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Improvisational Music Performance: On-Stage Communication of Power Relationships

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Improvisational Music Performance:
On-Stage Communication of Power Relationships

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This project explores how musical improvisational processes come into being through interacting discursive power relationships that are embodied and enacted through performance. By utilizing the concepts of framing and performativity I am able to show how discursive power constitutes the performance of improvisational music. To exemplify this theory, the project presents a case study examining a Grateful Dead cover band named Uncle John's Band that performs at Skipper's Smokehouse in Tampa, FL. Using an ethnographic methodology, the project articulates the dominant discursive power relationships that constitute Uncle John's Band's improvisational performances. The dominant discursive power relationships revolve around the lived philosophies and performance style of the Grateful Dead as embodied and communicated through performance by the members of Uncle John's Band. Dominant discursive power relationships also form among audience members as well as the staff at Skipper's Smokehouse. All of these power relationships constitute the performance of improvisational music. In a reflexive turn, the project also offers a re-articulation of ethnography through the tenets of improvisation. Finally, the project presents conclusions concerning the nature of researching improvisational music performance and some future directions for this study.

Chapter 1: An Introduction to Creativity, Improvisation, and Process

And I say row, Jimmy, row

Gonna get there, I don't know

Seems a common way to go

Get down and row, row, row, row, row

“Row Jimmy” (Garcia & Hunter, 1973, track 3).

Think about the moment after you read an especially compelling book or listen to an uplifting song. You are emotionally wrapped up in the text. You hold on to those passages and verses that say something special to you. Maybe the text shed light on a difficult situation, or opened your eyes to an alternate point of view. Maybe the text gave you some insight, or suggested an interesting approach to a problem. Soon, however, you recognize the fact that this text was written/composed by *someone*. What does it take to create such emotions and feelings? You realize that the book or song is a reflection and embodiment of a creative process. If you could ask the author or composer questions about her/his work, what would they be? What was your inspiration? What is your creative process? What advice do you have for an aspiring author/composer? Different artists will reply differently. Le Guin (1997) states, “the one thing a writer has to have is a pencil and some paper” (p. 227). Zappa (1997) says that, “composition is a process of organization, very much like architecture” (p. 195). In order to be creative, one needs tools, a process, and organization. Books and songs are products of a creative process. This creative process is as interesting and compelling as its products.

This project takes as its starting point the creative process, and seeks to understand how creative processes work within/on culture and individuals. The creative process pushes culture forward, challenges traditional meanings, and helps to transform society (Barron, 1997). Creative processes can help to change society, break apart ideas of oppression and intolerance, and introduce new meanings into a culture. Creative processes can also preserve the status quo and obfuscate notions of domination, coercion, and cruelty. In this sense, creative processes communicate meaningful relationships among culture and those who participate in creative processes. In other words, culture speaks to creative processes, and creative processes speak to/about culture by way of individuals involved in the processes.

Individuals participating in creative processes exist within a culture. Individuals obtain knowledge through social interaction with others in their society (Mead, 1936). Individuals learn culturally generated meanings, and in turn, apply those meanings in order to make sense of their world. But individuals are not social dupes. The human mind has the capacity to connect experiences to memories, and form opinions about cultural meanings. In some cases, these pinions, experiences, meanings, and memories act as a catalyst for creativity resulting in art, literature, and poetry. As culture works on individuals participating in creative processes, creative processes also work on culture. In other words, culture does things to the creator(s) and creative processes, *and* creative processes do things for both the creator(s) and the culture consuming the creative products. A relationship forms among cultural meanings and individuals participating in the culture. By studying communicating creators this project seeks to understand the relationship between creative processes and culture.

Creative processes encompass many activities. From playing a tuba to throwing a clay pot, creative processes strive to produce a reflection of the culture, the creator(s), and/or an image of the process itself. Creators often hide their creative processes rather than highlight them. Yet some creators highlight their creative processes. Examples highlighting creative processes are found in popular media such as VH1's Behind the Music, "Making of" special features for films, and "How to" instructional material. Goffman (1959) refers to this hiding as "backstage work", or work that is done outside of the audience's purview. Here, the assumption is that people want to experience a final product (e.g. a story, theatrical production, concerto, or glazed vase) rather than the trials and tribulations of creating that product. In other words, most consumers of art want to revel in the ends, and forget about the means. There are, however, creative activities that highlight creative processes rather than hiding them. One such activity is improvisation.

Improvisation is a creative process on display. Improvisation is a framed spontaneous performance that is conditioned by embodied power relationships, which I will explain in detail in Chapter 2. Because of its temporal nature, improvisational performance is a creative process that occurs center-stage and in the moment. Improvisation means that a performer is taking a risk by not retreating to Goffman's (1959) backstage. Trey Anastasio of the improvisational rock band Phish recalls:

If you're gonna take a risk, sometimes you're gonna play shit, ya know. And somebody comes and they pay their 20 dollars and you get up there and you play shit that one time, and then they're like, ya know, this is terrible. These guys are urinating in the ears of the listeners, (Phillips, 2000).

Improvisation forces backstage work (rehearsal, practice, preparation) into front-stage performance. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. Either way, forcing the creative process onto a stage is risky because it opens up the processes to judgment and critique. Herein lies part of culture's affect on both creative processes and the individuals doing the creating: by opening up creative processes to critique and aesthetic judgment, the processes enter into a network of discursive power relationships that serve to condition the performance. Discursive power relationships are present in the performance as well as embodied by the performers. In order to study communicated relationships among creative processes, culture, and creators, I focus this project on tangible improvisational performances to conduct an ethnography of musical improvisational performances. The ethnography focuses on improvisational musical performances of a Grateful Dead cover band called Uncle John's Band. Uncle John's Band's performances took place at Skipper's Smokehouse in Tampa, FL from August 2011 to May 2012. I attended 21 improvisational musical performances, resulting in a combined 70 hours of fieldwork.

Relationships among improvisation, culture, and creators are communication in many ways. An audience applauding a compelling guitar solo communicates their approval of the musical passage. The virtuosity of the guitar player communicates competence and dedication. Concurrently, the musical performance takes place within a culture, and that culture communicates what counts as musical authenticity (i.e. culture provides a foundation for aesthetic judgment). All of these communicative acts convey discursive power relationships among an audience, the guitar player, and their culture(s): the audience has the capacity to approve/disapprove, the guitar player has the capacity to

control the content he/she plays, and culture has defined knowledge concerning music and performance. Numerous, overlapping discursive power relationships are communicated through one guitar solo and the audience's response.

Communication of discursive power relationships takes place during an improvisational performance, and within the cultural performance space allotted. Concurrent observation, my methodology, helps us to understand communicated discursive power relationships within improvisational performance. Observing and participating in improvisational performance, during the performance itself, will contribute to existing literature on improvisation. Much of the literature concerning improvisation attempts to understand improvisational processes by way of retrospective analysis, outside of the context in which improvisation was performed. Studies tend to examine the products of an improvisational process (e.g. a recorded musical performance), rather than the processes by which the products are created (e.g. a live musical performance). Improvisational processes and products are symbiotic. Improvisational products inform processes, just as improvisational processes create products. Indeed, the differences between improvisational processes and products are vague. What if there is no recording of an improvisational performance? Does the performance become the product? By concentrating on the performance of improvisation, I hope to contribute a unique way of understanding improvisation, namely by showing how improvisation comes into being through a network of interacting discursive power relationships. I start this knowledge contribution by first outlining the ways in which scholars, musicians, and intellectuals describe and conceptualize improvisation. As I describe the various conceptualizations of improvisation, I connect

the approaches through the common thread of interaction. I then base my theory of improvisation on the interaction of discursive power relationships.

The History of Improvisation

Research investigating improvisation tends to focus on retrospective descriptions and definitions improvisation. Researchers often ask *what* improvisation is. Is it a revivification of the past (Peters, 2009)? Is it dialogical (Monson, 1996)? Is it based in repetition of musical gestures (Atali, 1985)? Aside from the particular ways scholars describe improvisation, there is a consistency that runs through literature examining improvisation. This constant feature is interaction. All of these writings incorporate interaction in their descriptions/conceptualizations of improvisation. Whether it is interaction between culture and performance, interaction among varying components of improvisational processes, or interaction among band/troop/cohort members, these writings feature interaction as a main theme. The essential component of improvisation, is then interaction. So what is improvisation? Improvisation is interaction in process. In the literature review that follows, I first offer a brief history of the treatment of improvisational practices in the United States. I then attempt to illustrate how other scholars incorporate the idea of interaction into their understanding of improvisation.

Although the origins of improvisation are lost, in the United States improvisation began to receive recognition (throughout the music world) in the 1920s and 30s. The advent of jazz music saw a rebirth of improvisation as an art form (Berliner, 1994). During the 1920s and '30s jazz was developed, maintained, and practiced by an oppressed group of musicians, mainly African-American males. Just as the people performing jazz were oppressed and barred from mainstream American society, so too

was the genre. The mainstream musical community was intolerant of improvisation as a musical practice. Thirty years later, however, jazz, bebop, and the practice of improvisation had seeped into many disciplines across American arts, culture, audiences, and fans as a result of artists' backlash to mainstream thought in the United States.

During the 1950s, due to fear, technological needs, and a conservative political climate, mainstream American culture embraced the tenets of modernity and realism. After fighting two major world wars, Americans were petrified at the thought of losing their loved ones to communism and global nuclear disaster. The Cold War as well as the Korean War fueled these fears, and Americans sought out ways to fortify and preserve their super-power of a nation. In order to maximize capital, industrial development (e.g. the interstate system and mass-produced goods) required focusing on function rather than form, and called for knowledge that explained, predicted, and controlled workers and productivity. Predictability, rationality, and technology ruled the dominant mindset of the American public. Capitalistic consumerism permeated the rising middle class of American society. Materialism stimulated competition between middle class families. As American mass society spiraled into fear and consumerism, experimental artists such as Jack Keruoac, Miles Davis, and Jackson Pollock rebelled against materialistic consumerism and public fear, opting for a mode of production outside of control and predictability (Belgrad, 1998). Foundational works of science fiction by Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, and Arthur C. Clarke were written during this period. As these artists gained traction, spontaneous, improvisational processes and practice were developed in music, painting, and writing that critiqued the modern way of American life.

As improvisation took hold of the arts, academics grappled with explaining the improvisatory mode of artistic production. Universities of the 1950s focused on quantitative epistemologies that mirrored mainstream American values of predictability and control. Academic knowledge consisted of the ability to control experiments in order to be able to predict outcomes, behavior, and/or results. This quantitative approach to knowledge allowed for the maximization of capital and low-cost production. Since improvisation was developed in direct contention to the ideals of predictability and control, quantitative epistemologies have had a difficult time explaining the phenomenon.

Improvisation is always changing and adjusting, never fixed, too elusive for analysis and precise description; essentially non-academic. And, more than that, any attempt to describe improvisation must be, in some respects, a misrepresentation, for there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation (Bailey, 1992, p. *ix*).

Bailey argues that improvisation cannot be predicted and controlled, and therefore can never be analyzed or described. A few decades later, however, some academicians began to shift from quantitative methodologies to qualitative methodologies. Qualitative methods focus on understanding rather than predicting and controlling. The paradigm shift from quantitative to qualitative epistemologies paved the way to understanding improvisation. Montuori (2003) states that “jazz improvisation valorizes subjectivity, emotion, the aesthetic, but also the openness and uncertainty that go against the fundamental goals of prediction and control” (p. 239). In order to understand the

processes of improvisation, academics began to shift from quantitative methodologies to qualitative methodologies, and expressed improvisation as a complex, creative endeavor.

Rather than predict and control the outcome of an improvisational process, scholars began to focus on understanding improvisation's complex nature. The work of Berliner (1994) became the foundation for scholarship examining improvisation's complexity. Focusing on improvisational jazz, Berliner (1994) notes that improvisation deserves serious attention as a process of composition, and is not merely creation *ex nihilo*. A mythical muse does not inspire improvisational creativity; rather, improvisation requires a complex intra-association with creative instruments, environment, tradition, convention, other individuals, and culture.

In the 1920s and 30s jazz brought improvisation to the oppressed American consciousness. Through artistic movements of the 1950s and 60s, however, jazz and its practitioners survived and resisted oppression and now enjoy an exalted place within the academic study of improvisation. Bailey (1993) hails jazz as the most important American artistic contribution to the process of improvisation. Researchers such as Fischlin & Heble (2004), Nicholls (2006), Coulthard (2007), and Weick (1998) continue to examine the musical form and performance of jazz as a means for understanding the complex process of improvisation. Others echo statements about the complexity of jazz performance, noting, "the musician who is most prepared – not only in terms of having thought about what is to be played but even having played various possibilities – is most able to be spontaneous" (Benson, 2003, p.142-143). Benson's statement highlights complex negotiations that individual musicians must navigate during improvisational processes. Through the understanding of jazz's complexity, scholars continue to study

improvisation. Those who study improvisation emphasize the complexity of the practice in order to gain validity among their scholarly peers and administrative overseers.

Although the complexities associated with improvisation are numerous, I believe they share a commonality. The idea of interaction ties the various complexities of improvisational practice together. Indeed, the following survey of literature highlights how interaction is a staple of improvisation.

Improvisation as Interaction

Communication and relationships form the basis of an improvisational practice that is defined as the interaction *among* elements of complexity. Montuori (2003) contends that, “improvisation involves a constant dialogic between order and disorder, tradition and innovation, security and risk, the individual and the group and the composition,” (p. 242). Here, Montuori focuses on how improvisation is always a negotiation among individuals. Improvisation is not fixed or pre-determined, nor do single individuals manifest improvisation. Improvisation is interactive by nature, and most scholars allude to this quality. I will arrange the following survey of literature into the following categories: interactions among improvisational performers, and interactions among composition, cultural traditions and repertoire, technology and performance.

Wynton Marsalis, a celebrated jazz musician, states:

The real power of jazz, and the innovation of jazz, is that a group of people can come together and create art, improvised art, and can negotiate their agendas with each other. And that negotiation is the art (Ward & Burns, 2001).

Marsalis alludes to the major difficulty in performing improvisational jazz, that of interacting with others within the performance. The art of improvisational performances are in the interaction with other members of the musical group. Burrows (2004) notes:

A group improvisation is a complex social phenomenon. During a performance, there is a subtle, web-like interplay of individual psychological needs and intentions, technical tasks and difficulties associated with playing musical instruments, awareness of the audience (if the performance is public) and, most centrally, conscious and unconscious reactions to sound stimuli (p. 2).

To understand improvisation, scholars turn to experiences of jazz musicians because of their direct ties and experiences with improvisation. Monson (1996) looks to musicians in order to investigate the traditional jazz ensemble's employment of improvisation. A jazz ensemble traditionally consists of a drummer, pianist, bassist, and some sort of lead instrument (e.g. a horn, a woodwind, or a guitar). In a group performance, there are two tensions at play: the individual versus the group as a whole, and the soloist versus the accompaniment or rhythm section (Monson, 1996). In this study, Monson (1996) examines the rhythm section of a jazz ensemble in order to illustrate the group's influence on a soloist. A soloist must actively listen to his/her accompaniment in order to improvise, and the rhythm section must listen to the soloist as well; it's like a conversation between the musicians (Monson, 1996). Improvisation, then, becomes a dynamic process among multiple musicians, not individual displays of virtuosity. Musicians exchange musical gestures in the hope that new directions emerge in the performance. A soloist does not lead the ensemble in the traditional sense of leading (i.e. an individual separated from the masses), but rather, participates in a

conversation with instruments better suited to provide foundational support.

Improvisation occurs due to the interaction of performers on stage, not an individual's musical prowess. In fact, the individual musician's identity is wrapped up in the relationship between other musicians in the performance and the representative meaning of the musical gestures they create (Sansom, 2007). Interaction allows improvisation its fluidity. Interaction creates the emergent quality within improvisational practice. These claims move improvisation from traditional individualistic notions, to notions of interactive social construction.

Continuing to focus on members of an improvisational jazz ensemble, Monson (2007) examines perceptual agency in the creation of improvisational jazz. Perceptual agency is a phrase describing a musician's capacity to engage in sensorial attention (Monson, 2007). Sensorial attention refers to the need for an improvisational musician to pay attention to data from all of the five senses. When perception is freed from a musician's own actions, the opportunity for improvisation becomes available to a musician (Monson, 2007). In other words, if a musician does not need to pay attention to her or his musical ability (e.g. playing a guitar, staying in key, keeping rhythmic time), she or he gains the capacity to pay attention to other aspects of the musical performance (e.g. improvising and interacting with other performing musicians). Although Monson's focus is on the individual musician's ability, virtuosity, and perception, the goal of the individual musician is to de-center her or his individuality in favor of creating music as part of a group. Improvisational performance is made not by individuals alone, but rather through interaction with the group.

By focusing on the phenomenology of a performing musician, Gustavsen (2010) suggests that an improvising musician should not only interact with others in the group, but also interact within him/herself. This self-interaction occurs as the musician is simultaneously making music and listening to the sound being created (Gustavsen, 2010). This self-interaction is similar to Monson's (2007) idea of perceptual agency; listening to his or her created sound frees the musician to explore the emerging, musical environment created by the musical performance. Gustavsen's (2010) description of a listening/producing musician suggests a type of temporal reflexivity in which a musician can concurrently shape his or her playing to the soundscape produced by a group of musicians. While interacting in a group shapes an improvisational performance, Gustavsen argues that self-interaction is the key to being able to perform in a group.

In live theatrical productions, improvisation depends on dialogue and action between performers. The drama must unfold through the dynamic process of interaction. Focusing on improvisational theatre, Sawyer (2001) describes the rules of improvisation. First, improvisers must, "accept the material introduced in the prior line, and add something new to the emergent drama," (p.16). Second, improvisers must not, "write the script in their head," (Sawyer, 2001, p.17). Finally, the improvising actor must, "listen to the group mind," (Sawyer, 2001, p.18). With these rules in mind, improvisation becomes a conversation between improvising performers rather than a display of virtuosity by an individual (Sawyer, 2001).

These are just a few of the ways in which scholars look at improvisation as interaction among members of a band or group. Again, the main tenet in these studies describes the improvisational creation of music/art/drama through group interaction

rather than by a single individual, no matter how talented. During an improvisational performance, interactions and concrete connections among band members are most easily observed, but studies show that there are other, more abstract interactions at work in improvisational performances.

Research that examines the interactive process between a performing musician and the written music he or she performs helps us to understand the traditional separation between composition and performance made by academics. Benson (2003) writes:

The ideal of classical music has been primarily that of encapsulation: for composition is taken to be the setting into place of the boundaries of a work and thus performance will tend to be seen as essentially reproductive in the sense of following those boundaries. Yet a participatory model presents us with a very different picture, in which performing and listening cannot be clearly separated from composition, precisely because they end up being part of the compositional process. Here I think improvisation helps in rethinking the binary opposition of composition and performance, for it gives us a notion of something that is *between* composition and performance.” (p. 22-23).

By inserting improvisation in between the traditional dichotomy of composition and performance, Benson (2003) shifts focus to a mode of inclusion. Music making becomes part composition and part performance due to the improvisatory nature of both of these processes. Composition is not pre-determined or scripted, and performance is not fused to the musical score (Benson, 2003). The dialogue between musical score and performance creates music, and this dialogue is improvisatory. While this study does not investigate improvisation as a stand-alone concept, it does use the interactive model of

improvisation to create a bridge between the creative processes of composition and performance. Improvisation removes the separation between two modes of production, indicating an interactive process of creativity rather than a competitive struggle for creative control.

Continuing the use of interacting absolutes, in the postmodern era researchers study the interactions between improvised creativity and cultural traditions. Sawyer (1996) describes improvisatory performance as existing on a continuum between ritualized performances on the one hand, and free-form improvisational performances on the other. “The emergent is structured but ephemeral, changes with each performance act, and emerges from the indexical presuppositions accumulated through the prior collective interaction,” (Sawyer, 1996, p. 279). An indexical presupposition leans on Peirce’s notion of an indexical sign. An index requires a contextual association in order to accomplish meaning (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2002). For example, an indoor pine tree means nothing without the context of Christmas. For Sawyer (1996), improvisational practice hinges on contextual meanings created by collective interactions. In other words, improvisation occurs between ephemeral performance and cultural traditions.

Similarly, Borgo (2005) argues that improvisation straddles the line between chaos and control. While improvisational processes embrace uncertainty, they also work on/within structures that define the art form, genre, or cultural context of a given performance (Borgo, 2005). That Borgo’s approach emphasizes interaction is clear:

To treat the individual as merely a *part* of the improvising group denies not only his or her wholeness, but also his or her connection with, and responsibility to, the musical context and moment. To envision an improvising ensemble as the simple

addition of individuals also misses the dynamic, interactive, and emergent qualities of performance. Finally, to examine a group or an individual in *isolation* of historical, cultural, and societal contingencies and opportunities ignores the richness of network dynamics (Borgo, 2005, p. 10).

For Borgo, multiple and simultaneous interactions between individuals, the context/moment, and culture is the defining characteristic of improvisational practice.

Individuals investigating everyday use of language also connect improvisation to interaction. Mackenzie (2000) likens formulaic speech patterns to the process of improvisation. Rather than creating speech *ex nihilo*, spoken language performance relies on, “deploying prefabricated, institutionalized, and fully contextualized phrases and expressions and sentence heads, with a grammatical form and a lexical content that is either wholly or largely fixed” (Mackenzie, 2000, p.173). Creativity and innovation, in both linguistic performance and improvisation, depends on, “a repertoire of semifixed expressions” (Mackenzie, 2000, p.175). It is the interaction between the repertoire of culturally available expressions and in the moment context that creates a linguistic or improvisational performance. Combining context and cultural tradition illustrates the interactive nature of improvisation.

Mackenzie’s ideas of cultural traditions and contextual interaction are similar to Peters (2009), who examines improvisation through the interacting concepts of memory and intention. In order to investigate the assumptions of improvisation’s creative potential, Peters’ study directly disputes a definition of improvisation as the practice of creating something original. For Peters (2009), improvisation is the ability to find new and novel ways of inhabiting the old, and revivifying dead forms through a productive

process of re-appropriation. Improvisation is a salvation and redemption rather than a creation (Peters, 2009). Improvisational processes force the interaction of past utterances (memories) into a new, present context. In the most postmodern sense, improvisation is not as innovative as it is interactive cultural recycling. Improvisation is not going beyond the known, but entering into it again and again (Peters, 2009). Improvisational processes bring the past to the present, in service to the future. Here, the interaction of time and space characterize improvisational performances.

Improvisation is characterized by its temporal nature. As Sawyer stated, the emergent characteristic of improvisation is ephemeral (Sawyer, 1996). In improvisational processes emerging material interacts with a present moment.

Nachmanovitch (1990) suggests the importance of time in improvisation:

The time of inspiration, the time of technically structuring and realizing the music, the time of playing it, and the time of communicating with the audience, as well as ordinary clock time, are all one. Memory and intention (which postulate past and future) and intuition (which indicates the eternal present) are fused (p. 18).

Nachmanovitch (1990) indicates that time is the focus of improvisational processes.

Improvisation occurs in a particular moment. Improvisation is tied to the present.

Whatever the creative processes are, they must interact within a present moment. In a similar way to Peters' (2009) idea, Nachmanovitch conceptualizes improvisation as the fusing of interacting moments of time, space, memory, and intention.

Although researchers approach improvisation from many different angles, philosophies, and epistemologies, the processes involved in creating art/music/drama

tends to focus on interaction as the improvisational process. I, too, will focus on interaction as the key element in the improvisational process; however, I wish to look at improvisation from a critical/cultural viewpoint as well. I hope to combine notions of power, systems of privilege, oppression, and dominance into improvisational processes. For the remainder of this project I will discuss interacting discursive power relationships that constitute improvisational performance.

A Critical/Cultural Approach to Improvisation

Most of the past research tends to focus on *what* improvisation is. I wish to discover and articulate *how* improvisation becomes. By shifting the question from *what* to *how*, I hope to avoid reducing improvisational performance to an essential definition or product in favor of understanding improvisational processes through communicated power relationships. In other words, asking *how* allows improvisation's fluid, emergent nature to remain intact. Understanding improvisation as a set of fluid, emergent processes honors both the spontaneous and temporal qualities of improvisation by examining its unpredictability and uncertainty. Rather than control improvisation, I will allow space for improvisation to become, and then attempt to understand that process of becoming.

One way in which improvisation becomes is through embodied discursive power relationships. I use the term embodied to identify the location at which power relationships intersect. During an improvisational performance, a multitude of discursive power relationships intersect on the body of the performer, creating and constituting the identity of the performer and the performance. Focusing on discursive power not only adds to the current literature which examines improvisation, but the term also enhances

our understanding of fluid, emergent situations. Sawyer (2001) argues that many everyday situations rely on improvisational techniques. For example, my experiences as a higher education instructor are rife with improvisational moments such as listening to and answering student questions, preparing speaking outlines, and dealing with departmental issues. These spontaneous moments include power relationships between me and students in my classes, departmental politics, university agendas, and federal education policy, to name a few. Power relationships create/shape my improvised experiences as an instructor in a way similar to the way improvisational performance becomes by way of power relationships. Improvisational performers must communicate and negotiate power relationships as they participate in improvisational performance, just as I must communicate and negotiate power relationships as an instructor participating in improvised interactions with students, faculty, and the university. I argue that my improvised interactions with students are constituted by power relationships, just as improvisational performance is constituted by power relationships.

In order to understand how improvisation becomes, I have developed a new approach to understanding improvisational performance. I will look at improvisation as a type of performance that incorporates ideas of spontaneity. As each instance of improvisational performance is enacted, discursive power relationships are embodied by the performer and in the performance. These power relationships are communicated by the processes which formulate an improvisational performance. The focus of my project is the critical understanding of how embodied discursive power relationships constitute improvisational performance.

Furthermore, I restrict the focus of this project to musical improvisation. This restriction is necessary to articulate clearly embodied power relationships in improvisational processes. My background is in musical performance. I understand musical terminology and creative processes more thoroughly than I do the terminology and creative processes of theatre, dance, or comedy, and I can, therefore, delve more deeply into power relationships in improvisation. Examining power relationships in musical improvisation will aid in understanding how discursive power operates within/on non-scripted performances. I invite an extension of this project's claims to other forms of improvisational performance in the hope that the claims presented are productive for other areas of interest.

Throughout the project ideas, philosophies, histories, observations, theoretical developments, and methodological concerns interact on the page. I allow this interaction of ideas to relate how knowledge/discourse emerges spontaneously through interaction. Rather than treat theory, method, and observations as separate aspects of this project, I allow them to interact with each other by writing in a similar way to how these aspects interact in the field. This form of writing resulted in a non-traditional structure for the project as the following chapter summaries demonstrate.

Chapter 2 describes the theoretical positioning and development of my critical/cultural approach to musical improvisational processes. I define musical improvisation as a framed spontaneous performance that is constituted by embodied discursive power relationships. I articulate theoretical descriptions of performance, frame analysis, discursive power, and how these theories interact at the site of the performing body to constitute an improvisational musical performance. This chapter incorporates

examples from the ethnography performed for this project as well as an extended metaphor in order to illustrate how the critical/cultural theory works in practice.

Chapters 3 and 4 articulate dominant discourses about Uncle John's Band shows at Skipper's Smokehouse. My findings take the form of observations, interview data, and casual conversations that resulted from my ethnographic experience at Skipper's Smokehouse. The thematic focuses of these chapters came about as I began to understand which discourses were dominant in the culture surrounding Uncle John's Band. Chapter 3 concentrates on the improvisational musical performances of Uncle John's Band by centering the findings on the performing band and how these performances relate to the performances of the Grateful Dead. As Uncle John's Band performs the music of the Grateful Dead, they traverse sets of expectations that form the discursive power relationships that constitute the musical improvisational performance. Chapter 4 turns to the audience and venue of Skipper's Smokehouse as co-creators of Uncle John's Band performances. This chapter articulates how dominant discursive philosophies enacted by the Grateful Dead continue to govern the experiences of audience members at shows featuring the music of the Grateful Dead.

Chapter 5 describes my process as an ethnographer conducting research at Skipper's Smokehouse. As I ran into difficulties and issues with the fieldsite, I attempted to work through them and alter my methodological approach to better accommodate the fieldwork. Rather than conduct the ethnography according to a prescriptive methodology, I folded my own approach to improvisation into my methodological performance. This resulted in a re-articulation of ethnography, one that incorporates

ideas associated with improvisation and interaction. Thus, my idea of improvisational ethnography focuses on interaction and the emergent data that results from interaction.

Chapter 6 concludes the project with a summary of the findings of the ethnography at Skipper's Smokehouse, as well as a discussion concerning how my approach to musical improvisation informs questions of identity, context, and everyday non-scripted performances. I also discuss future directions this project might take as I return to the questions listed in Chapter 2. The project ends with a hopeful suggestion that we incorporate the ideas and theories articulated throughout the project in everyday life, with the aim to make interactions and relationships among individuals more productive.

Chapter 2: A Performative Musical Improvisation

Dark star crashes, pouring it's light into ashes.

Reason tatters, the forces tear loose from the axis.

Searchlight casting for faults in the clouds of delusion.

Shall we go, you and I while we can

Through the transitive nightfall of diamonds?

“Dark Star” (Garcia, Hart, Kreutzmann, Lesh, McKernan, Weir, & Hunter, 1969, track 1).

Musical Improvisation – A framed spontaneous performance that is constituted by embodied discursive power relationships.

This chapter establishes the theoretical scaffolding for my understanding of musical improvisation. In order to set up the theoretical structure, I examine performance as it relates to improvisational music making, how power relationships serve to condition the improvisational musical performance, and how framing creates a set of expectations about musical improvisation. Again, rather than focusing on *what* happens during a musical improvisation, I am concerned with *how* the process of comes into being. While I am pushing a definition onto the process of musical improvisation, I hope that the definition is open enough to express its fluid identity. Asking how musical improvisation comes into being allows it to be defined by its *doing*, its performance.

Performance

Bauman (1992) describes performance as a particular type of communication behavior. Bauman (1992) goes on to say that, “performance usually suggests an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience,” (p. 41). For example, a street-side musical performance is a heightened form of communication that is different from everyday modes of communication. First of all, a street-side musical performance encompasses aesthetic ideas associated with music. Even if the street musician plays music never heard before, the music will include ideas of rhythm, melody, phrasing, pitch, and tone. If a street musician is attempting to play music, he/she must entertain the idea that his/her culture has an established musical aesthetic. If the street musician plays sounds that are not recognizable as music by passers by, then the aesthetic mode of communication ceases to be a musical performance.

Second, a street-side musical performance is framed in a specific way. The musician will attempt to play an instrument. The musician will set up a marked space for his/her performance. The musician’s environment frames the performance, conditioning audience expectations of the type of music he/she plays. This established performance frame indicates that this communication is different from other modes of street communication.

Finally, Bauman (1992) argues that in order for a performance to be a performance, there must be an audience to witness the performance. A street musician makes eye contact with those passing by. The musician turns to face people as they wait to cross an intersection. He/She nods in appreciation as people smile, bob their heads, tap

their feet, or toss money into the musician's empty instrument case. Such behaviors establish the idea of an audience, a transient audience, but an audience nonetheless. Without an audience, the musical performance ceases to be a performance. A performance relies on differentiations between the way a performance communicates and everyday communication. Bauman (1984) calls these differences, *keys*.

A performance is differentiated from other forms of communication by the way it is keyed (Bauman, 1984). Keying a performance is the way in which time and space are set aside for a performance action. Keys mark communication as an aesthetic event by signaling that whatever communication takes place (in a particular time and space) is indeed a performance. Bauman (1984) argues that performances are keyed in general ways that cut across cultures as well as in unique ways that are linked to specific cultures. Two keys especially set aside musical improvisational performance from other forms of communication: special formulae and disclaimers of performance.

Special formulae are, in Bauman's words, "markers of specific genres, and insofar as these genres are conventionally performed in a community" (Bauman, 1984, p.21). They are empirical claims that signify a particular type of performance is about to take place. For musical improvisational performances, special formulae are musical and non-musical style traits as well as the characteristics of the venue in which the performance takes place. For example, audience member's fashion choices are special formulae in the musical community surrounding Uncle John's Band (UJB). Since UJB is a Grateful Dead cover band, the audience typically dresses in clothing associated with either the current jam band scene or the scene constructed by the Grateful Dead throughout the 1960's, 70's and 80's. These fashion choices include tie-dyed t-shirts, ankle-length

skirts, concert tour merchandise, and handmade accessories (such as woven hemp necklaces and bracelets, semi-precious stone jewelry, and all natural-material wallets and handbags). Other examples of special formulae that serve to key performances by UJB include: the casual, natural outdoor venue at Skipper's Smokehouse (sand-covered flooring and a "roof" consisting of old-growth oak trees), UJB's instrumental timbre, (those carefully crafted tonal qualities and effects that mimic the Grateful Dead), and the, "once you're here, you're family" attitude adopted by many of the audience members at UJB shows. These types of special formulae let people know that a particular type of performance is about to occur in a particular space.

Bauman (1984) describes the disclaimer of performance as a statement signaling that a performance is to take place. Disclaimers of performance set aside time and space for a performance by indicating exactly who will perform where, and when. Disclaimers of performance vary between performance cultures and communities. The variances rely on, among many other factors, the communities' access to technology and information dissemination. A performance set to take place in the United States will have very different disclaimers of performance than performances taking place in non-industrialized areas of the world. For example, UJB performances take place primarily in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. Information technologies are very well developed in this area of the world, so disclaimers of performance for UJB shows are widespread and numerous.

Disclaimers of performance for UJB shows include: paper flyers at Skipper's Smokehouse, UJB's website, Skipper's Smokehouse's website, Facebook, Twitter, and local arts and entertainment newspapers. From Skipper's website (<http://www.skipperssmokehouse.com/venue/upcomingshows2008.shtml>):

THU FEB 23

Grateful Dead Night w/Uncle John's Band (JAMBAND/TRIBUTE) Hippies

please use side door... UJB has been faithfully bringing the music and spirit of the Grateful Dead to Skipper's every Thursday at Skipper's since 1998. All bottled beer on special in Skipperdome. *8PM \$7*

This disclaimer of performance sets aside a time and place for UJB's performance. The disclaimer also introduces a specific atmosphere/environment for the performance (e.g. hippies are greeted as regulars and given special instruction, Grateful Dead music will be featured, and there is tradition associated with the performance). In this sense, the example disclaimer of performance from Skipper's website is also an example of a special formula because it alludes to the type of performance that will take place as well.

Performance's emergent quality is a final factor in the constitution of a performance. The emergent quality of performance stems from the common assumption that no two performances are ever the same. Performances share similarities, but because of shifting contexts (e.g. differing venues, audiences, outside of the performance influences, and social situations), multiple performances will never achieve pure mimesis (Bauman, 1984). Musical improvisational performers thrive on the emergent by focusing on specificities associated with the co-presence of environment, and by focusing on interaction among a number of different individuals and their environment. As musical improvisational performers interact with band mates, audiences, venues, and cultural environments, they allow the emergent quality of performance to germinate. The emergent quality puts a unique stamp on each musical performance, characterizing musical performance as a process that relies on interaction.

The emergent quality of performance mirrors Benjamin's (1969) idea of the aura. The aura of an artwork is that which makes a piece of art original and unique. An aura connects an artwork to a specific time and space by imposing an inimitable aspect into the artwork itself. Benjamin (1969) exemplifies the aura in a natural landscape photograph by examining a shadow cast by a tree branch. This shadow requires a specific angle of the sun, particular weather patterns, and specific framing of the photograph. Without all of these specificities in place, the shadow cannot exist in the photograph. Re-creating these specificities in another photograph is highly unlikely; therefore, the photograph is said to be original and unique. If the photograph fails to capture an aspect of the natural landscape that ties it to a specific time and place, the photograph contains no aura, and is susceptible to re-creation.

Musical improvisation is an example of Benjamin's (1969) aura. Musical improvisational performance creates an aura by allowing (sometimes even forcing?) the emergent quality of performance. Through interaction (active listening, then saying/playing something back), musical improvisational performers tie a musical piece to a specific place and time. Musical improvisational performers create a unique performance that defies re-creation. An audience member describing a UJB show hints at the idea of aura:

Even though they play *Touch of Grey* nearly every show, every time they play it it's different. Especially when they get to the jam part. It kind of starts out the same, you know, but it really morphs into something unique as they get going. If it's a rockin' jam, you can see it as they play. They know that something new is happening. They can tell they're creating. They'll smile at each other, you know,

get into it a little more. Man, when that happens, it's really cool. It's definitely not something you see everyday. It's something to take home

This statement suggests that the smallest alteration in musical improvisational performances may create an aura that characterizes it as unique. For this audience member, seeing the players in UJB smile at one another and get into the song creates an experience that ties the performance to a specific and unique time and space. Aura and the emergent quality of performance stamp musical improvisational performances with a uniqueness that is unmatched by re-created, mass produced art. Musical improvisational performers endeavor toward these unique emergent qualities of performance.

The emergent quality of performance, however, does not mean that a performance is entirely novel and unique. Performances lean on standardized modes of communication and aesthetics in order to convey competent messages to an audience (Bauman, 1992). For a performance to mean anything, it must incorporate a culture's way of communicating. Because of this reliance on standardized communication behaviors, performances are able to work on and within culture(s), by employing the modes of communication that characterize culture(s).

Performativity

Similar to linguistic communication, a performance's meaning is determined through a process of signification arranged into a structure, or system of signification. Saussure (1986) labels this system of signification as *langue*. *Langue* relies on two principles: a way to differentiate between signifiers, and individuals in a culture agreeing on meanings of particular signifiers (Saussure, 1986). An individual creates meaning by differentiating certain behaviors from other behaviors, then agreeing with other

individuals that the determined meaning matches the established system of signification. Without this signifying system in place, a performance is nothing more than a display of meaningless utterances and gestures. These utterances and gestures are what Saussure (1986) terms, *parole*. Together *langue* and *parole* make meaning within a culture. An utterance and/or gesture is made (*parole*), and then the utterance is associated with a system of signification (*langue*). Each instance of *parole* relies on the *langue* of a particular culture, and *langue* is made possible by instances of *parole*.

Performance utterances and gestures also rely on a system of signification (e.g. performance traditions, cultural traditions, and individual identities) in order to make sense. For example, a musician about to take a solo will step in front of his/her bandmates to garner the spotlight and the attention of the audience. This stepping forward is a performance gesture (*parole*), however, a soloist stepping forward also relies on traditions of western performance (*langue*). A performer standing front and center-stage commands attention. Spotlighting a performer enhances his/her visibility, further signifying that an audience should pay attention to that performer. The spotlighted performer is on display for the audience. Put another way, what if a soloist does not step forward into a spotlight? It would confuse the audience. The audience wonders where the solo is coming from, who is responsible for the solo, and who should receive their applause/jeers. This example demonstrates how performance utterances interact with cultural signifying systems. While Saussure (1986) differentiates between linguistic utterances/gestures and the signifying system they are a part of, Austin (1962) goes further to explain differences among performance utterances/gestures.

Austin (1962) employs the term *constative* to refer to linguistic utterances (instances of *parole*) that describe something, and are either true or false. For example, the statement “that palm tree needs pruning” describes the state of the palm tree. “That palm tree needs pruning” is also an utterance that is either true or false. The palm fronds may need pruning, or they may not. By contrast, Austin (1962) introduces the term *performative* to describe a linguistic utterance that does something; the linguistic utterance performs as well as signifies. Austin’s (1962) examples of performative utterances include saying, “I do” at a wedding, and “I name this ship” at a christening (p. 5). These utterances *do* the act of marriage and christening. Put another way, the ceremony/action remains incomplete without these linguistic utterances.

In addition to a performative linguistic utterance, the ceremony/action relies on the authority and identity of the speaker, the context in which the utterance takes place, and the presence or absence of witnesses (Austin, 1962). For example, a scheduled and onstage musician must perform the *doing* of a musical improvisation. The featured musician(s) are the only ones granted authority over the performance. Although there may be many musicians within the audience, the scheduled musicians are the only musicians approved to perform. Also a musical improvisational performance relies on the context in which it takes place. Each culture establishes ways in which musical performances occur. In Bauman’s (1984) terminology, the musical performance depends on the way in which it was keyed. If a musical performance is not keyed according to cultural traditions, it ceases to be a performance. Finally, musical improvisational performances rely on the presence of witnesses who substantiate that indeed the musical performance took place according to cultural traditions. Bauman (1992) also asserts that

performances require an audience. All of these elements constitute musical improvisational performance of power relationships. Musicians have authority or power that allows them to perform musical improvisation. The power associated with a particular context opens up a cultural space for musical improvisational performances. Co-present witnesses also have power because they substantiate and provide testimony about the musical improvisational performance. Finally, performative utterances during the musical improvisation have power because they *do* the improvisational performance. These sites of power form relationships that are bound up in the performance of musical improvisation. Performativity is more than linguistic utterances that do something. Performativity entwines performance and power relationships. Performativity posits that power relationships constitute performances, and enactments of these performances communicate power relationships.

Throughout this work, I use the term *power* as developed by Foucault. Foucault (1972) conceptualizes power as rooted in discourse. Foucault (1995) posits that historically contextualized discourses shape the meaning of concepts, ideas, theories, and practice. Discourse, however, is broken down into constituent parts. The basic unit of discourse is the statement. A statement is anything that can be said, heard, read, written, produced or consumed as a means to establishing a certain way of knowing (Foucault, 1972). For example, if one reads the statement, “All music is organized tones” the reader would then have a framework for the knowing of music. Namely, that music is tonal and arranged/organized.

For Foucault (1972) statements form groups (termed a discursive formation) not by referring to a similar object, being of the same form or style, nor being deterministic

of permanent concepts, or by the presence of similar themes, but by a system of dispersion. Individual statements as they are disseminated throughout a society (dispersion) create groups of statements, or discursive formations. To take the example of music, statements that overtly refer to music, or statements that come from the same time period, or from a particular ethnic group do not create the concept of music; rather, the concept of music is created by all the statements about music available in/dispersed throughout a society. Discursive formations, then, are groups of culturally available statements that inform cultural subjects on a certain way of knowing (Foucault, 1972).

In his methodology, Foucault does not stop at the level of the discursive formation, but the importance of this observation deserves a detailed examination. Discursive formations are created by a system of dispersion. Systems within a culture dictate how these discursive formations are disseminated. Foucault (1972) calls these systems, “the rules of formation”. With Foucault’s (1972) method, one does not see objective reality, or a system of signs referring to the meaning of concepts or objects, rather one sees a group of rules for the formation of knowledge and discursive practices. It is at this key point that critical theory about performativity and Foucault’s notion of power intersect. Knowledge formation resides in rules that condition communication behaviors. As communication behaviors are performed, power relationships condition communicative behaviors in accordance to established meanings available throughout a culture.

As a final note, it is important to explain how power relationships move from cultural discursive formations to individualized communicative behaviors. Foucault (1995) contends that power eventually locates itself on an individual’s body through the

process of governmentality. Governmentality is the “conduct of conduct” (Dean, 1999, p. 10; Gordon, 1991, p. 2; Rose, 1999, p. 21). To further explain governmentality, imagine the role of the conductor of a symphony. The conductor produces no music, but rather, controls how the musicians in the symphonic orchestra play by setting the tempo, urging dynamic shifts, commanding individual musician’s entrances and exits, and beginning/ending the piece. Musicians embody this power relationship between the conductor and musician by performing (governing themselves) in accordance to rules embodied by the conductor. These rules consist of: the original piece of music, traditions associated with symphonic orchestras and their performances, and traditions of musical theory. In the end, the musicians govern their behavior based on both the discursively formed ways of knowing a symphonic orchestra, and the rules for performing as part of a symphonic orchestra embodied by the conductor. The conductor of the symphony, and the ways in which a culture understands a symphony, conducts the musicians’ conduct. Governmentality, or conduct of conduct, is how individuals both embody and communicate power relationships. Governmentality is similar to the idea of performativity but not exactly the same. While governmentality has no boundaries as to the type of behavior being conducted, performativity assumes that behavior is a broadly defined performance.

Authors apply the idea of performativity to multiple forms of communicative performance, including gender (Butler, 1988, 1990), choreography (Foster, 2002), and personal narrative (Langellier, 1999). Arguably the most influential of these abstractions comes from Butler’s use of performativity to describe gender. Butler (1988) posits that gender, “is in no way a stable identity” (p. 519). Rather, gender is, “an identity instituted

through a stylized repetition of acts” (p. 519). In other words, it is the repeated behavior of an individual that forces gender onto his or her body. Gender is not biologically determined, but rather, gender is communicated through an individual’s performance of gender. As individuals continue to repeat gendered performances, gender is imbued onto his or her body. In this sense, the performance of gender is how gender becomes; therefore, gender is performative.

Butler (1990) also attempts to describe how performance behaviors work to communicate/create/imbue gender for an individual. In short, both culture and the individual form a relationship concerning the performative nature of gender. The raw material for the performance of gender is based on discursive formations (i.e. Foucault’s notion of power) informing subjects how gender is enacted (Butler, 1990). Subjects, then, perform gender with regard to culturally dispersed discursive formations surrounding and constituting gender norms. These discursive gender norms are power relationships that serve to condition how an individual creates his or her gender, as well as how a culture perceives an individual’s performance of gender.

Following Butler’s use of the concept of performativity, how can the idea of performativity help our understanding of musical improvisation? Performativity shifts focus from *what is* musical improvisation, to *how* musical improvisation is constituted by power relationships. The idea of performativity allows for the critical study of musical improvisation’s constitutive elements, the possibility for a performer’s enacted agency, and limitations to a performer’s agency. Here, agency means “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahern, 2001, p. 112). Agency does not refer to unobstructed free will, but rather to the capacity to act/perform that is always conditioned by culture.

The culture grants space (capacity) in which a performer may act. This means that discursive power relationships exist between and among culture, environment, and a performer, not over and above culture and a performer. In musical improvisation, discursive power is embodied and contextualized. As a performer participates in a performance, his/her agency is conditioned by a culturally based system of signification. Put another way, discourse circulating through a culture forms a way of knowing that establishes expectations among members of that culture. In the section that follows, I examine the sets of expectations that surround knowing of Uncle John's Band's musical improvisational performances.

Frame Analysis and Sets of Expectations

A performance incorporates culturally agreed upon signifying behaviors in order to relay communicative events, ideas, concepts, and structures to observers. Describing a concept similar to Saussure's (1959) idea of *langue*, Goffman (1974) employs the term "primary framework" to refer to a set of agreed upon expectations for a particular communicative activity (p. 21). A performance is a primary framework because there is a set of agreed upon expectations for a performance. In the United States, attending a performance usually carries with it a number of expectations, including: procuring admission, sitting/standing/dancing among others in a designated space, a beginning and an end to the performance, and highlighting the performers in some way (by a raised stage, lighting, and/or sound reinforcement).

In addition to a primary framework, *keys* transform or augment a performance into other meaningful communicative activities (Goffman, 1974). Keys set another frame within a primary framework. Keyed frames move from general to specific, and each

frame adds its own expectations to the primary framework. For example, musical improvisation includes at least three frames. A musical improvisation is a performance (primary framework), music-based (second frame), and improvisatory (third frame). So musical improvisation is a frame within a frame within a frame. In this example a general performance is transformed into musical improvisation, and the added expectations of musicality and improvisation fall onto the performance. Such a nesting of frames applies to UJB as well.

UJB is a cover band. As a cover band, UJB establishes a series of frames that set up expectations for their musical performances. There are four frames associated with UJB: performance, music, “Grateful Dead cover band”, and UJB as a band and as individual musicians. The outermost frame is performance. Bauman’s (1984) notion of keys demarks performances from other forms of communication behavior. People begin to form expectations about an UJB show as a performance. For example, the show will take place on a certain date, at a certain time and place, and feature a performance by UJB. Performance is a general frame that serves to set aside the communicative behaviors of an UJB show from other forms of communication behavior. Expectations about music constitute the second frame for UJB shows. The music frame indicates that an UJB show will not be an elocutionary performance, a theatrical performance, or a comedy routine, but rather musical performance. The next two frames (Grateful Dead cover band and UJB) limit and specify further the expectations associated with musical performance by associating the musical performance with musical genre and the performers’ identity.

The frame of “Grateful Dead cover band” establishes expectations that associate UJB with the music and philosophies of the Grateful Dead. The musical genres associated with the Grateful Dead include: rock, country, bluegrass, funk, disco, and blues. The Grateful Dead frame also establishes UJB as an improvisational music performance because the Grateful Dead focused on a specific style of improvisation as a core component of their musical endeavors (Tuedio & Spector, 2010). In their turn, UJB assumes a similar set of expectations about how they improvise music, a practice I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3.

Although UJB assumes a set of expectations that are similar to those raised by the Grateful Dead, UJB has their own identity, which comprises the final frame of an UJB show. Each individual member of UJB carries two identities, one associated with the players in the original Grateful Dead and one as their own artistic performing selves. This final frame separates UJB shows from the catalogs of the Grateful Dead. One can expect a unique experience at an UJB show, not a mirror image of an archived Grateful Dead performance. The four frames -- performance, music, Grateful Dead cover band, and UJB -- establish a set of expectations for an UJB show; however, these frames are not stagnant. They change with time and within each performance.

Goffman (1974) contends that frames are neither static, nor rigid, but are tested, challenged, and reinforced by individuals attempting to make sense of the behaviors within the frames. In other words, behaviors within a framework of understanding transform the framework itself. For example, when a piece of improvisational music is performed, the performance relies upon musical traditions such as standard scale degrees, harmonic acoustics, and instrumental limitations, a musical improvisational performance

also tests and plays with musical traditions, modifying standard scale degrees and pushing instruments beyond their tonal limits. The enactment of musical improvisation augments the set of expectations associated with improvisation as a process and musical traditions, as well as expectations concerning performance in general. In this sense, the performance of musical improvisation changes expectations about improvisational processes, music, and performance. Musical improvisation and the frames that form expectations surrounding musical improvisation are performative. Understanding musical improvisation as a set of performance frames suggests fluidity, while encompassing expectations of interaction associated with musical improvisation. Musical improvisation is defined as a performance frame, and the *doing* of musical improvisation constitutes one of the frames of musical improvisation.

A Metaphor for the Processes of Musical Improvisation

Continuing the idea that doing musical improvisation constitutes musical improvisation itself, I want to concentrate on the process of musical improvisation. To associate how musical improvisation works with a more everyday activity, I will elaborate on how driving a manual transmission car could be considered a metaphor for musical improvisation. Not everyone has had the opportunity to participate in a musical improvisational performance, and connecting the theoretical ideas above to a more everyday process extends understanding of the ways in which I choose to employ theory. The uses of metaphors are commonplace, and my hope is that through the metaphor of driving a manual transmission car, I can illustrate how musical improvisation happens. I first want to establish the metaphor as interaction, and then talk about ways in which

discursive power relationships interact at the site of the driver to constitute the process of driving a manual transmission car.

Numerous interactions occur while operating a manual transmission car. The driver operates the clutch, shift, accelerator, brakes and steering mechanisms. The interactions among the clutch, shifter, and throttle are the most unique and telling interactions when driving a manual transmission car. A driver manipulates technology of the car (e.g. clutch plates, the spinning flywheel, throttle body, shift linkage to the gearbox, and multiple spinning gears) through the use of two pedals and a hand shifter. Although a driver may not be aware of how the technology works, multiple mechanisms are at play. This is similar to the way a musician plays a musical instrument. Not all guitarists understand acoustical and electrical physics, yet they know how to manipulate strings and sound controllers on their guitars in order to achieve a desirable sound. A delicate balance is at play. If a driver applies too much throttle, the car lurches forward when the clutch is engaged. If the driver applies too little the engine stalls. If a guitarist plucks or picks too lightly on a string, the pickups on the guitar will not be able to reproduce the sound. If a guitarist plays a string too hard, the result is a distorted sound. A driver or musician must operate within certain tolerances or limits to achieve a desirable outcome.

These tolerances are defined by power relationships. Whether one drives a car or plays a guitar, the power relationships are both mechanic and aesthetic. I will focus, however, on the aesthetic power relationships because they inform this project in a more direct way. Context establishes the way we expect a driver should change gears in a car. The preferred way to shift a car depends on the context and associated framework in

which the driver is driving. If a driver is racing the car, gear changes are much more abrupt and forceful as the driver must attempt to make the change as fast as possible. In an everyday driving framework, however, dominant expectations encourage drivers to change gears smoothly, paying attention to passenger comfort and mechanical wear and tear. What happens when the dominant discourse is challenged in an everyday driving situation? Passengers complain that the driving is too harsh. Mechanics chastise the driver for being too hard on the car. The expectations of passengers and mechanics converge on the driver of a car, forming discursive power relationships that constitute how a driver will take on the process of shifting gears.

Interactions between a driver and other drivers on the road are similar to interactions among members of a musical group onstage during a performance. Just as musicians communicate with each other using head nods, hand gestures, and movement on the stage, drivers communicate with other drivers by waving hands in thanks (or anger), using turn signals, and honking horns. Although these interactions are obvious, they point to the ways in which drivers and musicians adapt to shifting power relationships and emergent content. Improvisational musicians pay attention to the shifting motion of music as they play it, as a driver pays attention to shifts among other cars sharing the road. Driving to a destination is similar to playing an improvisational song. There is a defined beginning, middle, and end; however, the process of how to get there is unscripted, the way is unmapped. As the process unfolds, a driver or musician must adjust and conform to emerging content. A driver knows the route to his/her specific destination, but he/she has few ideas about what he/she will encounter on the way. Traffic jams, accidents, and construction projects hinder progress, forcing the

driver to adapt to the situation by either changing his/her approach, or by sitting back and letting the hindrance dissolve. While a musical improvisation musician receives feedback from other members of the band, sound engineers, audience reactions, and tolerances inherent in her/his musical instrument, drivers experience the same sort of feedback from her/his car. Drivers can feel bumps, undulations, and smoothness of the road through the steering wheel. If the driver does not have a tachometer in the car, how does he/she know when to shift gears? Drivers feel the engine wrapping up through the accelerator pedal. Drivers sense the urgency and energy building up in the engine and know that to resolve this energy he/she must shift gears. Improvisational musicians do the same thing with respect to playing a song.

Whether driving a car or playing an improvised song, communicated power relationships engage the driver/musician in a constant dialogue between habit and spontaneous interactions. Once habits are formed they tend to free a driver/musician from concentrating all attention on the mechanics of driving/improvising. Monson (2007) calls this process of forming habits in order to free up perception, perceptual agency. When I took driving lessons, one of the instructors echoed this notion. He stated that he knew when students were comfortable driving when they began to read road signs and pay attention to traffic conditions rather than focusing on the instruments and controls inside the car. An improvising musician does the same thing. Once playing his/her musical instrument becomes a habit, he/she is free to give his/her attention to the interactions associated with the musical group, thus opening up a space to improvise.

A final element I would like to mention is the way in which driving is constituted by power relationships concerning the rules of the road. Cultures establish rules that

govern the ways individuals drive on the road. There are rules that govern turning procedures, lane changes, speed limits, yielding and right-of-way, and traffic lights. These rules serve to encourage smooth and safe interactions among drivers on the road. Rules of the road also influence how a driver drives. These rules of the road are similar to rules governing music making. Western traditions in music establish the rules for making music in the United States. Some of the rules include ways to structure harmony, melodies, and rhythms (Berry, 1987). Rules established by the discipline of music theory encourage smooth interactions among players in an improvisational group. If everyone in a musical group understands the rules for making music, the improvisation has potential to go smoothly and safely. Musicians play with these rules and/or expectations during improvisational passages which causes certain elements of risk, and some musical groups thrive on taking those risks onstage.

In summary, musical improvisation is a framed spontaneous performance that is constituted by embodied power relationships. To illustrate how my theory/definition of musical improvisation works, I conducted an ethnography of an improvisational Grateful Dead cover band at Skipper's Smokehouse in Tampa, FL. I allowed a number of questions to guide my observations and interviews at Skipper's Smokehouse:

- How does Uncle John's Band go about performing the improvisational music of the Grateful Dead?
- What are the dominant discursive power relationships within the community of Uncle John's Band?
- How do the members of Uncle John's Band maintain an identity that differs from the Grateful Dead, if they do at all?

- How to the ideals of improvisation manifest themselves as discursive power relationships within the context of an Uncle John's Band show?

The above questions serve only as a guide to my ethnographic observations and interviews, not as a strict regimen of research questions that center my inquiry. As outlined in Chapter 5, I eventually abandoned all of these guiding questions in order to allow the ideas of improvisation and interaction to guide my data gathering techniques. The following chapters describe the results connecting my theory of musical improvisation to the ways in which Uncle John's Band creates improvisational music.

Chapter 3: The Musical Improvisations of Uncle John's Band

Come hear Uncle John's Band,

playing to the tide

Got some things to talk about,

here beside the rising tide

“Uncle John's Band” (Garcia & Hunter, 1970, track 1).

So far I have provided background information on improvisation, and situated my theory of musical improvisation into the continuing conversation concerning improvisation. I then attempted to define the theory behind my approach to musical improvisation, and gave examples and a metaphor of the processes associated with musical improvisation. In the chapters that follow, I provide an extended case study that will illustrate how my theory of musical improvisation operates in practice. This chapter introduces the method of ethnography, explains why it is important to this project, describes the space of Skipper's Smokehouse, and the players in UJB. It then presents findings that show how UJB creates musical improvisational performances.

To understand musical improvisation one must investigate the site of the performance. Sawyer (1996) urges this method of study because “it [improvisation] is a *contingent* performance, with each moment emerging, unpredictable, from the prior flow of the performance; and it is a *collective* phenomenon, with individual performers influencing each other from moment to moment” (p. 270). Studying the products of a creative process removes the researcher from emergent, ephemeral artifacts co-

constructed in the moment of performance (Sawyer, 1997). Tarasti (2002) also suggests that a musical situation is defined by the way an audience is invited to participate.

Emphasizing observations and personal interviews at the site, in the moment, and within the context of the performance aids the elucidation of musical improvisation as a process enacting improvisation's performance frames. The performative nature of musical improvisation should guide data collection techniques. If musical improvisation comes into being by its *doing*, I intend to understand the doing of musical improvisation by way of communicated discursive power relationships and participant observation.

Ethnography as Method

A central part of the project resides in demonstrating the theory by way of practice. I examine communicated discursive power relationships onsite, during musical improvisational performances. To accomplish this, I made ethnographic observations and conducted personal interviews as well as participated in (as a co-creating audience member) musical improvisational performances at Skipper's Smokehouse in Tampa, FL. Skipper's Smokehouse is a local Tampa favorite restaurant and music venue that caters to mostly local bands ranging from blues to reggae, funk to folk, and rock to zydeco. An individual interested in local music staying in Tampa for any length of time would be hard-pressed not to hear of this restaurant/venue. I was introduced to Skipper's Smokehouse by a Florida native (now my partner) during my first week of classes at the University of South Florida. The atmosphere at Skipper's is extremely casual, even for Florida. I have attended all sorts of shows, events, and festivals at Skipper's Smokehouse, but chose to focus on one band's performances in particular for this project.

All of the performances studied for this project featured a band called Uncle John's Band (UJB). UJB is a Grateful Dead cover band that plays at Skipper's Smokehouse every Thursday night throughout the year (except for Thanksgiving). I attended 21 performances beginning in late summer (August 2011), and ending in mid-spring (May 2012). These 21 shows provided roughly 70 hours of observation. Even though there are minimal risks to participants, all interviews began with an informative briefing on consent, followed by signing a consent form. Pseudonyms were developed for those who explicitly requested his/her name to not appear in the project. All transcriptions, fieldnotes, and any other potentially identifying documents have been stored under lock and key for the duration of the project.

Ethnography requires the researcher to be present at a performance, observing and absorbing all that he/she is able from interviews, observations, informal chats, media, and participation, and documenting the process in fieldnotes (Emerson, 2001). Discussions about ethnography have caused a division among ethnographers concerning the nature of ethnographic data and the development of theory. One side argues that theory should only be grounded in ethnographic data (Charmaz, 2001). That is, an ethnographer begins with ethnographic data, and then employs inductive reasoning to develop a theory based on the ethnographic data. The other side argues for an extended case method in which ethnographic data serves to revise and hone pre-existing theory (Burawoy, 2009). Since I am using ethnographic data to understand my theory concerning musical improvisation, I ultimately sided with those who use the extended case method of ethnography.

Working with ethnography requires the researcher to acknowledge her or his position in the research. As a researcher, I brought emotions, privileges, and knowledge

to the research site (Coffey, 1999). I wanted to remain mindful of my position within the research throughout the process of examination. Being male, white, heterosexual, able, and middle-class, I entered the ethnography as a privileged individual. I understand communication, performance, music, improvisation, and power relationships through the lens of such privilege. This privilege also conditioned my observations, personal interviews, and participation in musical improvisation. It is important to understand not only musical improvisational performance, but also reflexively understand my effect as an ethnographer on musical improvisation. Chapter 5 of this project contains a journal-style reflection on my ethnographic experience.

My methodological goals for this project were threefold: go into the field with a developed theory, apply the extended case method of ethnography to understand the embodied discursive power relationships that constitute musical improvisation, and reflect on ethnographic methodology as I conducted the ethnography. In order to accomplish these goals, I incorporated my observations, interview transcriptions, media reports/reviews, and fieldnotes in the subsequent chapters of this project. I find that using ethnography to understand a theory in practice also requires flexibility with theoretical and methodological constructions. To this end, I used my ethnographic observations and experiences to inform my theories about improvisation just as I used my theory to inform the ethnography. The ethnography will revise, hone, and condition my theory concerning musical improvisation. As theory and method interact, they form emergent ways to look at both theory and method. Thus, I combine historical foundations, my ethnographic observations, and interview results to illustrate how these aspects of the project interact.

In other words, I attempt to show the interaction between aspects in the project by writing about them in association, rather than confining the aspects into separate chapters.

The Venue of Skipper's Smokehouse

My goal in my initial ethnographic experience at Skipper's Smokehouse was to document the environment, context, and overall feel of the fieldsite. Following are my fieldnotes depicting the space, place, patrons, and staff of Skipper's Smokehouse.

Around Skippers' neighborhood, I first notice the fact that this area is very rundown. Old one-story apartment complexes, trailer parks, and out-of-business car repair shops line the side of Highway 41. This is the kind of area where you turn down the music in your car for fear of being marked. On the corner across from Skipper's is a 7-11 that has certainly seen too many hurricanes. Men sit on the sidewalk in front of the gas station, drinking from brown paper bags. No one uses the gas pumps. Neon signs flicker in the windows. I turn down Skipper Rd, and spot Skipper's on the left.

Skipper's parking lot is graveled, requiring a bit of off-road skill to navigate. It was already full of cars when I arrived due to a scheduled reggae festival. My VW Rabbit isn't a huge fan of off-roading, but what's life without a bit of fun? I negotiated the gravel pit (including mounds of sand, runoff holes, potholes, and tree stumps), and found a spot to park.

Skipper's consists of a complex with three main areas marked vaguely from the outside, the "Restaurant," the "Oysterbar," and the "Skipperdome." Hand-painted directions hope to direct you to your preferred destination, but throughout my time I overhear numerous misdirected patrons. Skipper's looks like a fishing shack in the Florida Everglades. The most striking feature of Skipper's is the enormous Live Oak

trees with Spanish moss dripping from their branches. It's the kind of place that you would buy bait from in the Everglades. Freshly painted purple paneling adorns the side of the building with enormous lettering reading: Skipper's Smokehouse Smokin' Since 1980. I walk along the hand-laid boardwalk to the first fork in the road, restaurant left, Skipperdome right. I take a left, preferring to sit and eat while I make notes on the decor. Nautical rope serves as handrails. Boating cast offs (props, cleats, life preservers, coiled rope) are scattered throughout the landscape. Skipper's has a number of exterior signs advertising its existence, the most notable being a hand-painted surfboard.

Walking inside the restaurant I notice that I'm still walking on the hand-laid boardwalk material. The threshold between in and out is barely noticeable, merely a light swinging door, one step up from a porch screen. Three servers sit on a counter, and ask in unison, "Hey there, what can we do for you?"

"Um, well, I just need a spot to eat."

"Just one?"

"Yep, just me."

One of the women hops down and leads me to a table in the very center of a near-empty restaurant. I sit down on the wall-length wooden bench so I can face the restaurant, and the server hands me a folded paper menu.

"Can I get you anything to drink while you look things over?"

"Okay. Well. I'll have a Newcastle if you've got it."

"Sure thing."

The servers here dress in jeans and t-shirts. All are caucasian females. I get the impression that you need to know someone to get a job here, like at a tattoo or head shop.

They seem nice and laid back, but confident in their ability to do their job. My particular server is short and of a normal, healthy weight. She wears no makeup. Her straight dark hair is pulled back into a ponytail. Fitting the theme of today's reggae festival, she wears a jacket with green, yellow, and red striping down the arms. Her apron has rainbow-colored chilies on it. The servers act like volunteers at a music festival. They are jovial, helpful, and generally cool customers.

Blues music plays on the house stereo, sounds like Taj Mahal. The server comes back and sets down my beer (served in clear plastic keg cup). She asks if I've decided on anything in particular. Skipper's serves mainly seafood, including oysters, catfish, mullet (that comes as a whole, smoked fish), and mahi. Other items of note are gator tail, whole crawfish, and peel-n-eat gulf shrimp by the quarter pound.

"I'm gonna try the catfish dinner."

"K. Fried, grilled, or blackened?"

"Blackened. With black beans, yellow rice, and steamed vegetables."

"Sweet. No problem. I'll get that out when it's ready."

"Thanks."

She smiles, then retreats to the front counter. No computerized server stations here.

On the tables rest three different types of hot sauce, one being a 12oz bottle of Tobasco, which is only a third full. The napkin holders are made of some sort of tarnished metal. The salt and pepper shakers are weathered plastic, white-ish for salt, brown for pepper. At each table is a folded paper newsletter entitled, "The Daily Mullet". The newsletter contains a schedule for upcoming shows. I put one in my notebook. The walls of the restaurant are covered with photographs of musicians,

patrons, and employees, as well as flyers from previous shows held at Skippers. The ceiling rafters are bare. The windows contain no glass and are covered with plastic tarps and chicken wire. Old lobster and crab traps surround the few light bulbs that illuminate the shack. Decorations include fishing nets, oars, X-mas lights, a stuffed 7ft tarpon, a metal sailfish, boat bumpers, and buoys.

The reggae festival begins with a MC announcing the first group. Bass rumbles the entire restaurant, and the crowd outside cheers. I can see the vibrations in the bottles of hot sauce.

It's warm and humid inside the restaurant, just like outside. I knock against the wall behind me and realize that it is made of cinderblock, a classic Florida construction material. I smell cooking smoke and damp wood.

A middle-aged couple sits down at the table across from me. I pretend not to notice them, as I am still writing notes, but the woman stares at me. They both have bottles of beer with them, encased in Daytona 500 beer cozies. I look up briefly and smile. The woman smiles back, the man just stares at me blankly. They talk to each other, and wait for a server.

There are only two other groups in the restaurant, a group of six twenty-somethings dressed in baggy jeans, Bob Marley and Jamaican flag T-shirts, and a single middle-aged man talking on a cell phone. The man is very dark skinned with ponytailed braids, dressed in all black military fatigues. He speaks in a Jamaican accent, and I deduce from his cell phone conversation that he is performing later in the night.

The server returns with my dinner, sets it down with a smile, and retreats immediately. I get the impression that she didn't want to disturb my writing. The food is

served on a styrofoam 3-compartment plate with a plastic fork and knife tucked under the fish fillets. The fish rests on a piece of parchment paper that wicks away some of the cooking oil. Since it is about 4 in the afternoon, the servers set up for the Saturday dinner rush. They bring out a 5-gallon bucket filled with clear squirt bottles. They set two bottles on each table, one is tartar sauce, one is ketchup. The catfish is wonderfully cooked. It's moist on the inside, yet still has a crispy blackened crust on the outside. I'm sure cooking fish like this is not easy, and requires a lot of practice. Skipper's is the kind of place that prides themselves on their seafood

After I eat, and order a second beer, I get up to check out the Oysterbar. The door leading to the bar bears a sign reading, "No minors without parents." The handle of the portholed door is a nautical cleat. The bar is painted a sea green. It is made of worn wood and L-shaped. A collage of photographs of musicians and patrons serves as wallpaper. A few TV's above the bar tuned to a college basketball game. The place is packed, and sounds of slurping iced oysters and clanging beer bottles come from the patrons. It's much louder in here, but the blues music I heard in the restaurant is still audible. The bar smells of the sea and beer, more like I thought the whole place would smell.

I return to my table to find a new beer stacked in the old beers' cup. Seems like a handy way to keep track of a patron's alcohol consumption. I continue to drink my beer and write notes. Servers continue to prepare for the dinner rush. The group of six leaves for the Skipperdome, the couple across from me does the same, and I am left in the restaurant as the only patron. No one else has come in since I've been here. I finish my beer, order another, and ask for the check. The server brings the check with a pen

decorated with Grateful Dead bears and flowers. I grab my beer and head out to the Skipperdome area.

All sorts of people attend the reggae festival: families, groups of all skin colors, college-aged, middle-aged, elderly, singles and couples. Most are smiling and having a good time. There are a few that sit at picnic benches that seem bored, but most seem happy to be there. The employees talk about basketball and the “old days” in between rushes of patrons and orders. There is a sense of community out here. Performers mingle with the crowd.

The Skipperdome is an outdoor music venue. There are two bars, one at the back and one on the side. The only seating consists of a number of picnic benches. Around the edges of the venue are standalone shacks that serve no purpose other than decor. The place has the feel of a music festival. Vendors walk around selling t-shirts, incense, and eco-friendly soap out of backpacks. I’m sitting on the edge of the side bar, writing notes. Employees conduct business right next to me. No one pays any attention to me as I write and drink my beer.

Skipper’s Smokehouse and Budweiser advertising surround the stage. There is no roof to the venue, only some aged tarps and oak trees for rain shelter. The dance floor and deck is the same weathered wood boardwalk as in the restaurant, oysterbar, and entrance. Most of the Skipperdome’s floor is white, sugary sand. Exposed walls are decorated with stickers advertising bands, the legalization of marijuana, craft beers, and alternative lifestyles. Out here I smell cigar smoke and cleaning products. The entire time I’m in the Skipperdome, a DJ spins Bob Marley songs. People sing along, and dance with one another. This brings a smile to my face as I finish my beer, and leave the

venue. I'm confident in the site. I'm happy to be doing the research. I feel that at anytime, I could talk with any of these people.

Out in the off-road parking lot, cars circle waiting for spots to open up. Parking has overflowed to nearby out-of-businesses. People stand in the lot drinking beer and conversing. As I drive away from Skipper's, I enter into the rushed and frantic traffic patterns of Tampa. I am sad to leave the oasis of the Skipperdome. I want the rest of Tampa to be like the reggae festival: laid back, calm, communal, and fun.

Uncle John's Band

Throughout the research for this project, the regular UJB lineup consists of six musicians: Alan Gilman on lead guitar/vocals, Rich Whiteley on rhythm guitar/vocals, Mike Edwards on bass guitar/vocals, Art Nelson on keyboards, Dan DeGregory on percussion/vocals, and Mike Bortz on percussion. The members of UJB hail from regions spanning the eastern and central United States including Wisconsin, New York, Delaware, Virginia, and Illinois, but currently they all reside in Florida. Most of the players in UJB grew up playing music, and were exposed to music at a very young age. Gilman states that his:

[My] first musical training was on piano from my father who played professionally. I was enrolled at the Julliard School of Music for classical piano instruction at the age of 6. I only attended there for 3 years, but had a great education to expand upon when taking up guitar at age 11.

DeGregory recalls that he:

Always had music in the house growing up. My mom, a trained pianist, would start each weekend morning with several albums on the turntable. I never knew

which artist or genre to expect, but it included classical, jazz, post-war pop, the Great American Songbook, folk, etc.

Whiteley also began his journey with music at a young age:

I was singing basic melodies pretty early on. Around the age of 8, I started out noodling around with a harmonica, and then learning some chords and songs on the ukulele with my dad. I played the sax in the school band from 3rd grade until 8th grade, but never pursued it all that much, and didn't study enough. Early in high school was when I switched to guitar and started studying under a great jazz guitarist in Delaware.

These members of UJB begin exploring music at a relatively young age, and were encouraged to do so by mothers and fathers who were musicians themselves. Bortz states that the impact music has made on his life is, “HUGE! Been playing and performing non-stop since 1968, with my first paid gig at 19. I listen to all styles of music about 75% of my awake hours.” Whiteley makes a similar claim, “Impact on my life? It's what I do. It's brought great joy, but also much uncertainty.” For the players in UJB, performing musical improvisations connect them to how they understand life, family, and community.

UJB performs around 10 shows a month, including their weekly Thursday nights at Skipper's Smokehouse. UJB rarely leaves the Tampa Bay area. Most of the band members have day jobs, families, and obligations outside of the music industry. They load-in, setup, sound check, tune, load-out, and take care of their own equipment. They drive themselves to the performances, usually in their own vehicles. Members of UJB are working musicians, and they do it because they love music and what music does for

them. Alan Gilman states that, “Music has a big impact on my life. It makes me feel good when I play and I can express a lot of emotion with dynamics. It is my favorite language in a sense.” Gilman, like the others, plays music for the joy of performing and the emotional outlet. UJB performs not for commercial success, but for personal enjoyment and for a sense of community with their audiences.

Forming a sense of community with their audience is a chief concern of UJB, whose mission statement reads, “The purpose of Uncle John's Band is to recreate the atmosphere and musical adventure of a live Dead show,” (Gilman, 2012). In order to recreate the experience of a Grateful Dead show, UJB insists that the audience at a show become an integral part of their musical performance. DeGregory explains the connection between UJB and their audiences:

With the Dead's songbook as a vehicle, what seems to work best is for us to concentrate on injecting emotional energy into the music, and then draw from whatever emotional feedback the audience is offering. The primal wails and “yawps” from the crowd at certain key dynamic moments in a song create a palpable energy that actually can make the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

DeGregory's statement hints at the four frameworks associated with UJB that I outlined in Chapter 2. The frameworks include: performance, music, Grateful Dead cover band, and UJB themselves. These frameworks, or sets of expectations, form a foundational set of power relationships that serve to constitute musical improvisation for UJB.

DeGregory comments that UJB employs the Grateful Dead's songbook as a vehicle for the production, conveyance, and dissemination of emotional energy. Performing musical improvisation results, in part, from interactions between the expectations associated with

the Grateful Dead and the expectations associated with UJB. UJB's mission and performances transfer emotional energy to an audience in a way that honors the musical philosophies put forth by the Grateful Dead, thus re-creating the experience of a live Dead show. UJB's stated purpose illustrates one of the foundational ways in which the power relationship between the Grateful Dead and UJB constitute UJB's performance of musical improvisation. There are a number of other ways in which UJB performs musical improvisation with respect to the power relationships between UJB and the Grateful Dead.

How does UJB cover the music of the Grateful Dead? Rather than mimic the music and the persona of the Grateful Dead, UJB re-creates the experience of a Grateful Dead performance. Extreme accuracy is not the goal of UJB. They are not trying to play every note and hit every change exactly as the Grateful Dead did. In fact, that type of mimesis goes against the philosophies and performance characteristics of the Grateful Dead. The members of the Grateful Dead longed for a style of music that incorporated their personal identities into the performances. The members of UJB continue this tradition by re-creating their experiences of Grateful Dead music. UJB allows their personalities and identities to condition the music they play, just like the members of the Grateful Dead. As Phil Lesh (the bassist of the Grateful Dead) explains:

The unique organicity of our music reflects the fact that each of us consciously personalized his playing: to fit with what others were playing and to fit with who each man was as an individual, allowing us to meld our consciousnesses together in the unity of a group mind (Lesh, 2005, p. 56).

Whiteley of UJB echoes these comments as he explains his mental metaphors for performing improvisational music with UJB:

The first is the idea of a brook or stream of crystal clear mountain water. I like to think of the streams of music from each individual instrument interweaving and playing along like the streamlets winding their way among the stones of a rocky stream. I suppose you could expand that metaphor to say that sometimes you're in the shallows, and sometimes deeper. Sometimes it's rapid, and sometimes more still. Sometimes powerful, and sometimes peaceful.

An extended example of this approach is the playing of UJB's bassist, Mike Edwards, who plays the bass parts of the Grateful Dead's bassist, Phil Lesh.

Playing the Bass Guitar

A bassist in a westernized rock and roll band has an interesting role. The bassist is the bridge connecting rhythm and melody. Traditionally, a bassist establishes and grounds a song's chord progression by playing the root notes of the chords while coordinating rhythmically with the percussion in the band. The bass plays the root note of a chord in time with the drum set. This results in a relatively simple, repetitive pattern that provides a background to the chord progression in a song. Repetitive, simple, and foundational, the bassline of a song is often linked to a primal feeling, like the heartbeat of a living organism connected to the tonal progression of a song. This repetition and primal feeling also places the bassline in an exalted space revered by dancing audience members. Audiences *feel* the bassline in music because of the physical air bass frequencies vibrate. Bass players tend to think of moving and pushing air rather than plucking a string. In this sense, basslines provide a tangible, predictable, and primal

aspect to music that forms the foundation for dancing and audience participation. In order to provide this emotional bedrock, basslines do not vary too much throughout a song, but provide a steady backdrop for the lyrical and melodic progressions to play with/on.

Phil Lesh took these traditional approaches to playing bass in a rock band and chucked them out of the window. Lesh came from the traditions of classical and jazz trumpet, and brought those traditions with him to the Grateful Dead (Lesh, 2005). Rather than conform to the standards set forth by rock bassists for the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and James Brown, Lesh took an unusual approach to the bass guitar, preferring to associate and interact with the more melodic instruments in the band like guitars, keyboards, and vocal lines (Lesh, 2005). A typical Lesh bassline, “consists of long phrases composed of series of brief melodic figures that swing in and around the main harmonic downbeats,” (Wood, 2010, p. 49). Lesh rarely played a repetitive, root note progression bassline. Lesh plays the bass in a less foundational, repetitive, and background way, but takes more of a lyrical, harmonic, and melodic approach. Lesh explored the bass guitar’s sonority in a similar fashion to the way John Coltrane explored a saxophone, or the way J. S. Bach explored tonality and the possibilities offered through harmonic consonance and dissonance (Jackson, 1999; McNally, 2002).

Although Lesh’s experimental approach to playing the bass guitar offered a new and unique sound for the Grateful Dead, it also created some difficulties for other players in the band and for listeners in the audience. Jerry Garcia, the lead guitarist and vocalist for the Grateful Dead, speaks of this problem with a new bass expression in a 1967 interview with Ralph Gleason:

The problems we're having with all this [are] because all of us still think so musically straight, really, that it's difficult to get used to not hearing the heavy two and four [beat]. It's difficult to think rhythmically without having it there all the time, but we're starting to develop that sense better. There's not that feeling of the big rhythm going [in our music] because we do a lot of tricks within a bar and the tricks we do are like eliminating the beat entirely and just all of us *not* playing it (Jackson, 1999, p. 108-109).

Since the bassline usually provides a rhythmic and harmonic backdrop for other instruments, the lack of a rhythmic and harmonic backdrop removes the foundation of the music. Without a repetitive, foundational bassline, the music of the Grateful Dead is often perceived as de-centered (Wood, 2010). The lack of a foundation and rhythmic focus proved to be a curse and a gift for the Grateful Dead. This de-centered music would make it very difficult for the Grateful Dead to score any hit songs. As Robert Hunter, the main lyricist for the Grateful Dead, claims:

Looking back, the best thing that ever happened for us was not having hits in those days. I don't know what kind of weird directions we would've gone, but we were made to work, and keep working year after year (Grunwald, Jong, & Marre, 1999).

Hunter is referring to the fact that if the Grateful Dead had produced any hits at the most productive time in their history as a band, the direction of the subsequent music would have been altered. Hunter brings up an interesting power relationship that a working band must negotiate. Scoring a hit song would help a band reach new listeners, provide more financial security, and increase opportunities for further success. The identity of

the band will be tied to that hit song, and expectations will arise about how the band should continue. Without a hit song, there are fewer expectations, and the band is forced to work hard for subsistence.

Lesh, then, proved instrumental in developing a unique, de-centered sound that flew in the face of what was (and still is?) considered a hit song. Because Lesh refused to conform to popular practices with respect to bass playing, and the Grateful Dead embraced this refusal, the band did not have to confront the power relationship surrounding a hit song or fitting into an aesthetic mold for making hit songs. Lesh's bass playing forced the Grateful Dead to construct their identity and musical style through persistence and hard work, rather than through pop consumerism.

The Grateful Dead's audiences also had to work a little harder to come to terms with the Dead's musical style and identity. The lack of a repetitive, primal, and foundational bassline requires a listener to expand his/her concept of rock music. As Garcia noted, there is no heavy rhythm to attach to. There are no two and four beats to keep a listener rhythmically locked into the song. Listeners must learn the Grateful Dead's approach to music, appreciate it, and allow the Dead's music cultural space. UJB does not need to carve out a unique space for the Dead's approach to music. UJB has the luxury of building on the Grateful Dead's approach.

The bassist in UJB, Mike Edwards, embodies a power relationship that goes between the frame of the Grateful Dead and the frame of UJB. Edwards does not mimic the bass playing of Phil Lesh, rather, Edwards begins with Lesh's basslines then augments them as he sees fit. Edwards' prowess on the bass guitar shows how a cover band performs musical improvisation.

Any cover band begins to construct their own music by playing songs by the original band. UJB begins with the songs of the Grateful Dead to cover the Dead's music. UJB, however, focuses on improvisational music that varies, shifts, and modulates, so the players in UJB are able to insert their identities and musical style into the music of the Grateful Dead. Edwards puts his identity onto the Dead's music by spanning a gap that Lesh refused to explore. In short, Edwards combines the bass style of Lesh with a more traditional, foundational way of playing the bass guitar.

In every performance, UJB plays a few Grateful Dead songs that contain an extended space for improvisation. On occasion UJB performs *Scarlet Begonias*, and then segues into *Fire on the Mountain*, a common sequence at Grateful Dead concerts, eventually nicknamed *Scarlet Fire*. The connection of these two songs comes by way of an extended improvised bridge. The music never stops; *Scarlet Begonias* morphs into *Fire on the Mountain*, and then usually returns to the main riff of *Scarlet Begonias* to wrap up the two-song run. Edwards approaches these two songs and their connecting improvisational bridge in two quite distinct ways.

Edwards plays like Lesh during the verses and structured parts of *Scarlet Begonias* and *Fire on the Mountain*. The bassline meanders and plays with the dominant melodies and riffs of the songs. Edwards rarely exaggerates the downbeat, preferring to syncopate the bassline with the vocal line, guitar lead, or keyboard rhythm, while at the same time harmonizing and wandering throughout the melodies. This syncopation de-centers the music, just as Lesh did throughout his years with the Grateful Dead. A major difference, however, is at play in Edward's situation. Because of the interacting power relationships of expectations (i.e. frames) from both the audience and UJB concerning

how the Grateful Dead performed the songs, this de-centering bassline is the original way the song was experienced. UJB performs the structured parts of songs as the Grateful Dead played them, thus affirming UJB's identity as a cover band. The improvisational sections within the song-structures as well as the bridge between the two songs, however, offer UJB a chance to establish their own agency and identities.

Edwards really shines on bass in these improvisational sections, combining Lesh's unusual style with his own, more traditional style. Early in the transition between *Scarlet Begonias* and *Fire on the Mountain*, Edwards uses Lesh's performance style, offering the improvising group a de-centered bassline. As UJB proceeds into the improvisational transition section, the music ebbs and flows, creating high-energy moments that are juxtaposed with low-energy moments. The audience goes along. Audience members dance frantically during the higher energy passages, and begin to sway slowly as the lower energy moments offer the dancers a chance to cool down and catch their breath. Edwards' bass playing during these improvisational transitions moves towards his own traditional approach. He accentuates the downbeats with root note bass drones. He rocks the venue with loud, low-pitched bass passages, opting to steer clear of Lesh's upper register melodic harmonizing. Switching back and forth between Lesh's style and his own style, Edwards highlights his foundational role by inserting a primal feeling into the environment. Edwards provides the musical improvisation with a sort of grounding that forces UJB's performance away from the frame of the Grateful Dead and towards their own frame. This return to traditional bass playing helps form UJB's identity, provides UJB's audience with a palpable energy, and lets the musical improvisation exist in the moment by turning away from standards set by the Grateful

Dead. Although Edwards' performance on bass illustrates how UJB covers the music of the Grateful Dead, UJB works with discursive power relationships between the frames of the Grateful Dead and UJB in other ways as well. In the following section I will examine discursive power relationships associated with philosophies put forth by the Grateful Dead, including creative control over the music, on-stage behavior, and setlist design.

Spokes of a Wheel

In order for UJB to re-create the experience of a Grateful Dead concert, UJB relies on, embodies, and enacts philosophies created by the Grateful Dead. The Dead not only embraced the idea of improvisation in music, but also lived their ideas of improvisation throughout their daily lives (McNally, 2002). Of course, improvisation had been well established in jazz and other forms of experimental music, but the Grateful Dead's contribution to the world of musical improvisation was different. During their improvisational performances, the Dead would interact among themselves, engage the audience at the performance, and shift the music's subjective meanings as they were performing them (Tuedio & Spector, 2010). Phil Lesh often described the players in the Grateful Dead as the spokes of a wheel (Lesh, 2005). No one member was the leader of the group, rather the players (spokes) in the Grateful Dead surrounded and influenced the center (hub) of the experience which was the song they were performing at the time. This approach is inclusive and non-hierarchical by nature, as it includes the members of the Grateful Dead, the sound techs, the audience, the context and environment, and the audience at the performance. Nowhere was this more evident than at the Acid Tests, the genesis of the Grateful Dead's wheel approach to music making.

Jerry Garcia spoke about the importance of the Acid Tests in developing what would become the Grateful Dead's (and subsequently UJB's) approach to music. The Dead's long-time friends, Ken Kesey, Neal Cassady, and the Merry Pranksters, devised a series of parties as a way to get like-minded people together and take large amounts of LSD. The Grateful Dead performed at these parties. Garcia recalls in an interview, (Jackson, 1999, p. 89):

We had no significance. We weren't famous. Nobody came to the Acid Test to see us, particularly. We got to play or not play, depending on how we felt. We could play anything we could think of, which meant we didn't have any constraints on our performance. We didn't have to be good, or recognizable even. We had an opportunity to visit highly experimental places under the influence of highly experimental chemicals before a highly experimental audience. It was ideal.

For the Grateful Dead to develop their approach to music, they needed freedom and cultural space. The Acid Tests provided that. The Grateful Dead paved an avenue at the Acid Tests for musical improvisation that UJB enjoy the luxury of walking. The carving out of a social space for the Grateful Dead's version of musical improvisation is done for UJB, they just need to embrace it and re-create it for their audiences.

Some members of UJB live by the philosophy of the Grateful Dead. DeGregory states, "I am an improviser at heart, both on the bandstand and in my day-to-day." Bortz claims that:

In the era I grew up in, I was 15 years old during 1969's Summer of Love. While just a bit young to be a real part of it, many of the ideals popular during that time

remain with me. At that time, I was not much of a Dead fan. Years later, I developed a much greater appreciation of the music. In an attempt to catch up, I read *Long Strange Trip*, a bio of the Dead, and *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* by Mickey Hart. This particular book is very much aligned with my views of the spiritual connection between drumming, improvisation, vibrational energy, meditation, etc.

Philosophies enacted by the Grateful Dead create a way of living for Bortz. In a similar way, Bortz talks about how UJB embraces the music of the Grateful Dead. Bortz states that, “Uncle John’s Band is unique in that each member *completely* enjoys the music of the Dead, with a goal of doing justice to the spirit of the music.” Bortz wants UJB to do justice to the spirit of the music, rather than the music itself. For Bortz, it is not enough to replicate the music of the Grateful Dead. His statements encapsulate the Dead’s philosophies for music making, particularly the philosophy of connecting spiritual and emotional energy to the process of creating music. UJB enacts this power relationship with the philosophies of the Grateful Dead by the way they behave on-stage and at their performances.

Uncle John’s Band and their Audiences

UJB works very hard to include audiences in their performances. A few of the shows I attended featured a revolving door of musicians standing in for the regular members of the band. These musicians included friends of the band members, past members of UJB, other musicians in the Tampa Bay area, and on occasion the working staff at Skipper’s. The members of UJB embrace this type of inclusion of fellow

musicians and performers, and so did the Grateful Dead. More regularly, however, UJB attempts to make their audiences feel welcome and at home.

McNally (2002) suggests that one of the main aspects fueling the Grateful Dead's longevity and continued reverence comes from the fact that the Dead encouraged such a familial approach to their band, friends, audiences, and fans. Garcia remarked about how the Grateful Dead wanted to evoke the ideals of a family with respect to their audiences. He stated in a 1992 interview (Jackson, 1999, p.110):

Being there was being part of the experience; you didn't feel that performer-audience [dichotomy] . . . We were part of that world. We were not performers. We were playing for our family, in a sense. It kind of had that feel, that kind of informality.

UJB enacts these familial ideals by the way they behave at their own performances. Going to an UJB show is an informal and welcoming experience. I talk about my experiences with breaking into the scene surrounding UJB in Chapter 5. In short, UJB performs in such an informal style that audiences cannot help but interact with the members of the band in natural and casual ways. Whiteley talks about his approach to interacting with UJB's audiences:

I'm not particularly good at stage banter, and when I see a band do it poorly it makes me cringe. I wish I was more comfortable with it, and occasionally I am. But I don't try to force it. We talk to individuals at the front of the stage, but our talk over the mic is mostly to the point. While I'm playing, I like to pick out a person and play to just that person for a while, then switch to someone else. If you're communicating to one, you're also communicating to many. But out in the

audience during a break, or before or after a show, I love hanging out and conversing with people, taking requests, etc.

Bortz also talks about how he interacts with audiences as he performs on-stage:

I would like to think an audience can tell how much fun I'm having while I perform. When the band is having fun, it's easy for an audience to do the same.

During breaks I'm eager to talk shop with *anyone*.

More often than not the members of UJB meander through the audience during set breaks and before and after the performances rather than retreating to the backstage area. They include whoever wants to talk in their conversations. The members of UJB are not pretentious or too busy for their audience. On numerous occasions, members of the band would arrive back to the stage late after a set break due to conversations and hanging out with the audience.

Members of the audience appreciate these types of gestures from UJB. One particular individual, who has attended UJB shows for a number of years, states:

I really like the way that these guys [members of UJB] do their thing. They always come out and talk with us when they can. It's such a cool thing to be able to give them comments on their sets, talk about the weather, talk about their families and friends. I mean, what other band around town does this? Every time I come out to the show I feel like I'm at a family reunion. It's like I'm at a picnic with my family and friends.

This audience member goes on to talk about how UJB shows fill in for his family since his parents passed away.

I used to go to Dead shows with my mom and dad. I wasn't but a teenager, but my folks thought that the community and culture of the Dead would mean something to me. It's been very hard to let them go, but these guys right here [points to UJB on-stage], have helped a lot. Maybe that's strange. I dunno. I feel like I can re-unite with mom and dad every Thursday, and that has saved me from some nasty stuff.

For this fan, UJB fills a void in his life, and is a type of therapy. Because the Grateful Dead's philosophy removes the separation between the audience and artists, and members of UJB continue this tradition, audience members feel as if they are a part of the music, community, and performance. As Whiteley states:

I am continually surprised by how important our Thursday nights are to many in the audience. I get people thanking us and saying that it's what they look forward to all week. It's great to be able to provide this for people.

This sense of inclusion is productive in the lives of both UJB and members of the audience. Inclusion provides joy for the players in UJB, just as the performances bring joy to the audience. In this way, the musical improvisational performers and the audience connect on an emotional level that resembles the comfort associated with family and friends. UJB fosters the Grateful Dead's informal approach to musical improvisational performance in other, less direct ways.

One of the first things I noticed while attending UJB shows was the way the members of the band behaved on-stage. UJB's performance style is extremely casual. They do not wear theatrical-type costumes, preferring tie-dye t-shirts, cargo shorts, and sneakers. UJB keeps the performance focused on the music, not on their personas. They

are laid back and informal. A major aspect of this informality is the length of time UJB takes on-stage between songs. From my fieldnotes:

The band is extremely comfortable on stage. They allow a lot of time in between songs, lighting and smoking cigarettes, drinking water or beer, chatting amongst themselves, or tuning instruments. These pauses really make the show seem like a rehearsal. It is like they are letting the audience into their space, space that is usually reserved for backstage or practice. When UJB takes these short breaks, you can hear rain hitting the tarps and tents throughout the Skipperdome. The band makes comments about how it makes the whole experience more natural. They get lost in the music, look up to the sky a lot, and generally have a good time with one another. UJB seems like a club, just regular guys who happen to love the Grateful Dead.

UJB enacts the power relationship between the performance frame and the frame of UJB. The dominant discourse forming expectations of a musical performance creates a separation between rehearsal time and performance time. Following the dominant discourse, most musical performances do not allow much empty, or dead, space between songs. Similar to ideologies associated with radio programming and scheduling, dead space is wasted time and money. UJB, however, lets their audience into the backstage space, inviting the audience to gaze at their process of creating and performing music. UJB is not a well-oiled music machine, but rather, they are people who create music for the enjoyment of other people. Allowing space between songs creates a personal association with the band which fuels the familial approach to UJB's performances. UJB is re-creating the philosophies of the Grateful Dead through their performance style and

behavior. Audience members experience and get involved in these philosophies by way of UJB's performances, and have the opportunity to re-live the community established by 30 years of musical performances by the Grateful Dead. Another way for audiences to get involved in Grateful Dead shows was the preservation, anticipation, and prediction of setlists.

The Importance of a Setlist

Throughout the shows I observed, one aspect came up in most conversations with both young and older audience members, the setlist. The order of songs played by the Grateful Dead increasingly became an important aspect of the show (McNally, 2002). While in the early years of the Grateful Dead setlists were less structured, they became very organized in the later years of the band's performances (Jackson, 1999). UJB organizes their sets according to the later years of Grateful Dead performances; however, in true form to the philosophies of the Dead and musical improvisation in general, nothing is set in stone. Whiteley explains UJB process in creating a setlist:

We do not re-create specific Dead shows. Maybe on a handful of occasions we've realized that the set list we've randomly chosen resembles a famous show, and for fun we'll complete that list. But it's not how we usually operate. To some extent we follow the structure that the Dead settled into in the early 80s, which, in general, was a somewhat more song oriented first set, and a more improvisational oriented second set. But we aren't rigidly attached to this structure and we do mix it up however we feel. We're pretty allergic to setlists and just construct the show on the fly. Occasionally we'll plot out the next three songs, but it rarely goes beyond that unless it's a special event type show like we've done for WMNF radio

on occasion. For example, playing the albums *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* for the 40th anniversary of those albums.

Rather than focus on re-creating Grateful Dead shows, song for song and note for note, UJB uses the basic structure of a Dead setlist to re-create the experience of a Dead show.

This approach sparked both positive and negative remarks from audience members. One audience member stated that:

I don't like the way UJB throws shows together. The Dead did shows in a specific way for a specific reason. I think preserving that would help UJB make a better show, closer to what the Dead did. If UJB wants to be a good cover band, they should play songs like the Dead did.

For this audience member, re-creating a Dead show by playing an exact setlist would make for a more authentic experience. A seasoned veteran of Grateful Dead shows stated that:

The Dead would never play shows like UJB. I don't know if that's a good or bad thing, but it makes me crave a real Dead show. I find myself criticizing UJB's setlists a lot. Why don't they do setlists like the Dead did? Surely it's not that hard. They play all of the songs. I would certainly like it more if UJB were more like the Dead in that respect.

Again, this statement indicates that the Dead's setlists are a major aspect of their shows, and authenticity derives from this aspect of the Dead's performances. Another audience member likes the way UJB arranges their setlists, saying:

First of all, these guys [UJB] aren't the Dead, so I don't like to think of them that way. I like the fact that they do things their own way. I mean, why would these

guys do it any other way than the way they want? The Dead didn't listen to critics; they did things on their own terms. I think UJB is doing the same thing in spirit. That's what makes UJB UJB, not the Dead.

This audience member encourages UJB to embody the philosophies and defiance enacted by the Grateful Dead. For this audience member, authenticity is not repeating exact setlists, authenticity is about re-creating the processes and ideologies of the Grateful Dead.

The main point of this chapter is to reinforce the idea that UJB does musical improvisation by way of re-creating the experience of a Grateful Dead show rather than mimicking the music of the Grateful Dead. Musical improvisation becomes by way of interacting power relationships, and the improvisational performances of UJB are no exception. Through the interaction of power relationships associated with the frames of UJB, the Grateful Dead, and musical performance, UJB establishes musical improvisational performances that pay tribute to the Grateful Dead. More specifically, UJB enacts and embodies power relationships connected to the musical and spiritual philosophies created by the Grateful Dead, all while augmenting and altering the Dead's music and setlists to further embrace spontaneity. Since the Dead (and subsequently UJB) focus on including all in attendance in their performances, the next chapter will highlight the ways in which individuals at Skipper's Smokehouse co-create UJB's musical improvisational performances.

Chapter 4: The Experience of Energy

Ripple in still water,
When there is no pebble tossed,
Nor wind to blow.
Reach out your hand if your cup be empty,
If your cup is full may it be again,
Let it be known there is a fountain,
That was not made by the hands of men
“Ripple” (Garcia & Hunter, 1970, track 6).

The above lyrics are from a Grateful Dead song entitled *Ripple*, and they represent one of the guiding philosophies of the Grateful Dead. This philosophy is called the Ripple Effect and it speaks through the ideas of collective consciousness, energy, and spirituality by articulating how intangible energy transfers from individual to individual, living or dead, forming a collective consciousness (Holt, 1999). Imagining ripples in water visually illustrates this dissemination of energy. As the ripples move away from a source, they distort calmer waters. These ripples affect the water. The ripples change, disturb, and distort the water, for better or worse. To further conceptualize the Ripple Effect, however, I imagine a center, or hub, creating an idea then disseminating that idea throughout a collected group by way of vibrational energy. In this way, the Ripple Effect describes how connections form among performers, audience, and place. The Ripple Effect creates a collective consciousness that informs a collective experience. Lesh

(2005) comments that at the best of times collective consciousness and collective experiences bring about a shared unity, a peaceful hope that human beings can elevate themselves above the ideas of materiality and aggression, and move into a new realm of consciousness.

In the spirit of collective consciousness and collective experiences, this chapter focuses on aspects of UJB's performances that are not centered on the members of UJB. More specifically, I focus this chapter on the experiences of audience members, Skipper's staff, as well as the space of Skipper's Smokehouse. All of these elements are part of UJB's performances at Skipper's Smokehouse, and thus enter into the power relationships that condition UJB performances.

As developed in Chapter 3, UJB concerns themselves with re-creating an experience for individuals who want to be a part of the UJB community, not with promoting, bolstering, or endorsing their band. In this sense, the community surrounding UJB is as important to the members of UJB as the Dead Heads were to the members of the Grateful Dead. McNally (2002) contends that the two primary legacies left behind by the Grateful Dead are their music and their community of fans known as Dead Heads. UJB embodies and pays tribute to both of these legacies by performing the Dead's music for the enjoyment and cultivation of the now Grateful Dead/UJB community. UJB follows the Grateful Dead's philosophy that all participants are a part of the experience, and the incorporation of the *All* in UJB performances is as important as the music itself. The philosophy of collective consciousness is a dominant discourse within the Grateful Dead and UJB communities. As such, this philosophy serves as an underlying principle for the members of UJB as well as other members of the community that surrounds UJB.

Within this chapter, I first develop the Grateful Dead's idea of collective consciousness in order to set the scene for my ethnographic observations and experiences at UJB shows. I then turn to describing how the elements within this collective consciousness manifest themselves as power relationships that condition UJB's musical improvisational performances. I accomplish this description by examining the concerns, comments, and actions of audience members at UJB shows, followed by articulating how the space of Skipper's Smokehouse creates an atmosphere conducive to the formation of a collective consciousness.

Collective Consciousness and the Ripple Effect

The Dead focused on consciousness in order to understand how they perceived the world, westernized society, and their own existence. As Jerry Garcia states (McNally, 2002, p.4):

Why would the universe go through the trouble of evolving consciousness? If it wanted life that would succeed, just to create the most effective living thing, it could have stopped at bacteria . . . But consciousness goes a quantum step further than just life. It might be that consciousness is the whole reason there is a universe . . . It's got to be that consciousness modulates reality. Besides, the truth can't only be here, or you could stare at your toes and figure it all out.

Garcia articulates that the idea of consciousness is not only a fundamental aspect of existence, but also that consciousness affects perception. It follows that if you alter consciousness, you alter reality. If one can alter his/her perception of reality, then the possibility arises that he/she could live a different style of life. As the members of the Grateful Dead began to understand the effects of consciousness and perception, they also

began to understand that if a group of people pursued a unique way of perceiving the world, they could live within the world in a different way. These *altered* people could live in the world with a heightened sense of awareness. In order to achieve this sense of awareness, the Grateful Dead and their associates, including, but not limited to: Neal Cassady, Owsley “Bear” Stanley, Ken Kesey, Hugh Romney a.k.a. “Wavy Gravy”, Mountain Girl, and the Merry Pranksters, practiced the formation of a collective consciousness.

My experiences at Skipper’s Smokehouse exposed and defined the formation of a collective consciousness as the Ripple Effect. Every time I witnessed the enactment and embodiment of the collective consciousness through the Ripple Effect, it brought a smile to my face. I was drawn in, motivated, and inspired. Individuals outside of the Dead Head/UJB community witnessed the forming of collective consciousness as well. For example, consider the recollections offered by Joseph Campbell, a leading academic in the field of myth, narrative, and literature. After attending a Grateful Dead show in 1985, Joseph Campbell remarked at a symposium (http://www.sirbacon.org/joseph_campbell.htm):

This energy and these terrific instruments with electric things that zoom in . . .

This is more than music. It turns something on in here (the heart?). And what it turns on is life energy . . . Now I've seen similar manifestations, but nothing as innocent as what I saw with this bunch. This was sheer innocence. And when the great beam of light would go over the crowd you'd see these marvelous young faces in sheer rapture - for five hours! Packed together like sardines! Eight thousand of them! Then there was an opening in the back with a series of panel

windows and you look out and there's a whole bunch in another hall, dancing crazy. This is a wonderful fervent loss of self in the larger self of a homogeneous community. This is what it is all about!

Campbell (1999) also recalls his experience in an interview focused on his influence on popular culture. In the interview, Campbell states that while attending the San Francisco, CA concert:

They [the Grateful Dead] hit a level of humanity that makes everybody at one with each other. It doesn't matter about this race thing, this age thing, I mean, everything else dropped out. The wonderful thing was, compared to the Hitler rallies that you see in the film [entitled *The Hero's Journey*] that were used to a political purpose, here it was just the experience of the identity of everybody with everybody else (p. 221).

Campbell's remarks speak of an energy that binds a group of people together into a community that not only honors individual selves, but also places those selves into a larger community of other, like-minded individuals. These are not solipsistic individuals, but rather, innocent people. This collection of individuals takes pleasure in the moment of a Grateful Dead concert, allowing the Ripple Effect to do its work. Campbell witnessed one of the primary philosophies established by the members of the Grateful Dead, a philosophy subsequently adapted, enacted, and preserved by the Dead Heads.

The members of the Grateful Dead embraced, embodied, and performed the idea of collective consciousness early in their musical career. During the Dead's highly experimental phase of music making (e.g. during the Acid Test concerts), they established a way to perform musical improvisation with one another that differed from

the ways in which jazz and bebop musicians improvised. The Dead's way of doing musical improvisation still involved interaction, but they also brought in an element of spirituality that connected their individual consciousnesses. This element of spirituality grew from the members of the Grateful Dead and their associated community's need for a way to live life outside the purview of consumer-based materiality (McNally, 2002). Having been brought up in a materialistic, Westernized world, the members of the Grateful Dead and their community actively altered their consciousness and perception of reality with LSD in order to pursue a new way of living. "This spiritual need coupled with the psychedelic experimentation of the sixties opened a channel directly from the collective unconscious to produce the Grateful Dead" (Goodenough, 1999, p, 175). The Grateful Dead and their associates, as demonstrated by the Acid Tests, desired a new philosophy for living life that ultimately produced the idea of collective consciousness.

One of the Grateful Dead's guiding theories for establishing a collective consciousness was Jung's philosophy entitled, synchronicity (McNally, 2002). Synchronicity is a "meaningful coincidence" between consciousness and other, outside-of-the-mind events that form a connection between individual consciousnesses and outside events (Jung, 1960, p. 110). Synchronicity puts meaning on the connections among individual consciousnesses and events that are not directly related to an individual's particular conscious perception. For example, during an improvisational jam at an UJB show, the two drummers combined to play a series of snare shots in rapid succession. At the same time, on the same beat, Gilman played notes on his guitar in matching short, rapid beats. While the drummers played opposing shots on their snare drums, Gilman combined the snare shots to precisely mirror the two drummers' playing.

Gilman looked back at the drummers and smiled wide, knowing that they just connected in a unique way. Three of the players in UJB played in unison without preconceiving the musical passage, without visually cueing the start and stop of the musical passage, and without communicating their intentions to play in unison. Jerry Garcia talks about synchronicity and the Grateful Dead (McNally, 2002, p. 619):

We know from our own experience that enough things happen that *aren't* the result of signals or planning or communication that we're aware of, but that are miraculous manifestations, that keep proving it out, that there's no way to deny it. We're just involved in something that has a very high incidence of synchronicity. You know, the Jungian idea of synchronicity? Well, shit, that's a day-to-day *reality* for us.

These moments of synchronicity connect consciousnesses in a way that allow individuals to share moments of spontaneous unity and togetherness. Instances of synchronicity form, sustain, and maintain collective consciousness. Synchronicity informs the Ripple Effect, and describes one of the ways in which energy, thought, emotions, and ideas are spiritually transferred among space, place, and individuals.

With the collective consciousness philosophy informing the community surrounding UJB, and the members of UJB, it is no wonder that the majority of conversations I had with UJB's community featured ideas related to collective consciousness. Whether an individual used the term energy, vibe, aura, that electric feeling, goose bumps, spirit, air, ripples, or ritual, he/she spoke of the philosophy of collective consciousness and the processes involved in forming a collective consciousness. These terms encapsulate how collective consciousness occurs. In other

words, all of the above terms describe the process that forms collective consciousness, the Ripple Effect.

Part of UJB's attempt to re-create the experiences of a Grateful Dead show must include the philosophy of collective consciousness. DeGregory, one of UJB's drummers, talks about collective consciousness when I ask him to define improvisation. He states that, "musical improvisation is extemporaneous storytelling with music as the medium. At its best, the performers and listeners' collective experiences coalesce in a spontaneous, real-time shared emotional moment. It's part spot composition, part performance art." For DeGregory, the best musical improvisations involve creating a situation in which both musicians and audience participate in collective creation. Whiteley also comments about how creating musical improvisation is really an exercise in embracing a collective consciousness. Whiteley articulates his conceptualization of improvisation stating:

Another metaphor I use is the idea of 'surfing the music'. I find that many beginners think that they are responsible for 'making' the music. This can make it sound forced. I find it much more useful to think in terms of 'channeling' the music, or 'riding the wave' when I play along with others.

Whiteley evokes the Ripple Effect by his "riding the wave" statement. A surfer does not create the wave he or she rides; however, he/she uses the wave's energy to propel his/her creativity on a surfboard. In a similar fashion, musicians do not create musical improvisations on their own, but rather, they open themselves up to influences and emotional energies emanating from others in the band, audience, and community. Collective consciousness permeates these members' of UJB definition of musical improvisation. Articulated by Jung, then adapted and put into practice by the Grateful

Dead, the philosophy of collective consciousness subsequently shapes UJB performances and the community that surrounds UJB. As a dominant discourse, the philosophy of collective consciousness forms a power relationship that conditions UJB's attitude towards the creation of musical improvisational performances, as well as the attitude of audiences at an UJB show. Next, I use snapshots from conversations with audience members to illustrate that the philosophy of collective consciousness is alive and well within the audience community at UJB performances.

As I began to get into the community surrounding UJB, the topic of energy and collective consciousness kept coming up in conversations. It did not take long for me to realize that the philosophy of collective consciousness is a major part of UJB's surrounding culture, just as it was/is a major part of Dead Head culture. In fact, and not surprisingly, most of the members of the UJB culture are Dead Heads. UJB's community claims the Dead Head identity by dressing and conducting themselves like an archetypal Dead Head, as well as educating themselves about the Grateful Dead and the Dead's outlook on life. One individual, clad in a tie dye t-shirt, cargo shorts, and sandals spoke quite frankly about his point of view, and how it intersects with the Grateful Dead's philosophies. He states:

I just keep coming back to these shows [UJB concerts at Skipper's] every week because of what I find here. I won't lie, I've done a lot of acid [LSD] and caps [psychedelic mushrooms] in my younger days, so I like to think I'm in tune with the idea of the expanded mind and psychedelic experiences. As much as drugs speak to the unreal, I find something *real* at these shows. Yeah, sure, they play the same songs and whatnot, but it's the people in the crowd that make a show.

I've been to shitty ones and great ones. The best shows are full of energy, and you can almost hear people's thoughts; see them thinking things that are similar to what you're thinking. It's that group mind thing, you know. That's real.

I pressed him a little further and asked him to define what he meant by the term *real*. He paused and thought for a second, then said:

Well I'll tell you what's not real, and it's the majority of the world we've set up for ourselves. Materialism, consumerism, work, politics, TV, all that shit. Those things are not real to me. It's all just a waste of time and a distraction from what humans are supposed to be doing. I mean, yeah, I just think that human connection and being with people is what is real. Those experiences count.

Most of the world is unreal to this audience member, and what is real has to do with establishing connections to other individuals. This is a re-articulation of the philosophy of collective consciousness. This audience member seeks the formation of a collective consciousness in order to make his world real. His use of the word *distraction* is also interesting in that he believes that aspects of everyday life that do play a role in shaping lives (e.g. politics) are distracting from an individual's ability to make real connections with other people. He separates everyday life from UJB shows, characterizing his experiences at a show as real and everyday experiences as unreal distractions.

Rather than separate aspects of everyday life from experiences at an UJB show, other audience members blended the two, stating that they use their experiences at an UJB show to inform their everyday activities. One audience member said the following just after she finished dancing with her friends:

I use this, well, number one, it's a good workout for me. I hate the gym so I come out here instead. But aside from that, I really like coming to shows because it recharges me. All of this energy and connecting with people makes me feel better about my life and the choices I've made. It's like I take all of this energy with me and use it up during the rest of the week. It's kinda like recharging my batteries.

One of her friends continues this train of thought, stating:

Yeah, seriously, you should see her after the shows. She, like, glows for the next couple of days. I never thought of it that way, but yeah, it's true. I think I feel that way too. But it makes sense. Look at all of these people doing their own thing, but with all of these other people who are doing their thing too. They feed off of each other on the dance floor. I know I certainly do. Imagine if we could create this scene at work or school. I'd probably be smarter and richer.

These two comments articulate how the two women use experiences at UJB shows to fuel their daily lives outside of the concert. For these two young women, the philosophy of collective consciousness is a takeaway from UJB shows. They use the emotional/spiritual high they receive from participating in UJB shows in a productive way. In this sense, these two women do not separate UJB shows from everyday life, but connect experiences from UJB shows to their everyday experiences.

One of the most memorable moments I witnessed during this project also connected experiences at UJB shows to experiences outside of the show. UJB mulled about on stage, tuning guitars, checking monitors and microphones, and situating themselves before the start of the second set. The majority of UJB's audience tends to show up around the beginning of the second set, so the crowd was very active procuring

drinks, connecting with friends, and exchanging hugs of welcome. As the crowd began to get larger and larger, UJB played the first few bars of *Touch of Grey*. The crowd heard these notes, and immediately consumed the dance floor in a large rush. Out of all of this commotion, one elderly woman caught my attention when she gingerly stood from her chair just in front of the soundboard and began to dance. Her companion stood with her, and steadied her when she would get tired or woozy. She was frail, but energized. She swayed back and forth, leaning her head forward and back as if allowing the song to wash over her. She wore a sweater, an ankle-length skirt, and a bandana covering her head. At first I thought about the irony of this as it was about 85 degrees outside, but then I saw that she had no hair or eyebrows. She was connected to an oxygen tank by way of tubes on her face, and had more medical tubes attached to the back of her left hand. She danced throughout the entire song, and all but collapsed into her chair when the 10-minute song/improvised jam ended.

The lyrics in *Touch of Grey* connected with this woman. When UJB came to the refrain, she sang with them, extending her fists in the air, tears streaming down her pale face.

I will get by

I will get by

I will get by

I will survive

“Touch of Grey” (Garcia & Hunter, 1987, track 1).

As she extended her arms, she pulled the connecting tubes from her oxygen tank, but no matter. Her companion re-connected the tubes and the dancing woman never knew the

difference. The song consumed her, and her companion was there to allow this total consumption. *Touch of Grey* connected this woman to a survival narrative; one she certainly lived outside of UJB shows as well.

When UJB finished up *Touch of Grey* the elderly woman sat down and re-situated herself in her chair. She needed help from her companion in order to untangle her various medical tubes. After they got her untwisted, she sat there catching her breath and wiping more tears from her eyes. She began to rub her hands and thighs. Her companion started to massage her shoulders. She winced in pain as her companion did this. I could tell she physically hurt from her dancing, but she danced nonetheless. The music, people, and environment energized her for a brief moment, and she seized that moment with all she had left in her. That is the essence of the Ripple Effect, and a shining example of its potential influence at an UJB show. The collective consciousness at the UJB show filled her with energy, and she accepted that energy, allowing it to motivate one more dance.

The three examples above illustrate how the Grateful Dead's philosophy of collective consciousness permeates the audience at UJB shows. Collective consciousness forms a power relationship that serves to condition UJB's musical improvisational performances. Not only do the members of UJB produce music through the lens of collective consciousness, but also the members of the audience understand and feel the energy rippling throughout the crowd at a show. In UJB's attempt to re-create the experience of a Grateful Dead show, they pay attention to the philosophies put forth by the Grateful Dead. In this way, UJB re-creates not only the music of the Grateful Dead, but the spirit in which that music was created. The Grateful Dead's mindset, point of view, and outlook on life is created anew for people at UJB shows. While this is an

extremely important aspect of re-creating Grateful Dead shows, there are other features of an UJB show that help re-create the experience of a Dead show. I will concentrate on two such features: the knowledge level of UJB's audience concerning the Grateful Dead, and the atmosphere of Skipper's Smokehouse at UJB shows.

Knowledge of the Grateful Dead

One of the first things that audience members would talk about when I interviewed them is the amount of experience they had with the Grateful Dead. Whether it was in the form of reading biographies, autobiographies, or interviews about the members of the Grateful Dead, or attending concerts put on by the Grateful Dead, audience members at UJB shows displayed a large amount of knowledge concerning the Grateful Dead phenomenon. One such audience member opened up our conversation by asking me how many Dead shows I had been to. I replied, none. The audience member looked surprised, then continued by saying:

Well, I've been to about 30 throughout my life, and I can still remember the majority of them. There's nothing like a Dead show, although these guys [UJB] do a good job. I can tell you every setlist from every show I went to. I can tell you how Jerry played. I can tell you how the jams went, and which songs got connected by jams. I have tapes of every single one of those shows, and hundreds more, for that matter. But I'm not the Dead's biggest fan by a long shot. Some people just go nuts over them.

This audience member comments about her experience level with the Grateful Dead in a similar way to most audience members I interviewed. Most of the time, our conversations would start with trading knowledge about the Grateful Dead. I suggest that

this trading of knowledge is a form of establishing and sharing subcultural capital (Thornton, 2006).

Subcultural capital establishes a person's identity in a subculture, and marks him or her as a qualified member of the subculture (Thornton, 2006). Within the subculture surrounding UJB, the communicative displays of knowledge concerning the Grateful Dead, especially as the first topic of conversation, work to create meaningful identities for those involved in the conversation. More often than not, my position was lower in the subculture than the individual I interviewed. There was a wide variance concerning the acceptance of someone who was clearly, at first, outside of the subculture. Some audience members embraced the opportunity to initiate a new member into the UJB audience subculture, as exemplified by this response:

Oh, you don't need to worry about not knowing much about the Dead. For my first show, I didn't even know that UJB was a cover band. People here are nice, and love to meet new people, so you shouldn't have a problem getting to know them. I'll take you around to meet most of them if you like.

While this audience member embraced and enjoyed the possibility of making new friends, other audience members were skeptical about including outsiders in the subculture surrounding UJB. One such audience member states:

Really? You've never seen a Dead show? Why would you want to study a Dead cover band then? If you don't know, then you just don't know. Without ever seeing the Dead live, I don't think anyone can tell you what it's like. But, whatever.

Some audience members view the experience of a Grateful Dead show as so unique that outsiders cannot ever truly understand what that experience was like. Other audience members were more hostile with respect to including new members in the UJB subculture. The most hostile response I received from an audience member was:

So you want to study us like rats in a cage? What're you gonna do, write something up and sell it while we all starve and live out on the streets? Maybe I'd give a shit if you knew something about the Dead, and had been to some Dead shows, but without any of that. I don't know man. I live this shit, and for all I care, you can fuck off. It's just like the media in the Haight in the 60's, exploiting and profiting off of innocent people trying to have a good time and listen to music.

Although I was rarely met with such hostility, it is important to keep in mind that the subculture surrounding UJB are not all open to new people, and new membership. Like most subcultures, some audience members strongly base his/her identity on his/her membership in the subculture surrounding UJB, and want to keep the subculture closed and exclusive to those that have experienced Grateful Dead shows and continue to live as Dead Heads. Whether I spoke with audience members directly, or overheard conversations at the venue, audience members traded knowledge of the Grateful Dead as a normal and routine part of attending UJB shows.

In certain cases, an audience member's knowledge of the Grateful Dead earned them an interesting role at UJB shows. One of the regular attendees helps out UJB at most of their shows by reinforcing and suggesting similarities between UJB and the

Grateful Dead. Mike Edwards, the bassist of UJB, speaks with this audience member at nearly every set break I witnessed. From my fieldnotes:

Ricky [a pseudonym] has long gray hair tied back into a ponytail. His long, bearded face is concerned, always scouting for someone new. His eyes squint behind plastic framed glasses. Not the trendy thick black frames, but thrift store frames. He wears navy blue shorts that stop well above his knees, a yellowing white tie dye shirt, gray socks pulled up over his ankles, and black shoes with no brand markings to speak of. Ricky is like a golden retriever. He roams around the crowd, talking to anyone who makes eye contact with him. While in conversations, he gets really into the topic, whatever it may be. He talks more with his hands than his mouth, creating air diagrams, invisible objects, and pointing incessantly. Ricky is an intense guy. His conversational partners nod, agree, and generally leave the floor to Ricky. Ricky makes intense eye contact, looking directly at you over his glasses when he is being especially engaging. Even though Ricky is such an intense conversationalist, however, his mind is obviously not far from the music he hears in the background. He consistently breaks away from a conversation to dance a bit (a couple of arm spins and a little twist). And just as fast as he breaks away, he is right back in the conversation. Ricky is certainly a regular here, hugging people as they come into the venue, and having chats with the employees behind the bar, at the ticket booth, or serving food. Ricky is never alone, for when there are no people around him, he falls back into the music.

The members of UJB look to audience members for critiques and opinions on the show. As discussed in Chapter 3, most of the members of UJB spend their set break time talking with audience members, staff at Skipper's, and/or their family members. The relationship between Edwards and Ricky, however, is more solidified than most of the acquaintances between members of UJB and audience members. Edwards and Ricky constantly talk about UJB's performances and directions that the show could take. Edwards and Ricky's relationship breaks traditional boundaries between a musical artist and their audiences. UJB is willing to take advice from their audience in order to give the audience a better show. Again, UJB performs to re-create the experience of a Grateful Dead show, and the feedback they receive from members of the audience informs how to better achieve the Grateful Dead experience. This opens up a large capacity for the audience to influence how an UJB musical improvisational performance proceeds, and in Ricky's case, he is granted even more influence. A power relationship forms between Ricky, a very knowledgeable and trusted audience member, and the members of UJB. The knowledge that UJB audience members possess concerning the Grateful Dead is a discursive power relationship that conditions UJB's musical improvisational performances. The dominant discourses established at Grateful Dead concerts (e.g. collective consciousness, the Ripple Effect, and the removal of the traditional performer/audience dichotomy) re-appear in UJB musical improvisational performances. In order for these dominant discourses to come about, however, an UJB performance must also re-create the scene and atmosphere of a Grateful Dead show. The venue of Skipper's Smokehouse provides an atmosphere that allows, and gives space for, the re-creation of experiences at Grateful Dead shows.

The Effect of Skipper's Smokehouse

Chapter 3 began with a detailed description of Skipper's Smokehouse, and the ways in which Skipper's fosters a laid-back, fun atmosphere for individuals attending a musical show. Security does not check audience members when they enter the venue. Audience members are free to move in and out of the venue, and they frequently go out to the parking lot to congregate with others before and after a show, or between sets. Once in the parking lot, no one from Skipper's Smokehouse patrols for illegal activities, and the audience members meeting in the lot are free to do as they please. As I walked throughout the groups congregating in the lot, audience members offered me shots of homemade liquor, tokes of marijuana, mushroom-laced chunks of chocolate, and/or a good bit of conversation. While these small gatherings of audience members are nowhere near the scale of the Grateful Dead's parking lot scene, they allude to the tradition of the community that made up the scene outside of Grateful Dead shows.

Inside the show, the Skipperdome is permanently set up for musical performances. The Skipperdome consists of a stage that supports sound reinforcement, a built-in house mixing board, benches and chairs, a permanent wooden dance floor, and a few bars within quick access for thirsty concertgoers. Most concerts at Skipper's look very similar to each other. For UJB performances; however, the scenery at Skipper's Smokehouse is altered just a bit. From my fieldnotes:

Throughout the first set, more and more people arrive, around 50 in total.

Skipper's allows vendors to set up for the night, and concertgoers browse their wares at regular intervals. The vendors are selling hemp jewelry, CD's, tapes, glass smoking pipes of all sizes and shapes, crystals and other spiritually-laden

stones, tapestries, t-shirts, hats, skirts, dresses, handbags, spiritual books, and incense. It feels like a festival, like you are on the infamous *Shakedown Street*. Grateful Dead shows became just as famous for the scene outside of the show as the scene and musical performances inside the show (McNally, 2002). At most Grateful Dead shows, Dead Heads touring with the band would collect living expenses by selling handmade food, clothing, jewelry, and/or drugs and alcohol. These touring Dead Heads would set up covered tents, canopies, or their vehicles as storefronts. Once a number of vendors established themselves on the tour, they would self-organize into a row of shops that became affectionately known as *Shakedown Street*, named after one of the Grateful Dead's songs.

Skipper's Smokehouse aids UJB in their pursuit of re-creating the experience of Grateful Dead shows by allowing vendors, who are not affiliated with Skipper's, to sell goods inside the show. The vendors take up the back row of the venue, and the individuals occupying the various stalls and tables are as much a part of the subculture of UJB audience members as the paying attendees. When the vendors are not making sales, they step out from behind their tables and dance to the music or talk with friends attending the show. In a similar fashion, when not responsible for taking cover charges or checking identifications, the staff at Skipper's Smokehouse joins in with the audience members.

Whether they are on duty or not, the staff at Skipper's Smokehouse adds a level of comfort to the community surrounding UJB performances. From my fieldnotes, early on in the ethnography:

The staff doesn't abide by the traditional code of conduct at these shows. I recognize the only dancers as servers in the restaurant. When they aren't dancing, they talk with others in the audience, give hugs to people they know, and hang out with patrons having dinner. The doorman leaves his desk to watch the show and dance when he likes the song UJB plays. Actually, all of the staff here are very nice and friendly. This is my third show, and the bartender knows my order, calls me by my name, and carries on conversations as if he's known me for years. It's no wonder people come here regularly.

The staff at Skipper's not only participates in UJB performances by dancing and enjoying the show with other audience members, but the staff also behaves in a way that cultivates a friendly atmosphere. Although the staff at Skipper's attends the shows to make money and sell food and drinks, they act as if they enjoy themselves. The staff's attitude towards their jobs establishes an inclusive environment conducive to creating a collective consciousness. While some of the staff participates with the audience, others occasionally participate in UJB's musical performances.

Over the course of this project I attended a couple of UJB shows that featured a revolving door of performing musicians. UJB would stray from playing only Grateful Dead covers, and allow the guest musicians to suggest songs to perform. One of the most memorable performances featured a staff member at Skipper's Smokehouse. From my fieldnotes:

To my surprise, only three of the regular UJB musicians are on stage. I don't recognize the other two performers, but the lead singer/rhythm guitarist is definitely a staff member at Skipper's. There are no improvisational passages in

these songs, just the songs themselves. These songs are not Grateful Dead songs either; they are songs from New Riders of the Purple Sage. The staff member leaves his post, and just hops onto the stage, grabs a guitar, checks the mic, and they're off. He did a really nice job with *Last Lonely Eagle* and *Dirty Business*. After the two songs, he hops down from the stage and returns to work while the audience gives him a standing round of applause. It's interesting that while the audience pays to hear UJB, they still accept the occasional detour.

This moment at an UJB show demonstrates the amount of inclusion UJB and their audiences are willing to take on. This moment also mimics the Grateful Dead's willingness to let guests perform with them onstage, further re-creating experiences at Grateful Dead shows. The staff member did not show nerves or any form of tentativeness. He was quite comfortable jumping on stage and taking a lead role, which indicates his comfort with the community of attendees at UJB shows. UJB enacts the philosophy of collective consciousness by allowing guest musicians to perform with them. By including venue staff members in their performance, UJB strengthens the idea of a collective experience for their audience. While the regular members of UJB are set apart from their audience by the traditions of performance, the inclusion of the venue's staff member serves to break traditions of performance by altering who receives attention from the audience. From the audience's point of view, UJB combines the frames of the Grateful Dead and UJB into an experience that recalls experiences from Grateful Dead concerts by including spontaneous guest musicians in their performance. This inclusion breaks traditional norms of performance, mirroring the challenges to tradition established by the Grateful Dead.

In this chapter I articulated how aspects not directly related to performing music serve as discursive power relationships that condition UJB's musical improvisational performances. These power relationships include the philosophy of collective consciousness as established by the Grateful Dead, the Ripple Effect, the community of audience members that attend UJB shows, and the venue of Skipper's Smokehouse. As all of these discursive power relationships interact within the context of an UJB performance, they inform important creative characteristics that aid UJB in re-creating the experience of a Grateful Dead concert. While I began to understand how UJB does musical improvisation, I also saw connections to how I was doing the process of ethnography. I conducted the ethnography in a similar way to how UJB covers Grateful Dead songs. In short, I re-created other researchers' experiences of ethnography while implementing the ideas and philosophies of improvisation. This ethnography *became* an ethnography through the interaction of power relationships among established ways of doing ethnography, theory, and improvisation. My performance as an ethnographer *created* the ethnography I describe in this project. In this sense, ethnography is performative. In the next chapter, I use my journalistic notes to inform a reflexive examination and re-articulation of ethnography as a method for conducting research.

Chapter 5: An Improvisational Ethnography

River going to take me, sing sweet and sleepy,
Sing me sweet and sleepy all the way back home.
It's a far gone lullaby, sung many years ago.
Mama, mama, many worlds I've come since I first left home.
Goin' home, goin' home, by the riverside I will rest my bones,
Listen to the river sing sweet songs, to rock my soul
"Brokedown Palace" (Garcia & Hunter, 1970, track 7).

The methodology discussed in this chapter takes the idea of reflexive ethnography as its starting point. Reflexive ethnography contends with the traditional, grounded approach to theory development as well as differing philosophical approaches to ethnography by bringing these approaches into a dialogue (Burawoy, 2009). This chapter brings the approach to theory development into a dialogue through the use of journal entries made throughout my research process. This dialogue informs a re-articulation of the method of ethnography, entitled *improvisational ethnography*.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss ethnographic observations, interview data, and theoretical underpinnings at UJB's musical improvisational performances as they relate to (auto)biographical documents concerning the Grateful Dead. Rather than focus on ethnographic results from the field or philosophies established by the Grateful Dead, this chapter examines the method of ethnography. My use of journal entries allowed me to reflect and understand how I enacted the process of ethnography at UJB performances.

My intent in using these journal entries to inform this chapter is to evoke the idea of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). Reflection-in-action means that a practitioner of ethnography reflects on his or her method of doing ethnography while the ethnography is in progress. A number of questions arose during the ethnography at Skipper's Smokehouse, and my solution was to capture these questions in journal entries in the attempt to effectively work through these questions without halting the research. As I worked through these questions, I began to develop a different conceptualization of ethnography that altered my approach to the method. My reflection-in-action resulted in associating the terminology and philosophies of musical improvisation with the practice of ethnography. I re-conceptualized and enacted ethnography as a process similar to the process of musical improvisation.

This idea of an *improvised ethnography* is the product of my reflexive examination of this project's research agenda, research processes, and my position as a researcher. I conceptualize *improvisational ethnography* as a process of co-present observation and interviewing characterized by subjective knowledge sets (i.e. repertoires), interaction, and discursive power relationships. This approach to ethnography mirrors my theoretical conceptualization of musical improvisation as outlined in Chapter 2.

As I developed the improvisational approach to ethnography, I began to apply the approach in the field with varied levels of success. On one hand, the improvisational approach to ethnography allowed interaction to fuel the content of observations and interviews, creating an interesting set of emergent data. This open, interaction-based content, however, often permitted conversations to stray into topics that were less

relevant to the project. For example, one evening a three-hour conversation about adopting pets consumed an entire night of observation. I do not mean to say that this straying from relevant topics was unproductive, as the process of getting to the end result is as important as the end result itself, but it was difficult to see the usefulness of the conversation in the moment. Bob Weir, rhythm guitarist and vocalist of the Grateful Dead, echoes the difficulty of having to go through less relevant, yet productive experiences in an interview with David Gans (Gans, 2002, p. 186):

Also, it's a given that we're going to have to go through some stuff that ain't so much fun, such as bad nights, in order to learn how to be more flexible – so that in the end, when we evolve into angels, we can make anything fun. We can make fun out of hell.

Weir refers to the difficulties involved in creating improvisational music. These statements allude to the risk involved with improvisational approaches to creativity. Sometimes the improvisational approach creates wonderful harmony; sometimes the improvisational approach creates less interesting content. Just as with making music, improvisational ethnography is a risky endeavor. The researcher relinquishes control over the research method in favor of an interactive attempt to understand a culture. This risk, however, creates the possibility for data that no interview schedule could generate.

To illustrate how I came up with improvisational ethnography, I will first discuss my initial approach to the fieldwork at Skipper's Smokehouse, followed by my methodological transformation into improvisational ethnography. I then further develop the defining components of improvisational ethnography: repertoires or knowledge sets,

interaction, and power relationships, in the hope that the method proves useful for others attempting an ethnographic approach to understanding culture.

My Process of Ethnography

I began the project with the intent to follow a grounded theory approach to ethnographic methodology. The grounded theory approach to ethnography insists that theory be developed by way of data collected at the ethnographic fieldsite, rather than testing existing theory by way of data collection (Emerson, 2001). A researcher should go into a field with no preconceived notions of theoretical underpinnings, and resist the urge to apply theory to the fieldsite until after the researcher completes the fieldwork. This allows data collected in the field to produce theory, rather than allowing existing theory to produce the fieldsite. The data is grounded in the fieldsite.

As such, I began the fieldwork with an idea of what I was looking for, but resisted the urge to look for examples that reified my developed theory of musical improvisation. This felt awkward to me as a researcher because I was intentionally forcing myself not to think about applying my existing theory to the fieldsite. I felt disingenuous. From my journal:

This is ridiculous. How am I supposed to unlearn what I've learned? My conscious decision to *not* apply my theory of performative musical improvisation to the fieldwork is in itself an acknowledgment that I'm thinking about theory and how it applies to the field. Anyone who does this must, in some way, lie to themselves by pretending to be ignorant. Something's got to change.

My desire to be a genuine person in the field forced me to change my approach to the ethnographic fieldwork. Rather than fight the change, I embraced it and sought out a different philosophical approach to ethnography and theory building.

The approach to ethnography that worked better for me was the extended case method (Burawoy, 2009). The extended case method does not attempt to begin the research process with a blank slate regarding theory; rather, the extended case method embraces the fact that as a researcher, one always comes to a research site with theory in mind (Burawoy, 2009). With the extended case method, theory is revised in order to make existing theories more robust and useful in social settings.

In this version of ethnography we don't deliver our minds from preconceptions but clarify and problematize them; we don't accumulate data day after day only finally to code it and thereby infer theory in the end, as though no one else had thought of these matters before, but we continuously engage theory with data, and theory with other theories (Burawoy, 2009, p. 15).

I came to the research site at Skipper's Smokehouse with a developed theory describing how musical improvisation comes into being through interacting discursive power relationships. Rather than discard this theory, as prescribed by a grounded approach, the extended case method allows theory and data to associate with each other. The extended case method allows for theory and data to interact in a spontaneous moment of data collection, similar to the way improvising musicians use interaction to create music. This approach seemed more appropriate for the study of improvisation, so I went with it.

Since I was now allowed to bring my ideas of performative improvisation into the field, I began to wrestle with how to observe the power relationships that constitute musical improvisational performance. From my journal:

My newest issue is how does one see power? Usually, in critical cultural studies, power relationships are teased out of cultural artifacts that are examined and studied over and over again. If I'm trying to see power relationships in a spontaneous moment, I can't study it over and over again. I can't press rewind on musical improvisational performances. What does power look/sound/feel like?

Some power relationships were easy to see onstage, however, they were not the type of power relationships I sought. For example, it is common for the members of UJB to look to the main vocalist of the song as the leader. Whiteley talks about this sort of power relationship during UJB's performances:

In theory there isn't a leader per se, but in actuality, song selection tends to bounce between Mike Edwards and myself since we're doing the majority of singing. So I would say that during improvisation, anybody can influence the music in a certain direction, or contribute to a musical conversation. In practice, I frequently end up taking the reins during transition points, partly because of my central position on the stage. So I'll end up signaling with my guitar neck, or eye contact, that we're getting ready to end the song, etc.

Whiteley refers to leading the group during musical transitions in order to keep the members of the band in time with each other, similar to the conductor of a symphonic orchestra. This type of power relationship, however, is not discursive by nature, and is more of a hierarchical power relationship. Since my shift from the grounded approach to

the extended case method allowed me to establish differences between discursive and hierarchical power within the data I observed, I was able to disregard these types of power relationships as they were outside of my theoretical purview. This discarding of hierarchical power informed the answer to my questions concerning how one sees power relationships in an ephemeral moment. I went back to the definition of power as outlined by Foucault (1972). The power relationships I sought were discursive in nature, and therefore, I should pay attention to discourses established and offered by members of UJB, members of UJB audiences, the staff and place of Skipper's Smokehouse, and historical accounts of the Grateful Dead. When I began to understand which discourses were dominant in the culture surrounding UJB, I also began to see how discursive power relationships conditioned UJB's musical improvisational performances.

Because I began to allow dominant discourses in the field to shape my methods of data collection, I also relinquished most of my control over the ethnography. I threw away interview schedules and agendas for observation in favor of succumbing to emergent data brought about through interaction with individuals in the field. At first, this was a struggle for me because I was not prepared for the onslaught of different topics, segues, and amount of data I obtained from these interactions. The mountains of data, combined with the disconcerting possibility that none of the data would be useful, tore at my consciousness. I was taking a risk by allowing others to dictate my research, and it was difficult to come to terms with this risk. Soon enough, however, I was able to connect some themes from the ethnographic data to themes associated with the Grateful Dead and the Dead Heads. Once these connections became more concrete, I began to understand the depth to which UJB and their surrounding community paid homage to the

ideas and philosophies set forth by the Grateful Dead. Much like the Dead's philosophy of creating music, it took a conscious removal of control for me to see what was happening at UJB shows. Once I gave up control over the ethnography, the UJB community took over and led me to the dominant discursive power relationships. Data collection was no longer forced. I feel as if I succumbed to the Ripple Effect, allowing the waves of energy forming a collective consciousness take over my research. My research became an example of the Ripple Effect.

Relinquishing control of my methodology set the stage for a different approach to the ethnography, an approach that honors the ideas of improvisation described in Chapter 2. In essence, I turned my theory of musical improvisation onto my research methodology, which was attempting to exemplify how my theory of musical improvisation works in practice. This reflexive turn established a re-articulation of the ethnographic method. Once I experienced the formation of collective consciousness in the setting of an UJB show, I decided that I would attempt a way of doing ethnography that incorporated the ideas of improvisation. This *improvisational ethnography* consists of three aspects: the use of repertoires or knowledge sets, the valorization of interaction, and the idea that ethnography is performative.

Improvisational Ethnography

When musicians improvise, they do so through the use of repertoires. Peters (2009) defines improvisation as the revivification of past memories, techniques, and experiences. Musicians come to the improvisational session with a host of musical passages, licks, songs, scale runs, patterns, structures, and rhythmic fills that are at his/her disposal throughout the musical improvisational performance. For example, UJB's

repertoire not only consists of the vast catalog of Grateful Dead songs, which include cover songs performed by the Grateful Dead, such as traditional folk songs, and songs by Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, and Buddy Holly, but also, UJB's repertoire consists of the individual members' past experiences with music, licks he may know, scale runs, modulations, and rhythmic patterns. Through interaction among band members, audience members, the local environment, and discursive power relationships, these embodied repertoires are called forth to the emergent spontaneous moment of musical improvisational performance.

In a similar way to performing musicians, ethnographers come to the fieldsite with a repertoire of knowledge. This knowledge consists of academic theory, past experiences with ethnography, other research methods, ideas concerning interviewing and observation, and other scholars' work that examines similar cultures. An ethnographer's repertoire, or knowledge set, is actively called upon while interacting with individuals at the fieldsite. As I conducted my ethnography at Skipper's Smokehouse, I was constantly reminded of articles I had read, conversations with colleagues, and classes I attended.

The key to understanding repertoires in improvisational ethnography are to respect the knowledge sets an ethnographer brings to the fieldwork, and allow them to inform data gathering. Montuori (2003) states that "To improvise means to draw on all our knowledge and personal experience, and focus it on the very moment we are living in, in that very context" (p. 244). The improvisational ethnographer thrives on bringing past experiences and knowledge sets to the process of data gathering by allowing spontaneous interaction to guide the recollection of knowledge sets. Spontaneous

recollection of knowledge sets gives the improvisational ethnography an emergent quality that locates data not only in the culture under investigation, but also in the time/context of the fieldsite. By focusing on the emergent interpellation of repertoire, the improvisational ethnographer also incorporates interaction in the ethnographic method.

As developed in Chapter 1, musical improvisation relies on interaction among band members, audience members, the local context, and discursive power relationships in order to create improvisational music. Bob Weir of the Grateful Dead echoes this argument in an interview with David Gans (Gans, 2002, p. 186):

What you have in the Grateful Dead is a bunch of guys who would probably amount to neighborhood heroes but for the fact that they've fallen in with each other. Their innate understanding of each other and their concerted sense of quest coaxes out of them what on a good night I would equate with genius. And that's hard to find. Nonetheless, I've seen what pretty much satisfies my criteria for genius displayed by the various members of the group, almost always in response to a stimulus offered by someone else in the group.

Weir suggests the importance of interaction in the development of the Grateful Dead. Individually, the members of the Grateful Dead are mediocre; however, as a group of interacting individuals they approach genius. It is this interaction among the members of the Grateful Dead that make them so special, not individual prowess or virtuosity with music. Improvisational ethnography takes its second defining characteristic from the idea that as an interacting collective of researchers and cultural subjects, the research will move into new territories.

Interaction is vital to the method of improvisational ethnography, just as interaction is vital to the development of improvisational music. The improvisational ethnographer must treat interaction as a primary way into the culture under investigation. This requires a relinquishing of control over interviews, conversations, and observational emphasis in favor of anti-hierarchical interactions with members of the culture under investigation.

One way in which I initially incorporated interaction into my ethnography was to invite colleagues into the research process. I informed my colleagues about my methodological approach before we went into the fieldsite. As my colleagues and I participated in conversations with members of the UJB community, we allowed spontaneous, emergent data to unfold. I understood the ways in which my colleagues interact in conversations, so I could pick up on nuanced behaviors that directed and created the conversations. Bringing trusted colleagues to the fieldsite also enacted Monson's (2007) idea of perceptual agency. Shifting from controlled, scheduled interviewing to relaxed conversations with colleagues allowed me to free my perception from the mechanics associated with traditional interviewing in favor of understanding the interactions in conversation. I was able to focus on how interactions within our conversations were conditioned by discursive power relationships. It was like bringing a trusted musician to a jam session. We formed a small group of participants in a conversation rather than the traditional structure of an interviewer and interviewees. Removing the labels of participants as researcher and researched created conversations that were more natural and less constrained. Having people I knew and trusted in the field made conversations more comfortable. In this sense, inviting my colleagues into the

research environment eased the risks associated with relinquishing control over interviews and conversations in the field. Part of taking improvisational ethnography seriously, however, is realizing that risks are also productive means of data gathering.

Honoring interaction in ethnography is accepting a sense of risk in that the improvising ethnographer surrenders interview schedules and agendas, and allows the conversation to emerge in a present moment. The risk associated with interaction means that an improvising ethnographer has a greater possibility for making mistakes in data gathering. As Lesh (2005) describes the challenge in creating improvisational music in the style of the Grateful Dead:

After playing a wrong note, for instance, I would quickly resolve it to a proper note – but then I took to repeating my mistakes . . . in order to resolve them differently each time. I soon began to see the dissonances caused by wrong notes, or right notes in the wrong place, as opportunities rather than liabilities – new ways to create tension and release, the lifeblood of music. This approach was to bear strange and wonderful fruit over the next five years of the band’s development (p. 53).

Rather than attempting to eradicate mistakes, an improvising ethnographer embraces mistakes as learning and productive opportunities to create emergent data. In this sense, the risks traditionally associated with relinquishing control over the fieldwork become productive, interesting aspects of the ethnographic examination.

Emphasizing interaction in ethnography also requires the ethnographer to give back to a conversation as much as he/she takes away. An improvisational ethnographer must *say something* in the process of interacting with individuals in the fieldsite. Just like

an improvising musician, the ethnographer should contribute something of substance during the interactive conversation or interview in order to have his/her voice heard in the emergent data. An improvising ethnographer constantly locates him/herself in the data rather than collecting data through a more detached method. It is important, then, for the improvising ethnographer to understand his/her place and position within the research context, and acknowledge his/her influence on the process of data collection. In this sense, the improvising ethnographer is part of a series of power relationships that constitute the process of ethnography.

Improvisational ethnography is constituted by discursive power relationships. Improvisational ethnography, then, is performative. As an improvisational ethnographer conducts the method of ethnography, he/she embodies and enacts discursive power relationships through his/her performance. These discursive power relationships include academic ideas of the method of ethnography, how-to guides that describe possible ways to conduct ethnography, and classroom discussions outlining effective methods for conducting ethnography. In addition to these discursive formations, ethnography is conditioned and informed by all of the available information concerning ethnographies previously conducted by scholars throughout the world. Enacting the processes involved in ethnographic examination is a heuristic endeavor. Just as musical improvisation is constituted by traditions establishing musical theory, improvisational ethnography is constituted by traditions establishing the method of ethnography.

A researcher employing improvisational ethnography effectively bridges the gap between a grounded approach to ethnography and the extended case method. Theory guides the ethnographer's approach to a fieldsite; however, the ethnographer also allows

spontaneous interaction to guide data collection by removing interview schedules and agendas from the process. Emphasis on spontaneous interaction grounds the research data in the context in which it is taking place, characterizing the data as bound to a specific time and place. As the improvisational ethnographer opens him/herself to spontaneous data collection techniques, he/she must also accept risks associated with loss of control. Although relinquishing control of the fieldsite could produce mistakes, the improvisational ethnographer must treat these mistakes as possibilities for productive data, rather than throwing out data that seems irrelevant. The improvisational ethnographer focuses on the process of ethnography just as much as he/she focuses on the products of ethnography. The process and products of ethnography form a symbiotic relationship. Improvising ethnographers seek to understand this relationship just as much as they seek to understand the community under investigation.

As this project moves into the concluding statements, it is important to understand the relevance of defining musical improvisation and improvisational ethnography as constituted by interacting discursive power relationships. Why is it important for improvising musicians and improvising ethnographers to understand how their performances are constituted by power relationships? The reasons are twofold. First, if an improvisational performer understands the dominant discourses constituting his/her performance, then he/she can infer expectations associated with the performance. In certain ways, understanding and participating in a dominant discursive world is necessary for most individuals in Westernized society. Understanding the expectations that govern certain situations gives individuals a deeper awareness of the situation and its ramifications. Second, if an individual understands how dominant discursive power

relationships constitute his/her performances, then opportunities for challenging those dominant discourses arise. Put another way, if an individual understands the rules that govern his/her performance, then he/she has every right to break them.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Truckin' got my chips cashed in
Keep truckin' like the doodah man
Together, more or less in line
Just keep truckin' on
Sometimes the lights all shining on me
Other times I can barely see
Lately it occurs to me
What a long strange trip it's been

“Truckin” (Garcia, Lesh, Weir, & Hunter, 1970, track 10).

I want to begin this concluding chapter by discussing the irony associated with writing about improvisation. In some sense, writing about improvisation fails to incorporate the shifting, moment-to-moment focus of improvisation. As researchers attempt to understand improvisation, they capture and halt examples of the improvisational process. If researchers understand improvisation by way of specific examples, those examples reduce an ever-changing process to specific moments in time, in specific contexts, constituted by specific power relationships. This reduction flies in the face of improvisation by rendering an emergent, ongoing, and interactive process as predictable and repeatable. The traditions of academic study hinder the ways in which improvisation is understood, and how that understanding is disseminated throughout the academy, by forcing the processes of improvisation onto a written page of text.

The representation of improvisation through the medium of written text will always fail. Once research captures improvisation and puts it on the page, improvisation will move to new territories. In this sense, attempting to understand improvisation through academic study is similar to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle states that in the attempt to measure the movement of a quantum particle, the researcher affects the movement of the particle to the extent that the measurement is no longer relevant. In terms of improvisation, once a researcher attempts to stagnate fluid improvisational processes in order to understand them, the researcher reduces the flow of improvisational processes to a specific moment in the process, thus the researcher is unable to understand the entirety of fluid, emergent improvisational processes. Once researchers capture a moment of improvisation, they miss and ignore previous, and subsequent, moments of improvisation in order to comprehend the specific captured moment under investigation. One of the reasons researchers must capture specific moments of improvisation is due to the nature of academic research.

Traditionally, academic research provides a way to analyze a phenomenon, and then disseminate that analysis through a written text. In order to write about phenomena, research must halt a moment of a phenomenon, unpack it, analyze it, understand it, and represent it by way of written text. Because of this academic process, it is impossible to attempt to understand every moment of an unfolding, fluid phenomenon such as the movement of quantum particles or the practice of improvisation. In this sense, it is ironic to write about improvisation. Anything a researcher writes about improvisation necessarily misses the entirety of the improvisational process because improvisation incorporates so many levels of interaction into a single performance.

In my attempt to define and understand improvisation, I missed more than I saw. There is no way around this dilemma. In order to understand improvisation through the culture surrounding UJB, I focused on dominant discursive power relationships that serve to constitute the performance of musical improvisation. This emphasis overlooks oppressed discourse in favor of discourse communicated more often, and in privileged ways. Because I overlooked oppressed discourses in the community of UJB, I necessarily missed discourses within UJB performances that constitute UJB's musical improvisational performances in a more subtle way. In essence, I reduced UJB's musical improvisational performances to the dominant discursive power relationships that constitute them.

This reducing of musical improvisational performances into dominant discursive power relationships is productive in the sense of creating themes that tie together the various parts of this project. The main theme I gathered from this project is that creativity comes out of interaction. For a cover band, creativity comes from the interaction between the original songs, and the local performance of those songs. For the solo artist, creativity comes from interaction among technique, memory, medium(s), and inspiration. In spirit of social interaction and dialogue, focusing on interaction allows non-scripted processes and content to emerge. As creative individuals interact, they form an atmosphere that permits collaboration, collective consciousness, and the exchange of ideas in the service of the emergent. With this being said, I conclude this project by restating my theory of musical improvisation, summarizing how UJB's performances exemplify my theory, and articulating future directions of this project.

Summary of the Project

As developed in Chapter 2, my theory of musical improvisation incorporates discursive power relationships into musical performances. Musical improvisation is the performance of interacting embodied discursive power relationships. These power relationships come about by way of sets of expectations, or frames, associated with performance, musical performance, and local context. In other words, discursive power informs expectations of the musical improvisational performer and audience attending the performance. The embodied interaction among discursive power relationships and expectations constitute the performance of musical improvisation. This theory defines musical improvisation as performative. A performative approach to musical improvisation allows it to be constituted by its *doing*. Rather than reduce musical improvisation to a specific definition, a performative approach seeks to understand how performances define themselves.

In order to exemplify how my theory of musical improvisation works in practice, I conducted an ethnography of weekly performances at Skipper's Smokehouse in Tampa, FL. This ethnography focused on a Grateful Dead cover band called Uncle John's Band (UJB). The sets of expectations, or frames, associated with UJB include: performance, music, the Grateful Dead, and UJB. As these frames interact, power relationships form by way of dominant discourses concerning expectations that are dispersed throughout the culture surrounding UJB. The members of UJB embody and communicatively enact these power relationships through their performance of musical improvisation. UJB's musical improvisations are performative.

Throughout Chapters 3 and 4 I discuss the various discursive power relationships that constitute UJB's musical improvisational performances. These power relationships came about through observations and conversations in the field. As I began to understand which discourses were dominant throughout the culture surrounding UJB, I also began to understand how those discourses formed power relationships that constituted UJB's musical improvisational performances. These discursive power relationships include: UJB's long history with performing music and knowledge of music theory, UJB's stated and demonstrated purpose to re-create the experience of a Grateful Dead show, the Grateful Dead's conscious effort to perform musical improvisation within the genre of rock music in a unique way, the removal of the traditional separation between performer and audience, UJB's behavioral demonstrations of inclusion in the music-making process, the importance of setlist design, the experience of energy at a show, the Ripple Effect, the philosophy of collective consciousness, and the venue/staff of Skipper's Smokehouse.

While the above power relationships were the dominant discursive power relationships that constituted UJB's musical improvisational performances, there were other non-dominant power relationships that were too numerous to comprehend. Again, this is why a complete understanding of musical improvisational performance is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to attain. Understanding these performances by way of dominant discursive power relationships, however, goes a long way to understanding the processes involved in musical improvisation.

As I described in Chapter 1, the processes involved in musical improvisation are complex and numerous, however, simply put, these processes are interactive. Whether

musical improvisational processes are defined as intrapersonal interactions of memory, repertoires, and consciousness, or interpersonal interactions between band members, audience members, and/or the context in which the performance takes place, interaction is the key to improvisational processes. My critical/cultural approach to musical improvisation characterized these processes as rooted in interactions among discursive power relationships. As a musician performs musical improvisation, his/her performance is constituted by all of the interacting discursive power relationships available to the culture in which the performance takes place. This constitution by way of discursive power relationships not only forms the musical improvisational performance, but also the identity of the performer.

In a similar fashion, the performative approach to UJB's musical improvisation performances elucidates how UJB constructs their onstage identity. As a Grateful Dead cover band, UJB's onstage identity is wrapped up in the combined identities of the members of UJB, the Grateful Dead, the Dead Heads, and the historical traditions of the 60's counter-culture. In their pursuit to re-create the experience of a Grateful Dead show, UJB *becomes* the Grateful Dead by enacting the philosophies and power relationships mentioned above. At the same time, UJB creates their onstage identities as musicians through the performance of musical improvisation. Improvisational processes offer UJB agency in the creation of music, and allow UJB to create identities apart from the Grateful Dead by forcing the performance into a present moment of emerging musical material. Put another way, moments of musical improvisation allow UJB to remove their Grateful Dead masks precisely because of the ideals associated with improvisational

performance. DeGregory of UJB puts it this way when I asked him about freedom and improvisation:

The Dead songbook allows me (in theory at least) to play very freely. Any restrictions are simply self-imposed. Beyond that, not every musician I perform with has the same musical philosophy, experience, or skill set. All in all, I would say we are restricted most by who we are as players.

Gilman also talks about the freedom performing musical improvisation allows him as a musician:

Absolutely free to play whatever I want. Of course, I risk some criticism if it would not sound good, but we've known each other for a long time now, and the first time or two just gets an inquisitive smile.

Even though the members of UJB play cover songs from the Grateful Dead, they feel free to express themselves in whatever way they see fit. The philosophies enacted by the Grateful Dead allow this freedom of identity creation. Discursive power relationships interacting among the philosophies of the Grateful Dead and the members of UJB permit agency for the members of UJB to create their own onstage identities.

The dialectical relationship between UJB's identities as musicians and the music of the Grateful Dead brings up an interesting question. How far can UJB stray from the music of the Grateful Dead and still be considered a cover band? According to the findings of this project, once UJB establishes the frame associated with the Grateful Dead, they are free to play whatever they want. UJB's musical identities center on this premise. After the Grateful Dead frame is established, UJB is not bound by particular setlists, accuracy of lyrics, or authenticity of their sound. The members of UJB, and

audiences at Skipper's Smokehouse, allow for experimentation and improvisation, which in turn, allows UJB to construct their identities as they see fit.

UJB's experimentations and improvisations include interpretations of the music of the Grateful Dead. With respect to reproducing the Dead's music, authenticity is not a concern for UJB's community. Authenticity is a concern with respect to re-creating the experience of a Grateful Dead show. UJB establishes their identity as a cover band not by performing authentic Grateful Dead music, but by how they re-present frames concerning individual and collective experiences from Grateful Dead shows.

As the members of UJB use their own backgrounds and experiences with music in the creation of musical improvisation, they construct identities apart from, but still associated with, the Grateful Dead. UJB's onstage identity, therefore, is a both/and situation. Through UJB's awareness of the music and philosophies of the Grateful Dead, as well as UJB's musical prowess and personal experiences, they combine their onstage identities with the identity of the Grateful Dead. UJB's understandings of expectations associated with the Grateful Dead inform their onstage behavior, but only to the extent that UJB's local context allows. UJB forms identities apart from the Grateful Dead because UJB performs improvisational music that reveres spontaneity. This is how UJB re-creates the experiences of a Grateful Dead show for audiences at Skipper's Smokehouse in 2011/2012. Musical improvisation forces this local context on the members of UJB's musical performance as well as their onstage identities. I would like to focus on this idea of a local context constituting musical improvisation performances in reference to future directions for the project.

Future Directions for the Project

A possible future direction for this project rests in the notion that a local context constitutes an improvisational performance. Rather than focus on how an existing context constitutes a performance, however, the project could inform questions concerning how to shape the local context to encourage productive improvisational performances. In other words, how can designers create a context in which productive interaction is encouraged? UJB is able to re-create the experiences of a Grateful Dead show, in part, by embodying and performing the Dead's philosophies of collective consciousness and interaction of the *All*. The venue of Skipper's Smokehouse also encourages interaction among participants in UJB performances by providing an atmosphere in which UJB, their audiences, and Skipper's staff members co-create the experience of an UJB musical improvisational performance. One future direction for this project is to allow the findings of this project to inform the creation of an atmosphere that allows for interactive co-creativity and collective productivity. This application of the results is relevant to numerous and diverse environments such as: education, business, research and development, problem solving, policy meetings, and theatre/venue design. Using the findings of this project to inform the creation of an atmosphere that venerates co-creation and collective productivity is also directly relevant to the methodology of ethnography.

The findings of this project already catalyzed an alternative approach to ethnography; however, a future direction could also integrate environmental design into the method of ethnography. Designing the environment in which observations and interviews take place with a focus on collective creativity would be productive for

ethnographers, since ethnography calls for the researcher to participate in the co-construction of meaning within a specific culture. For example, according to the findings of this project, one of the primary ways to create an atmosphere that encourages collective creativity would be to remove traditional separations among individuals. I am not calling for more scientific experimental design or laboratory setting for ethnography, but rather, I am urging setting up the local context into an arrangement that is conducive to co-creation and collective consciousness. This arrangement could include anything from the physical positioning of researcher and interviewee, to controlling the lighting, sound, and temperature of a space. As a future possibility, I would like to conduct an ethnography with the focus of creating a space conducive to collective creativity.

Another possible direction for this study is to introduce my theory of musical improvisation to other forms of non-scripted practice. Rather than focus on musical improvisational performance, shift the focus to everyday non-scripted performances. Individuals engage in non-scripted performance on a daily basis. While everyday life may take the form of daily routines, familiar routes, or established schedules, the process of performing these daily practices are by and large non-scripted performances. Put another way, an individual may know the end result of a daily routine, but he/she may not know the exact way in which that end result will be achieved. In this sense, the process of the daily routine is non-scripted while the end result is planned. Understanding *how* an end result is achieved through interacting discursive power relationships will inform the choices made by an individual throughout the process of attaining that end result. Is the individual maintaining the status quo, or challenging a dominant discourse by his/her unscripted performance of everyday activities? Either way, an awareness concerning

how discursive power shapes non-scripted behavior allows an individual the capacity to choose to follow or challenge dominant discourse. But more than just behavior, an individual's performance of everyday activities also shapes his/her identity. This means that non-scripted, everyday activities are performative.

As an extended example of this re-focus on improvisational everyday activities, I will describe a situation in which the understanding of interacting dominant discursive power relationships is productive. When a prospective job candidate travels to a place of possible employment, he/she usually has a meal or two with other individuals in the department, organization, or institution. Having an unscripted conversation over a meal helps prospective employers gain a sense of the person they may hire. In other words, having a non-scripted dinner conversation establishes an identity outside of the workplace for the prospective employee. The performance of non-scripted dinner conversation is performative in that embodied discursive power relationships interact at the site of the prospective employee in order to establish his/her identity. If the prospective employee understands, and is aware of these discursive power relationships, the prospective employee gains an advantage in the non-scripted performance of his/her identity.

Say, for instance, that the dinner takes place at an upscale restaurant. Discursive power informs behavior associated with etiquette, which order to use utensils, posture, conversational topics, and interactions with servers and staff. Discursive power conditions the rules of a dinner conversation. If the prospective employee understands discursive power relationships that inform the rules of dinner conversation at an upscale restaurant, these understandings also inform his/her unscripted performance of dinner

conversation. The choice to abide by these rules or break them resides with the perspective employee, and the spontaneous decisions made by the perspective employee construct his/her identity. In a similar way to a jazz musician sitting down for a jam session with a group of other musicians, the perspective employee performs his/her knowledge or awareness of discursive power relationships, which in turn establishes his/her identity. It is vital for the non-scripted performer to understand the interacting discursive power relationships that constitute his/her performance in order to establish an identity congruent with how the performer wants to be perceived.

With an understanding of *how* discursive power relationships constitute non-scripted performance, individuals can potentially lead more productive lives. This, in essence, is moving the theory constructed in Chapter 2 into practice. Rather than leave theory in the academy, a future direction of this project is to push theory into practice in the lived experiences of individuals in society. In the most optimistic sense, I hope that the understanding of how discourse constitutes unscripted behavior enables an awareness that helps individuals throughout their daily lives.

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