask me a question” (Angelina, busker). When the Eclipse gets uncomfortably crowded, little open sidewalk space is available. A busker can easily be ordered to move or leave for blocking pedestrian traffic. At times the nearby establishments or passersby do enjoy the act or the type of attention it draws around their business. My informant Jason expressed this very bluntly. “Don’t piss anyone off!” These simple words ring true. From watching my informants I realized how easily you could piss someone off.

Limited sidewalk space makes performing even minimally physical acts a challenge. Pedestrian bodies are constantly weaving in and out of a busker’s performance space. The busker must be aware of the physical distance between themselves and passersby at all times to avoid the chance of a collision. For this reason space management is a valuable skill for any busker, but especially for those working in congested spaces like the Eclipse. My informants told me stories of how drunken pedestrians became easily enraged by a simple, accidental “bump.” Other hazards are the

taxi services and cars that pull in and out along the curbside adjacent to where the busker is performing.

From my observations I witnessed what most of the buskers I interviewed described as close calls. I watched my informant Brad get yelled at by an irate taxi driver for blocking his vehicle space. Establishments can formulate a number of reasons to complain about buskers which include that the music or act is too loud, their act blocks an entrance, their act blocks pedestrian traffic, they are too close to private property, or their behavior is unruly.

One night I observed a circle of onlookers gathered around an unfamiliar busker performing a magic act. Immediately a police officer approached him and he was asked to move for blocking the sidewalks. He received a warning that if an incident such as this happened again, he would not be able to perform in the Eclipse any longer. In another incident, the passerby was the one who became upset. My informant Eric's juggling prop went flying from his hand, hitting a girl in the back. The man who was walking beside her lost his temper yelling obscenities at Eric.

My informants agreed that there are special hassles to performing in the Eclipse, yet they are also drawn to the district. I wondered why this be the case? After all, buskers in the Eclipse all stressed at one point or another in their interviews that working in the district was challenging or difficult, despite the fact that they "love busking here." In order to understand this I spent many nights observing and interviewing these buskers. My own experiences through participant observation also helped me understand these perceived challenges more clearly.

Nearly all of my informants explained to me that one of the main challenges they faced was the outward pressure to constantly justify and prove themselves to both passersby and establishments. It was through the justification process that they felt they could claim their spot without intervention. Besides business establishments, this also includes police, security, and passersby. The following is a summary of the most common responses given to me when I asked buskers how they needed to justify their spot.

1. The busker needs to justify why they are there and what their goal is.
2. The busker needs to explain whom they are working for.
3. The busker needs to prove that their act is well received. This is not only dependent on the degree of skill exhibited in the act, but on many other factors such as the busker's race, gender, and ethnicity.

The pressure to justify or prove oneself comes through a series of questioning by all parties in the Eclipse. In other more relaxed busker spots, buskers are not harassed with as many questions as frequently. If questions are asked, they are more likely to pertain to curiosity about the act such as "Where did you learn to do this?" or "How long have you been doing this?" During my first night of participant observation as a busker in the Eclipse I was asked several questions before I had even started.

On this night my nerves are much higher than normal because I am about to dance in front of hundreds of strangers in the middle of one of the busiest intersections of downtown San Diego. Thick, velvet ropes block off much of the sidewalks, guarded by large bouncers sternly scanning the crowds. Lines of women and men dressed to impress all make the environment a little more intimidating.

I quickly scan each of the four corners to see what space will be the best to perform. The first corner in front of the popular Top Hat bar is by far the busiest, but is already occupied by the regular busker Ricardo. On another corner an unfamiliar band is setting up their equipment, preparing to play. I feel my nerves kicking in as I worry I have missed my chance at claiming a spot. The other two corners were occupied by nightclub promoters offering free cover, advertisers waving signs with deals for their restaurants, and women desperately asking passersby if they would like to purchase a single rose from the bucket hanging by their side. Suddenly, I spot a fairly empty space outside a popular wine bar with just enough distance from the promoters.

As I cross the street with my hula hoop by my side, I feel as though I am already in trouble and that someone will find out my intentions to perform and come arrest me. A few police parked on bicycles stare intently at me, as if waiting for me to make a wrong move. Heads are turning because something different is taking place and no one is sure what is about to happen. I can feel the piercing points and stares. The occasional shout out of “Hey hoop girl where are you going?” or “What are going to do with that?” is drowned out by my eagerness to get started.

Once I get to my spot, I quickly turn around, crouching down to open my blue bag to get set up. This includes a portable speaker, a small, clear Tupperware container with a “Tips Appreciated” sign attached, and two dollars and a five at the bottom for luck. This is the point during all of my performances that I feel the most vulnerable. I feel as though at any moment someone is going to approach me and tell me I cannot be here. Before I get to start, passersby ask “Are you allowed to do this? Do they (security and businesses) get mad? Are you working for someone?”

The process of establishing one's credibility in a new environment is risky and can be emotionally unsettling. Proving yourself as a busker serves the primary purpose of being allowed to use the sidewalk space without hassle from others. It is not always simple to establish this credibility.

Most of the Eclipse's establishments are very particular on the image of those they choose to represent their business. Nearby buskers that might interfere with their ideal representation are met with hostility. On several occasions I witnessed as security of a popular bar denied entry to my informant Rusko. When the busker is performing close to the establishment, public and private realms become blurred and competing interests can produce tension.

If a busker is near or in front of an establishment, they inadvertently become a part of that establishment's public image. One security guard of a popular nightclub I interviewed told me that it is his job to protect the image and reputation of the club. "It's frustrating when someone loiters on the sidewalk that you don't want scaring people away and there's not much you can do about it because it's a public sidewalk." Regardless of how clearly outlined property-line boundaries are, a busker who performs in front of an establishment still influences the surrounding pedestrian traffic.

There are a few different strategies establishments can use to drive away an unwanted busker. Threats are used by security to intimidate the busker into leaving a space. Security may threaten to call the police or threaten to sue the busker in hopes that they will be coaxed into leaving. More often than not these threats turn out to be nothing more than a scare tactic. However, in the rare instance when an establishment does contact law enforcement, the busker is usually asked to leave. Despite the fact that the

busker may not have broken any laws, they are less likely to be taken seriously because of their relatively low social status in comparison to those working in the formal economy. I observed that in these instances law enforcement tended to assume the authority and credibility of the security or business owner.

Establishments sometimes take disputes with buskers into their own hands by assuming an authoritative role. This tactic is most effective when the person's appearance is physically intimidating or they hold an intimidating social title such as manager or security guard. For example, on a night my informant Brad was performing the bongo drums, a man walked outside of the restaurant adjacent to the alley where he was set up. He interrupted Brad mid-performance and said in a firm tone "I'm the manager here and I'm going to have to ask you to leave this area now. You can't be here." Brad hesitated for a moment and then nodded. "Uh, yes sir I understand" he replied, slightly taken aback. Without a further remark, Brad hastily began to gather his belongings. The restaurant manager had not threatened that a higher authority would take care of the situation, but simply assumed the role of authority in hopes Brad would be intimidated enough to leave, which he did.

The deference Brad showed to the restaurant manager can be examined through Erving Goffman's *The Nature of Difference and Demeanor*. Goffman describes these displays of deference as ways of making a promise between the actor, in this case the busker, and the recipient of a higher social status (Goffman 1956b:60). Typically the recipient falls under the category of promoter, business manager, or security guard. By displaying deference, the busker is submitting to the recipient's assumed social authority,

agreeing to treat them in a particular way. Doing so helps reinforce the authority and corporate control in the district.

James C. Scott discusses how hidden and public transcripts permeate throughout social relations. In encounters between buskers and security or business owners, buskers play the role of the subordinate in the public transcript (Scott 1992:2-7). This transcript is acted out as the status quo in public by the busker's choice of polite and submissive language in addressing and conversing with the recipient. Amongst other buskers and trustworthy friends, a distinctly contrasting hidden transcript emerges. Scott describes the hidden transcript as one that expresses how the subordinate truly feels (Scott 1992:5-7). When buskers are pushed to the point where they no longer maintain the public transcript, they act out the hidden one.

My informant Brad expressed the hidden transcript of buskers in the Eclipse by emphasizing his distaste for the power dynamics from the discriminating security to the snooty attitudes of certain passersby. Before our interview I had the chance to observe his act on a couple evenings. On one night nearby security told him that he needed to relocate to another corner because the performance was too close to the nightclub. Although this may sound like a reasonable request, his judgment was questionable. I had also witnessed another busker earlier who had performed much closer to the venue than Brad with no trouble. It was clear to me that there was something particular about Brad, either his act or appearance, which was troubling to security. Brad took a deep breath in and smiled. "Okay sir, no problem. Sorry to be trouble." I was rather surprised by Brad's unquestioning, calm obedience. He even introduced himself to the security guard and shook his hand. Brad's unbothered demeanor quickly transformed as we started to walk to

another street corner. His smile suddenly faded and he appeared livid. “What happened bro?” asked Brad’s friend who caught up with us. Brad shook his head. “Fucking prick! I wanted to swing him a good one.”

The next week the same security guard approached Brad. However, this time Brad was across the street. Surprisingly there was a different busker on the same corner Brad had been ordered to leave before. “Hey man, you’re going to have to leave this intersection. This is just causing too much of a scene for us,” said the security guard. Brad stood still in disbelief for a moment of awkward silence, as if trying to process what was happening. He could no longer maintain his composure. I slowly backed away as he started yelling at the guard all the reasons why he was wrong. He had clearly reached a breaking point that forced the hidden transcript out. Brad’s friend put in his best effort to diffuse the situation, but it was no use. A few small crowds of passersby stopped and watched in amazement at the anticipation of a possible fight. Some pulled out their cell phones in hopes to record if the argument escalated.

All of Brad’s angry rebuttals to the bouncer’s complaints were sound. Unfortunately, to an audience unfamiliar with their history, Brad was quickly characterized as an unruly troublemaker. A restaurant owner observing from the doorway on the same corner as Brad yelled, “You better get the hell out of here or I’m calling the police!” After realizing he was fighting an uphill battle, Brad looked at his friend and said “Let’s bounce. This shit ain’t worth our time!” Curious onlookers slowly whispered amongst each other for a moment, then gradually dispersed after realizing the show was over.

Another special challenge of performing in the Eclipse is the fierce competition for attention. The sidewalks overflow with locals and tourists alike, drawn in by the district's numerous attractions. Establishments employ entertainment acts at most of their venues. At times, the busker competes directly outside an establishment with employed entertainment acts inside. These acts vary but often overlap with common busker acts such as comedy, magic, dancing, singing, and music.

Although many areas of San Diego have distractions, the Eclipse's occur at a much higher rate and specifically fall under the entertainment genre. To compete, a busker must find ways to stand out to win the attention of passersby. My informants expressed that the crowds are harder to please because there are so many competitors trying to capture their attention. One busker outside the Eclipse told me "It's like a big competition where everyone is trying so hard to get everyone else's attention. I doubt anyone there would pay attention to me or stop to listen." Another busker told me "I feel like I would get lost in the crowd." Other popular busker areas such as Seaport Village, the beach boardwalks, and Balboa Park, tend to have more relaxed crowds. There is also more physical space available between the busker and other businesses.

Beyond competing with nearby establishments for attention, a busker also must compete with a large number of street promoters. These promoters can be found walking throughout the district, enticing passersby to come to their venue. Interviews with promoters revealed that they strive to target passersby that they believe have a lot of money to spend at the establishment as well as attractive females who they believe will attract men with money.

Street promoters often wander the sidewalks at night or linger around popular street corners. This affects the Eclipse's buskers by limiting their available performance space. A conflict of interest is likely to occur if the busker tries to perform on a street corner already occupied by a promoter. A promoter can also become an obstacle to a busker if they divert attention away from passersby who might otherwise watch the performance and tip.

The Development and Transformation of the Eclipse Over Time

The current corporate domination of public space in the Eclipse is the result of a lengthy transformation process. This transformation heightens as cities transition from an industrial society to a post-industrial one (Banks et al. 2000:455). Becoming a post-industrial society, the city no longer functions in the same way. The city once represented a landscape of economic power with factories being the core source of wealth. Through globalization as factories were pushed abroad, the city no longer functioned in the same manner (Zukin 1991:180).

The gentrification of the Eclipse transformed the once worn-down district into a new center of beaming wealth. As Zukin describes, gentrification aims to boost an area's cultural value and enhance its economic power. This process draws in the middle class, who typically live in the suburbs outside the city. Zukin believes the middle class are attracted to the idea of living in the city because they have an aspiration for the symbolic power that downtown holds (Zukin 1991:186).

Some of the ways that gentrification tries to recapture the value of place is by focusing on attributes of an area such as history or aesthetics of architecture (Zukin 1991:192). This drive towards historic preservation and cultural renewal is what city

planners and allies have used to justify claim to an area. Although these areas claim to bring forth history, they rarely represent the places that were once there (Zukin 1991:193).

Zukin's description of gentrification closely aligns with the transformation the Eclipse underwent. The Eclipse is known as a historic district that was also once a notorious red light district in the late 19th century. Today this space has become a gentrified district that lures in the middle class with its array of high-end nightclubs, restaurants and entertainment options. However this current image does not accurately reflect the Eclipse's historical and cultural significance. The contrast between the old and new Eclipse could not be starker, as pleasure in the district is highly controlled. It appears as though the city planners are claiming that the area is unique due to its history, when in actuality all places have history. A specific place like the Eclipse only appears more significant because of the sudden attention brought toward it.

The gentrification of the Eclipse has led to expensive housing, pushing those who once lived in the district, outside. Directly outside the perimeters of the district one is confronted with poverty, homelessness, and lower income housing. However the reemergence of the district has masked the problems that continue to take place. Through these transformations, insecurities prevail in postmodern society, leading to instability. The aftermath of the transformation of cities and the uncertainty this creates, establishes the need for new forms of work to tackle the risk.

Those who choose to perform in the Eclipse have no choice but to work in a semi-controlled environment transformed and shaped through gentrification. Buskers are free to use public space but only under constrained conditions. A busker cannot simply avoid

being caught in the complex web of relations in a gentrified space. By submitting to the constraints bestowed by those in power, buskers are further reinforcing the social hierarchy. However if a busker chooses to abide by their own rules, they engage in a risky gamble. The following Chapter explores how buskers form relationships with promoters to help minimize these risks and maximize tips and acceptance.

CHAPTER III
MANAGING RISK ON THE STREET: FORGING NETWORKS AND BUILDING
TRUST

I first realized the significance of networking in the Eclipse after multiple casual conversations I had with buskers I met across different areas of San Diego. At some point in our conversation I would always make a point to ask “Do you ever busk in the Eclipse district?” Nearly all of them replied negatively. Instead, they favored spots that were characterized by a more relaxed atmosphere, more space, and a more diverse crowd. I was curious to learn how those that did choose to perform in the Eclipse were able to make it work in their favor.

I discovered through this process that forming networks with promoters, businesses, service workers, cab drivers, and even passersby, developed strong relationships of trust and respect. This significantly lessened the negative factors a busker might experience in the Eclipse, such as harassment from the crowd, businesses, police, or general feelings of intimidation. The alliances I am referring to are social bonds formed between these two parties, which often increase mutual benefit. The networks I am referring to are an interconnected group of personal relationships and social interactions. More specifically these are the bonds formed between buskers and corporate promoters and workers of the district.

Four out of five of my key informants expressed that these relationships were actively sought, meaning they intentionally tried to connect with specific people. All five of my informants expressed that often times these networks were inactively acquired, or

occurred spontaneously. In these instances they did not plan on forming networks but through the course of the night's events, formed them. Finally, in both cases these networks almost always led to others that may not have formed without the prior.

Interestingly, none of the buskers I observed and interviewed interacted with or formed networks and alliances with other buskers in the district. However this does not necessarily mean that they do not hold respect for one another. My interviews revealed that respect for other buskers is expressed by not performing in a place a residential busker performs, not getting in the way or interrupting a show, and not copying or stealing another's work. All of my informants clearly expressed to me that they were well aware of who the other buskers were and what they were up to. When I asked my informant Jason why he did not interact more with the other buskers he told me "Because it's just easier that way. We are doing our own thing so we don't want to get in each other's way."

Buskers in San Diego's Eclipse form networks as both a natural process of social encounters based on spatial distribution of workers within the district, but also as a strategy to minimize risk. There are several types of risk factors buskers face in the Eclipse. Interviews pinpointed three primary risks that buskers could potentially face: Having to leave, being forced to leave (arrested), or making bad tips. If there is a lack of external support for a buskers act they may be asked to move or leave by businesses, security, or police. Every busker I interviewed was asked to leave at least once, three had been either arrested or escorted by security, and all had at least one night of bad tips.

Financial risks vary upon the busker's socio-economic status. These risks are more evident when the individual relies on solely on street performing for income.

However, even buskers who have other sources of income strive to make good tips. Besides monetary satisfaction, there is also a personal and emotional satisfaction through receiving tips. “I feel like I am no good if I don’t get good tips. I know it’s not true but it lowers my self-esteem” (Angelina). “I get discouraged easily if people aren’t tipping. My energy goes down and I feel like shit the rest of the night” (Brad).

Financial risks and the negative emotional reactions they can stir, can be reduced through forming alliances and networks. I frequently observed that when large crowds gathered around an act or if a lot of commotion was made, the busker would be tipped more. Also, if a passerby is familiar with the busker and enjoys their act, their friends would likely tip as well. In almost every circumstance, the more social support that is displayed through gathering, cheering, and tipping, the more likely other passersby will watch the busker and tip.

The final component of building networks is the development of trust and ultimately respect. Trust and respect apply to relationships formed between a busker and promoters, businesses, and passersby. Both my own experiences through participant observation and stories from interviews with my informants, demonstrate how unfamiliarity can breed suspicion.

Buskers who love the Eclipse describe their experience as a game that if played right can reap in rewards. “If you play your cards right, you can make good tips” (Jason). At some point or another each busker stressed the importance of networking almost as much as they described how they enjoy the independence that goes along with street performing. This is how the stakes are raised by corporate venues. If you know what

you're doing you could be incorporated into their business or used. On the contrary, if you offend them, you could be asked to leave.

Respect and networking come into play as strategies for legitimizing one's performance when going against ideas of acceptable public behavior. Amidst panhandlers and the general uncertainty of unusual public behavior, earning trust and respect are essential components of survival. The space binds people of various backgrounds together, creating sites where networks and alliances are formed. Despite the fluidity and constantly changing crowds of the urban streets, in any given moment, a busker can create a sense of community and in turn generate respect. These moments are fluid, transitional, and situational to the moment, but nevertheless they are felt.

The audience helps define which buskers hold respect by how frequently they are spoken of and the manner in which they are spoken of. If they are not spoken of at all or spoken of negatively, they clearly have not earned this respect. "Oh, have you seen Andy, the guy who plays all those instruments at once?" asked one passerby to another. "Yeah, he's awesome!" Another time I thought I would try my luck going in front of the Top Hat bar. I was quickly reminded by the bouncer that, "That's Ricardo's spot, you'd better not go there."

Ricardo did not claim ownership to the space where he performed. Rather, it was others in the district who claimed Ricardo had rights to this space. This respect developed through trust generated through the networks and alliances he formed. In a competitive, unstable environment, these relationships can become essential. As in the example of Ricardo, this space is not always visible to the outsider, but when disturbed, one may receive a verbal warning.

Respect is also expressed and formed through word-of-mouth. This is best illustrated through the example of the Rusko, the carefree Mexican-American street magician I followed and observed. Before I had met Rusko in person, I already knew who he was and could have probably identified him. On several occasions his name was brought up, sometimes while I was performing and other times when my informants were performing. Surprisingly his attire does nothing to help him stand out amongst the crowds, but the black slender cat resting comfortably on his shoulder does. His cat lures in passersby who often do a double take as they walk past. Rusko's gift-of-the-gab, charm, and talent also help him easily build friendships, fans, and respect.

As word-of-mouth spreads throughout the Eclipse, more individuals come to Rusko to be entertained. After his shows I would casually ask some of his audience members if they knew him. Most replied that they did not know him personally but knew of him. More specifically, they had heard that he was talented from a friend or heard some of their friends talking about him. As I observed Rusko's interactions one evening, I watched how he earned respect from the regular Eclipse visitors and was negatively characterized by security in the same night.

A young couple linking arms and laughing catch site of Rusko's cat as they head in his direction, causing them to slow their pace and stare in disbelief. Still smiling, the girl asks "How do you get him to stay there like that?" After chatting with the couple for a few moments, Rusko asks the couple if he can show them a quick magic trick. Before another word is spoken, a few guys approach from behind. One of them recognizes Rusko and excitedly points over to him. "Dude, dude, seriously, check this guy out he's really freakin' good!" After a few card tricks, Rusko has successfully amused the couple who

laughing and baffled, give him a tip. As they start to walk away, a police officer approaches them. "Is he giving you any trouble?" he asks. The couple immediately defends Rusko along with the group of young men whose friend convinced them to watch. The police officer seems convinced and walks away.

Rusko told me right after the incident that this is not the first time that he has been scrutinized by police or that police have questioned others about him. On another occasion a different police officer approached me with questions about Rusko. He described him as shady. The officer asked me if "that guy" was bothering me or trying to sell drugs. This officer was clearly not as familiar with Rusko's street fame as some of the other Eclipse regulars.

Rusko does not have a flashy costume or a marked tip jar. In fact, he is rather ruggedly dressed, usually in a baggy, worn, tan jacket with his hood on. I asked Rusko how he experiences the sometimes suspicious characterization others have of him. "People love what I do, I love what I do, so I don't give a fuck. At the end of the day I'm doing what I love and making money," he responded.

I further realized the power behind networking with one's audience after witnessing how quickly people would step up to defend Rusko. He further emphasized this point when I once casually asked him what he considered to be a successful show.

"You hear them talk," he said. "People tell me, 'Oh I've heard about you!' Then I know my fans have my back." Sure enough, Rusko did not understate this. During my participant observation as a busker, multiple passersby made me aware of Rusko's act. They asked me "Have you seen this guy? He is so good." As I followed him through the

course of the evening, he occasionally received shout-outs from pedestrians, bouncers, and restaurant hostesses outside of establishments.

Some of the earlier networks I made helped me form relationships of trust and respect that made my experience working in the Eclipse more rewarding. After several interviews with my informants, I discovered that they too had similar experiences. As I continued my first evening working as a busker in the Eclipse, I discovered how spontaneously networks could form.

I am still dancing amongst a small circle of onlookers when I spin around to see a young platinum blond with an elegant headscarf exit the wine bar directly behind me. She scurries towards me through the small crowd, wearing a short glittery, gold cocktail dress with her arms crossed. I immediately think that she is going to tell me that I am too close to the café and that I need to find another place to go.

Her lingering eye contact tells me she is eager to speak with me so I step towards the back window of the bar, clearing up the sidewalk. “Hi hon, sorry to bother you, is there any way you would want to join me and my band inside for a number? We saw you outside doing your thing. I don’t want to interrupt your thing out here but I think it would be so fun!” She introduces herself as Jennifer. I agree to join them even though I am taken by surprise by the sudden change of direction of the evening. I follow Jennifer inside the bar along with the strong feeling of being out of place.

The bar is filled with young and middle aged couples in fine attire, sipping wine and sangria. Slow jazz sets the mood over the speakers. “Are you sure I won’t be out of place with what I’m wearing?” I ask, thinking that my neon colored attire clashed with

the elegant ambiance. She laughs, “No don’t worry they will love you!” Her encouragement does little to calm my nerves and feelings of awkwardness.

Inside I am introduced to both the band and the staff. The bartender offers me a drink before we get started. I decline, as I am already worried about knocking over a wine glass with my hoop. Jennifer on the other hand is all smiles, appearing confident that the show will run smoothly. She glances at the band and then me, giving a smile and head nod. Leaning towards the microphone stand, she gathers the bar’s attention. “How’s everybody doing tonight? Well tonight folks we have a special guest joining us here from Washington for a song. This is Miss Hillary!” The audience smiles and claps. They seem to be going along with this change as comfortably as Jennifer.

The band starts playing a slow jazzy tune. Jennifer soulfully begins to sing a slow, sensual version of Aretha Franklin’s “Respect.” I began performing to the best of my ability. I felt as though this was my chance to prove myself. I was positioned awkwardly on the opposite side of the wall as the band, almost blocking the entrance. I’m starting to feel more at ease once I can see the onlookers smiling in delight.

Afterwards a young, perky girl with a pixy cut runs up to me and gives me a hug. I guess correctly that she is Jennifer’s friend by the similar giddiness. “That was wonderful! Do you mind if I get your number? Would you want to do some pictures later? I’m an independent photographer and I’m trying to collaborate with other artists and performers here.” I get her contact info and we make plans to meet up the following week. I felt at ease the rest of the night with the comfort that I had the bar’s acceptance and support.

Networks such as these, made within the Eclipse can also lead to possible job opportunities outside of the district. Four of my key informants had booked at least one gig outside of the Eclipse through the networks formed while performing inside the district. On another busy evening, I was getting ready to take a taxi home. I was in the middle of a conversation with the driver as he helped me load my hoop and supplies into the backseat, when we were interrupted by a large bouncer waving us down at the front of the line outside the Crazy Dice bar.

“Hey hula hoop girl! Were you the girl performing outside the wine bar last week?” I nodded. “Hey nice to meet you, I’m Rick. Sorry to bother you but some of the promoters from the Double Trouble were talking about you the other night. Word’s been spreading around here. One of my buddies in PB (Pacific Beach) is looking to hire someone who does that. He runs a bar over there called Angelo’s. Can I get your contact information to give him?”

This example outlines how some of the former networks I had made with the promoters led to formation of new ones and also to other performance opportunities. This type of word-of-mouth networking continued to grow and strengthen throughout my participant observation as a busker. On a few occasions, I heard some of the passersby refer to one or more of the networks I had made. For example, one girl told me that her friend Jennifer told her to watch me perform. I also observed Jason welcomed on multiple occasions by small groups of cheering people shouting “Jason, woo!” The attention stirred by these warm welcomes always caused passersby to take a closer look at the busker to see what all the excitement was about.

The importance of building alliances in risky environments is highlighted by Banks, Lovatt, O’Conner, and Raffo in their study “Risk and Trust in the Cultural Industries.” They define risk as “a process of dealing with a perceived hazard or problem” (Banks et al. 2000:456). These risks can be either realized or potential risks of the future (Banks et al. 2000:455). In this view, networks and alliances are formed primarily to minimize risk between individuals. Mauss argues that the process of gifting, which in the case of buskers sometimes follows alliance forming and networking, creates a sense of obligation between parties (Mauss 1967:3-4). For example, if a promoter gives a busker positive exposure by encouraging his clients to watch and tip, the busker is likely to feel obligated to help the promoter. They can do so by recommending the establishment the promoter works for to passersby.

Although promoters have power and respect, they must actively work to sustain their status through networking. Promoters act as the intermediaries between buskers, other independent workers, and the large corporations in which they work. For these reasons, they are some of the best networks a busker can have, providing a connection to the head source of power of an establishment. This has to do with the fact that most promoters are required to pull people off of the street and bring them inside various establishments. They rely on making connections to get their name out there and make their percentage.

Although buskers work outside of the formal business structure, they can adapt better to this environment by understanding the popular culture around them. In the case of Ricardo, he capitalizes on a popular meme with an obvious sexual innuendo through self-branding. Drunk club goers love the idea of taking a “selfie” with Ricardo for laughs.

Creating networks of trust extends beyond the inside of venues, beyond the sidewalks where promoters and bouncers work, to the pavement where drivers transport passersby from one place to another. In the Eclipse there are a number of workers who pull customers around in small carts powered by pedaling a bicycle. The drivers of these “peddy cabs” charge customers a flat rate, but also accept tips. They blast popular, catchy tunes from their speakers and sometimes decorate their carts with bright, colorful LED lights. Business typically starts slow earlier in the evening and picks up as the night goes on and more people have been drinking. The following example demonstrates how I networked with a pedal cab driver. Our friendship eventually introduced me to new people in the Eclipse and provided me with additional support and respect.

On a busy night at my usual corner, a pedal cab driver in his early forties with thick, clear frame glasses and unruly hair pulls over along the side of the curb next to my sidewalk space. As I perform my hoop routine in front of a few onlookers, he claps his hands and hollers a couple times with a huge grin plastered across his face. “Are you that girl who was out here the other night hula hooping?” he shouts over the traffic. “Unless someone else hoops out here then yeah, that was probably me,” I managed to say partially out of breath while still spinning a hoop around my waste. We proceeded to have a slightly awkward conversation for a few minutes. I would turn to speak to him now and then while still trying to please the onlookers from other angles and pose for photos mid-conversation.

“What you need is some music!” he said. “I actually have this one here. The power is low right now so you can’t hear anything very well,” I replied, pointing to the grey, rectangular speaker near my tip jar. He squints his eyes and nods understandingly.

“Hey look, I’ll tell you what,” he starts to say. He leans over and starts fumbling through a sack in the back of his cart. He pulls out a small portable speaker. His expression shifts to a serious one. Widening his eyes he says, “This is my extra one. You can use this for now, but just for tonight. Just bring it back cause my buddies and I will know where to find you.” The stern look on his face abruptly breaks with a burst of laughter. Suddenly his expression changes once again to a casual one and he smiles and winks. “I gottcha’ covered Hillary! My buddies and I circle around here a lot so if there is trouble just tell em’ you know Dave and we will set em’ straight,” he laughs. He hands me his business card in case I need to call him.

Over the next few weeks I’d occasionally see Dave. Usually he was busy with customers so I would give a wave or he would stop to briefly say hello and proceed to go on with his business. I also noticed that the other pedal cab drivers who knew Dave began to stop and talk to me, helping me expand my network. Just a few weeks later I felt as though I could talk to anyone who worked in the Eclipse and find someone who I knew. The area felt like a small, exclusive world in a big city. The friendship between Dave and I continued with gifting one night as we were talking about safety and money.

“I have something for you,” he says. Reaching toward the back of his cart, he pulls out a rusty, large energy drink can with an “I love SD” sticker on the side. He unscrews the top and shows me the hollow inside. “You see that?” he whispers loudly. A couple of coins rattled around in the bottom. “This is what you need to keep your money safe! Especially when you get full like that! That right there is unacceptable doll,” he says shaking his head as he stares at my small, clear Tupperware tip jar. He reaches over and places the disguised tip jar in my hands. “I told ya I had your back,” he said smiling.

I thought Dave was about to get back to work. Instead he hesitated for a moment in thought, then turned towards me again. “Hey by the way, could I get you to model a shirt for me?” he asks. “I also work for some other clubs in San Diego and I try to get some pics repping.” As I agree he pulls out a hot pink T-shirt with tiny crystal rhinestones making out the words of a popular establishment. I pull the shirt over what I was wearing. He instructs me to pose in the back of the cart. He snaps a photo of me and my LED hoop. “I will wear it the rest of the night to represent!” I said.

This example further highlights how networks between buskers and Eclipse workers are formed between parties in part to minimize risk, but also as part of the moral economy. Thompson’s(1964) work on moral economy describes how there are set of norms and moral attitudes of what is believed to be reasonable by a group. In the context of buskers, this is the understanding of how buskers expect passersby to act or how buskers expect passerby to act morally in different situations.

Without these relationships, a busker’s chance of success in the district is very slim. This is also the key reason why many buskers avoided performing in the Eclipse altogether, but the same reason why those who regularly did had success. Although these relationships are initially formed primarily for business purposes, they evolve into genuine, sometimes lasting relationships between persons.

By examining the correlation between forming networks, alliances and success, one can grasp a better concept of the limits of street performing in a gentrified district like the Eclipse. Philippe Bourgois’(1995) *In Search of Respect* examines how crack dealers sometimes engage in work within the white collar world but then eventually drop out. They see it as disrespectful and maintain their freedom by working in the informal

economy of selling drugs in the streets. The Eclipse's buskers also risk working in the informal economy because of the ability to perform what they want, in the way they want, and when they want. Similar to the findings of Bourgois' research, my research revealed that working in the informal economy did not provide as much freedom or liberation as one would expect (Bourgois 1995:143-173). The freedom of being a successful busker in the Eclipse is contingent upon forming networks and playing by an unspoken set of rules.

The liberation that being a busker suggests is somewhat double-edged. On one hand, buskers have more control and do not have to deal with issues such as having to work under a manager or have to worry about moving up ranks on the corporate ladder. On the other hand, they are still entwined in a system of class and hierarchy by relying somewhat upon trusting others that work in the formal economy for business. Therefore they are not entirely independent. In this way the Eclipse functions as a micro space of both oppression and liberation. Buskers are independent yet succeed heavily based on respect and trust generated through the alliances they form. We turn, in the next chapter, from examining relations between buskers and corporate promoters to examining relationships between buskers and passersby.

CHAPTER IV

TO TIP OR NOT TO TIP: RECIPROCITY AND POWER HIERARCHIES

“If you can grab their attention, you have a better shot at pulling them in” (Eric, busker).

One of the most difficult aspects of street performing to analyze is tipping, particularly because of the complex social layers that interact with the performer. Bourdieu describes these fields as social arenas of maneuver and struggle between the busker and passerby to produce desired results. These desired results vary greatly between parties. For the busker, the desired result is to receive tips. Whether or not the passerby tips depends upon a multitude of both social and personal factors that make up the individual's habitus. This consists of various forms of social, economic, and cultural capital that help guide an individual's course of action (Bourdieu 1977:170-174). The busker is therefore faced with an ever-changing audience of passersby, each with their own forms of symbolic capital that influence how they respond to buskers.

The social layers in the Eclipse are somewhat more predictable than in other areas of San Diego. Here the general crowds can be characterized by middle to upper class men and women in their mid-twenties and thirties. Although individual goals may vary, most are there to wine and dine and enjoy an evening out. The Eclipse also functions primarily as an entertainment district. The relatively predictable passersby that make up the Eclipse's crowd allow buskers to strategically target their audience for the best desired results, in this case tips.

Beyond the more obvious factors that make up the social layers in the Eclipse, more subtle factors were revealed to me that influence how much a passerby tips.

Through participant observation as a busker and the observation of other buskers, I became aware of these less obvious factors. These factors include the passerby's degree of eye contact, degree of movement, and time spent watching the busker.

Whether or not the passerby paints the busker as a panhandler or performer, will also factor into the busker's chances of receiving a tip. Bourdieu looks at how distinctions, in this case the distinction between busker and passerby, help unconsciously reinforce a class hierarchy in society. When this kind of distinction is made it affects how the passerby views and treats the busker. The passerby refers to the *doxa*, or rules of how they should treat the busker as opposed to others in their own class or a higher class (Bourdieu 1984:56-60).

At first glance the tipping exchange between busker and passerby in the Eclipse could be viewed as what Sahlins would describe as a form of balanced reciprocity (Sahlins 1972:94-196). The passerby, depending upon their investment in the show, may feel socially obligated to give something in return to the busker for their entertainment. In most instances, this is a monetary tip. In this form of exchange, both parties receive something of value: A tip in return for entertainment. However this clear-cut example of exchange does not account for the wide array of tipping scenarios. For example, at times the passerby feels that by tipping, the busker is now indebted to them. In this scenario, tipping creates a stronger sense of social obligation. At times this obligation was expressed through an expression of entitlement or power over myself or another busker. Most often these ideas and emotions are expressed verbally.

Special requests in exchange for tips are often made in the presence of a group for social amusement or as a way to display control over the busker. Some of my informants

were promised a tip if they were willing to perform a special trick or special request. At times the requests were degrading or ridiculous. Other times the passerby will require the busker to justify their talent or credibility in order to receive a tip. On a few occasions I had heard passersby tell my informants “Show me what you’re all about” or “I want to see if you are good enough for a tip.” One night I experienced this power struggle in the Eclipse in a way that took me by surprise.

An African American man in a motorized chair with a small American flag waving in the back approaches me. As he gets closer I can see from his baseball cap that he is Vietnam veteran. I see a small smile start to curl and he shakes his head laughing. “I see a lot of people doing their thing out here, but I’ve never seen anything like this! You know I remember when the hula hoop first came out!” He proceeds to ask me a few more questions about where I learned and where I am from.

Nestled in his lap is a small, clear jar with a worn cardboard sign attached to the front that reads “Homeless disabled vet, anything helps.” At that moment I couldn’t help but notice the stark contrast between the few bills at the bottom of his jar and the pile in my jar. I felt an immediate sense of guilt for making more money than this man who clearly needed it more than I. Reaching into my tip jar, I pulled out two dollars from the top and gave them to the vet. The donation was rather discreet but there were a few onlookers that had been watching me dance for a while before this man and I started our conversation.

As the veteran leaves, in the distance I suddenly hear the voice of another man say “Hey bro she just gave that homeless guy the money you gave her.” I looked over to the side and saw two males in their twenties which I immediately recognized. One of them

had just tipped me. “Are you going to let her do that?” he asks his friend. His friend just shrugged, shook his head in disappointment and said “That was for you, not for him. It’s disrespectful!” Both of them walked off. I was a little surprised by their reaction but slightly on guard in case things got confrontational. I thought for a moment one of them was going to reach into my tip jar and try to take two dollars back after he said “Are you going to let her do that?”

As this example demonstrates, the exchange of tips for performances on the street is much more personal than in other formal settings. The man who tipped me and his friend felt a sense of entitlement over how I spent my money. In a restaurant the tip is usually left on the table and not given directly to the server. This creates a slightly less awkward social scenario for both parties. However the face-to-face action of tipping a busker can fuel the pressures of obligation. This demonstrates how an individual may be more or less inclined to tip a busker depending upon how intimate or personal the connection between them is.

I discovered that the first way a personal connection can be established with a busker is through eye contact. Goffman describes how individuals strive to avoid social situations that could potentially cause embarrassment (Goffman 1956a:104). Similar to this idea, certain passersby tend to do their best to avoid running into a busker or being put on the spot. In this case, passersby who do not wish to be part of the busker’s spectacle try to evade the encounter in the first place by avoiding eye contact. Once eyes have met, the tactful busker will likely call on the subject to bring them into their show. After being publicly called out, the passerby still has the option to deny the busker’s invitation. However ignoring them will be slightly more difficult since the ever-so-slight

personal connection is starting to form. Once eye contact is made it becomes harder to separate busker from individual person or performer. Additionally, there may be others observing at this point, making the passerby feel more obligated to respond.

The second way a personal connection can be formed with a busker is when the passerby decelerates their walking, and slows or stops to observe the performance.

Although this detail may seem trivial, its significance in establishing a connection cannot be overstated. When the passerby continues to move past the busker or keeps distance, their odds of being stopped or absorbed into the performance lessen. As soon as the passerby stops moving and stands to watch, they make the transition from passerby to audience member. In turn, this grants the busker greater opportunities to develop a connection with the passerby and incorporate the new audience member into their act. They must now keep the spectator entertained in order to prevent them from walking away. I observed how the longer the spectator lingers, the more likely they will feel obliged to tip.

One of my key informants, whom I watched on several occasions in the Eclipse, demonstrates a clear example of how buskers use eye contact to slow passersby down and bind them to their act. Eric, a young man in his late twenties, performs a variety show act that he has been striving to perfect for five years. Flaming torches, a unicycle, balance boards and magic tricks are just a few components of his show. He is careful to always incorporate the use of eye-catching props in hopes to snag the attention of passersby or what he refers to as potential audience members. Eric goes the extra mile to not only make eye contact with the performer, but to use props in his act that make it difficult to look away. I found that his flashy costume allowed him to stand out in the crowd, even

from far distances. I picked up on this trick when I performed as a busker in the Eclipse. I realized that sequin costumes were likely to help capture attention as opposed to mundane clothing.

Eric also used what he referred to as his secret weapon in his act. Once he caught the attention of the passerby, made eye contact, and got him to come to a halt, he used a portable microphone attached to his shirt to verbally single him out. “Sir over there with the yellow shirt and baseball cap,” he shouted to a middle-aged man. The passerby suddenly found himself at a crossroad of decision-making. He had to either keep moving and risk feeling rude, or take a moment to hesitate and linger.

Eric, without warning attached the man to his performance. He whipped out a prop saying, “I need you to hold this for me and don’t let go,” placing it directly into the man’s hands before he had a chance to respond. At this point the passerby is now in a situation where it becomes increasingly difficult to walk away. He has been given precise instructions not to move or let go. As a small, curious crowd gradually circles around the spectacle, the man is now stuck or he will risk ruining the show for the rest of them. If he were to leave now he risks social embarrassment. It is clear by his facial expressions that the man has been put on the spot. His gaze is slightly downcast and he tries to force a smile to appear confident amongst onlookers. Goffman theorizes that in embarrassing encounters one will use these types of gestures to help conceal embarrassment (Goffman 1956a:102).

With each additional step of the magic trick, anticipation among the crowd builds and more curious onlookers are drawn in to see what the commotion is about. At this point enough onlookers are personally invested in the show so that walking away

becomes increasingly difficult. Eric also wisely continues to refer to the man by his first name, making sarcastic jokes about their relationship in order to strategically emphasize the personal connection between them. Each of these techniques has made the involuntary volunteer feel obliged to tip. Although they just met, the constant use of the first name makes the association seem more intimate.

Passersby who are especially suspicious of street performers are likely to have reservations about tipping that are strong enough to prevent them from being drawn in by a busker like Eric. Those with attitudes that do not support buskers generally have a negative characterization of those who perform on the street. I learned of these attitudes through casually talking to passersby who did not seem impressed with the show. Other times I overheard the opinions of passersby who were talking to one another.

Tipping and characterization of buskers goes hand-in-hand. Talent can be blinded by social perceptions and stigmas about performing in the street. All of my key informants had been told to get a real job at least twice. Others had been mistaken for being a panhandler, being desperate for money, or under the influence of drugs. When strong reservations or beliefs about buskers prevail, fancy costumes and flashy props are not enough to hold one's interest or influence them to tip.

There is a strong categorization based on appearance in the Eclipse between those who fit in and those who do not. It appears that the recognition of differences seems to help personally validate the passerby's normality. One could do their best to judge by dress standards alone what is out of place. However in many instances, I witnessed this expressed verbally by someone else. The Eclipse is an environment where being noticed is generally favored. If an individual tries to get attention in a way that does not sync with

popular culture, they tend to fall under suspicion or become a noticeable outcast.

Questions frequently arise such as “Why are you here?” or “What are you doing this for?” Buskers have the potential to fit into this atmosphere while still standing out as a street performer and not a passerby. Informants of mine who seemed aware of this also received better tips.

To develop a clearer understanding of what these popular standards are in the Eclipse, it is best to examine the unofficial dress code of nightclubs and even certain restaurants. I had lengthy discussions with a couple of the Eclipse’s nightclub promoters who enlightened me on appearance rules for getting past security into establishments. First, those wearing tennis shoes or flip-flop sandals are denied entry. Second, door bouncers also subjectively scrutinize the style of the overall outfit and whether or not it appears to be cheap or costly. Third, bouncers can deny entry based on weight, poor grooming, or any reason they subjectively judge to be in non-compliance. Although these rules are not necessarily as strict for every establishment, they are commonplace and set the stage for what can be expected.

If an individual with a negative attitude towards buskers is in a group, they may hold enough influence over otherwise interested members of the group to stop them from watching or tipping the busker. On one occasion I had been performing and a member of a large passing group of women wanted to watch. However two others encouraged her to move forward. “Come on you’re not really getting sucked into this are you?” The girl continued walking with the group but kept looking back in curiosity.

Besides negative characterization, another reason a passerby may not tip is simply because they do not have any cash with them. During observation, a common phrase was,

“I would tip but I don’t have any cash.” Other times the passerby does have cash, but only in the form of larger bills. I also heard a lot of passersby say, “I don’t have any smaller bills.” This phrase and ones similar to it further reinforce the idea that the dollar bill is the acceptable tipping norm for a street performer.

There are two key reasons why passersby would tell a busker they do not have any cash. First, they can use this as an excuse or escape route to avoid tipping. This also prevents them from appearing stingy in public. Even if the passerby does have cash, they may say this simply to save their money. Other times the passerby is being truthful and letting the busker know that they are worthy of being tipped but that current circumstances prevent them from doing so. In this way, telling the busker they do not have any cash is a way of expressing appreciation when tipping is not an option.

At times passersby will tip larger bills to make a bold statement. This is used to demonstrate that they really admire the busker’s talent, or as a way to flaunt their wealth. In the Eclipse, men in the presence of other women most often gave larger tips, regardless if the busker was male or female. Typically when a passerby gave a larger tip, they would make it a point to slowly draw out their wallet and make sure that the busker was watching before they placed the bill into the tip jar. This intentional gesture demonstrates how they are making a point to connect with the busker either to personally form rapport with them or as a means of flaunting their wealth and power in the presence of others.

There are several other ways the passerby can use tipping to establish a more personal connection with the busker. For this to happen, the passerby must cross the invisible barrier into the performer’s personal space. This is done usually during a break

and sometimes involves directly handing the busker a tip. This becomes an even more powerful gesture when the amount of the tip is higher than one dollar. Typically some sort of verbal compliment or conversation accompanies these interactions. Whether or not this interaction is a way for the passerby to express approval or a way to flaunt power depends upon how discreet the act is. If the former, the money is usually passed off, rolled up. The transaction is quick and discreet. If the latter, the money is handed to the busker openly and purposefully in the presence of onlookers.

I experienced a clear example of discrete tipping one evening in the Eclipse when a young man approached my subject Brad during his water break. He waited until the Brad was done chatting with a couple of other admirers around him and hesitantly approached, smiled and said “ Wow that was incredible man, I freakin’ love what you do. Here,” he says, consciously lowering his voice. He hastily glances down at his hand and passes off a rolled up bill to the Brad. Brad thanks him and immediately slides the twenty-dollar bill into his pocket.

In contrast to Brad’s example, deliberately not handing a busker a tip or placing it in their jar can be used as a way to flaunt power or even insult the busker. I first notice this in the Eclipse when I watched a pair of young male musicians jamming out. One was on acoustic guitar, the other on bongo drums.

The loud chatters and shrieks of laughter of club goers overwhelmingly drown the musician’s instruments out. At some points during observation, I realize the two are nearly invisible to passersby. Their inability to draw a crowd makes it difficult for them to transform their street corner into a stage. Drunken passersby scurry past them, nearly

stepping on the men and continuously knocking over their tip jar, sending change and bills flying into the streets and sidewalks.

Once in a while a few heads turn to take a second glance at the duo. Still, they seem to be out of place in this environment. Their easy going folk music appears to be no competition for the loud sax blaring from the jazz bar or the rattling bass pounding from the nightclub walls. The buskers are dressed very casually in loose fitting flannel shirts and worn jeans. The few individuals who pause for a minute are quickly distracted by the next louder, flashier spectacle nearby. Just a few dollars are settled at bottom of the duo's tip jar. Suddenly, a few men walk by and without a word or eye contact they carelessly throw a couple dollars at the buskers, not even attempting to aim for their tip jar. The money falls out of reach. One bill lands slightly outside the performance space and instantly gets stepped on by a woman in heels. She pauses only for a moment, looks down with an expression of disgust and confusion, and continues walking. Both buskers scramble to gather the cash. They shake their heads in disappointment in a way that reveals that this experience is all too familiar.

The tips the duo received were given in a disrespectful way that demonstrated the passersby believed they were superior. The tip was clearly not given out of appreciation, but out of pity and mockery. Throwing the money carelessly rather than placing it into the tip jar or handing it to the busker communicates that the busker is not worth the time or effort. Also observing this incident were two women in short dresses and heels. "That's so rude," one of them comments. The woman beside her, while texting on her phone replies in an annoyed tone "Well why the fuck would they play here?" Her comment only further highlights the stark contrast between these buskers and their

surrounding environment. Unfortunately for the musician duo, they were negatively characterized by most and did not stand out enough to make decent tips that night.

Scott discusses how power relations are staged and expressed through the use of hidden and public transcripts (Scott 1992:36-40). I found that the Eclipse's buskers recite a public transcript with passersby whom they interact with during their break or during their performance. A public transcript is essential to receiving good tips between buskers and passerby by humbling the position of the busker and concealing any negative emotions.

I discussed with most of my informants the difficulties of maintaining this public transcript when dealing with disrespectful and obnoxious passersby. These include those that block the tip jar by standing in front of it, those who enter a busker's performance space, or those who take too much of the busker's time by continuously having long conversations with them when they could be performing. Although there are other negative encounters with passersby, these are the primary three that affect the busker's performance and ability to receive tips. In the busy streets of the Eclipse district where passersby are often intoxicated or under the influence, these incidents occur twice fold.

It is necessary to effectively deal with disrespectful passersby in a polite manner in which they are unaware of the busker's dissatisfaction with their actions. If the busker cannot maintain the public transcript, their chance of being tipped decreases. As a result, most of my key informants had strategies to avoid expressing how they really felt in a frustrated moment. One of my informants used humor, while others utilized passersby in their act. Internally the busker may be angry or frustrated, but to the spectators the busker appears cheerful with a smile on his or her face.

Many of my informants told me that they find it difficult to not express how they really feel to disrespectful passersby. In order to not take some of the harsh or rude comments personally, they must develop a thick skin for the streets. If the busker manages to handle a difficult passerby, they may receive a tip from them after all. “You just can’t let it get to you,” my informant Brad told me. “Just move forward with the show. If you break, you’re letting them get the best of you.” Therefore, maintaining the public transcript between both parties helps the show run smoothly.

A busker’s true feelings are expressed after their performance in private amongst friends, family, and other buskers. In this setting the busker takes their mask off and the hidden transcript emerges. I listened to these conversations after a long night of observing my informants performing. The same busker that I observed smiling and politely dealing with a rude passerby earlier, was now angrily venting his true feelings of the incident. Expressing their emotions amongst others provides them with a second chance to act out the scene as they would have liked to. One night during participant observation, a passerby acted out in response to another for not tipping. During this incident I tried to smile and hold my composure while the passerby angrily expressed his emotions.

A shiny red convertible mustang pulls forward alongside the curb behind where I am performing. A slick looking man in his mid thirties wearing a suit and shades sits behind the wheel. Next to him in the passenger's seat is a blond woman in her late twenties. Both silently stare appearing somewhat amused by my performance. Roughly fifteen minutes goes by. Crowds come and go but the mustang is stagnant, the couple still peering out from within.

From my peripheral vision I can sense there is a man approaching me from behind. I am surprised when I turn around to see my tip jar cradled in his arms. He gestures at me to wait a second, as he can tell I am a little surprised and confused. He confidently approaches the couple in the mustang. "Hey there, I noticed you've been here watching her while. It's pretty amazing right?" Slightly taken aback, the man in driver's seat remains silent. "So how about giving her a tip?" He extends the tip jar towards them. The woman nervously turns wide-eyed at the driver, not sure of how to respond. After an awkward moment of hesitation the man says somewhat sarcastically "Alright." He scrapes up some change from the car's ottoman and drops the few coins into the tip bucket.

I understood the man with my tip jar was trying to do me a favor but I could tell this situation was not going to end too well. "Okay," says the passerby, staring at the coins in the bucket and giving an unsatisfied nod. "You know, I was thinking she is really good and you've been watching her a long time. How about another penny?" The driver looks back at him, this time directly in the eye. Without breaking eye contact he says "okay," with a smug smile. Again he reaches into the ottoman and picks up another penny, then drops it in the bucket.

I completely stopped performing at this point, too amused by what is happening. Many of the spectators also move their attention towards the scene. Fuming, the man turns back towards the audience. At the top of his lungs he yells "How about that everyone! This man just tipped her twenty-six cents!" He starts clapping loudly and making a scene, encouraging others to get involved. "That's right! This badass right here just tipped her twenty-six fucking cents! Hey everybody let's give him a round of

applause!” A few audience members start clapping and cheering. The mustang revs the car engine as loudly as possible. The driver shouts “asshole!” He speeds off down the road. I am left somewhat dumbfounded by the spectacle.

What is especially interesting about this situation is that the passerby who acted out received support from the other spectators. If I would have expressed myself in the same way, the effect would have been very different. I would be seen as lacking composure and it would have discredited my performance. However since the passerby acted out on my behalf, it was received well by passersby. This is the perfect example of the moral economy of the audience.

In the Eclipse district, those who flaunt wealth hold the highest status and therefore the most power. This affects buskers because of the way they are characterized and often the way they are tipped and how. Those who are used to spending big to receive the services they want may find it frustrating or humiliating when a busker is not willing to do exactly what they want for large tips. From the busker’s perspective, because they are not working directly for any of the businesses in the Eclipse, they have much more freedom. They do not have to abide by the strict rules and regulations that come along with entertaining for an establishment.

Buskers are generally attracted to the Eclipse because of the prospect of large tips. The Eclipse’s buskers are feeding off the primarily corporate structure of the district in order to produce the results they desire. Buskers must use the public transcript and fit the role of entertainer in the Eclipse by how they dress and act in order to receive promising tips. Buskers rely on passersby to be spending large amounts of money at the Eclipse’s establishments. The more money the passerby spends in the Eclipse, the better the chance

the busker will receive good tips. Due to this fact, most buskers are indirectly supporting the gentrified structure of the district. Even the large crowds buskers rely on are formed to consume and further support the Eclipse's establishments.

The differences in tipping and power structure create a distinction between street performing in a gentrified district like the Eclipse as opposed to street performing in other areas. Other areas in San Diego provide more economic and ethnic diversity. Dress standards are not as strict or harshly judged. This makes performing in the Eclipse either an advantage and disadvantage depending upon how a busker chooses to present themselves and the appeal of their overall act. If the busker's act does not fit in, they will likely receive less support than they would performing in other areas of San Diego. There are other factors that greatly affect tipping and outside support for a busker's act. The following chapter examines how passersby are influenced by gender and racial stereotypes that are institutionally reinforced through the Eclipse's establishments. Buskers are also classified and stereotyped under these standards, which affects how they are perceived and responded to.

CHAPTER V
INDUSTRY BAIT: RACE, GENDER AND THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF STREET
PERFORMANCE

Out of everyone I interviewed in the Eclipse district, I learned the most about the representation of women through the promoters of establishments. Promoters have a lot of key insight on the structure and workings of businesses because they are required to maintain a specific image for the district's establishments. They are also the most familiar with the advertising methods that are used which display these images so clearly. These popular representations of males and females trickle down from establishments to passersby, and then to the buskers. As a result, there are a number of perceptions and expectations created for both sexes. Passersby who support these businesses and play into these roles help reinforce these standards.

Promoters are responsible for the spread of media that represents males and females in a particular light. This media includes photographs, advertisements, and videos. Advertising is strategic and serves to entice a particular audience to come to various venues in the Eclipse. Ultimately the goal of each establishment is to make profits off of customers. Businesses use social media such as Facebook and Instagram, to target a select audience and build a following of supporters. Images are by far the most effective way a venue can capture attention of potential consumers. Each venue posts images on their social media outlets, which are then shared by the promoters. Supportive customers help advertise the venue for free by sharing these photos.

Each promoter, whether male or female, is required to fit a certain online persona and maintain a large number of online followers on their social media accounts. Both sexes are instructed to target attractive females. The idea behind this strategy is to use the females as bait to draw in wealthy males who will then spend money at the establishment. Anthony, a promoter in his early thirties for a popular club as well as a restaurant summed this up for me. “When hot women are there everything falls into place and we make money. They just make everything work and fall into place” (Anthony, Club Promoter).

Promotional posters use the female image to draw in men by creating a fantasy for the male gaze. Females are seductively portrayed as lustful objects of desire. It was not difficult for me to find these images plastered throughout social media sites and on official venue websites. I was able to see how easily these images spread by tracking a promotional ad online. The original poster had shared the image from a friend, which was shared by a promoter, which they had shared from the establishment’s main social media page. By portraying women in this way, these images strive to tempt men into attending these events and going to these venues. If the ad is affective, consumers will believe that these types of women will be present.

To examine the representation of women in the Eclipse in more detail, I began to search for as many of these images as I could find from a wide variety of popular restaurants, bars, and nightclubs in the district. I collected any promotional materials I came across and sorted them into three categories. The first category contained images that only displayed women. The second category contained images that only displayed men. The third category contained images that displayed both men and women.

After organizing my data I was able to pinpoint some clear patterns in the images. First, I discovered that females were not represented nearly as often as males in imagery. Second, I found that female images are usually used to promote events where a male is the star entertainer of the evening. Lastly, in nearly all the images of females, they were represented in a highly sexualized way, wearing very little clothing. I strived to find an image that did not fall under one of these categories. I began to doubt that one even existed. I was not able to find one after all.

In contrast to images of females, images of males are used very frequently in promotional advertisements. Not surprisingly, there are some distinct differences between the ways males and females are portrayed. Males were never presented in a seductive, erotic way. They were always fully clothed and their full body was rarely shown. More often than not a standard profile picture of the male from the waist up was placed in the center of the ad. In stark contrast to ads containing a female image, when a male was depicted on an ad he was also the guest entertainer for the evening.

I also observed how this particular female image is reinforced throughout the different establishments. Women hired as bartenders, waitresses, cocktail servers, and go-go dancers are required to wear outfits that fit this image. From interviewing a go-go dancer, bartender, and cocktail server, I learned that women are encouraged by their supervisors to act flirtatious with male customers. Dress codes and standards for hair and makeup had to fit this image. “We are encouraged to wear push-up bras” (Elena, bartender). “At first I felt self-conscious wearing lingerie on the job, but after a while you get used to men always staring at you and expecting you to enjoy it. If you complain, someone else will take your job. It’s that simple. Most girls know this is expected of them

or they wouldn't apply to work in the Eclipse" (Sarah, cocktail server). Not surprisingly, there are clear double standards for uniform requirements and ways of acting around others. Men are typically required to dress in semi-formal attire, in a dress shirt and sport coat or a suit with nice shoes.

Inside the venues female entertainers outnumber males unless the entertainer is a DJ or musician. In fact, male entertainers in other forms are nearly non-existent. I asked various workers and promoters why there were no male dancers. The first time I asked I was given a carefully constructed response. "We let anyone apply. We judge each person on their personality and ability to dance well to the music" (Paul, nightclub promoter). After a few weeks of talking with Paul, I asked the same question again. He was much more comfortable and his response was very different this time. "Okay, let's be honest, no guy is going to want to watch a bunch of dudes dancing in skimpy outfits. Everyone would think the club is gay." I was surprised by his shallow response. However, I realized that his answer revealed something more important. These establishments are hyper-heterosexual spaces that cater to the desires of hetero males much more than females.

I found that representations of males and females in the Eclipse are more strategically planned out than I had previously thought. I interviewed a photographer who was hired by multiple establishments to take photos of guests and later put them up online. I wanted to see if his viewpoints on the representation of men and women were any different than what I had already experienced. He told me that he was not able to take photos of anything he wanted. He was instructed by management to focus on taking photos of good-looking women who are defined as thin, white, and well dressed. He was

only able to take photos of men if there were at least two women around them. This demonstrates how potential male customers need to be able to interpolate themselves into a scenario legitimated by women.

A pattern was beginning to emerge. When an idea is spread, shared, and reinforced by enough people, it appears to be a reality. Many women in the district internalized these ideas. These ideas influence women by showing them how they should act. They also affect how males treat women and what they expect from them. All of my findings could be summarized by what Anthony had told me earlier: Females were used as bait to draw in men with money. Women are not socially expected to pay for drinks and so the venues would lose money by trying to bait men to females.

Women in the Eclipse are represented through a primarily hetero male perspective overlapping with Mulvey's idea of the male gaze. In the Eclipse, the male gaze extends beyond media and into the establishments themselves. Women are told and encouraged to represent themselves in a way that appeals to hetero males (Mulvey 1975:6-18). As a result, the representation and image portrayal of men and women in the district affect how male and female buskers are perceived and treated by other establishments and passersby.

Young and physically attractive female buskers have a strong advantage over male buskers in the Eclipse. They are able to get more attention based on their appearance. Similar to the way females are sexualized in ads and in the workplace, female buskers are able to play up their sexuality to get more attention and ultimately better tips. Some men will tip female buskers simply based on the fact that they find them

attractive. Female buskers also tend to generate more attention because they are much less common.

Each of my male informants received approximately half of the tips their female counterparts did. It is important to note that other factors must be taken into consideration such as age, costume choice, and how well the act is constructed and executed. Although these factors play an important role, it is obvious from my observation of reactions from passersby, that females have the upper hand at street performing in the Eclipse. This was not only the case with male passersby, but with female passersby as well. Females complimented, took the time to watch, or tip female buskers more than they did for male buskers. Females tended to perform acts similar to those of male buskers in the district such as singing or playing music.

The advantages of being a female busker do not come without a special set of challenges. Women may be expected to play the role of the stereotypical woman as represented throughout media and in establishments. As mentioned before, this role is a woman represented as an object of desire. If women do not meet these criteria they may be hassled or ignored. I observed this more than once while watching my informant Angelina, a young college student, play the cello. Men became frustrated with her when she did not respond how they expected.

It is a fairly busy night in the Eclipse. Angelina sits in a folding chair on the street corner, passionately playing the cello as passersby come and go. She is dressed to impress in a slinky, gold sequin dress and heels. Many compliment her playing or good looks as they walk past. Others hesitate and take a brief moment to appreciate the rich sound being produced from her classical cello playing. I watch a small group lean

against the railing of a closed shop to listen longer. Her case full of tips indicates that passersby have picked up on her extraordinary talent.

After one hour of observance, three different men approached Angelina. The first offers her two hundred dollars if she will agree to spend the evening going to bars with him and his friends. "I'm here to play my music," Angelina says with a sweet smile. "I know but my buddies and I have a table at Pulse (a popular night club) and I know you're working for tips," the man replies. She politely declines his offer. It suddenly becomes apparent that this man is used to enticing women he desires with money. He is clearly offended by her refusal and as he walks away I hear him say "You're a stupid bitch," under his breath.

Twenty minutes later a new man approaches. Without hesitation he proceeds to stuff a twenty-dollar bill down her shirt into her bra mid performance. As he does this I hear him say laughingly "I have to do it because that's how I roll." Disgusted Angelina pushes him away, pulls the money out of her bra and shakes her head. For a moment I thought she would lash out but she maintains her composure and continues playing. I could not help but realize that if the busker were male, the passerby would not have been so invasive. If he had, there would have likely been a fight. The man points his finger at Angelina. "I just gave you twenty dollars. Are you serious right now? Don't disrespect me like that!" He storms off.

Only ten minutes later another man approaches. He keeps a comfortable distance as he approached Angelina. The conversation starts off fairly normal. "How long have you been playing?" he asks. "You're really good." She is in between songs so she responds. Suddenly he changes the topic. "Where is your man tonight? You are way too

pretty to be out here alone. Let me buy you a drink.” “Actually I don’t have a man but I’m not really interested in drinking tonight,” she replies. “Well you really shouldn’t be out here this late. It’s not safe. Besides I know you want to come have a drink with me instead of being out here.” She laughs nervously and just shakes her head. Realizing that this man is relentless, she starts to get ready to play another song. She ignores him but he continues to talk, raising his voice. “I would not let my woman do this. You should be working inside!” Angelina starts playing again. He turns to a group passing by. “Hey guys, do you think she should be doing this out here?” The passersby look at each other and give an awkward smile, but just continue to walk by. He appears frustrated and walks off.

I decided to conduct my own participant observation experiment. Most nights I chose to wear a complete, flashy costume, including fixed hair and stage makeup. I felt that this was necessary in order for me to stand out but also that it was somewhat expected. I was also aware that I would be silently competing with the entertainment acts inside. I wanted to appear equally as professional as the female entertainers inside the club so that those who frequently go to these establishments would give me a second glance. I realized by doing this that I was subjecting myself to their standards and not my own.

Since my flashy attire was the norm on most nights, I experimented one night by purposefully presenting myself in the opposite way. I wore a plain hooded jacket and black workout pants. Despite the drastic change in appearance, everything else about my act stayed the same. I performed in my usual spaces, my act included the same content, and I performed to the best of my ability.

The results of my experiment were what I had expected, but I still found myself disappointed. I performed for an hour and received only six, one-dollar bills. Although the number of passersby who tipped me had dramatically decreased, I found myself receiving more comments. These comments consisted of a mix of concern and judgment.

It is Friday night at 11pm. I am on the same corner as I was last week but this time I present myself in an entirely new light. I already know that the results of tonight's performance are going to dramatically differ from the weeks before, but I still hold onto a small amount of hope that some might enjoy it. My drastic change in appearance has already lowered my confidence. I try not to let my own insecurities distract me from putting on a good show.

As I am performing, few stop to pay attention. One girl in a group yells "Get a job!" She laughs as she continues walking past me with her group. I hear her say to her friends "She must have AIDS!" Unbothered, I continue to perform to the best of my ability when a young man approaches me. "Hey there you're working hard out here. I am sorry you have to do this. Here's a dollar. I love to help out when I see someone busting their ass for money." Most passersby take a quick look at what I am doing but continue to walk by as if I am invisible. They scan, analyze, and choose to ignore. Then there are the few that look interested but seem hesitant to stop. I am lucky to get a slight, hopeful smile.

When I perform in full costume and makeup, passerby reactions are dramatically different. Many men and women take the time to stop, watch, and appreciate my act. I also notice that those who do not stop and watch typically make some kind of positive

comment or cheer and clap. I cannot help but wonder what type of response I would receive if I were a male of color performing the same act for the same people.

The primary difference between my experience working in full costume and working dressed down was in perception. When I was in full costume, passersby saw my act as a performance. When I was dressed down I was perceived by passersby as struggling to survive. As a female, I was perceived as more vulnerable than a male and was greeted with more sympathy. There were a few passersby that seemed to appreciate the act despite the lack of glitz and glamour, but most seemed to be distracted by other flashier spectacles in the distance.

One night a male promoter approached me. He asked me who I was working for. When I told him “no one,” he offered to let me help him. I saw this as a great window of opportunity to find out more about the role of females in the Eclipse, as well as cross-promotion. We met for coffee and planned out how we would collaborate. I would use my advantage of being a female to draw people in with my performance. Once I drew them in I would hand them a card and instruct them to call the promoter who would proceed to take them to the establishment. In return, he would bring people to watch me as he walked them to the establishment. He told me he had done this with other female buskers before. He wanted to use my sexuality as a way to draw people into his business. “I sometimes give women a percentage to promote for me,” he told me.

Similar to how stereotypes about women affect female buskers, stereotypes about race also affect buskers of color. In turn, this affects a busker’s experience, how well they are tipped, and how well they are responded to. Anthony explained to me how racism is reinforced in the organization and function of the district’s establishments. “One night I

saw a party of four girls. Their features were lighter. Most of them had green or hazel eyes. I knew from the get go they had money and weren't thugs. After we started talking I found out they were from Mexico, here on vacation just to have a good time. See, I knew they spoke Spanish but they also spoke English and they were beautiful, so I thought perfect. They tell us we need to get these hot girls in the club. Guys have the money, but will come if there are girls. Number one thing I have learned and I've worked for four establishments here: Bring good looking females into the establishment and from there on everything works."

"I told them I work for Pulse and could get them in for free. They wouldn't have to wait in line and I could get them a drink. Since they were Mexican they had these types of Mexican IDs and passports but they weren't breaking any laws. Well everything was going fine at first. The bouncer approved until he saw those IDs and found out they were Mexican. I had warned the girls there might be trouble. I am Mexican and so if you're Mexican you already know you have issues. This goes through my history of being Mexican in clubs. We already know it's not going to be easy for us. I have witnessed establishments literally embarrass people and humiliate them. I've seen this time and time again. Look, I already know I'm going to have trouble with these girls, but because they are light and have whiter features, they know they may be able to get in and not have any issues. I told them that I would tell security that one of them was my cousin because I already knew that security was going to give them a hard time."

"So you know what he said next (referring to the bouncer)?" At this point Anthony was shaking his head. I could tell he was getting fired up. He leaned over and pointed his finger at me looking me dead in the eye, his tan cheeks turning red. "If you

have a Mexican ID get the fuck out of line!” He takes a deep breath then looks up at me. “How do you think that makes me feel having to be racist? I can’t say shit cause I’m getting paid and have to pay my bills.”

Anthony comes from a Mexican-Argentinean family. He recognizes that the racism that permeates through the Eclipse’s establishments is rampant but fears to speak up at the risk of losing his position. The idea behind this, Anthony told me is that they are believed by managers to cause more trouble. By racially profiling, the club is extremely selective on who they let in. A few months later I spoke again with Anthony to discover he had lost his job after finally speaking up against racial profiling.

Racial oppression and sexism trickle top-down from the head of the establishment to the workers and passersby. These policies are rarely questioned in fear of retaliation. Employers, providing them with very little protection from retaliation, pay many promoters under-the-table. The consumer reinforces these ideas by continuing to spend money at the establishments. In order to avoid being accused of racial discrimination, the security, usually white males, are trained to use certain excuses to not let people in when put in these situations.

Anthony gave me another good example when he told me the story of how security refused to let a group of African Americans into the establishment. “There were a large group of guys. They were all dressed pretty nice. The only thing I noticed is that a few of them had tennis shoes on. I didn’t think it would be a problem because I had gotten two other groups in earlier that night that also were wearing tennis shoes. I should add, they were nice shoes too.”

“I took the party up to security. He took one look at them and said ‘I’m sorry we can’t let you guys in tonight.’ I was kind of upset but tried not to let it show. ‘We can’t let anyone in who’s wearing tennis shoes tonight, sorry.’ The parties I had brought in earlier were all wearing tennis shoes. The security guy told me ‘I must have not caught it, sorry about that.’ I wanted to call him out but once again but I just laughed and walked off. I learned quickly that if you’re white and you have tennis shoes you can get in, but other races can’t get in with tennis shoes.”

The next day Anthony’s supervisor asked to have a private word with him and said “Hey look, you can’t really be bringing these Mexican or black people in here.” “I just hate how I had to sit there with my tail between my legs,” Anthony told me. “I couldn’t believe what they were telling me. You probably are wondering why they let me work here right? It’s because I look white and I’m decent looking so they don’t care. I really need this job otherwise I wouldn’t be putting up with this. I’ve dealt with it my whole life!”

Anthony’s story highlights the blatant racism that circulates throughout the Eclipse. These ideas and attitudes are important to understand in order to see how it affects the buskers working there. Buskers of color face more scrutiny and discrimination than those who are white, especially if they are male. Some of the buskers I had interviewed that did not work in the Eclipse told me they would not perform there because they had heard they were racist. A couple of them knew a friend who tried and was harassed. I could not help but notice during my observances the large difference in response to how buskers of color were tipped compared to those who were white.

These ideas of race and gender that circulate through the Eclipse affect the busker experience. Of all my informants, female buskers received the highest rate of sexual harassment. Male buskers of color faced the highest rate of scrutiny from law enforcement and security. All of the buskers I interviewed believe that there is already a strong, negative social stigma for buskers. Both racial and gender stereotypes additionally affect how the busker is characterized. It is only by popular demand and familiarity that these buskers are welcomed and accepted in the district.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

On my last night in the field I could not help but notice all of the dramatic changes that had taken place from when I first began my fieldwork.

The once foreign, busy streets now felt like a second home. Instead of curious stares as I walked past each business, I was mostly greeted with waves and smiles. I approached my favorite performance spot and set my things down with confidence, feeling a sense of entitlement to the space. "I was wondering when you were going to get here," I heard a familiar voice say. I looked behind me to see a familiar woman selling roses on the corner. "I guarded your spot!" she says laughing. Across the street I see Shake weight Ricardo and we exchange waves.

I consider myself fortunate enough to have had an overall successful experience as a busker in the Eclipse. I have secured a good spot, formed alliances, received good tips, and was able to stand out, yet still seem to fit into the environment. I understand what it takes to have a successful busking experience in the Eclipse district. I feel confident that tonight no one will hassle me or tell me to leave. However, I still feel the same nervous, excited energy that often comes along with performing on the street corner.

Although I can say that my busker experience in the Eclipse was successful overall, it came at a cost. Ever since the beginning of my journey, I always felt that I was walking on eggshells. In order to receive acceptance I had to carefully wear a variety of social masks to properly stage each interaction. As I observed a few times with my own

informants, one small slip of the tongue or wrong move can have lasting negative consequences. However I started in a position of relative privilege, being a white female from a middleclass background. This allowed me to surpass some of the additional judgments and scrutiny that I would have likely faced if I were not.

I started out as most buskers do with the intention of performing my own act exactly the way I wanted. Slowly but surely I realized that if these ideas did not fit well with the surrounding corporate standards, my experience would not be as pleasant. At first I was clearly aware of the social masks I was wearing. The roles I played often felt artificial, but I knew that is was necessary in order to avoid drama. However, as time went on I understood how easy it was to become so absorbed in playing these roles that they became normalized. The distinction between acting and reality slowly faded. I felt more comfortable in time with blending in and appeasing to different people in ways I would not normally have.

My fieldwork reveals how buskers in gentrified district like the Eclipse face special challenges based on a number of factors. Tying my findings back to Davis and Miller, the Eclipse functions as a theme park-like zone, with its flashy spectacles and enticing venues. These attractions convey an illusion of harmonious pleasure yet in doing so skillfully cover the issues throughout. One such issue is the masking of class divisions (Davis and Miller 2003:161). Through the gentrification process and the rise of living costs that follow, low income workers and the homeless are pushed outside the districts borders. Buskers pose a threat to this order if they appear in a way that characterizes them as lower class. As Bourdieu would explain, when distinguished as a lower class, the mask of class divisions is uncovered (Bourdieu 1984:56-60). This is also why buskers who

blend in or hide this distinction tend to face less scrutiny and are more widely received by passersby and workers alike.

The choices a busker has on whether or not to accept these ideas can be viewed through reception theory of Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding (Hall 1973:92-95). The Eclipse's private businesses and corporations strive to promote hegemonic ideas represented through images and media to consumers and workers of their establishments. The busker is faced with the decision of whether or not to accept these standards and ideas as the norm. I found that only one of the buskers I interviewed decoded these messages and took a dominant position. Rather, it was much more common for the Eclipse's buskers to hold a more negotiated position. I found that in my own experience I also took this stance, not fully agreeing or disagreeing with these representations or standards, but choosing to abide by them for the sake of doing well. Although it is not common, there are those buskers who are well aware of their differences and choose to highlight the contrast between themselves and their environment. The most rebellious buskers will decode these messages with an oppositional position. In doing so they face the most risk, but typically do not care and are more concerned with making a bold statement against the hegemonic position.

No matter how buskers choose to present themselves, whether they look like they could have walked out of one of the nightclubs or they look like they are a vagrant, they are making a strong statement. Corporate power exhibits a limited degree of tolerance for those displaying a sort of cultural capital. Performing in a gentrified district like the Eclipse often comes down to a choice between earning tips or doing things by one's own set of rules.

Buskers of the Eclipse are woven into of the hierarchal system of the formal economy. All buskers, district workers, and passersby can be examined through Bourdieu as agents in the field. Buskers must play by the doxa, or rules of the game in order to obtain desired results (Bourdieu 1977:170-174). By submitting to the rules of the field and displaying deference to others, the Eclipse's buskers are conserving the structure of the field rather than transforming it.

Examining this further through Goffman, buskers also conserve the structure of the field by showing deference to workers of the Eclipse, already reinforcing the idea they are superior and making a promise to treat them by a certain set of rules (Goffman 1956b:60). When buskers attempt to transform the field by challenging these norms, other agents such as bouncers and passerby use their capital to attempt to obstruct them. This was observed many times when security and business mangers used their assumed authority to ask buskers to leave a space.

Through the lens of Bourdieu, the Eclipse is composed of fields of conflict and competition as buskers and workers compete for capital that is most advantageous for them (Bourdieu 1977:170-174). The continued consumer support of the Eclipse's establishments demonstrates the symbolic hierarchy of the district's corporations. In turn, this also formulates the same kinds of distinctions Bourdieu discusses when he explains how individuals make cultural choices or have taste based on a combination of their educational capitol and social origin (Bourdieu 1984:58-60). Distinctions formed in the minds of passerby and workers of the district separate themselves from other social classes. The busker's goal is to not be distinguished as a lower class by passerby and workers of the district. This would be a disadvantage because classes typically reject the

taste of a class that they see beneath their own (Bourdieu 1984:56-60). By trying to blend in or appease to the middle class, buskers try to win approval to generate success.

The Eclipse clearly shows these power relations and how they play out in a battle for competing interests in the field. Each agent, or busker, carries with them different dispositions and likely or potential courses of action. These are bounded by space constraints, the alliances they form, what they need to do to receive tips, and the gender and racial stereotypes that circulate throughout. Therefore, performing in a gentrified district comes with its own special challenges that performers must abide by that are not typically encountered in other busker areas. These findings support the idea that the corporate and private business domination in the Eclipse greatly affects a busker's independence and binds them to practices that reinforce the market economy.

Before beginning this research, I believed that buskers would face much more harassment from police. However I was surprised to discover that it is mostly security, business workers, managers, and even passersby that do their own form of policing. Law enforcement does not typically decide whether a busker should be in a space or not. If no one complains, the police are likely not going to hassle the busker or tell them to leave.

What this ultimately reveals is that a strong set of standards do in fact permeate throughout the Eclipse and affect the busker experience. These hegemonic ideas trickle down from the top of the corporate ladder, to the employs, the passerby who consume at the businesses, and ultimately the buskers. My examination of the representation of women in the district demonstrates that Mulvey's idea of the male gaze permeates throughout the district. In the organization, promotion, and structure of the district,

women are represented through a male perspective, depicting them as sexual objects of fantasy (Mulvey 1975:6-8). In turn, many women internalize these representations.

Financially, the buskers of the Eclipse are making their own profits but in conjunction with the corporations. Without the large number of consumers of these businesses, the busker would have little to no audience to perform for. Therefore, even though the Eclipse's buskers appear to be separate from the formal economy, they are in fact bound to it through dependence on its consumers. When businesses are successful it means that consumers are spending large. This directly works as an advantage for the busker as their chances of being tipped and receiving bigger tips increases.

The overall structure of surveillance and domination, while always representative of corporate interests, is mediated in somewhat unpredictable ways through individual agents of control. In the case of the Eclipse, these individuals vary but typically are workers such as business managers and security guards. Changes in staff and security can pose a great threat, even to established buskers in the district. A manager who supported a busker may be replaced a few months later with one who asks them to leave. A once stable environment can crumble by a simple change.

Davis describes the processes that lead to the unofficial policing of urban streets like those in the Eclipse. Public space is being diminished in attempts to make the city more secure. The idea of public space is becoming somewhat of an illusion and represents the strong push towards space that is privatized. Davis describes of the militarization of the streets is used to divide classes. This is clearly exemplified in the unofficial policing of the Eclipse's streets by private security and business managers (Davis 1990:226-228).

The stronger the backing of alliances and networks a busker has, the less likely changes like these will affect them in a negative way. My informants told me stories of how changes in the staff affected their favorite performance spot. I know that if I return to the Eclipse to busk a year later, my experience will not be the same as when I had left. I would not be able to claim my spot with the same type of confidence that I had on my last night there.

I end with one of my last observances in the district that highlights the vulnerability of a new busker trying their chances out in the Eclipse. A sort of kinship bond and willingness to provide guidance is present between buskers when they are not in competition with one another and do not see one another as a threat. As I discovered, buskers are willing to give away their best spots in an area as long as they do not plan to use them anymore. Knowing it was my last night, I was ready to pass on some of the advice I had learned.

It is approximately 1am on a Saturday night. I see a young guy walking with some sort of instrument case down the sidewalk. Instantly I recognize that he is a busker. I am certain I have not seen him before. He goes to one street corner and looks around. My best guess is that he is contemplating whether or not he should stay on the corner he is at or find a different spot. He glances across the street back and forth at the other three corners at the intersection scanning the area. He is dressed very well but seems apprehensive.

I watch a few of the bouncers from each corner curiously watch him. I know these bouncers well and I know those looks all too well. Fortunately for me, I am on good terms with them both. I approach the busker and say "If you are going to busk I suggest

that corner over there.” We talk for a moment to introduce ourselves and then I walk over with him and make sure the bouncer waiting near the other corner is watching. I make it a point to be extra friendly as I greet the bouncer. I introduce the new busker to him, explaining that he is going to play there tonight. I tip him a dollar and wish him good luck, knowing that even with a little help to get started, he was going to need it.

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