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PRECARIOUS COLLABORATIONS: A STUDY OF INTERPERSONAL
CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN LOCAL ROCK BANDS

by

Ryan Thomas

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
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PRECARIOUS COLLABORATIONS: A STUDY OF INTERPERSONAL
CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN LOCAL ROCK BANDS

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University of Nebraska, 2011

Adviser: Martha McCollough

Drawing upon interviews with 15 local musicians, related literature, and personal experience, this thesis examines the interpersonal conflicts experienced by local music bands, and accompanying methods of reconciliation. Despite extensive variation between bands, I have identified common agitators and resolution mechanisms. Disagreements often occur due to differing aspirations of the band members, the type of structure governing decision making, competition among members, criticism during songwriting, monetary issues, workload, and the age of a group's members. Common methods of reconciliation and conflict prevention include encouragement of open communication, the ability to selectively ignore unsolvable disagreements, and active group mediation. More drastic solutions to acrimony include the adoption of a hierarchical, leader-based political structure, the elimination of songwriting (becoming a cover band), and band fission or breakups.

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Many people deserve credit for adding to this project in one way or another.

Foremost, I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Martha McCollough, who helped transform my curiosity into a master's thesis. I also owe many thanks to my committee members, Drs. Patricia Draper and Thomas Gannon, who both applied many hours to my benefit.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Local musical bands are remarkably varied. Numerous genres of bands exist: rock bands, pop bands, indie bands, reggae bands, jam bands, and the list continues ad nauseam. With all these different types of bands, there is an incredible variety of instrument and vocal combinations. Not only do bands' general instrumental combinations vary, but a single instrumentalist can pick from an astonishing range of equipment. Some bands exist for years, booking nation-wide tours and playing countless local shows, while other bands break up after their first house party gig. Some bands play copy (cover) music while others write their own songs. Others may perform a mixture of both.

Even with all these differences, bands share important commonalities. They incorporate people working together towards a common goal and they contain decision-making structures. However, most bands experience internal conflict. Potential sources of this strife are common among the vast array of band styles. For example, disagreements often occur due to the differing aspirations of the members, the type of structure governing decision making, competition among the participants, monetary issues, workload, and the age of the group's members. Some of these conflicts create more acrimony than others, but a band that wishes to survive must find ways to mediate these differences

In this paper, I catalogue and examine the most frequent causes of strife in fifteen local bands as well as the most common strategies implemented to resolve or mediate conflicts. By combining this data with relevant literature, my aim is to not only break down areas of conflict so they can be better understood but also to explore strategies

bands use to defuse volatile situations. By learning about potential sources of conflict and successful resolution strategies, local musicians may be better equipped to prevent the eruption of serious conflicts that often lead to the dissolution of a band.

Thesis Overview

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the paper and a map of its general layout. In chapter two, I provide a basic overview of the interpersonal dynamics of bands in order to acquaint the reader with the population. The rock band and its musicians are a highly nuanced group and, through 15 years of personal experience as well as interviews of other musicians, I can provide the reader with a more thorough view of the interpersonal issues these bands experience. In this chapter I draw heavily upon my own experiences and perspectives. The issues introduced in this chapter are examined in far more detail in chapter six.

Chapter three provides a review of relevant literature relating to the interpersonal dynamics of rock bands. Unfortunately scholarly literature concerning the interpersonal dynamics of rock bands is sparse (Conlon and Jehn, 2010: 13; Ferguson, 2002: 268; Groce and Dowell, 1988: 21; Thorpe, 2007: 2). Most of the literatures that are available are popular accounts of aging major players in the entertainment world. Fortunately a few articles have been written on the subject, such as Murnighan and Conlon's 1991 article on string quartets. Their insights can be adapted to some extent to the internal dynamics of rock bands.

Chapter four is a presentation of the research methods that were employed in the search for more detailed knowledge of rock band dynamics. In this section I detail both

the manner in which interviews were conducted and the method used to gather informants. I also break down the variables I used to describe the musicians' attributes and the conflicts that they experienced.

Chapter five is the first of three chapters that examine the information put forth by my informants. Chapter five is an examination of the demographic information I collected from each informant (age, sex, years playing in bands, etc.). I list and explain the variables encompassing the data and explore the relationships between those variables.

In Chapter six, I utilize my informant interviews to examine the conflicts that these bands experience. This chapter contains three main categories of discord: priority related issues (aspirations, work load and division of labor, side projects), creative issues (songwriting, criticism), and political and hierarchy based issues. One of my main hypotheses when beginning this project was that a band's political structure played a large role in determining the types of conflict a band will experience. The qualitative evidence supports this hypothesis.¹

Chapter seven is the final chapter devoted to informant interview analysis. Whereas chapter six catalogued and analyzed conflict, chapter seven focuses on bands' resolution and reconciliation mechanisms. I examine communication issues, the merits of ignoring problems and absorbing conflict, active mediation strategies, and finally band breakups.

¹ When I began this project I decided to focus on more egalitarian bands. I reasoned that a band with a clear leader who pays musicians to play his or her music would function too much like a regular job to be interesting and relevant to this paper. However, during my interviews, a few informants were in leader-based bands of this type, and their band's problems were far from uninteresting and completely relevant. As such, even though I am focusing on more egalitarian bands, hierarchical bands get plenty of attention and analysis.

Chapter eight is the conclusion of the thesis. I reiterate the main findings of my research and address areas in which my research could have been improved. My recommendations for future research are included here as well.

CHAPTER II: BAND CONFLICT ELUCIDATED

Groce and Dowel (1988: 23) write that musical performance “is a social interactional event which may be best understood in a group context.” This sociality, and ensuing collaboration of multiple perspectives contribute to the richness of the songs that bands create (Ferguson, 2002; Groce and Dowel, 1988; Murnighan and Conlon, 1991). The unfortunate side effect of these collaborations are frequent social struggles that I will refer to as “band-related conflict.”

In order to generate a collection of songs and prepare for a performance, a band must spend a good deal of time together. At the very least, a band that does not plan to pursue commercial success must still spend time together practicing, writing, and learning new material. While these activities can be fun and rewarding, they also are a veritable spawning ground for interpersonal problems. Creating and learning new material is a difficult and stressful process that often involves the work of one person being presented, criticized, altered, and finally compromised to some degree in order to fit the material within the constraints of the rest of the band in terms of prowess, taste, and perhaps marketability. Furthermore, the band’s instrumental makeup may compromise the presenting artist’s original vision (the same song arranged for a jazz orchestra will sound vastly different than a guitar, bass, and drums power trio). All of these factors can clash with many artists’ egos and senses of perfection and create feelings of annoyance, dissatisfaction, and even hostility and anguish if the artist takes the inevitable criticism too personally. Being in close proximity with the same people week after week in these conditions can lead to annoyance simply because band members will begin to employ the same critical process at every band practice. This can create a

situation in which a disgruntled band member may anticipate criticism and react preemptively without knowing whether they would have actually been criticized at all.

In addition to songwriting and practice sessions, a band's tour puts them in constant contact with one another as they drive from town to town. Not only does the band experience extended close contact in the tour vehicle, but once the band reaches a town, they will often have a little time to themselves outside the van in the destination city. Every meal is spent with one another (deciding what to eat can cause conflicts, especially with picky eaters). The band will likely have only one vehicle so the day's activity must be decided upon as a group. The band may have to choose whether to go see a city's attractions, or spend time with a member's friend that lives in the city, for instance.

While these situations are all common sources of conflict among bands, they are hardly unique to bands. Spatial proximity, either at a specific work site or engaging in multi-day travel, is common in many jobs. A major variable that sets many bands apart from most other jobs is the lack of a rigid hierarchy.

Bands fall into a continuum of hierarchy that ranges from a very egalitarian band in which everyone shares songwriting duties, is paid equally, and has equal say in decision making, to a rigidly tiered band where one member writes the music, makes the decisions and then assigns members to play predetermined parts. In bands towards the latter part of the spectrum, everything functions more like a standard job. Musicians are hired based on their skills and either perform their assigned parts and get paid a predetermined sum, or they get fired and replaced (Informant Twelve, 2010).

Egalitarian bands are subject to the problems inherent to any occupation, but suffer additional acrimony due to problems incorporating member's artistic visions into a band. Where an autocratic leader singlehandedly determines the creative direction of a band, an egalitarian band's members must learn to compromise and find a creative common ground.

Egalitarian bands can also be problematic because no band is truly egalitarian. A band can write all their music together, divide money evenly, make decisions as a group, and attempt to be as equal as possible in every way, but that band will ultimately end up somewhat stratified. Every band I've been in has functioned within a meritocracy of sorts. Members who are prolific song writers, proficient musicians and great showmen will be set apart from their less talented bandmates. If a member believes his or her talent surpasses those of their bandmates, they may decide that this affords them special treatment and excuses themselves from certain duties or jobs. I heard an anecdote about a band member who would go on tour and, consistently, after three or four days run out of money. Because of his instrumental and songwriting contribution to the band, he thought he deserved to be financially propped up for the rest of the tour. This feeling of entitlement may cause the talented band member to excuse themselves from equipment loading duties, promotion duties, recording duties, and provide a basis for an asymmetrical payment scheme. Even if a talented band member does not initially feel that they deserve more than their bandmates, they may get more attention from fans and critics. This attention can cause the musician to perceive themselves as the most important member and the reason for the band's success.

In addition to talent, a person's connections can tip the balance of power in a band. If a member of the band knows someone who can get that band cheap equipment, lucrative shows, or a recording contract, that member may expect heightened status as a result. Money can operate in the same manner. If a member is rich enough to buy favors for the band or owns the equipment that another band member uses, they may expect something in return. In this way, no band can remain truly egalitarian; differing access to equipment, performance venues, and monetary resources within bands often precipitates conflicts.

A frequent cause of band conflict is the commitment of time members must contribute to the group. Not surprisingly, individuals within the band often have competing demands on their time. Employment in other bands or jobs as well as family obligations can make it difficult to meet the band's expectations regarding its member's ability to fully participate in the group. In addition, musicians employed in the work force must sacrifice financial security for the sake of the band. It is often the case that a serious musician with aspirations of success in the field will not be able to hold a steady job that pays more than minimum wage. Local shows are often late at night on week days, which can make it difficult to wake up early and function through a nine-hour shift. While this problem can be surmounted with dedication, the real difficulty is due to out-of-town shows and tours. A band must consider the time consumed by driving as well as moving equipment from the practice space to the venue and back again. Even a relatively nearby out-of-town show is likely to create a situation where band members cannot get to bed until three or four in the morning. A tour will require missing work for weeks or months at a time. Few day jobs accommodate the needs of these employees.

Because of a band's demanding schedule, a serious musician must value flexibility and will likely work one or more part-time, low-paying jobs that allow the musician to take extended vacations. This creates a situation where the musician is overworked and underpaid and suffers stress both financially and due to a heavy work load. A student who is in a band suffers worst of all; they must find time for work, school, practice, shows, promotion, and perhaps a tour—all before factoring in everything else in their life.

The financial burden experienced by band members is exacerbated by the high price tags associated with musical equipment. A serious musician may quickly find their potential limited by cheap, inferior instruments and equipment. In addition to the high initial investment associated with these instruments, many require some form of upkeep. Guitars need strings, amps need tubes, drummers break sticks, heads and cymbals. All instruments sometimes need repairs or adjustments. The money that a band makes from playing shows may be enough to cover these expenses, but many bands choose to save earned money for recording and touring expenses and expect members to pay for the upkeep of their equipment.

This pursuit of success and the ensuing temporal and monetary poverty is a root of many conflicts. In order to have a chance at success, a band's members make sacrifices in time, money, and relationships. A committed and stressed musician is unlikely to tolerate a lazy uncommitted bandmate. Chronically dealing with a lack of money, time and sleep permits minor issues to be blown out of proportion and results in major conflicts.

In the following chapters, I put my personal experiences to the test as I catalogue the responses of interviewed informants and the works of published authors. Although my experience encompasses a wide range of situations, conflicts, mediation strategies and general minutiae, the scope of the problem and the range of opinions are far wider and more varied than I had imagined.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the researchers who has published material concerning local level rock bands is Stephen B. Groce. Allied with Joan A. Dowell, the pair's 1988 article *A Comparison of Group Structures and Processes in Two Local Level Rock 'N' Roll Bands* compares the motives, group cohesiveness and norms of two local bands – a cover band, and an original music band. It is almost entirely qualitative research, focusing on interviews of the band members in order to compare the workings of the two bands. Particularly useful is information concerning the bands' political structures; the cover band was far more hierarchically governed than the original music band. The cover band maintained a strong leader who controlled many aspects of the group such as scheduling practice sessions and performance venues, the distribution of money, promotion, and decisions concerning the music played. This person also received more money than most of the other members. Groce and Dowell's article also provides insight into differences between cover bands' and original music bands' workload distributions, the organization of loading equipment, and practice.

The most glaring weakness of the paper is that it only compares two bands. Because bands are varied and comprise groups of unique individuals, it is difficult to say with any certainty that a band's status as an original or cover band is causative of the observed differences in internal conflicts.

However, a year later Groce utilized some of this research (and some paragraphs, nearly verbatim) in order to write *Occupational Rhetoric and Ideology: A Comparison of Copy and Original Music Performers* (1989). This paper more narrowly investigates the ideologies involved in the two types of bands and discusses an individual's aspirations

and reasons for being in bands, and the goals of the whole band. In this article, seven different bands are represented and analyzed. Groce found that musicians in cover bands were generally motivated by the prospect of monetary gain, while musicians in original music bands viewed themselves as artists in need of creative outlets.

With the help of Margaret Cooper, Groce went on to write an article on gender in rock and roll bands titled *Just Me and the Boys? Women in Local-Level Rock and Roll* (1990). Much of the work concerns the interactions of female band members with the audience, though a section of the work does concern interpersonal issues. Groce and Cooper's informants discuss females being pushed to behave in a more sexual manner on stage as well as double standards concerning acceptable conversation topics after shows; the male members felt uncomfortable talking about women with the female bandmate. These issues were echoed by my informants but were never discussed as being serious problems. While women sometimes get paid less than men in bands (Groce and Dowell, 1988; Groce and Cooper, 1990), my female informants did not indicate that this was an issue they faced. While it is possible that times are better for women these days, I never explicitly asked about unequal pay. It would be interesting to see what a female researcher might uncover.

Frederick Seddon and Michele Biasutti's unpublished paper *Investigating a Rock Band Engaged in Group Composition* (2008) explores in some detail the processes of an Italian local band engaged in songwriting. The work captures the nuances of a "democratic" political structure and illustrates that even a band that writes music as a group by recording improvised group jams contains hierarchical leadership. No band is truly egalitarian.

J. Keith Murnighan and Donald E. Conlon's (1991) article *The Dynamics of Intense Work Groups: A Study of British String Quartets* examines the intricacies of 20 string quartets in England. Essentially, the authors purport that interpersonal paradoxes exist in string quartets that are essentially unsolvable. Interestingly, groups that attempted to work through these issues often dissolved, while successful groups acknowledged the existence of internal problems but did not discuss them. Instead, they worked around these issues by silently accommodating or avoiding them.

The article is quite well written and elucidates the complex hierarchical interaction between the leader and subordinates. It is difficult to determine the relevance of the work as it pertains to local rock bands, however. All of the string quartets are essentially cover bands – they all play music written by an outside composer. However, the authors state that a large amount of creativity is required to not only determine how to interpret the sheet music, but also how to keep the music fresh every performance. All of the string quartets are also leader-based, hierarchical groups with a clear delineation between first and second violin. This is at odds with many of my informants' rock bands which are comprised of individuals playing unique instruments and far less defined hierarchies. Despite the difference between hierarchical string quartets and egalitarian bands, the article provides insight into many of the themes I have investigated.

Heather Ferguson's 2002 article, *In Search of Bandhood: Consultation with Original Music Groups* attempts to apply Murnighan and Conlon's research towards democratic rock bands as an aid in psychoanalytical group therapy. Her comparison of a string quartet's first violinist to a band's lead singer is problematic, however. The entirety of the paper rests on this assertion but she does not convincingly make this connection.

While both the lead singer and the first violinist do become a band's spokesperson to a large degree, Murnighan and Conlon assert that much of the group's internal tension is a result of musicians who play the same instrument being differentiated by the complexity of their contributions to the music. Those playing less complicated parts receive less acclaim:

The first violinists' parts are usually the most difficult. When they perform well, they give life to each different presentation of a piece. The first violin is most easily heard by the audience, even in the single-voiced European style. Among the four players, he or she gets the most attention and acclaim; many quartets, for example, are named after their first violinists (Murnighan and Conlon, 1991: 166).

Although the second violinist is expected to play nearly as proficiently as the first, this person garners little credit for their contributions to the performance. Contrastingly, rock bands are far more varied in their number of personnel, instrument array, songwriting method, politics, and hierarchical structure. In some bands a lead singer is also a lead guitar player and writes all of the music. This (albeit rare) configuration may indeed reflect a string quartet. But a band like Rush contains a bass-playing lead singer, a drummer who is probably the most acclaimed member and a guitarist that depends on no rhythm guitar player. While Ferguson's research application works for structures that have formal methods to differentiate members playing the same instrument, it does not aid efforts to elucidate the causes of conflict in most rock bands.

Where Ferguson's comparison can be applied to rock bands is in her section concerning the balance between conflict and compromise. In this case, her informants echo similar notions to Murnighan and Conlon's and suggest that avoiding some conversations is an effective way to prevent arguments and conflicts.

CHAPTER IV: METHODS

For this project, my research was confined to a scouring of available literature and personal interviews with 15 informants. In order to procure informants, I utilized a snowball-style approach which combined a list of my acquaintances with recommendations from key early informants. Although my eventual list included nearly 50 people, I only interviewed 15 due to time constraints and concerns about anonymity. My most successful interviews were generally with people I did not know, as they were more willing to freely divulge information. Interviews with friends or members of bands I'd often played with were generally more reserved, and attempts to obfuscate mutual acquaintance's identities resulted in a queer awkwardness.

Informants were at least 19 years of age at the time of interviewing and were musicians in a band consisting of at least two people. No attempt was made to randomize my research sample; my goal was to gather a wide variety of variables with regards to instruments played, sex, age of the player, age of the band, genres, the band's decision-making style and politics. Therefore, while I strongly believe that the results of my research apply to most bands, statistically speaking, my research is biased. This project was planned as an exploratory project rather than a highly representative, large-sample research undertaking.

Interviews generally took approximately one hour and were conducted in a setting approved by both the author and the informant. When considering meeting places, our criteria included low ambient noise (which could obscure the recorded conversation), short distance/high convenience, and security with regards to anonymity and personal safety. For example, I found it inappropriate to invite a total stranger to my house.

Due to the nature of the information I would be recording, I took great care to protect informants and their identity. Informants' names were not included in the research and I used codes to identify each informant. Before an interview was performed, I required that informants sign an IRB-approved consent form that detailed the purpose, expected procedure, content, and foreseeable risks (of which there were none). Informants were aware that they would not be monetarily compensated, but were also informed about the possible benefits of completing the interview (such as cathartic venting, validation of concerns, and the public value of these results in a published form). I recorded an audio representation of each interview. This collection was then transcribed; any names that were recorded were omitted.

The bulk of each interview involved asking questions about various conflict-related subjects (see Appendix A). I generally began each interview by asking informants to describe a typical band practice. This served to open a dialogue concerning band-related activities and get the informant thinking critically about the minute details of band life they might otherwise take for granted. Preferably, something interesting would come up during this discussion. If this was not the case, I resorted to a list of prepared questions about topics that I or earlier informants had thought important. As such, the answers that informants provided were a mix of insights thought up independently, and elaborations on topics I provided.

In order to attempt to find relationships between different types of musicians and their connections to band-related conflict, I operationalized a number of demographical variables and administered a short survey before each interview. In this way, I compared

variables such as the informant's age, instrument played, gender, and years playing in the band as a means to try and find bivariate associations.

CHAPTER V: DEMOGRAPHICS

At the beginning of each interview, I collected basic demographic information about each informant. The variables I examined were the informant's age, the informant's sex, the informant's primary instrument, the number of additional instruments the informant felt they played competently, the number of years they had been playing in bands, the number of bands they were currently playing in, the number of bands they had ever played in, the informant's subjective opinion of the political structure of each band (democratic or autocratic), the number of members in each band, the genre of each band, the duration of each band's existence, and whether the informant sang. All informants were English speaking caucasians.

Table 4.1 Numerical Demographic Data

| | Min | Max | Mean |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|------|
| Age | 24 | 43 | 30 |
| Additional Instruments | 0 | 6 | 2.3 |
| Years Playing in Bands | 8 | 33 | 14.5 |
| Number of Current Bands | 0 | 4 | 1.9 |
| Number of Total Career Bands | 2 | 30 | 10.7 |
| Autocratic/Democratic (1-10) | 1 | 10 | 5.3 |
| Band Size (Members) | 2 | 7 | 4.1 |
| Band Age | .1 | 14 | 3.4 |

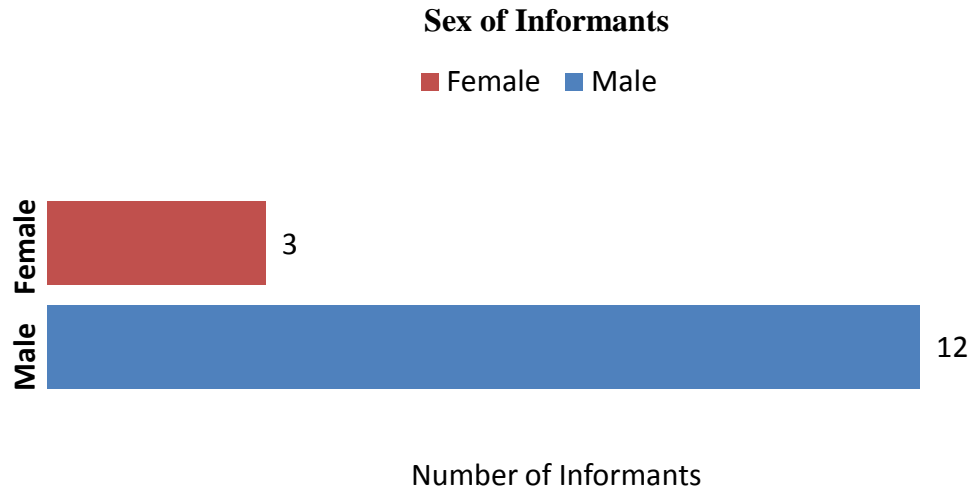


Figure 4.1

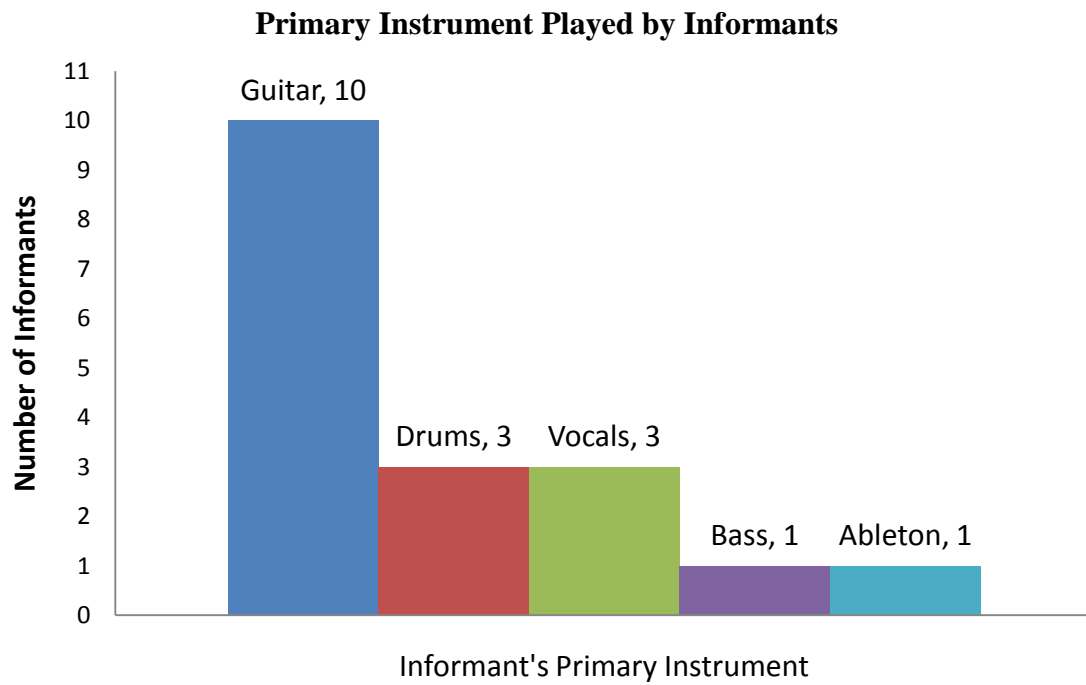


Figure 4.2

Reported Genre of Informants' Bands

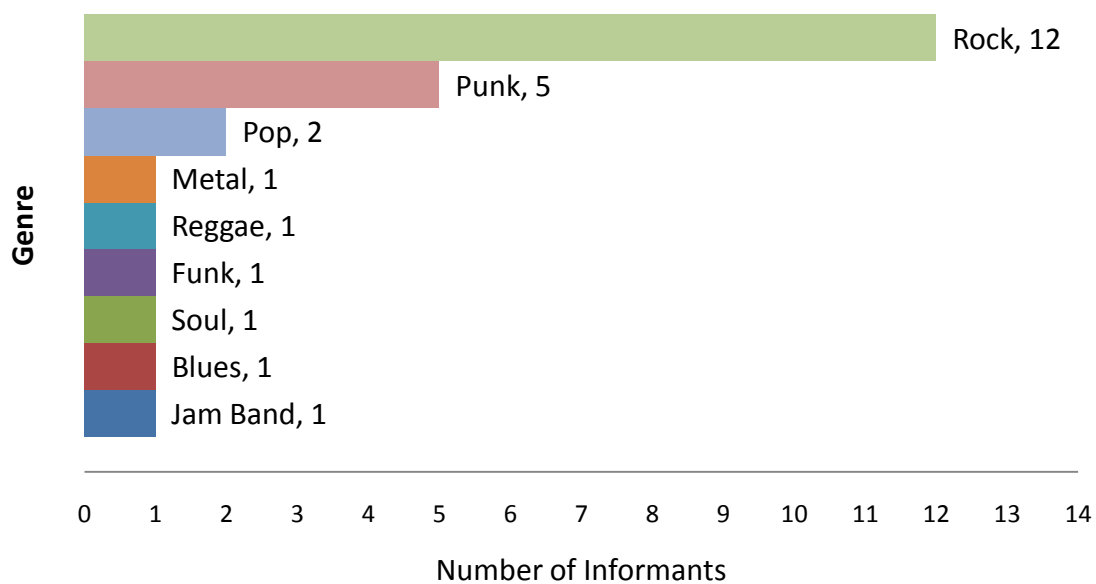


Figure 4.3

Do the Informants Consider Themselves Singers?

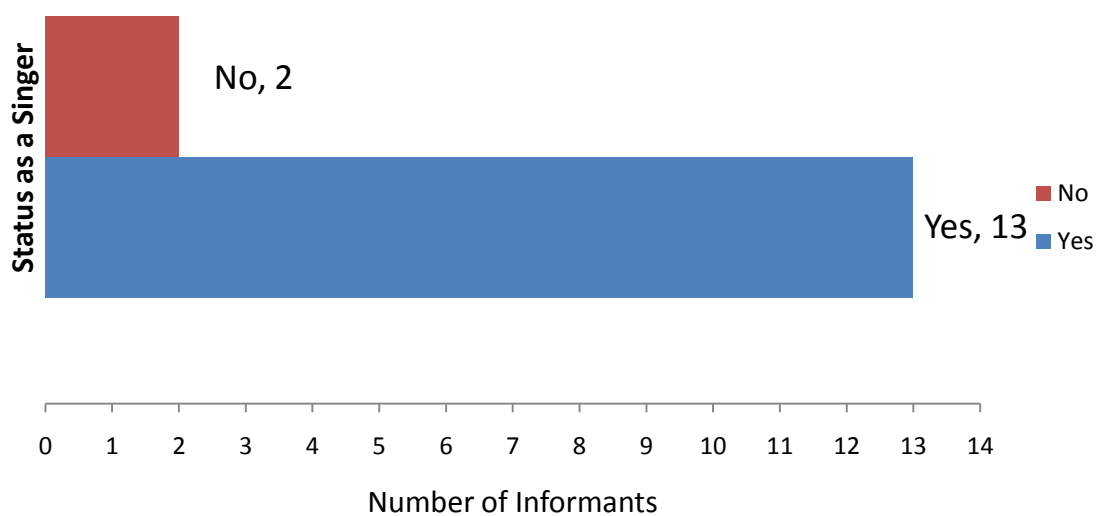


Figure 4.4

Discussion of Data in Table 4.1 and Figures 4.1 – 4.5

Age

Due to IRB concerns, I could not interview anyone under the age of 19. In my sample, the minimum age was 24, the maximum was 43, and the mean age was 30. This rather narrow age range is likely a product of the snowball style approach I utilized in informant selection. I was 29 at the time this paper was written so most of my peers are near the mean age range.

Sex

Of the 15 informants selected for interview, 12 are male while only 3 are female. While this hardly represents a balanced gender selection, personal experience suggests that the ratio of females to males in the local music scene may well be less than 1/5. Indeed, many of my male informants had no experience playing with females in bands.

Primary Instrument

While I asked everyone to pick a primary instrument, some informants felt torn enough between two that I simply recorded both selections. 10 informants picked guitar. 3 picked drums. 3 picked vocals. 1 picked bass. 1 picked the Ableton live music sequencer. It is interesting that the predominant instrument is by far the guitar (my own forte). I am curious whether this trend is a result of my own personal bias or if the population at large is dominated by guitarists. However, if a band has more than one

instrument, it is usually the guitar that gets duplicated. One almost never sees two drummers or bass guitarists, and it is rare to see more than one keyboard player.

Additional Instruments

I also asked informants how many additional instruments they played competently. The minimum was 0, and the maximum was 6, with a mean of 2.3. Presumably, being able to play more instruments should make for a better-rounded musician. I am curious if this affects either the conflicts in which the informant engages or the informant's take on band conflict in general. For example, a guitarist may criticize a drummer differently if he or she also plays the drums.

Years in Bands

The number of years a person has been playing in bands acts as a proxy for experience. The minimum was 8, while the maximum was 33. The mean was 14.5. Presumably, in most cases informants with a larger pool of years playing in bands should also have experienced more conflicts over that time. Additionally, this added experience may give those musicians insight in to mediation and conflict prevention strategies.

Number of Current Bands

This variable, while imperfect, performs a number of functions. It arguably gives an approximation of each informant's commitment to music in general; informants with a greater number of current bands are probably spending more time doing band-related things. Second, it provides insight into the amount of band polygamy in the area. This

variable may be somewhat misleading as it only measures current bands and not bands in the past. At least one informant noted that he was not in a current band at all, although previous bands had been very important parts of his life. The minimum was 0, the maximum, 4, and the mean, 1.9. Only 6 of the 14 informants who were currently playing in a band were in only one band. This indicates that band polygamy is quite common and normal. I should also note that in cases where a musician performed solo material without bandmates, I did not include that band in these numbers. Because I am investigating interpersonal relations, I am not concerned with projects that have only one member.

Number of Bands in Informant's Career

The number of bands that a musician has ever participated in provides additional information concerning experience. The minimum number of bands was 2 while the maximum was 30. The mean was 10.7. It is worth noting that for the larger numbers, most informants were guessing so these numbers are hardly concrete. It is worth noting that 5 of the 15 informants reported a greater number of lifetime bands than their total years playing! This may indicate a fast turnover rate for each band, a high degree of band polygamy, or more likely, a combination of both factors.

Political Structure

One of my prime hypotheses—an assumption even—was that a band's political structure plays a sizable role in determining the kinds of arguments a band experiences. As such, some measure of a band's political structure was necessary. Eschewing a more detailed set of questions due to time constraints and informant patience issues, I simply

asked each informant to measure their bands' politics on a 1 – 10 scale, with 1 being generally autocratic and 10 being generally democratic. Unfortunately this composite score blends all types of decision-making; some bands may have a songwriting leader and a separate business leader, for example. But for the most part, I felt that informants were able to answer the question to their own satisfaction, which probably means that the variable is quite usable.

The minimum was 1, and the maximum, 10. For this question the mean was 5.3. I find this number comforting, as it suggests that the question and the scale were appropriate and illuminating. It is important to note that multiple informants said that the politics had changed in their bands from the time of their inception to the present. The bands seem equally likely to become more autocratic or more democratic. In my own experience, I've found that bands often tend to start in a more free-form egalitarian configuration, but eventually, people assume certain roles. Generally this means that some people end up making more decisions than others.

Number of Members in Each Band

While it may seem obvious that a larger band would be more acrimonious than a small one, my own experience has shown that this might not always be the case. I asked informants to list each band's size as part of their demographics. The minimum size was 2, the maximum 7, and the mean 4.1.

Band's Age

Ideally, a band whose members get along well should last longer than a band rife with conflict. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Many external factors play dominant roles in determining a band's longevity, such as personal life choices, success, and even a player's general level of contentedness with the band. As such, a band's age is not a good indicator for harmony. Furthermore, my data only encompasses informants' current bands, and so is not indicative of past longevity. For instance, an informant could have moved to a new city and quit her band of ten years before recently forming two new bands. One thing is certain, however. The longer a band has been together, the more conflict they have experienced. The minimum band age was .1 years (about one month). The maximum was 14 years. The mean was 3.4.

Genre

Although I found it to be inconclusive, I included this category in order to give the reader some indication as to the variety of my sample. Many informants who were in more than one band were also in bands comprising more than one genre. It is important to note that many of these informants described their bands as a mixture of more than one genre. Because genres' existence is based on forcing a wide range of variation into discreet categories, in cases where an informant used more than one genre to describe their music, I chose one for them based on their main descriptor. Some form of "rock" headed the category, with 12 informants identifying their bands as such. It is worth noting that a wide variety of prefixes accompanied this genre, such as "alternative rock," "90's rock," "popish hard rock," "math rock," "new wave rock" and so forth. Next was "punk"

or “punk based,” with 5 entries. The rest of the genres were only cited once. These are listed in table 4.1. One informant was interviewed before I added this question to the list, so the bands this person discussed are not included in the tally.

Informant’s Status as a Singer

Finally, I asked each informant whether they sang in bands. The overwhelming answer was yes; 13 of 15 informants answered yes to this question. I had hoped that an informant’s status as a singer might influence their role in their bands, but because almost all informants identify themselves as singers, this variable is unusable in that sense. A more productive question would have been “are you the lead singer in a band.”

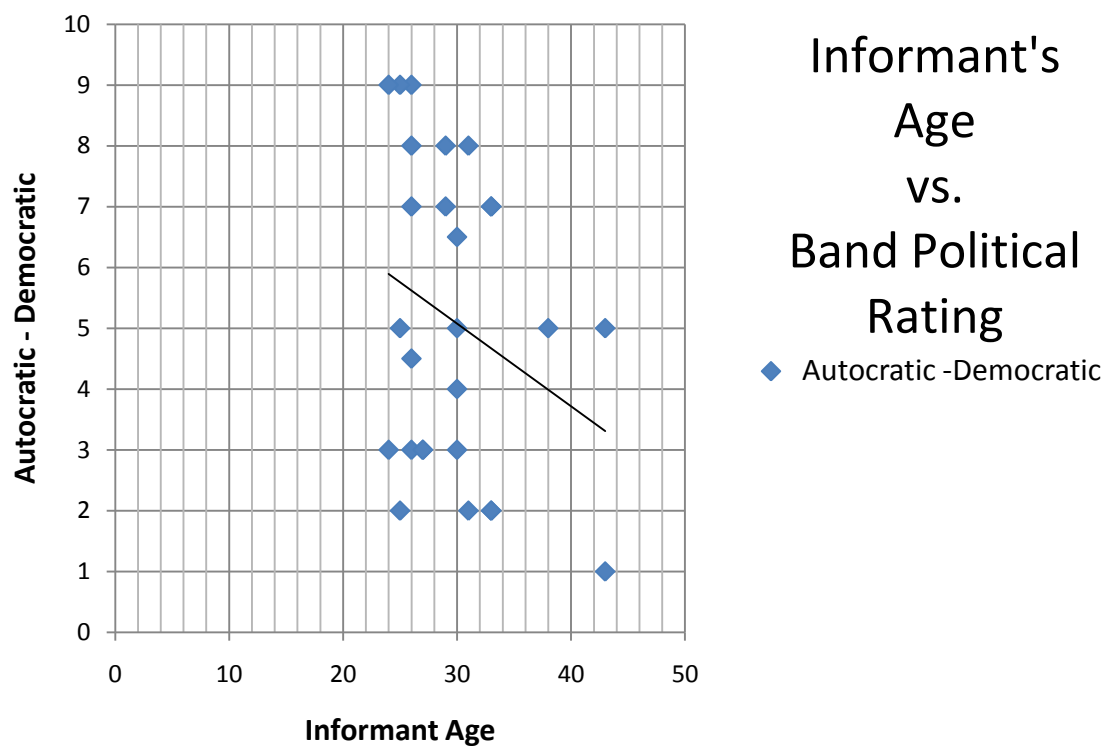
In retrospect, it would be useful to do a more in-depth survey of each informant to catalog in greater detail every band that they have ever been in, including the duration of each band, the genre, the success level, the political structure, and so forth. In this way, the ambiguities that have arisen for each variable could be more clearly delineated. Unfortunately, I simply did not anticipate the need during my interview design.

Bivariate Analysis of Survey Data

I stated above that I performed a number of bivariate analyses in order to find associations between variables. Of course a number of variables were positively associated, such as age, years playing in bands, and informants’ total career bands. These are all expected and uninteresting. To find interesting and unexpected associations, I compared variables such as band age, political structure, informant age, and total number of total instruments played. Of these the only noticeably associated set of variables was

the informant's age and the type of political structure present in their band. Figure 4.5 shows that a weak association exists in which older musicians favor leader-based bands. The sample size is far too small to draw any significant conclusions, but this relationship would be worth further examination in the future.

Figure 4.5 Scatter Plot of Informant's Age vs. Their Bands' Political Ratings



CHAPTER VI: CONFLICT

The aim of this chapter is to examine both the causes of band-related conflict, as well as factors that influence the types of conflicts a band is likely to experience. It would be convenient to cleanly divide these two categories and discuss each in turn, but they are too tightly interwoven to sort in this way. Therefore, I have divided my informants' responses into three main categories:

The first are essentially priority and time-based issues. These encompass things like the work load and division of labor, and are governed largely by the aspirations of the band's members. For example, a band with mixed aspirations is likely to have issues with the perceived work ethic of the members.

The second category is composed of creative issues. Issues during songwriting and intra-band criticism are examined here. As we will see, the creative portion of a band is partially controlled by the third major category: band politics and hierarchy. During the course of this chapter, the reader should bear in mind that all of these factors affect one another to varying degrees. Beyond these categories, there is one variable that looms overarching and affects many of the others: the age of the musician.

Age

The age of the musician affects the nature of a band (and its conflicts) in a number of ways. First, a musician's age affects their behavior. Some younger musicians can be more prone to hostility. Informant Seven (2010) explicitly stated that he found himself feeling less anger in his later years. "Myself, [as I grew up] I stopped being as angry, I just grew out of it. And I think that happens a lot" (Informant Seven, 2010). Moreover,

informants felt that a person becomes more conscious of other people's feelings as they get older:

I play with people that are about my own age, and I think that they're a lot more conscious than an early twenties group would be about things like that. And I think people do give a little more now that they've been experienced. . . . In my earlier years I would say, not as conscious and not as caring or careful or as giving. I think the younger you are in a general sense, you don't give a fuck (Informant Ten, 2010).

Informant Two (2010) echoed this sentiment and added that, in addition to maturity calming situations, the longer a musician has been playing in bands, the more likely that they have encountered similar situations in the past (and thus have already dealt with something similar). So in that case, experience, coupled with maturity, helped to prevent conflicts. Informant 14 (who is in his late 20's) also found maturity to be a helpful factor:

Definitely, my ability to criticize my bandmates and the respect I show for my bandmates has changed extremely over the last 5 years. . . . I was like really stressed all the time, really thought everything had to be a certain way, and I was really not good at communicating with my bandmates, I didn't give them the respect they deserved. I was a total fucking nut job, control freak. I've just really grown to appreciate the idea that guys will spend time sweating in my basement learning shit that I wrote, and I have a love and appreciation for my bandmates now (Informant 14, 2010).

It is difficult to parse out the difference between age and experience, and the effect that each factor has on band relations. In general I agree with Informant Two. Experience helps prepare us for future encounters, but the nuanced nature of social interaction and the myriad personalities a musician will encounter in a career combine to create unexpected situations which do not respond to this "experience inoculation." The

final and probably most important affect that age has on band relations is its ability to change a musician's aspirations.

Aspirations

In addition to age, a musician's aspirations are of paramount importance in determining how bandmates will perceive each other, and each other's actions. A musician's aspirations determine what a musician hopes to achieve from his or her band, and a mismatch can cause serious internal problems. My informants vary considerably in their goals and in their opinions on what a band's purpose is. The scope of this variation was noted succinctly by Informant Nine (2010):

The people, they come to the band for so many different reasons. And their motivation has so much to do with what their bringing into it. And a lot of times those motivations are girls, or free beer, or a claim, you know, to some fame of some sort. Feeling like an expert. They just vary as widely as people do. And then you bring it together and try to form some sort of bond to communicate on and find you're going different directions (Informant Nine, 2010).

Unfortunately, I didn't start explicitly asking informants what their musical goals were until my second interview, but of the fourteen informants I did ask, four viewed their bands as important hobbies. Their bands exist as fun, diverting projects that they can put their constructive energy into, but they expect little or nothing from them. Informant Three (2010) noted that his band was comprised of older guys who have families and different priorities. Their band agrees that touring and success are not priorities; their longest tour was a three-day outing, and that was more than satisfying. Informant Five echoed a similar thought. "I don't want to be a rock star. I don't want to play music

professionally. I do it as a hobby, and as something I love, and as something that's fun. And when it's not fun anymore, that means I need to stop. I don't stop playing music altogether; I still play music by myself at my house” (Informant 5, 2010).

Other informants had a much different view of their bands, and viewed them as a very high priority item. However, there is a muddy division between people that want their band to become as successful as possible, and people who just want to make a modest living from the band, or augment their income. In general, four informants fit into one of these categories, but again, that line blurs the more one tries to resolve it. One informant seemed to take future success almost for granted, and didn't discuss the subject explicitly. However, Informant Fifteen did discuss the band's future and its goals:

[The guitarist] and I have the same aspirations and would love to go as far as we can. Not that we're going to become rich and famous and make a lot of money off of it, but if we could do what we can to live a little bit off of it, that would be awesome (Informant Fourteen, 2010).

As I stated above, no one was willing to declare a goal of “making it big” or becoming a rock star. However, others did share somewhat optimistic goals:

I think sometimes people in my bands don't take much vested interest in it, so they're not too concerned with what they're doing sometimes, whereas I'm hypersensitive, with no delusions of success down the road; however, I'm very serious about planning on touring and making a second income out of this, and doing this until it seems stupid. And it doesn't seem stupid right now (Informant Thirteen, 2010).

Informant Thirteen's statement is contradictory. He states that he has no delusions of success down the road, yet he continues to tour and wants to push the band. I think this is indicative of a desire to hold on to aspirations that the informant formerly held. I

understand completely. For people with lofty aspirations, music is a dream. It is probably one of the most fulfilling activities in which they participate, and the image of the successful musician is tantalizingly displayed via radio, television, movies, and books. But the image is so often an illusion that eventually one has to restructure their priorities. Informant Eight discussed this “lottery.” Fortunately for Informant Eight, the band is successful enough to keep him interested, for the time being:

I think I kind of view being a musician that's writing your own music as being kind of almost like a lottery. I think it's just so abstract whether you could make a living at it, especially doing things the way you want to do. And it seems like my own journey is deviating enough from the normal structure to make people interested and excited but also keeping enough original ideas to make it relatable at the initial moment (Informant Eight, 2010).

Other informants talked about feeling caught between their dreams and the “real” world:

When you were younger there is always that, you know you love music, you think, this would be awesome if could just do this all the time. And I think the ways you do this change over time. When I was young I think it was that, "Oh man, my band I've been in since Junior high, we're going to be able to do this as long as we want!" . . . I think over time, you realize that it's not necessarily the most realistic goal to try to make a living playing music. But it's fun to try (Informant Eleven, 2010).

Informant Eleven highlights a serious issue facing musicians: age, once again. Despite a few optimistic musicians, most of my informants were not at a place in their lives where the band still maintained the allure it had in their youth. The majority of my informants discussed the band as something that they took very seriously years ago, but now, in the absence of real success, their priorities have changed to make room for

school, careers, family, and other interests. Increasing age begins to affect their aspirations.

Informant Five (2010) once had high ambitions and toured around the country, but gave them up to go to graduate school. Informant Four (2010) was formerly very much interested in playing professionally, but is now disenchanted with the band because of years of conflict and wants to have children. Informant Two (2010) was formerly a band devotee and a well-known name in the area, but he stated that his aspirations have declined in recent years, partially due an expanding family. Informant Seven summed up the effect of age on aspirations succinctly: “Age has a lot to do with things. People that are in bands are usually at a crossroads in their lives. They have serious girlfriends, they may want to move to a new city or go to school” (Informant Seven, 2010). Eventually a person begins to realize that the band probably won’t work as a career, and they change their life accordingly. Informant Ten also stated that age was a factor that killed his ambition:

I definitely had a bigger ego before and less controllable ego before, and now that I don't have that, I feel like I'm playing better music and it's definitely more professional than it was, but I don't have the same aspirations that I did before. I don't need really need to travel much anymore. And I'm married and I'm expecting a kid next month so I just have different goals now (Informant 10, 2010).

To further complicate the issue, Informant Twelve (2010) stated that he had to make compromises regarding his ambitions in order to utilize his music as a source of income. Whereas a band that wants to succeed on a national level must make investments toward that future (such as playing low-paying gigs on tour in exchange for exposure), Informant Twelve (2010) stated that he would even play solo acts rather than play in his

main band, simply because he did not have to share his earnings with any bandmates. This is similar to the goal-related differences between cover bands and original bands as explored in Groce and Dowell (1988). According to the authors, cover bands are willing to invest less unpaid time into the band than original music bands. In almost every case, a cover band is the quintessential example of a band with no grand overarching aspirations – it exists to satisfy short-term goals (Groce and Dowell, 1988,) much like the situation Informant Twelve describes.

Problems with Mixed Aspirations

It is clear that musicians' long-term goals tend to decline with age and time. It is fortunate then, that as we age, our peers do so with the same rapidity; many people seem to be fairly synchronized in this pattern. Of course, there are plenty of people who do not fit into the curve, and additionally, there are many bands comprised of people of different ages. These two facts combine to produce bands that have members with different goals, ambitions, and perspectives. This can cause problems.

There are two obvious categories that encompass the problems with mixed aspirations. Either a member has higher aspirations than at least one bandmate, or a member feels that his or her bandmates' ambitions are unrealistic, and that they expect too much. The great majority of ambition related problems dealt with the perception that informants' bandmates were less committed than they were. This is something I expected. What I did not expect, was that several informants were, indeed, on the other side, feeling that many problems resulted from having an overambitious bandmate.

Too Ambitious

Informant Five told me that their band used to be fun, but that it became frustrating due to an unrealistic bandmate:

One person is the most enthusiastic, pumped all the time, but also the least musically talented. So that starts to become a problem because they have all these aspirations and this desire. And it is really nice to have someone so excited about it, but when they can't play an instrument, then that goal become unattainable so it just becomes this false hope (Informant Five, 2010).

Informant Six claimed to be put in a similar situation:

I play along a lot, too, to ease any sort of tensions that might come up out of mixed aspirations for the band. And I say why not. I would rather err on the side of being idealistic and going where anyone wants to go with it, than limit it, because I'm fairly certain it's not something I'm going to have to deal with anyway. It's not like this is going to become something where I have to decide if I'm going to quit my job or not. And I don't see that being an issue with the other [bandmates] either (Informant Six, 2010).

Informant Six went on to state that he is often subtly encouraged to do more work in the band by an ambitious bandmate.

I get tired of that shit sometimes. It's like, what's the fucking point. C'mon, we're not really going anywhere with this that's actually worth going to this extra trouble that feels like work just so I can do this thing with you guys that's really fun. Why make it into work because you think it's going to do something it's not going to do? I'd rather just have fun. But if it weren't for that driving force, we probably wouldn't have done anything in the first place. I'm not giving that enough credit. And the fact that I'm able to sit here and complain about it is testament to his particular mindset when it comes to getting this accomplished and getting it done. [His work ethic] has been a huge factor for getting us to all be together and play music and have some output that's been substantial (Informant Six, 2010).

In this case, despite his opposition to the prospect of doing unnecessary work, Informant Six is willing to admit that his ambitious bandmate has led the band to do more than it ever would have in his absence. This seemed to be the general consensus. An ambitious bandmate may be an annoyance, but they are tolerable because they help get goals accomplished. There were some informants who did not agree, however. Informant Ten discussed two situations where differences in ambition and band-related goals were too much to deal with:

Things got so hairy. We went on a tour, we would fight with him. It was kinda 4 against one, we weren't trying to make it that way, but . . . And a lot of it had to do with external factors. . . . The four of us looked at the opportunity to be in a band more as a way to travel and to get into interesting situations and have stories to tell afterwards. And he looked at it as a profession. And in that sense, he probably had the mindset to be more successful in music, but the rest of us, I mean, we didn't want to be rock stars. We just wanted to have fun. I mean we liked playing music, but loading in and out the equipment was the shitty part. Playing the show was fun. But then the party afterwards and the experiences and the things we got to see was the best part (Informant Ten, 2010).

There was a band that I tried to play in. There was a guy, he would be the dictator let's say and he had written all this stuff, he had recorded it all, you know drum machine and such. He had everything planned out. He had this delusion of the entire—of how he was going to make it to the top and be this big rock star. He was crazy. And I couldn't play with him because I couldn't respect that and I didn't want to deal with his ego (Informant Ten, 2010).

Informant Ten's quotes illustrate that a simple difference of opinion concerning the group's long term goals can break a band. Ten's quotations reveal a kind of ideology in which success is somewhat shunned in favor of something more social and experience-based. Groce (1989) discusses this idea when comparing bands at two ends of an ideological spectrum. One band existed only to produce immediate monetary success,

while the other existed as a social outlet for band members to express their creativity. Informant Ten's experience suggests that combining members from opposite poles of ideology creates unsustainable bands. The obvious question (that I do not know the answer to) is how far apart members can be before the band breaks. Informant Twelve was in a band that broke because of an ideological difference, yet the problem seemed fairly trivial:

At the time, two of us were the key songwriters and our female vocalist, she didn't feel like it was fun. And she was all about having fun, and we were like, "man, we could realize this, we could actually do something professionally and make money and maybe tour" and she's like "this isn't fun anymore because we're thinking too much about it. . . ." Once we lost the female singer, the whole thing kinda just started falling apart (Informant Twelve, 2010).

This case shows that there are no steady rules. People simply want different things from their bands.

Finally, informants talked about situations where bandmates had completely unreal expectations that ruined the band. Informant Nine (2010) often discussed problems with a bandmate who he had been playing with for years who saw the band as a way to escape his life's problems:

For instance, [my bandmate] was going to get kicked out of his apartment, so he decided that that week, we have to go on tour. We all have to go on tour because he didn't have a place to stay. And the rest of us have day jobs, and sometimes kids. So, the ideas about what you're gonna do with the band really did cause a lot of problems and which way to grow was something that was really difficult to decide on because it was never discussed in a mature way. . . It was usually just sprung on us, like we have to do this. We have to become an 80's metal band. Or we have to go on tour this week. Or if we don't go to California we're gonna miss something big and we won't have a chance to make it big again . . . And in one formation of that band, too, we had a drummer come in and within

the first couple of weeks, he decided that he knew the guys that produced Pink Floyd and we had to go with these top-of-the-line producers and release a big thing. And we were already geared up to be an independent, grassroots band; we had bought our own recording equipment and were happy with that. He's like, "no. That's not good enough. We need to go to the best producers in the business." And that caused an issue, too, because I think we didn't really have our hopes set to conquer the music industry. We just thought we kinda wanted to be one of these jam bands that does pretty well for themselves (Informant Nine, 2010).

This statement illustrates the difference between mismatched aspirations and goals, and the existence of unrealistic expectations for the band. The drummer's ambitions, though admittedly greater than his bandmates, were appropriate and not particularly unreasonable. The first bandmate, however, was often discussed by Informant Nine and was frequently described as a strong personality who was a constant source of strife and conflict. Evidenced from additional discussion with Informant Nine, it is almost certain that this bandmate's unreal expectations were a result of broad life problems centered on substance abuse. Rather than being a case where a musician has deluded himself into thinking that success is certain, this bandmate viewed the band as a resource with which to alleviate his life's problems.

In my musical career, I have only experienced one instance in which a bandmate's greater aspirations were a cause of strife to the rest of the band. In this instance, the bandmate decided to plagiarize another band's music. He told the local newspaper that we had won a battle of the bands (we actually came in second) in order to generate positive exposure for the band. Presumably, this was all done in order to help the band advance towards commercial success, but the rest of the members felt such actions were unethical, unnecessary, and inexcusable. Fortunately, the band broke up for unrelated

reasons before his subterfuge was discovered, and a confrontation was no longer necessary.

No Ambition

It is interesting to consider that informants who complained about an overzealous bandmate disagreed most often about the purpose of the band on a fundamental ideological level. Some informants who complained of unmotivated bandmates also felt there was an ideological gap between themselves and their bandmates, and this was sometimes a source of tension. Heather Ferguson (2002) wrote about a member of a band who was unhappy with his level of success. He “describes learning to compromise and be patient with bandmates who have differing levels of sacrifice because of family and work responsibilities” (Ferguson, 2002: 276). In this example, the musician had to learn to work with his bandmates who had different priorities in their lives. But for most who complained about bandmates being too unmotivated, the problems were generally of a more practical nature. Informant Twelve’s story about the female bandmate, who just wanted to have fun, is the most ideological case I heard concerning non-ambitious bandmates; her motivations as a musician were different than the rest of the band. The problems a band experiences concerning unmotivated band members generally fall into two interconnected categories: time commitment and an uneven work load.

The amount of time an original music band requires can be stressful to its members and a large work load awaits any band seeking some measure of success. At the very least, a band must practice somewhat regularly, or risk getting sloppy and “loose.” They spend nights playing shows; typically the band is required to arrive several hours

before they play, and if a number of bands are performing at the venue on the same date, it is a social custom to stay until the last band is finished playing in order to support one's peers. This often means spending close to five hours at a venue.

If a band is touring, they may spend months away from home playing shows from town to town. In order to have albums to sell, a band must generate new music periodically. Someone must book shows, book tours, manage money and deal with public relations. Shows must be promoted to draw sizable crowds, and band merchandise (such as t-shirts, albums, stickers, etc.) must be designed, ordered, and sold. If a band records their own albums, then not only must the band spend time playing instruments for the recording, but one or more members must engineer (perform the physical recording duties) and mix (all post-production) the album. Some bands also spend time making music videos, and performing on local radio shows. It is easy to simply condense these jobs into a term like "band duties," but the fact remains that people are doing these jobs, and some more than others.

The problem is that, before these bands get signed to a record label, there generally is not much money coming in. Band members play for a variety of reasons (Groce and Dowell, 1988, Groce, 1989), but regardless of their goals, the time spent doing band-related things could be spent in other endeavors. In a touring band, especially, time that could be spent with a family, on school, or trying to build a career is instead invested towards the band's future. This creates a situation where some members of a band, who feel they are giving up a lot for the band, have little patience for someone who doesn't invest equal time or effort. Informant Three (2010) discussed this problem during our interview:

I miss out on a lot, or I give up a lot to be in this band, you know? I have a lot of stuff going on, you know with the family. . . . Every once in a while I have to battle with the wife about this stuff, and I totally see her point about this stuff. You know “you really have to go play another show?” . . . I do feel like I put a lot of effort into the band that the other guys don't, but that's part of the deal, you know (Informant Three, 2010).

Whereas Informant Three is willing to deal with his bandmates despite his frustrations, Informant Eleven illustrated that his problem can be far more problematic.

Time commitment is huge. I know one of my bands broke up because of it. You have to be committed to it or it really pisses people off. And in both of my bands it's been an issue to the point where in one [case] someone said “I'm done”, to another where it just became such a mutual lack of time commitment to where it just fell apart (Informant Eleven, 2010).

At the very least, it makes a difference to some informants to simply have the rest of the band present during band functions. Even if some people do more than others, having the rest of the band on location ensures that time is evenly spent. Informant One (2010) talked about this concerning a large band, where it is difficult to get all of the members together. “We'll go to a show and some people will drive separately if it's either in Lincoln or Omaha, and they'll get there late, show up for our set, play, and then leave. And that really bothers some others of us in the band” (Informant One, 2010). In addition to not spending equal time at the show, the members who show up late and leave early are likely not loading equipment, either. The band moves their equipment in one van, and it must be loaded twice each show—into the van, into the venue, into the van, into the practice space. So in this case, members of the band are doing less work and spending less time engaged in band-related activities.

Work Load

Most of my informants who complained of an unmotivated bandmate cited a collection of small annoyances that build into a real problem over time. In this way, the guilty bandmate does not get removed from the band outright, but instead tends to slowly attract the animosity of the group. Informant Eleven discussed the expectation he has for his bandmates:

If you're going to play with somebody, you should be up for it all. Does that happen all the time? No. And it's one of the most annoying things when someone's not carrying their weight. And it happens all the time. Be it loading in, loading, out, or being the littlest thing like, not having a pick, and you're a guitar player. . . . You could've gone to the store before the show like I did, you know (Informant Eleven, 2010).

Informant Twelve echoed a similar sentiment:

I get frustrated when people don't pull their weight. If you always gotta pick someone up and take 'em to the gig. Or if you always gotta set aside their money cause they got drunk and took off. Just the babysitting factor. . . . It's a professional thing, but at the same time, it's an enjoyable thing, and if you can mix the two, that's the ideal, but sometimes people aren't as professional in bands as you'd like them to be, 'cause it's party time or whatever (Informant Twelve, 2010).

Informant Twelve and Eleven's complaints are centered on issues such as general preparedness and professional behavior. Their cases are nonspecific and encompass complaints that likely span multiple bands over the years. Informant Fifteen (2010), however, discussed a specific complaint.

I feel like I'm constantly working on things, like constantly trying to set up a tour, I always make all the posters, I go out and promote. He's working on getting the word out, which helps. But I feel like, if I wasn't doing all

the stuff that I'm doing, we wouldn't be as far along as we are. And we'd be a lot more broke if he wasn't recording our albums. I would say it's not totally balanced. I would say I do a bit more because I'm constantly working and thinking about it. And he has his time when we have an album coming out. That's his work time. And then he writes other times, which is intermixed. . . . If I feel like maybe he doesn't appreciate the time and work I'm putting into things, that's when I've kinda been like, “dude, do you understand that this is kinda my neck on the line, too? I'm working hard on this all the time”, you know (Informant Fifteen, 2010)?

Informant Fifteen's complaint provides a clear-cut example of a work load related grievance. The informant has clearly specified areas in which the less motivated bandmate does not help with duties involving promotions and tour booking. Informant Four (2010) also felt that her band's work load was unbalanced and that she did too much work. In addition to doing all of the promoting, including creating and distributing fliers and booking tours, she was in charge of "making sure that everyone gets to everywhere on time, all the time. I'm the one who makes sure we have a place to sleep. I'm the one who makes sure we get paid" (Informant Four, 2010).

These two informants specifically cited promotion as an area in which they resented the lack of help from their bandmates. Informant Seven (2010) also stated that this was a job that carried a lot of weight with the band (in comparison to other tasks). This makes sense, however, as the process of designing promotional materials, getting them printed and finally disseminating them is a multi-step process that is very time-consuming. Unfortunately, I was not aware of this trend when I began my research and so did not ask informants about their feelings on the issue. I did, however ask most informants about the process of moving equipment; this has been an issue in some of my bands.

Equipment Moving

In my own experience, the act of moving a band's equipment (commonly referred to as "loading in") has been a point of contention. The load in is a unique case because whereas other tasks can be delegated, each bandmate brings with him or her a certain amount of equipment that must be moved about. The way a band negotiates this task says a lot about its members, and also plays a role in determining the harmony of a band's interactions. Groce and Dowell (1987) discussed the load in as it pertained to the difference between the Copy Cats (a cover band), and Curious Cargo (an original music band).

Whereas the Copy Cats expected each other to arrive at the job sites with his or her own equipment, Curious Cargo made bringing their equipment to the location more of a group effort. . . . As members were available (given time constraints) they were expected to meet at the practice site to load the equipment into Joe's truck. After the show most members contributed consistently to the reloading process (Groce and Dowell, 1987:31).

This account agrees with my experiences in bands in which everyone is expected to load equipment together, barring prior engagements. It is an important part of the work load and to consistently avoid this job often incites conflict. I asked many informants if the load in process had ever caused problems with the band. Unsurprisingly, drummers (who generally have more equipment than the rest of the band) tended to be the most vocal on the subject. Informant One (2010) who is a drummer noted that the load in can be a source of tensions:

I've seen bands in which everyone's responsible for their own equipment, but I've been lucky to be in bands where people help me. There are times

when people can't show up to load their own gear because they have prior obligations and stuff like that. And, as long as it's not happening on a consistent basis where one or two people have to move everything, I think everyone feels pretty good about helping people out and moving other peoples' gear. But when it becomes a situation where you feel like you're being taken advantage of, where your kindness is being taken advantage of, it becomes a point of contention (Informant One, 2010).

Informant One basically states that when everyone is pulling their weight, the band stays happy. He also notes that allowances can be made for people who can't be there at a certain time. Informant Fifteen (2010), who is also a drummer, was somewhat less content with the situation as it related to the guitar player:

It kinda sucks 'cause I have a minivan so all the stuff is with me. So, if I get there first, my drums are behind his stuff. So a lot of times, I feel like I'm helping him carry in stuff, his amp or other things. And he's starting to help with my drums, but it's kinda like, man, I'm carrying in 75% of this stuff (Informant Fifteen, 2010).

No one else had major complaints about the load in process. This is quite provocative since two of the three drummers in my roster complained but no one else did. I present the following explanation. First of all, as I stated above, drummers tend to have more equipment than other members of the band. In general, a guitar player with a very extensive setup probably has the same amount of gear as a lightly equipped drummer. At the very least this creates a situation where a drummer benefits from a collective load in circumstance. Otherwise, the drummer has to move more equipment than the rest of the band. Moreover, whereas the guitar and bass player's amps and guitar cases are square and compact, drums are round with high volume. In order to move drums a drummer requires a large vehicle. Both of the above drummers drove vans. Because the drummer has the van, they may as well move the rest of the band's equipment to save money on

gas and promote cohesiveness. So, while other band members can show up late if they have prior engagements, the drummer is always responsible for his or her drums, at the very least, and sometimes other people's equipment as well. So not only does the drummer have to move the most equipment, they also end up moving other people's equipment more often as well. A possible way to alleviate this problem would be for a band to purchase a van that any member could drive at any time. In this way, the drummer would not be so tightly connected to the equipment.

An interesting aspect of the load in process is the issue of singers. If a member of a band sings but plays no instrument, they will likely have little to no equipment to carry. This creates a situation in which a singer could feel that the load in process is not their responsibility. Unfortunately, none of my informants were singers only, but I asked some of them what they thought of this issue. Informant Four (2010) simply stated that she felt that rudeness in a band setting was inexcusable and that every one helped move things, even for other bands. Informant Three's response was more pointed:

I think if I were in a band with a guy whose only job was to sing, and he said, "I'm not going to load any equipment because I'm the singer. I don't have any equipment. So you guys are going to have to get your own stuff." I think I would just have to say, you know what, that's a very reasonable thing to say. You make a very good point. You don't have to help me with my equipment. And I don't think we need a singer anymore. The band is a unit. You do things together (Informant Three, 2010).

Where the previous two informants specifically stated that everyone in their bands was required to move equipment as a group, Informant One, a drummer, seemed willing to compromise in his assessment of the situation:

The females in band A only sing and so a lot of the time they feel it's unfair to have them do load in and load out stuff, so they don't show up for that a lot of the time, which can become a point of contention. So it's weird trying to find a balance for them to try and help move things to the best of their ability because they can't carry the heaviest things just out a point of physical strength and it would be unfair to ask them to do that. But it seems unfair to have them to not show up and not help at all. For me at least it's trying to find a balance where it can be totally egalitarian in regards to gender, but at the same time, it's not fair to say, "you have to move this giant bass [speaker enclosure] (Informant One, 2010)".

Informant One's statement shows that not all musicians feel the way Informant Three and Four do concerning singers. Informant Eight also stated that singers sometimes did not have to help with the load in. "Anyone who plays instruments and has gear helps, and sometimes people who don't [have gear] help too" (Informant Eight, 2010). Additionally, Informant One's quotation shows a willingness to take females' limited upper body strength into account when deciding how much responsibility his bandmates should take on. Informant Five also stated that a previous band comprised of mostly "relatively dainty girls" (Informant Five, 2010) had occasional issues with the load in given their limited strength.

Division of Labor

In the previous pages, some of my informants discussed the division of the jobs that they do for the band. I asked some of my informants how they split up the bands' tasks, and if this division was ever a source of conflict. Of course, some of my informants did find this divvying process to be stressful, generally because they felt that they were doing too much work: "I felt like, whoever could, should. But what ended up being is me doing a lot more" (Informant Nine, 2010). Based on my informant's statements and my

personal observations, there are three basic ways in which tasks get delegated. First, a leader or industrious member steps up and takes on the majority of the band's tasks. Second, bandmates end up doing what they are good at. Third, the instrument a person plays helps to determine a musician's job in their band.

In the first case, a band member takes charge of a number of duties either just to make sure they get done, or because they want everything done a certain way. Even Informant Two (2010) admitted he did most of the work in all of his bands because, "if you want something done right, or done at all, do it yourself" (Informant Two, 2010). This informant did admit that over the years he had relaxed his stance and begun asking for help, but for the most part, he still liked doing most of the work himself. Informant Ten (2010) agreed, stating,

If there's a dominant songwriter, usually . . . they are the one who does all the booking—in my experiences. And, like, getting the van and promoting the show and that type of thing. It's usually the one that has to have the biggest ego because they're his songs (Informant Ten, 2010).

For some bands this mechanism may result in the delegation of most duties to a single person, but not all bands will have someone who is willing to take on so much work. Some of my informants stated that a person's role in the band is determined by their aptitude in certain tasks. For instance, Informant Twelve (2010) talked on this issue. "I'd say that's more something, like, if you're really good at business or really good at talking to people, you might do the booking, or the business end of it." Informant One (2010) agreed and stated that he didn't really like doing the jobs that he did, but he was good at them:

A lot of the time I feel like I don't like to do the things that I end up doing, but I do 'em because I'm fairly good at doing them. Like all the accounting work, booking tours. . . . The behind-the-scenes work that you have to do if you're going to be moving, touring and stuff. It can be really tedious and boring (Informant One, 2010).

This makes sense as it would be unproductive to delegate a task to a member whose lack of the necessary skillset might lead to mistakes. I've seen this in my own experience in bands. People who are good at math tend to account, and people who are artistically inclined design fliers and band artwork. However, Informant One also stated that another force factored in to his doing much of the side work.

When I began this project, I felt that some associations might exist between the instrument one plays and the types of jobs they are responsible for. While there are no clear-cut rules, certain situations can influence the way jobs are delegated. Specifically, drummers will more often perform band side duties. Informant One (2010) explained why. As a drummer who does not play other instruments, he cannot write melodies or chord progressions (generally the heart of songwriting) and so has to do his part in other ways:

My not being able to play other instruments [besides drums] and because of that I don't usually write melody stuff—sometimes I write lyrics and things. My duties generally fall into business and organization stuff and then I help out where I can. . . . Some of the people in the band write more songs and are more involved in that way. And so, it's kind of a way of dividing duties among different band members (Informant One, 2010).

While Informant One's case corroborates my theory, not all drummers are unable or unwilling to write music. Still, drummers are probably less likely to write music, given the instrument's focus on rhythm rather than pitch. It would be useful to survey

musicians with the intent of discovering rates of songwriting within specific instrument categories. If drummers generally have a low songwriting rate compared to their bandmates, one would expect Informant One's experience to be common.

In an attempt to find more evidence concerning this theory, I asked another drummer, Informant Fifteen, about this issue. Unlike Informant One, Informant Fifteen (2010) did not feel that being a drummer affected her band's labor division. Instead, she introduced the idea that being a singer confers a musician some additional duties:

I love playing the drums, but I feel like, since I'm singing at the same time, it kinda holds me back performance-wise, both drumming and singing-wise. . . . But I'd say in that realm, as far as drums are concerned, that's the only way that that holds me back. I feel like the fact that I'm the lead singer, too, kind of puts me in the forefront as well. And I am kind of a go-getter, so as far as decision-making and getting things going, I kind of do all that kind of stuff, just because it's what I do. Talking to people, meeting new people. The guitarist is getting better at it, and he does his—he records our albums and produces them. . . . I have the van that we drive on tour. I set up the tour. If people interview us, it's nice to have [the guitarist] there, but if he's not around, they'll typically interview me, just 'cause I kind of am the spokesperson, and manage everything. So I'd say . . . the lead vocals in any band kinda have the front person roll in any band, but on the whole I would say, just 'cause of the type of person I am, and maybe 'cause I'm the singer too, I end up making more decisions or being more of the outspoken person (Informant Fifteen, 2010).

Informant Fifteen's statement draws a link between singers and the managerial duties in a band. This statement was echoed by Informant Two (2010), who stated that singers tend to be the booking and public relations person. It makes sense because, as Informant Fifteen suggested, the singer in a band tends to be the face of the group and may be more outgoing in the first place. More research is needed to prove or disprove either of these theories, but the evidence I've found so far is noteworthy. It is worth noting that other informants stated that they'd never noticed a link between one's

instrument and their job in the band. The idea of one's instrument affecting their band's division of labor is by no means a universally agreed upon notion.

Finally, the relationship between one's instrument and one's job-related duties is less clear if a band writes all of its songs as a group. It becomes difficult to designate "songwriting" as a viable band job because everyone is doing it. This is especially true of the drummer theory, where drummers cannot take part in songwriting and so must compensate in other ways. As part of my research I wanted to ascertain the "weight" of songwriting as a band duty, and see if all musicians considered songwriting to be a "job" equal to tour booking, accounting or any of the side work duties.

Business versus Creative Duties

The final item I want to examine in this section is the equivalency between the business end of a band (accounting, booking shows, and promotions) and the creative side of a band. This is a fairly problematic subject because some musicians participate in both aspects of the work. Additionally, songwriting can be done alone on one's own time, but it is difficult to prove that the time was spent writing songs for a specific band. A musician could very well be writing for a solo project or second band and therefore be putting no effort into the band in question. I asked my informants if they thought writing music was a legitimate job and if it excused band members from other duties.

The answer is, in a word, yes. Both songwriters and non-songwriters alike generally agreed that writing songs is important enough to equate it to other duties. In fact, Informants Three and Six (2010) both complained that the time they spent writing songs wasn't always given enough recognition:

I would love to plug in that amp right now, and rock out on that guitar for like, three hours down here tonight, but I just can't do it. So I'll probably, if everyone's sleeping I might grab that guitar and play it upstairs, but I might do that for a couple hours tonight, where the other guys might be downtown at the bar, or, you know, hanging out, just doing stuff, while I'm spending time on the band thing. And that is, you know I'll admit it, sometimes I do get frustrated like that, you know if someone in the band has a complaint about something, it's like, "you fucking kidding me?"—all this time that I've spent towards this band (Informant Three, 2010).

Our drummer basically takes care of everything and our guitar player and I just show up. It has been a little contentious in the past because the drummer feels like he does an extra lot of work getting this stuff done. You know, setting up shows, and taking care of the Facebook and whatever. . . . I don't feel that bad because I fucking have to write the goddamn songs because they're like, busy doing their other bands or whatever. Our guitar player does very little . . . work for the band. I'm not being fair, I guess, cause I'm sure there's lots of things I don't know about. . . . I think we all probably feel like that. We all feel like we do our share of the work (Informant Six, 2010).

Informant Six's statement illustrates that biases may exist when people try to weigh their work habits against their bandmates'. It is quite possible that most musicians feel as if they do more work than their bandmates. It would be interesting to do an analysis of an entire band for the purpose of determining whether everyone in the band felt this way, or if it were only some people. Regardless, it is clear that many songwriters value their contribution to the band and equate it with managerial duties.

I also interviewed non-songwriting informants who spoke of the songwriting process as a valuable and viable job. I asked Informant One if songwriting was equitable to managerial side work. He replied, "I think so, in my mind. One of the songwriters sometimes apologizes for not doing more business stuff, but at the same time I remind him that he does a lot of the writing and without the separate duties for everyone things probably wouldn't work out" (Informant One, 2010). Informant One's case shows a great

deal of cognizance of the potential conflict, and a generally amicable relationship. It may be that this case is somewhat exceptional (given the colder statements above), but in the absence of additional proof, we must assume it is not. In general, songwriting appears to be a highly respected and valued job in most original music bands that is on par with other business-related duties.

When I asked Informant Twelve (2010) about this issue, he brought up a case that I had not anticipated, in which the ability to play proficiently excused the band member from duties:

I got one guy in the band that I have to deal with shit like that. Talent. That's it. . . . If he can't play for shit, he's not going to get helped. But if he's a player, you bend a bit. You know "I'll set up your gear for you. I'll let you come an hour late. I'll let you do this, I'll let you do that," 'cause the mother-fucker can play. That's my thought on that. It's not like I'm happy about it. I probably tend to bend a bit more than I should (Informant Twelve, 2010).

In this case, something as intangible as the sheer ability to play an instrument very skillfully afforded this musician leniency, exemption from behavior norms, and generally high status. It corroborates an anecdote I heard about musician who went on a multi-month tour, only to run out of money after a few days on the road. His bandmates financially supported him on the rest of the tour because of his prowess on his instrument and his songwriting ability. These types of stories very much suggest that songwriting is at least equal to managerial duties.

Side Projects

With all of the time that musicians spend working on their bands, and all of the problems that surface due to unbalanced workloads, it makes sense that there would exist jealousy over bandmates' side projects. Because a musician only has a certain amount of time that he or she can spend on bands, splitting time between two or more bands would likely reduce the time allocated to both bands. This can be compounded by the fear that the multi-banded musician might quit one band to spend more time in another. Some informants (Informant One, 2010; Informant Two, 2010; Informant Three, 2010) were willing to compare bandmates to spouses; many of the same commitment-related fears exist in both bands and relationships. Informant Three (2010) used this analogy when expressing his disdain for bandmates that got jealous over his side projects: "You don't love me anymore? You want to hang out with these other guys?" (Informant Three, 2010). Informant Three stated that because he's not going to quit the band, his bandmates have nothing to worry about. According to Informant Three, bandmates who don't put much effort into their bands are the ones who will attract ire. As long as ample time is being put into both projects, everyone stays happy. This is an optimistic view, but Informant Eight (2010) noted that age was a factor in determining how much time a person has, and how jealous bandmates become because of a side project:

There's sometimes a bit of jealousy when it doesn't work into your agenda. . . . It's obvious there's time that's going to be taken away from the other band. I feel like it's more like that with the age we're at now where there's not as much time, and there's only so much creative energy, not as much as like, when you were in high school (Informant Eight, 2010).

An interesting thought that Informant Eight brings up is the idea one's creative energy might be finite. If a given musician only has so much available output, then the side project problem becomes far more problematic. If we assume that a person can only create a certain amount of good material in a year, then that amount is effectively halved in two bands, and divided further for each subsequent band. In this case, not only is a "polygamous" bandmate unable to commit the same amount of time to the band, but they are also unable to commit the same quality of creative product! Informant Eleven (2010) made a similar statement during our interview. "I've been in both situations. . . . It goes back to that time commitment thing. If it's affecting the amount of time that you have decided is needed for one band, then I think it can be a problem. If all creative energy is being diverted to a side project, that can be a problem, too" (Informant Eleven, 2010). Informant Eleven corroborates Informant Eight by stating that both time and creative energy diversion causes problems.

This idea of creative energy is troubling. It is possible, though improbable, that each musician has a finite amount of good ideas in a given time period and that utilizing them for one band denies another their use. A study would have to be performed to validate this. However, assuming that this is not true, I think that creative energy is still tied to free time. A musician certainly has a finite amount of time to devote to the creative process. Work, family, leisure and everything else compete for time. So even if creativity is an endless font requiring nothing more than attention to produce a product, creative generation still consumes time. A side project is almost sure to be a detriment to a band in that sense.

However, not all of my informants felt so negatively about side projects.

Informant Ten's opinion represented the exact opposite view point— to Informant Ten side projects increase bands' exposure and invigorate the entire music scene:

Everybody in the music scene in my town is part of the same thing, is to get people excited about music. Really, the success of the other bands that they're in, and I'm in, draws more attention to this band, which is just one of 8 that we're all a member of. When it starts to draw down on the amount of effort [other members are putting in] there's that grain of salt you have to take with it. You know, this may be a good chance for me to get caught up on my taxes. Because it usually goes in cycles. That may happen, and then a couple months later your band will be playing 4 or 5 times a week (Informant Ten, 2010).

Informant Ten's view has been echoed by my peers periodically; I've had bandmates that expected a side project to increase our band's exposure and used that as a means to quell any jealousy that might have manifested. However, I am not in a position to say whether the band benefitted as advertised. I do agree with the last part of Informant Ten's statement. Bands do appear to follow a cyclical pattern and, if nothing else, my bandmate's current side project has given your author more time to write this very thesis.

Songwriting

In the previous section of this thesis, a number of informants brought up songwriting as it pertained to the division of work. I illustrated that most of my informants considered songwriting to be a valuable job that was equitable to business jobs in terms of dividing the work load. Given that the work load is not always equally balanced, this in itself could then become a source of conflict when a bandmate felt overburdened. But the problems related to songwriting go deeper than this. Songwriting

becomes a source of conflict because of the criticism involved in the process as well as tensions between a band leader and her followers.

The Songwriting Process

Bands' songwriting processes generally fall along a spectrum that describes the amount of input members have compared to a band's leader. On one end of the spectrum, songs are written as a group, with each member adding aspects of the song. The idealized version of this pole probably does not exist, but bands I interviewed approach this ideal. In Seddon and Biasutti's 2008 article, *Investigating a rock band engaged in group composition*, the authors discuss the writing process of the Italian band Reeta Pawone, who write songs by recording group improvisations and refining them over the course of three or four practices. Even in this situation, the members are not purely equal in their writing contributions because one member "manipulates the backing tracks on the computer during group composition sessions. Often at home he listens to the recordings made at the group composition sessions and constructs backing tracks for the group to play with at the next session" (Seddon and Biasutti, 2008).

Informant Fourteen (2010) was in an interesting position with regard to this issue because he was in two different bands on either side of the spectrum. In one band, the members improvise and refine the parts they like, not unlike Reeta Pawone. However,

There's another band which is the complete opposite, where it's completely my decision, everything we do, pretty much. Maybe the contributions come just from errors from the other guys, 'cause I'll compose everything a certain way, and then show it to them and then they don't play it exactly the way I wrote it, and that's their contribution. . . . I feel like just by having bandmates, even if I compose everything, they still have an

influence on the sound and the writing just by their weaknesses and strengths (Informant Fourteen, 2010).

Informant Fourteen's statement illustrates that even a band with a clear leader who writes everything is subject to member input. There is no such thing as a truly autocratic band.

Most of my informants' bands fell somewhere toward the middle of the spectrum. Although I did ask informants to place their bands on a ten point scale between "autocratic" and "democratic," I unfortunately made no attempt to separate songwriting from other decisions. In hindsight, this would have been quite useful. Instead, I used informants' extended interview responses to estimate their status with regards to songwriting. Most of the bands appear to be more leader-based than egalitarian. Informant One (2010) stated this succinctly: "In all the bands [I am in] it's usually the same. There's some collaboration in songwriting, but it'll be one or two people usually will come with a song idea that is mostly fleshed out as far as the parts and structure goes. And then everyone will write their own parts and give input to people" (Informant One, 2010). Seven of my fifteen informants specifically cited a similar songwriting method, in which one person brings a rough song structure to practice, and everyone else writes their parts and changes the song somewhat. In all of these cases, the person who brought the song idea generally has the most power in determining the direction of the song. My personal experiences in bands echo this finding; most of the bands that I have been a part of utilized this songwriting method.

Conflict During Songwriting

According to informants, the two main issues that cause conflicts during songwriting are criticism of ideas, and leader/follower tensions. It is interesting that a band's songwriting method largely determines the relevancy of these issues and the frequency with which they will arise. Bands that write their music as a group or bands where members are free to write their own parts are more likely to experience conflict related to criticism of their creative efforts. Conversely, leader-based bands, where members' parts are dictated by the composer, are more likely to have problems relating to leader/follower tensions.

Criticism

Most of my informants agreed that bandmate-to-bandmate criticism during songwriting is an essential act for a band. Just as an author utilizes an editor, so must a songwriter's creation be scrutinized in order to filter out mediocre ideas. Informant Two (2010) noted that his bandmates were competent filters, and Informant Six (2010) was willing to take a further step by explaining that his bandmates often added to his vision:

They're incredibly patient with me when it comes to working with a part I bring in, and they're also both very receptive to my direction when I suggest, you know I want it to sound like this. This is what I was thinking. Not that I have to do that a lot. . . . I am surprised a lot. I think that's great, because if everything sounded as I imagined it sounding, we would be terribly, terribly boring. And it would sound so stagnant and the same. That's the great thing about being in a band with other people, I mean, you get THAT. That all said, they do indulge me a lot (Informant Six, 2010).

Informant Eight agreed that criticism was necessary and stated: “I think bands are made good and defined by conflict and group editing” (2010). However, numerous informants noted that criticism can cause serious fights. It appears that most criticism-related fights are due to passive-aggressive communication and band members becoming emotionally attached to their songs or parts. Additionally, the political structure of a band plays a large role in determining how problematic criticism will be for a band.

Passive-Aggressiveness as a Response to Criticism

Many of my informants said that passive-aggressive communication plays a negative role in determining how well criticism is received. Informant Seven (2010) noted that, while most musicians have big egos, many of them are too timid to say no. This can lead to a situation where a musician feels strongly about a song or part but is unwilling to talk to the band about it. Instead, their frustration manifests in other ways, such as veiled personal attacks (Informant Three, 2010) or attempts to drown out a bandmate by turning the amplifier’s volume up (Informant Seven, 2010). Informant Nine (2010) discussed this regarding a band he used to be in: “It really depends on how the criticism is delivered. Usually if it's spoken, it's a lot easier to deal with than if it's just this vibe” (Informant Eleven, 2010). He continued, “So in some cases it caused some permanently hurt feelings. . . . That was one of those unspoken things. It was just energy. And I think it's a lot harder to process through energy communications than it is verbal communications—at least for me” (Informant Nine, 2010). Informant Eleven agreed:

The fight, in a more democratic band, usually goes down fairly passive-aggressively at first, I think. I generally would just keep [playing my unpopular part], if it's something I'm sure I want in the song. Or I would

just tweak the other parts so they would fit around the part I liked. The other people in my band, a lot of times, are a little more blunt, I think, and would straight up say "I don't like that" or "that part sucks" (Informant Eleven, 2010).

Informant Eleven is careful to draw a distinction between egalitarian bands and more autocratic ones. He also illustrates that this passive-aggressiveness works both ways; a member whose part was vetoed can be found utilizing a passive-aggressive or nonverbal argument just as a member who is displeased with a bandmate's part. Not all of this passive-aggressive behavior is nonverbal. Informant three cited a critical method that one of his bandmates often employs: "One of the guys will . . . point out how [my song] sounds like something else . . . and he'll always reference something that he knows I hate" (Informant Three, 2010).

A Band's Political Structure's Effect on Criticism

The above examples have mostly dealt with relatively democratic bands. In more autocratic groups that have a clear leader, issues relating to criticism seem to be less prevalent. Although I do not have survey data to support this, Informant Fourteen (2010) stated that his autocratic band has fewer issues with criticism than his democratic bands:

I will just say "I don't like that beat," or "I don't like that bass line," or something. I feel pretty comfortable just being really honest. But I can completely take that from my bandmates. I think if there's something that's not jiving for one of us, we should just talk about it. . . . We just have a pretty chill vibe in the band, it's not too serious. I think because I write most of the stuff, they're just kinda like, "Cool. It doesn't matter." They don't have as much of a personal stake in it. So it's not like, if person x sits down and bangs out a drum beat, it's probably, like, super sacred to him, you know. . . . So really I think the whole, trying to get it exactly how I want it works out in a nice positive way for everyone cause, no one really takes shit as personal then (Informant Fourteen, 2010).

This distinction between a musician's own parts and those of their band leader's is incredibly important and not particularly obvious from the outside. I, personally, have never been in a band where I was playing parts that were written for me, but I have been in a band that played cover songs. The parts I write do become somewhat sacred to me, and unlike the parts in a cover song, if my bandmates want me to change them, I sometimes get defensive. Informant Twelve (2010) discussed this defensiveness during his interview:

I'm maybe a little bit too close-minded. A lot of the tunes that I write, I think about for a couple of years, and it's not like their great songs, it's just that I've invested so much thought into them that if somebody wants to come in and rework the thing, it's not gonna happen. Maybe minor changes will happen, but I've never been one to say "yeah, sure. Do whatever with it." It's kinda like my baby, you know (Informant Twelve, 2010).

Informant Eleven also discussed this issue, and in doing so, clearly defined the difference between a democratic band and an autocratic band, as it pertains to criticism of his parts:

I've known that this [autocratic band] is someone else's vision and that allows me to hold my tongue a little bit more. But it is easier to come up with more creative stuff when it's a little looser—how you can express yourself. But at the same time, I have been in a band where it was looser and I've thought there's been some really great ideas that I've come up with, and then it's been like "We're not going to do that. Don't do that. Scale it back. Don't do that. Don't do that." And it is hard to accept sometimes, but it's easier when there's someone who's clearly in charge, so to speak, so it makes it an easier pill to swallow than if you were in a band where everyone had equal say and you fight more for your ideas in situations like that (Informant Eleven, 2010).

Informant Eleven clearly states that having a leader lightens the effect of criticism directed towards the parts that he writes. When a musician is trying to help someone else achieve their vision, or is being told what to play, they do not become as attached to their parts and take criticism as personally as they might if they were in a democratic band. Where autocratic bands do experience issues is in the realm of leader/follower tensions where arguments occur due to the demands a leader places upon subordinates.

Leader/Follower Tensions

In leader-based bands, tension can form as a result of the demands that a leader places on his or her musicians. Informant Eleven (2010) discussed a situation where he was replacing a musician in a band that had existed for some time. The leader tried to compel him to play the old musician's parts exactly as the former member had:

In the band I'm in now, where I'm trying to be similar to another player that was in the band before. There's been points where I'm like, I don't think that he was doing what was best for the song, and I don't think he was doing the same thing all the time, but he was when they recorded and that's kinda my reference point (Informant Eleven, 2010).

[The thing that causes the most arguments is] when the leader is trying to get us to essentially recreate a band that we're not. All musicians have their own style, their own subtle differences, even if you're trying to make it very similar. . . . This is a situation where it's the main guy, and then 3 new musicians who are playing with him. So it's hard (Informant Eleven, 2010).

Informant Eleven noted that this was often a source of frustration because his strengths as a musician were not being put to good use. It may be the case that he was simply not suited to the material; finding another musician more like the original member

could alleviate the problem. However, this problem could be compounded by the leadership style of the band's songwriter. In this case, I was able to talk to the leader of this band and discover part of the cause. Informant Thirteen, who led the band, discussed his critical approach as it related to instructing his band members:

Currently, I have a lot of suggestions for sure, because I feel like I'm limited in what I'm bringing to the table any more. I'm kinda going through a crisis where I feel like I've written my definitive song and I'm not sure how to totally change up my style. So the best I can do, is at practice, suggest that other people try to do something else—something that wouldn't make obvious sense to them with my guitar part. If I'm doing something and they come up with a perfectly fine part, I might suggest something totally different (Informant Thirteen, 2010).

Not only is Informant Eleven attempting to copy a former band member's material, but he is also being instructed to play parts that don't necessarily make musical sense. The problem here is a mismatched replacement for the former band member, along with somewhat unreasonable expectations from the leader. Whereas some musicians may not mind copying old parts or writing intentionally unnatural, unaesthetic accompaniments, others would rather write new parts and play what seems natural. I've personally been in a band where I was forced to play specific parts that did not suit my style, and the outcome was rarely satisfying. As seen above, however, most informants did not like their songs to be overly tampered with. It is very difficult to find a balance between playing something that satisfies the songwriter and the contributing musician at the same time. I asked Informant Nine (2010) how he went about directing his bandmates to play parts that work for his songs:

It hasn't always been a problem—sometimes it just works out, where the person just does it. There have been other times, when I personally have

just gotten someone close enough and just left it at that. And they were doing something that really embodied their own personality, which I prefer, to tell you the truth, 'cause I don't like those projects that are all owned and organized by one person, because I prefer the complexity of different energies coming together (Informant Nine, 2010).

At first glance, Informant Nine seems to have found the balance, but the truth is less optimistic. Despite the above quote, Informant Nine's songwriting experiences have been so problematic that he has partially abandoned original music bands. Informant Nine repeatedly stated that his cover band is far more harmonious than his former, original music, band: "Band A doesn't write any music. And that's why it works. We started the band with the idea of playing just [Well-Known Band], and it keeps us out of all sorts of problems. If [Well-Known Band] did it, we play it. If they didn't, we don't" (Informant Nine, 2010). This solution is quite drastic, and the ambitions of the band's members will determine if this is even an option. A band that wants to make a name for themselves will likely not be as willing to cut out songwriting as a band that plays for fun.

Does an Autocratic Political Structure Create Less Conflict?

As shown above, the political structure of a band has a huge effect on the types of conflicts a band is likely to experience. During my interview sessions I began to understand the relevancy of these politics and began asking my informants if they had formed an opinion on the subject. Most had an opinion, and the majority tended to extol the benefits of a single-leader-based band. According to Informant Seven (2010), a leader creates a system that benefits the whole band:

In the inception of a band, there needs to be a leader. There needs to be someone that has a formula, a goal, or just a vision, and with that, the rest will fall into place, because you form the rank and file. With that in mind, the songwriting aspect becomes the goal, not the show, the album, it's the song. . . . That takes the weight off the other people, and lets them have fun. The whole spectrum changes—you go from a pissing battle to “cool, man. I can relax, have fun and work more on trying to get the ladies and get wasted than I have to worry about trying to come up with a song.” You can leave that to the guy who wants to do that (Informant Seven, 2010).

Informant Seven's experience suggests that some band members work better with a clear hierarchical structure. This makes sense, given what has been written above concerning aspirations and time constraints. Informant Two (2010) also talked about wanting to do all of the administrative work as well as much of the songwriting in his bands. By taking control of the band, the leader frees the rest of the band from some of their work load and the accompanying pressure. As long as the leader is happy with the extra responsibility, the arrangement benefits the whole band. Leader-based bands do not always work this smoothly, however. If more than one bandmate wants the leader position, conflict ensues. Informant Nine and Ten both discussed situations where a power struggle between two band members destroyed their bands:

There were misconceptions and power struggles around that. [The other leader] was always challenging me. . . . He wanted to run everything but his expertise was hit and miss, really, and I didn't necessarily want to run everything, but it ended up being that I always had the last say on everything so, it kinda was like I ran everything, and he resented that, and yet, whenever he would fight for power and control, I always had the upper hand (Informant Nine, 2010)

It helps to have one leader. If there are two people that want to be leaders, you usually butt heads a lot more. This band, I'm referring to, had a lead singer, and the lead singer and I butted heads on artistic ideas and structural ideas all the time, and it ended up that he quit because we couldn't get along (Informant Ten, 2010).

Both of these cases ended with negative results: either the band broke up or someone quit or was forced out of the band. It is clear that a leader-based band with two or more individuals vying for power is an invitation for conflict. However, the effectiveness of the leader is critical in determining how harmonious the band's relations are likely to be. Leaders who ask too much of their band are likely to draw ire.

It is interesting to me that so many informants said that a leader-based band is desirable; according to my survey data, the political structure of bands is divided almost evenly between autocratic and democratic, with a very slight lean towards democratic. Here again, it would be incredibly useful and telling to have a full historical survey of every band each informant had been in. Given the existing information, however, I reached the following politics-based conclusions:

1. In a leader-based band, one leader is desirable. Two or more individuals vying for power can destroy a band.
2. Criticism is a lesser issue in a band where a leader writes all of the material. However, the leader must take care not to frustrate band members by forcing them to play against their strengths as musicians.
3. A songwriting leader can stifle creativity by vetoing band members' ideas.
4. It is common for bands' political structure to shift over time. Informants cited instances of bands becoming more or less democratic as time went by, and even reverting after a time.
5. The elimination of songwriting can ameliorate some political conflicts. This may be due more to a shift in aspirations than anything else, however.

CHAPTER VII: CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND MEDIATION

While the last chapter was concerned with the band-related conflict, this chapter examines the ways in which bands actively deal with those conflicts. While the proposed solutions to the problem are not as bountiful as the causes, informants did have a lot to say about their resolution methods.

Are Musicians Cognizant of their Band's Interpersonal Relations?

In my experience, a first step in dealing with these interpersonal problems is to begin thinking critically about the band's dynamics. I've been in bands that contained members who seemed deeply concerned with the band's interpersonal relations, as well as bands with members who did not care. To determine whether informants and their bandmates were thinking critically about these problems, I asked informants if they felt their bandmates were cognizant of their band's relationships. The results were mixed.

Informant Seven (2010) provided a positive answer, though his response was mixed: "I hope they are, but I can't say. With some of the former bands, for sure" (Informant Seven, 2010). Informant Seven often talked about his main band (which had recently broke up) as being a very volatile affair, so that band may be exceptional in that they were not particularly cognizant of the process. But the many differences between bands illustrate the breadth of variation likely to occur. Indeed, Informant Eight (2010) notes that his band is not cognizant at all: "No. I think a lot of the other members just leave that stuff—they don't touch it with their minds. . . . I don't know. It's something that's never talked about, and it's hard for me to assume" (Informant Eight, 2010). This lack of cognizance is fairly prominent. Even Informant One, who seemed to be very

attuned to mediation, noted: "When everything's going good there's not too much thought put into it, I would say" (Informant One, 2010). I suspect this is the case in most bands. It is easy to glide through the good times and forget about the bad, but I think simply remembering the delicacy of band relations could be enough to prevent some problems.

Age, once again, plays a factor in this area, as Informant Ten (2010) indicates: "I think it's thought about quite a bit—more now than before [in my 20's] especially. . . ." (Informant Ten, 2010). This is an extension of a quotation from earlier in the paper where he talks about older bandmates being more caring in general than their younger counterparts. Once again, older musicians are better prepared to deal with conflict, in this case by thinking in terms of their band's interpersonal relations.

The most positive opinion came from Informant Fourteen (2010), who felt his bandmates put a good deal of thought into making sure everyone got along: "Yes, I think we're all pretty good at mediating and keeping a cool head. . . . Honestly, I think having a ton of grass really helped, too, you know? It's hard to get real worked up over an issue [when you are under the influence of marijuana]" (Informant Fourteen, 2010). Within a deluge of sad and disastrous stories concerning bandmates' abuse of alcohol, opiates, stimulants, and hallucinogens, marijuana use was only once discussed as a problem (it proved too distracting for an informant's bandmate).

In fact, Informant Fourteen also noted that marijuana played an important role in some of his bands' songwriting processes. It would be useful to investigate the effects of cannabis during both the songwriting and reconciliation processes, with the intent of finding its effect on rates of conflict during songwriting, and success during mediation.

Communication

Informants regularly stated that the way in which their band communicated played a vital role in determining the outcome of conflicts. The medium of communication (verbal, written, etc.), how blunt or tactful a person is, and the frequency of communication all affect a band's interpersonal relations. The positive or negative effect of these variables on a band is more unpredictable than one might think, however.

I asked almost all of my informants to describe a typical practice and almost every one noted that practice begins with a period of discussion. These discussions can range from small talk to important business decisions. Some informants even simply watched online videos or engaged in some other friendly bonding activity. Informant Two (2010) noted that over a half-hour of each practice was usually devoted towards the discussion of upcoming events and band-related dialogues. While this time is cited as a positive bonding experience by some informants, for others it is a cause of problems. Informant Nine (2010) noted that this period allowed old issues to resurface, resulting in the resurrection of past arguments (although he does note that sometimes they get worked out). I've personally been in bands where the period of small talk was welcome. I've also been in a band where we all seemed to instinctively avoid talking at the beginning of practice. In that band, our pre-practice discussions centered around who was late and why. This led to complaints that a band member's gear was not set up and that time was limited and could be better spent elsewhere. By starting practice as quickly as possible, we avoided these irritants and the ensuing hurt feelings that could result from open confrontations with the perpetrator.

A few informants discussed the use of written communication as a means of organizing their bands and making decisions. The only cited methods were email and phone-based text messaging. It is interesting to note that the only informant that discussed email as a communication medium cast it in a very negative light. According to Informant Three (2010), email-based communication has led to explosive arguments that were mostly based on misunderstandings that would likely not have occurred had the discussion happened face to face. He strongly recommended against such practices.

The tone of communication was also cited as a way to either enrage or calm bandmates. Informant Five (2010) noted that, when addressing band-related issues, it is important to prevent the discussion from moving to a personal attack. I asked Informant One to describe one of the worst arguments he had experienced in a band, and he relayed a story concerning a bandmate who perceived a confrontation as a personal attack:

Well there were two of them I can think of that were probably equally acrimonious, where we brought up problems that we were having and one time the person blew up and locked themselves in the bathroom and wouldn't come out for the remainder of the practice and meeting and then went home and wouldn't talk to us for a while (Informant One, 2010).

Informant Six (2010) also discussed an instance of a bandmate locking himself in a room after a perceived personal attack. Avoiding personal attacks seems like common sense, but this can become problematic. There was not enough detail provided in these anecdotes to paint a clear picture of the event, but I've witnessed or participated in numerous conflicts in which a band member thought an attack to be personal when the rest of the band did not. In this type of case, it can be hard to predict a bandmate's

reaction, even if care has been taken to prevent hurt feelings. As a result, sometimes musicians avoid direct confrontation to prevent this type of problem.

Strategic Ignorance and Passive-Aggressiveness

In chapter VI, I discussed the conflicts created or exacerbated by passive-aggressive behavior. But sometimes, avoiding problems is a solution to conflicts rather than a cause of them. Some musicians avoid direct confrontation because they are afraid of hurting their bandmates' feelings. I asked Informant Five (2010) what she did when someone wrote a part that she did not like: "You try to tell em, no, that's not what I want, or you start working on something different and ignore the problem! Passive-aggressive! That happens a lot, but sometimes you don't want to hurt someone's feelings" (Informant Five, 2010).

When Informant Five made this statement, she seemed to feel that passively ignoring problems was not a good solution. But according to some researchers, ignoring the problem is the best idea in some circumstances. In a study of 20 string quartets, Murnighan and Conlon (1991) found that string quartets that were able to "absorb" conflict were more successful than those who could not. The bands I'm studying are different in that the string quartets did not write their own material, but the problems are similar. The authors note that the quartets would appear to fight over the nuances of an impending performance, but at the heart of the argument was "bad mood, trouble at home, and outside sources" (Murnighan and Conlon, 1991). Successful quartets were able to back off when the fight did not involve particularly meaningful subjects:

Rather than continuing to confront each other, quartets often decided to abandon discussion when they were mired in a troublesome dispute. They could return to it later—maybe. Another second violinist expressed it best: “If it’s important, you can always bring it up another day” (Murnighan and Conlon, 1991:177).

The major problem I foresee with this method is that it depends on there being unrelated factors driving the conflict. If the fight is not based on grouchiness and outside factors, it may be much more difficult to ignore the band-related issues being brought up.

As explained above, sometimes attempts to avoid direct confrontation and personal attacks can result in undesirable passive-aggressive behavior. Informant Nine (2010) noted that it’s best to find a comfortable balance. “If it’s something that doesn’t mean much to you that you can let go, well then [not talking about it] might be the best thing. But if it’s something that’s going to bug you, it’s best to probably talk about it” (Informant Nine, 2010). This balance is not always easy to find, and in its absence, the problems associated with direct, honest confrontation seem to be fewer and less damaging than passive-aggressive behavior and indirect confrontation.

Mediation

Informant Seven (2010) stated that his former band had serious issues communicating—they did not really engage in constructive communication at all. I asked him how to get a band that does not communicate to communicate. He replied, “Well I’ve seen bands do that. It’s called a manager” (Informant Seven, 2010). While there was certainly some humor intended in his comment and none of my informants had a manager, the fact remains that many bands contain members that do attempt to mediate arguments between other bandmates. According to informants, bands that practice some

sort of group mediation usually have one or two members who attempt to solve problems.

This person must be someone who is relatively uninvolved with the current argument:

There are a few of us who try to be mediators in arguments. We try to have someone who's not being affected as much bring up—broach the issue, and then kinda act as a referee if things get out of hand. But there's really no stated role when that happens. It's just kind of a de facto thing. . . . Usually it's between me and another person in any of the bands that I do this with. There's usually one other person or two other people that will initiate the conversation about what's going on and try and deal with it. I don't know if we have a vested interest, but we take more initiative in trying to figure things out (Informant One, 2010)

Informant One's comment makes clear that although there are a small number of people that consistently play the role of mediator, that role is never officially recognized. Rather, the mediator role is likely fairly thankless. The last sentence in which Informant One talks about having a vested interest in the situation is quite interesting. The motivation for doing the work necessary to intervene is not clear. Informant Three (2010) may have the answer, however. He states: "you play mediator because you don't want the band to break up" (2010). He goes even further by suggesting that sometimes he wanted to take a side in an argument between two other band members where one is clearly wrong. "I should be honest, in this instance, but I'm not going to, because I selfishly want to keep my band together" (Informant Three, 2010). Informant Three illustrates that, at least in his case, mediation is not due to an altruistic drive to solve problems and make people happy, but a selfish desire to keep the band together. I imagine that most of these mediators' motivations stem from a similar desire. Informant Eleven (2010) states another reason to mediate. In his case, he was responsible for bring two people together in a band:

I always feel like I end up being the mediator. . . . If there are problems I generally try to go between two people. Because I've been in bands with two people that just don't get along. And a lot of times, I'm the one who brought them together. So you're trying to be the guy who can get them to jive. And that's something I've realized over the years that sometimes you just gotta let people have their fights and have it out, or it's just this cloud over what you do. (Informant Eleven, 2010).

Informant Eleven's response indicates that he feels a duty to resolve arguments between two band members that otherwise might not have been in a band together. It is also interesting that Informant Eleven sees some fights as necessary. Surely the ability to differentiate between fights that need to happen and fights that should be mediated would be a useful skill.

Breaking Up or Fissioning as a Means of Resolution

Unfortunately, not all disputes can be adequately settled, and bands have one more option to consider when all else fails: breaking up the band. Band breakups come in two forms. In the first, the band simply disbands and the members go their own ways. Obviously this is not usually a desirable outcome; all of the band's hard work is thrown away. However some informants saw these breakups as a necessary progression in their musical careers. Informant Eleven (2010) was frank about the impermanence of bands and assured me that the band breaking up was not the end of the world:

There's a point where you can deal with people and you can make things work. And that's kinda what being in a band is about. It's never going to be perfect. No band is perfect. There's always going to be conflict. But I'm kinda in the camp nowadays that says, "If it aint working, and you've put enough effort into it, then you kick that member out or you break up the band, because it's not worth it to waste your time and not be musically creative or not succeed at the goals you set for your band". . . . Just like any relationship . . . some things are just broken and it's not going to work

that way, no matter what you do. . . . And the longer I've played the more I've understood. Bands come and go (Informant Eleven, 2010).

This concept of bands coming and going is echoed by Informant Six (2010), who also sees a breakup as a necessary step. In this case, though, the band tends to regroup in a similar configuration sometime down the road, but with a new name and new material. This optimistic view of a break up is not shared by all informants, however. Oftentimes, a band will not completely dissolve, but will fission when a band member either quits, or is removed from the band by consensus. Rather than an idyllic view of a band cordially parting ways to pursue other interests, these affairs can be quite unpleasant.

With the loss of a band member, a band loses part of what made it unique. In previous sections above, many informants noted that individual band members were incredibly important because they added their own musical styles to their band. Informant One (2010) states that because of this uniqueness, a band should try every other resolution mechanism to avoid fissioning:

It makes it a very difficult decision because the people in your band really help define what you sound like. All the bands that I've been in have been collectives really; it hasn't been a person writing all the songs and having a backing band that's replaceable. We've gone through members and when we have had to replace them, it's been really difficult to get back on track. It's taken us months and months to really do it and it's a really big setback for what we're trying to do. So the mentality has been to go to any and all lengths to not kick someone out (Informant One, 2010).

Informant One also notes that the band went into a period of disarray after the breakup which may not be as predictable as other problems. Some undesirable repercussions are certain to occur. For instance, a band that loses a songwriter also forfeits part of its repertoire:

I've been in a few bands where people were kicked out. The first real band I was in, the two main songwriters fought all the time. So it became a choice of who was instigating more of the time and to kick that person out. So we lost half of our repertoire because we kicked out half of the songwriting team and I lost a friendship for a while because of it, too. . . . The person we kicked out took it very personally (Informant One, 2010).

Informant One brings up the second major predictable effect of a fission: hurt feelings and the potential loss of friendship. Informant Three also talked about this problem as it relates to his band, which is comprised of family: "So, I mean, how do you break up a band like that? If you break it up, it has to be on good terms because you're going to see these jerks at holidays, you know" (Informant Three, 2010). This case illustrates the problematic nature of breakups and fissioning, in which hurt feelings and grudges are not acceptable side effects.

The final major issue when dealing with a band breaking up is the division of band assets. For most of the musicians I interviewed, money was never a significant source of conflict because there was not much money to begin with, and any money that did exist went into a communal band fund. However, a fissioning member may expect to receive part of the band fund. To avoid this problem, a well established rule (akin to a prenuptial agreement) could be established at the band's inception that determines what will happen to the band fund in the case of a breakup.

Informant Four (2010) noted that her band made sure new members understand the rule when they join: "Band fund is fifth member. You leave the band, you leave the fund. That's the way it is. I don't want to deal with the math. I don't want to deal with the payback. I definitely don't want to deal with the bitching" (Informant Four, 2010).

Unfortunately, money is not the only thing a dissolved band must negotiate.

During the course of its existence a band's name can become quite valuable. Informant Nine stated that he felt slighted when the band broke up. "Besides, I was the owner of the band, I was sole proprietor and I paid all the taxes on that band. I was like, I own this band. I came up with the name, and basically I paid taxes on that band for 15 years" (Informant Nine, 2010). In this case, however, the name had to be put to rest because it belonged to both Informant Nine and the songwriter who was removed from the band. Beyond money and names, bands sometimes invest in recording equipment, instruments and vehicles, all of which have to be divided in some way upon a band's dissolution. Having a plan from the start may alleviate some of the conflict associated with this distribution. Even so, the complications of distributing the band's assets explain why many informants view fission as a last resort.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Although my informants discussed a great deal of conflict-related issues, the major factors centered on time and priority-related problems, creative arguments, and political and hierarchical issues. Musicians' aspirations have a great effect on the kinds of interpersonal problems a band is likely to experience. Bandmates with differing ambitions and mismatched priorities are likely to encounter numerous conflicts relating to ideological differences and the band's division of labor. The large amount of time necessary for a band to function often leaves musicians with little patience for an uncommitted or lazy bandmate.

Conversely, a highly motivated band member, with the personal goal of attaining fame and wealth by "making it" as a musician, can clash with other bandmates who do not share this goal. Many of my informants stated that they did not want to be rock stars; instead, they were motivated by a desire to express themselves artistically, and experience other places through travel. These informants viewed their more zealous bandmates as being unrealistic and driven by ideologies that they could not endorse. However, a highly motivated musician can have a positive effect on a band by pushing them to greater success than they might otherwise attain.

Creative and songwriting-related issues seem to be most apparent in egalitarian bands, where all of the members contribute somewhat equally to the songwriting process. When musicians write their own parts they tend to take criticism more personally than they might in leader-based bands, where parts are either pre-written by the leader or written for another member's song.

One clear, effective leader can prevent political power struggles and allow a band to function more smoothly. The success of this strategy depends on the effectiveness of the leader, however. Leaders who lack direction, or demand that their followers play against their musical strengths, can frustrate their bandmates.

Informants generally agreed that an effective communication strategy, including the ability to tactfully criticize bandmates' material, is important for the prevention and resolution of conflicts. However, the efficacy of Murnighan and Conlon's "conflict absorption" research should not be underestimated. Some conversations are best avoided. Additionally, active mediation, perhaps headed by a band manager, was prescribed by some informants as an effective means of resolving problems. Band breakups were generally seen as an undesirable last resort, although some informants simply viewed them as necessary steps in their career as musicians.

Future Research

This thesis's weakness (and strength) is its breadth of scope and reliance on qualitative research. Although I believe that my informants possessed a great deal of insight into the themes I was investigating, the dramatic variances in age, genre, experiences, and opinions that have been illustrated throughout this paper underscore the need for more research into factors that influence bands' potential to resolve internal conflicts. Put plainly, it would be illuminating to put my informants' assertions to the test to determine how representative they are of the greater community by conducting a survey with a relatively large sample size.

In my current study I felt limited by my research sample. Rather than interviewing all members of specific bands, I interviewed musicians from many different bands with very little overlap. While this probably gave me more variation in the types of problems encountered, there was no way to see if there was a uniformity of opinion in the types of conflicts and mediation strategies within each band.

A specific issue that could benefit from this kind of full-band study is the division of the work load. If the whole band were interviewed, a researcher would have not only each member's opinion of their own work ethic, but also the opinions of their bandmates. If everyone tended to rate their own work ethic higher than their bandmates', this would be apparent. It would also be helpful in this regard to ask informants how many hours a week they put towards their band.

The other major area where I could have used more information was in determining each informant's aspirations and goals in the band. Because I never specifically asked what each informant's ultimate band goal was, I had to infer these from my informant interview. It would be very useful to specifically ask each informant about their goals as a musician, and about the goals of their bandmates.

Regarding the load in, according to my interviews, drummers tended to feel unfairly worked because they owned the band's van. It would be useful to ask informants what kind of vehicle they drove and who was responsible for moving the band's equipment. If this drummer-van connection is a fluke, it will appear in the survey data.

Also, the issue of one's instrument affecting their band's division of labor should be investigated with the goal of discovering whether drummers end up doing more business work due to their inability to write music. A survey that determines which

musicians write the most music (based on the instrument played) would be very useful, along with a survey that simply asks which member of an informant's band does the majority of the business work. This research would help to define the mechanisms that are responsible for dividing a band's work load.

Finally, band breakups and fissions should be investigated with the aim of determining which members are most likely to quit or split off from the rest of the band during a fission. From my own experience, it seems that drummers and bass players have some of the highest turnover rates in bands. A study could verify this observation and attempt to find additional variables that are responsible for the trend. For instance, if drummers and bass players write less music than their bandmates, they may not feel as strongly connected to the band as the main songwriters.

Closing

The title of this thesis, *Precarious Collaborations: A Study of Interpersonal Conflict and Resolution Strategies in Local Rock Bands*, is broad, which is appropriate given the wide scope of the research. I think that many people have little knowledge of the inner workings of bands and so are ill-equipped to attempt research in this area. It is likely no coincidence that many of my cited authors had been in bands (Groce and Dowell, 1988; Ferguson, 2002). So, in addition to providing useful information to local musicians, part of this thesis's objective is to expose this wide range of conflict to readers who would not otherwise be privy to bands' inner workings. My hope is that this thesis can enable non-musicians to more easily take part in band-related research and address

both the many recommendations I put forth above, and all of the new issues that will surely surface in the future.

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Appendix A: List of Interview Questions

Opening

Describe a typical band practice.

General Conflict-Related Questions

Does your band usually get along?

Does the instrument a person plays affect their relationship with their bandmates?

What sorts of things cause the most arguments in your band?

Can you remember the worst argument you've experienced in a band?

How do you deal with a difficult or problematic bandmate?

Have you or your bandmates experienced problems relating to jealousy?

Have you or your bandmates experienced problems relating to side projects?

Division of Labor

How does your band divide the work load?

How is does your band organize the load in process? Should singers who don't play other instruments help carry other people's equipment?

Songwriting

How does your band write music?

How do you and your bandmates deal with criticism during songwriting?

Conflict Resolution and Mediation

Does anyone ever attempt to mediate disputes between other bandmates?

How does your band solve problem X?

Do you feel you or your bandmates are cognizant of your band's interpersonal dynamics?

Other Questions

What role does gender play in your band's interpersonal dynamic?

How does your band deal with money?

Have you or your bandmates experienced problems with alcohol or other drugs?

What makes for a more conflict-free band: a band composed of great musicians, or a band composed of good friends?