

LIVING WITH MUSIC:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF SESSIONS
IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

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Living with Music: An Ethnography of Sessions in St. John's, Newfoundland

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A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Anthropology
Memorial University of Newfoundland

April 2011
St. John's Newfoundland

Abstract

This thesis offers an ethnographic account of the musical lives of musicians who play traditional Irish and Newfoundland music at "sessions" in St. John's, Newfoundland. Drawing on interviews and participant observation, I explore the significance of this music for musicians in terms of their self-definitions, social networks, senses of place and belonging, and livelihoods. I show how, in learning and playing this music, musicians also learn to become a particular type of person, with certain aesthetics, ethics, and behaviours associated with ideas of "tradition," "musicality," "community," and "place." I also explore the different ways that musicians express these ideas and the politics, hierarchies, and exclusions implicated in debates over what it means to be a "traditional musician." I argue that, in becoming part of these negotiations, musicians establish their position within the St. John's music scene and organize their lives and construct their selves through the performance of this music.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, many heartfelt thanks to all the musicians in St. John's who welcomed me into their lives and their music, without which this thesis would not have been possible. More than that, you have given me a musical home in this city and anywhere else in the world that I might find a session. To my wonderful Fiddle Group, for so warmly accepting this anthropologist/flute-player that you barely knew into your midst and for just being great people to hang out and play music with. Thanks to Greg for introducing me to the group. I am also deeply grateful to Sue for all your musical and personal encouragement and support and to Margaret for your enthusiasm and for visiting and checking in on me. You both always made sure that I took the time for a few tunes and didn't get too lost in the busyness and stress.

Thank you also to all my anthropology professors and peers for your intellectual and personal guidance. Robin, you always had insightful suggestions, helpful advice, and words of support throughout this process and in my occasional moments of panic. Thank you for being such a great supervisor. Dianne, Dave, and Laura, you have all been amazing sources inspiration in every aspect of our programs. Thank you for your friendships, which have sustained me through all problems and challenges, great and small. Thanks also to Jill, for your help with just about anything in the world. To Tracy, for the wine, hugs, songs, and for your endless enthusiasm for everything. I also could not have finished this process without the help of Consuelo, who always had the essentials of life, tea and chocolate, on hand. Thank you also to August Carbonella, Rex

Clark, Reade Davis, Wayne Fife, Kathy Gordon, Alison, Greg, Josh, Ken, Sol, and all other members of the anthropology department.

Another essential contribution to this project came in the form of funding generously provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), and the A.G. Hatcher Memorial Scholarship.

Certainly not to be forgotten are my friends and family who, even at a distance, have been of great help. Thank you to Beverley for your 18 years of friendship and to Jenn for never stopping to inspire me to try and do more with my life. To Colin, your unfaltering belief in my academic and non-academic abilities was always a comfort when I was more than a little doubtful of myself. To Steph and Fox, for the chats, the laughs, and for visiting. Also, to my family in Ireland who introduced me to the vast and wonderful world of traditional Irish music to start. Finally, and above all, thanks to my parents for your support throughout my life. This thesis is a testament to the independence and courage that you taught me, as well as to your continued insistence that I followed my dreams, whatever those may be. Thank you for always being there.

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Chapter 1: Playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in St. John's

St. John's, the capital city of Newfoundland and Labrador, is home to musicians from across the province, the rest of Canada, and other countries who play traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music.¹ Musicians come from a wide variety of musical and regional backgrounds, ages, and genders and participate in this music in multiple ways. For example, along with numerous professional and semi-professional performers, there are many musicians who play primarily in private or informal settings. Musicians also delimit and define the music they play in various ways – leading to my awkward but useful term “Irish (and) Newfoundland music.” What unites all the musicians I spoke with, however, is that playing this music is a meaningful endeavour and an important part of their lives. This thesis offers an ethnographic portrayal of the musical lives of these musicians and their interactions as they meet in different spaces for the performance of this music, based particularly on my research at sessions during the late spring and summer of 2009. In the process, I explore the multiple ways that traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music is implicated in musicians' lives, addressing both individual and shared meanings and practices.

This first chapter provides an introduction to the significance of this music to musicians and to how I will approach this significance analytically. I also provide background information on this genre of music and its performance that I will draw on throughout this thesis. I present a brief description of traditional Irish (and)

¹ While the political boundaries of the province incorporate both Newfoundland and Labrador, this thesis focuses specifically on the island of Newfoundland. I frequently use “the island” to refer to this particular part of the province.

Newfoundland music and of sessions, which are a primary venue for the production of this music. I then undertake a review of the relevant literature and explain the theoretical approach guiding my thesis. I conclude with a preview of the subsequent chapters.

As a way of introducing the deep personal relationship musicians have with traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, I begin by considering the life of Newfoundland flute player Gerry Strong.² Gerry grew up in the Little Bay Islands in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland. He learned classical piano as a child but is now a professional musician who plays traditional music in several bands, as well as in sessions, has released a solo CD, and appears on several other recordings. Gerry's introduction to traditional music was by chance. His sister bought him a Planxty album as a gift when he was a teenager and he instantly fell in love with it.³ He commented that "as soon as the needle hit the first side, I was hooked." After that initial introduction, he began to learn "whatever I could get my hands on," which included a significant repertoire of Irish music. This learning eventually led him to where he is today as a musician.

At the time of my fieldwork, Gerry had a full-time non-musical career, but nevertheless played as much as he could. He did not live in St. John's, however, so was unable to attend sessions as often as he would have liked. Yet, he found other ways to enjoy his music and learn new tunes. One day when I called him, he told me he had just turned on Clare FM, an Irish radio station, to listen and play along. When I asked him why he played this music, his response was "it's like eating and drinking and breathing..."

² I use pseudonyms throughout this thesis in order to protect musicians' privacy, except where I have received explicit permission to use musicians' real names or their names are already found on the public record. In these exceptional cases, I will introduce musicians using both their first and last names, as I have done with Gerry. A more detailed discussion about my use of pseudonyms can be found in chapter 3.

³ Planxty was a traditional/folk music band from Ireland during the 1970s.

just one of those things you got to do." This statement is clearly demonstrative of how essential this music is in Gerry's life, a sentiment shared by most musicians.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "life" refers to "vitality or animate existence embodied in an individual person or thing" (OED Online 2010:s.v. "life, n"). That is, life is both the act of living and the quality of being alive. This thesis therefore considers the different ways that the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music is tied to both musicians' "animate existence" and their "vitality." In doing so, I discuss how ideas such as "tradition," "authenticity," "community," "place," and "leisure" influence musicians' experiences of the music and the meanings they attach to it. Sessions as a particular performance configuration, for example, are intimately tied up with the idea that playing traditional music was and should be an egalitarian and communal endeavour. Yet, I also show how musicians negotiate these meanings, associations, and practices with themselves and with one another. Far from simply being a source of entertainment, as music is often conceived, I argue that musicians make their lives in various ways through the music they play. That is, even for musicians like Gerry who do not play in a full-time professional capacity, they nevertheless organize their lives and create their selves in relation to the performance of this music. This occurs as they navigate their own position amidst a nexus of ideals and social and musical practices.

I use the concept of "musical pathways" as an analytical tool for exploring this life-making process by musicians (Finnegan 1989). In interviews, participation, and discussions – forming the core of my ethnography – I asked about musicians' "musical biographies," hoping to gain an understanding of the changing role of music in their lives

and where traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music figured. These biographies offered insight into the many different musical experiences lived by musicians. They also revealed many patterns in *how* musicians' discussed their musical experiences. As such, these biographies acted as narratives through which musicians illustrated and constructed their life-ways – past, present, and future.

"Musical pathways" captures precisely this idea of change and of direction (both linear and non-linear) in musicians' lives (Cohen 1993:129). Virva Basegmez explains,

A pathway is like the history of a musician's life. It is a kind of *biography* that, importantly, is connected with processes of identity. Pathways inform about where the musicians come from, what they have done, where they are now and what they are doing, and what they would like to do in the future.

(Basegmez 2005:70)

Paths can run straight, wind, circle, cross, or even double-back, just as musicians' musical lives can change courses, returning to past ideas, places, and experiences or creating new ones. The pathways of different musicians can also converge in shared spaces, overlap in similar directions, meanings, or experiences, or run completely different courses (Basegmez 2005; Finnegan 1989).

The concept of "musical pathways" originates with Ruth Finnegan (1989) in her exploration of "grassroots" musicians in Milton Keynes, an English town. Finnegan expands on the idea of "art worlds" used by Howard Becker (1982), where musicians play in "worlds" of shared meanings and conventions. To Finnegan, "pathways" are "a series of known and regular routes which people chose – or were led into – and which they both keep open and extended through their actions" (Finnegan 1989:305). For example, many musicians who are from away, meaning not from Newfoundland, only

started to play traditional music when they moved to St. John's. These musicians were often referred to a particular session known as Fiddle Group, held weekly by a group of amateur musicians, as a means of learning this music and its social conventions. This session has therefore served as a "regular route" for many beginners new to the city. These routes resemble Becker's worlds, but the concept of a path allows for a greater sense of change within genres and life-ways (Basegmez 2005:59; Finnegan 1989:306).

Virva Basegmez (2005) also uses the concept of musical pathways extensively in discussing the music-making practices of young musicians in Dublin and Galway, Ireland. She follows Vered Amit-Talai (1994), who adapted Finnegan's concept of collective, shared routes by adding a notion of individual agency (Basegmez 2005:61). As such, individuals can create new pathways for themselves, join or leave particular routes, or contest and change these shared pathways (Basegmez 2005:61-62). Basegmez, for example, explores how musicians change musical genres over the course of their life-time, in turn changing between the different routes laid out for those genres (Basegmez 2005:62). Musicians in St. John's make similar individualized choices, as Gerry did in pursuing his interest in traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music after learning piano as a child.

My approach to musicians' musical pathways follows both Amit-Talai and Finnegan. That is, these pathways may be individual *and* collective. For example, each musician's pathway may vary over the course of their life-time, but multiple individuals' pathways may also overlap and become shared and "familiar routes": "Some pathways are narrow and individual, others are wider, well-trodden and more familiar" (Basegmez

2005:60; Cohen 1993:128). I see these routes or “wider, well-trodden pathways” as pieces of consistently overlapping or parallel paths. Musicians can then choose their pathways in relation to existing routes; they do not always have to break new ground. They may also choose their pathways in relation to *conceptual* routes – shared ideas of what the pathway to becoming a “traditional musician” should be, for example. It is the interplay of the conscious and individualized sense of pathways with the idea of shared, collective routes that I find useful in understanding the various paths of musicians. This interaction allows me to explore how musical pathways are similar and different, why musicians may choose certain pathways or are led down others, and how these choices influence musicians’ overall life-paths and life-ways.

While the notion of pathways and routes allow for a sense of movement and choice, Basegmez points out that Becker’s more collective and static concept of “art worlds” is useful in certain contexts. Sessions are one example, where musicians from all over the world can meet and share in the production of music as a result of shared repertoires and conventions (Basegmez 2005:62). These shared contexts, however, can also be captured by the notion of “scenes.” According to Will Straw, a musical scene is a “cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization” (Straw 1991:373). Using the concept of scenes, then, I can look at the context within which musicians play music, including overlapping, diverging, and sometimes competing musical influences and interactions

from many people and places, as well as the negotiations over meaning and experiences that result.

Further, as described by Basegmez, there are scenes within scenes (Basegmez 2005:92-93). The session scene of St. John's could be considered part of a wider traditional/folk music scene within the city, as well as part of a yet wider scene of traditional music in Newfoundland, in Canada, or throughout the world. Similarly, sessions at two different pubs could be construed as scenes unto themselves that are both part of the larger network of Irish themed pubs and sessions in St. John's and of musicians and performers that participate in them in various capacities. Thus, scenes are overlapping and nested, with shifting connections and boundaries amongst them.

Throughout their lives, musicians' paths can move through various scenes in playing different genres, in different places, or with different musical goals. Their paths intersect with those of other musicians at certain times and places and new scenes and paths can themselves be created through these interactions. The scenes constitute the milieu for pieces of musicians' paths, which are, at the same time, nested within greater scenes of similar contexts and networks (and thereby similar conventions and repertoires). In addition, since musicians' pathways are situated within a larger albeit changing social context, these pathways are influenced by factors relating to age, gender, and class (Basegmez 2005:79-90; Finnegan 1989:308-316). The existence of an active and visible traditional music scene in St. John's, for example, may provide young musicians with greater opportunities for learning and playing than are available to

musicians growing up in many other places.⁴ Thus, I explore the interweaving of individual and collective paths, of structural influences and individual choices, through musicians' musical pathways and their movement through various music scenes.

I consider only musicians who play or have played traditional instrumental music (broadly defined) in St. John's. In the image projected by arts, culture, and tourism industries "traditional music" often appears to be the primary form of musical production of Newfoundland. The musical practices within St. John's, however, are not identical to those across the Island, though they are also not unconnected. In addition, St. John's hosts a diverse musical scene of which traditional music is only a part.⁵ Many of my participants themselves play other genres of music in addition to traditional music. However, due to the constraints of an MA program, I focus on the meanings attributed to the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music.

In considering the pathways of musicians, I seek to illustrate the tensions and paradoxes that musicians navigate, but also the fun and the love of music that all have a part in playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in St. John's, Newfoundland today. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the musicians who play this music in St. John's are all quite diverse: different ages, genders, backgrounds (regionally and musically), with different opinions, ideas, and experiences. The performance of this music, however, provides them with a means of engaging with one another and with their own lives. As such, for musicians like Gerry, playing this music and participating in

⁴ Various facets of these structural opportunities and constraints will be explored throughout this thesis.

⁵ There are, for example, musicians in St. John's who play classical, jazz, gypsy jazz, blues, folk, rock, klezmer, reggae, among many other musical genres.

sessions becomes "just one of those things you got to do" as part of making and living their lives.

1.1 Tunes and sessions

What happens in a session is someone enters the pub with an instrument, they put it down on the musicians' table, and they order a pint at the bar. They might chat with the bartender for a minute until they see another musician arrive. The two pick seats at the table, set up their instruments, and update each other on news. A few other musicians come in and join the table. Everyone is sitting and chatting, about music, about the weather, about when the caplin are rolling, or about their week. There might be a lull in the conversation and someone will start a tune. Other musicians, who can hear over the buzz in the bar and recognize the tune, join in. The tune repeats. On the third round, a musician who just started to practice the tune that morning finally gets the feel and starts to play along enthusiastically. Another sits out because s/he has not heard the tune before. Yet another adds a distinctive variation. Someone calls out a key change or makes a yelp, indicating a new tune is coming. The leading musician starts the new tune and everyone else stops playing to listen. One or two join in and the guitar player works out the chords, joining in more loudly in the second turn. The others listen quietly or chat with one another. No one calls out or starts a new tune after the third round and everyone ends at approximately the same time. The pattern repeats throughout the night. More pints are ordered, more tunes are played, and more chatting occurs, until the night's stage performance starts or the majority of musicians decide to pack up and leave.

This sketch offers a sense of how a session would unfold at a pub in St. John's. Sessions are one of the primary venues for the production of traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music. While there is a "song session" that takes place at O'Reilly's Irish Newfoundland Pub, a pub located on George Street downtown St. John's, the sessions I consider focus on playing instrumental music, referred to as "tunes." As Barry Foy describes in his *Field Guide to the Irish Music Session*, the session is "a gathering of Irish traditional musicians for the purpose of celebrating their common interest in the music by playing it together in a relaxed, informal setting... as an elaborate excuse for getting out of the house and spending an evening with friends over a few pints of beer" (Foy 1999:13). While the musicians at sessions in St. John's certainly are not all Irish nor is the music played exclusively Irish, this is a succinct introduction to the concept of a session. As seen in the example above, they are generally not formal stage performances. Rather, musicians play around a table or two in a pub or café, in a rough circle, and often will drink, eat, and chat throughout the session.

One of the features said to define a session is its spontaneity. That is, while a musician may come to the session planning to play certain tunes that they have either recently learned, thought of, or heard, no one knows ahead of time what tunes will be played throughout the night, in what order, or by whom. In addition, in public sessions it is generally held that any musician may join and partake in the music.⁶ As a result, the musicians and instruments that will be present at any given session can vary significantly. I observed one day in my field-notes:

⁶ The actual inclusiveness of sessions and the ability for musicians to join will be explored later.

Every time I walk through a pub door to attend a session, I never know what I'm going to find, no matter what I hear outside. How many musicians, who's there, is incredibly unpredictable even given that certain musicians are supposed to host – with musicians being away for gigs overseas or elsewhere in Newfoundland.

(Field-notes, July 12, 2009)

The degree to which this statement is true also varies among sessions with some being more variable than others.

As mentioned in this excerpt, many of the sessions in St. John's have one or two paid hosts. Other musicians who attend the session are not paid but may be given a free pint or two by the pub or receive a discount on drinks. Gary, a part-time professional musician who has been playing at sessions in St. John's for several years, described to me the various types of sessions that can occur:

There's three different types... One of them is it's a gig, you know. There's someone hosting the session and he's only there because he has to be, there could be fifty other people playing, he's the only person getting paid, you know. There's a few free pints up in there [for the other musicians], that kind of thing...

Then there's the closed private sessions, which only kind of elite players are invited to or are welcome at. I don't see that happening a lot around here now, but I know it happens. They're fun. I like those because they're fast and the music is kind of non-stop, which is I guess another attribute of what I like in a session. You know good friends, good tunes, good times, good Guinness. Late nights, you know, just shut out the world and play music for two or three hours. That's nice.

But then, you know, the whole point of a session really, and this is the third category I guess for me, from my perspective. The whole point of a session is a social learning event... so that people don't just have to practice in their bedrooms by themselves. I mean, 'cause that's how you learn, you learn by playing with [other people], that's how I learned anyways. You learn from playing with people who are better than you.

While Gary described three types, from my experience these are not completely distinct. A session that is a gig could become a private session if no patrons are in the pub during the session. Similarly, a session that is a gig could also be a social learning event for musicians of various levels. The overlap amongst types again relates to the spontaneity

and dynamic nature of sessions. The dynamics of specific sessions in St. John's will be discussed throughout this thesis.

The music played at these sessions is primarily what I have termed "traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music." Chapter 2 will explore in detail the history of this kind of music in Newfoundland. Briefly, however, the music first came to the Island with its early settlers and has origins primarily in England, Scotland, Ireland, and France (Osborne 2007:189). It has changed over the time since its arrival as the music developed across the Island, new compositions were created in Newfoundland, and new sounds and music were brought by more recent visitors and settlers, radio broadcasts, recordings, sheet music, and Newfoundland musicians travelling to and learning music from other places (Byrne 1991a; Osborne 2007; Quigley 1995; Smith 2007; Webb 2008a; Webb 2008b). The influences of Irish music and Irish musicians on music in Newfoundland are often particularly emphasized among musicians.

This music was originally used as an accompaniment for dances but later came to be played principally in a listening context (Osborne 2007:192; Quigley 1985:15-18). This shift occurred primarily through the influence of the revival movement of the 1960s and 1970s as urban middle-class musicians in St. John's began performing this music on recordings, radio, television, stages, and in sessions (see, for example, Saugeres 1991). Common forms include jigs, reels, hornpipes, slides, singles, and doubles. Currently in St. John's, the tunes that are played are considered to be primarily Irish and Newfoundland in origin, though a Scottish or Quebecois tune will also sometimes be played. Each tune is usually played two to four times and tunes are grouped into sets of

tunes where two or three tunes are played consecutively.⁷ My intention throughout this thesis, however, is not to investigate the technical details of this music beyond what musicians themselves have described. I focus instead on musicians' understandings of this music and its performance.

1.1.1 A note about tenses

My fieldwork took place during the spring and summer of 2009. Yet, many of the sessions that I encountered are ongoing. I have also continued to participate in sessions across the city throughout the period of writing. My choice of tenses throughout this thesis reflects these processes. In particular, I switch between past and present tense as seems appropriate to the ethnography. For example, there is a session at Erin's pub on Friday evenings that I often attended as part of my fieldwork. This session, however, continues to be held with much the same music, musicians, and social and musical practices as seen during my research. As a result, I sometimes refer to this session in the past tense to discuss specific observations and experiences that occurred during my fieldwork, and sometimes in the present tense to relay the ongoing performance of music by myself and other musicians at this session. Through these grammatical choices I also situate my own position, both temporally and regionally, as the narrator of this thesis. The next section also discusses the position I take theoretically in exploring musicians' lives and the traditional music scene of St. John's, providing an understanding of where I place my own research within various streams of thought.

⁷ The number of times a tune is repeated can vary depending on tune length and complexity, with two to four times being most common. Similarly, the number of tunes formed into a set varies based on the length of the tunes, the complexity of tunes, and whether musicians can think of tunes they want to combine. A common length for sets, however, is two or three tunes.

1.2 Existing research and theoretical perspectives

This thesis is situated primarily at the intersection of two bodies of literature: the anthropology of music and the study of "tradition." Discussions in these areas have been developed extensively by the fields of ethnomusicology and folklore along with anthropology. I focus here particularly on anthropological explorations of these topics, but I also consider other fields where relevant.

1.2.1 The anthropology of music

My analytical and theoretical attention to music is based on its study situated within a particular cultural context (Merriam 1964; Nettl 2005:12). As my focus is the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music by musicians in St. John's, I draw particularly on the literature surrounding musical practices in Newfoundland, as well as the performance of traditional Irish music specifically. In doing so, I do not mean to suggest an essential connection between music in Ireland and music in Newfoundland. Yet, there has been extensive research conducted on the performance of traditional Irish music that provides useful insights into the traditional music scene(s) in Newfoundland.

My approach is multifaceted but centers around interrogating the experience of music. As an experience, I see music as simultaneously site for, subject of, and source of negotiations over individual and shared meanings and practices. As part of this perspective, the performance of music is therefore individualized, but also situated in and influenced by a social/cultural context. This approach allows me to explore the meanings and practices that musicians associate with their music and negotiate through their music and how these are affected by the wider social, cultural, political, and economic milieus in

which they play. Many musicians, for example, focus on playing specifically "Newfoundland" tunes. I explore what it means for a tune to be from Newfoundland, the significance of this association for musicians, as well as how negotiations over "Irish" versus "Newfoundland" music and over different understandings of Newfoundland as a place occur through the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. Yet, as I will show, the significance of distinguishing Newfoundland music can also only be understood in relation to historical circumstances that devalued "Newfoundlandness" and local practices, including the performance of traditional Newfoundland music.

There have been numerous approaches to studying music in the fields of anthropology and ethnomusicology. The early study of music (outside of "Western" classical music) often involved the collection and description of the music of "other" cultures. Both musicians and scholars, for example, have made significant efforts to document, preserve, and promote the "music of Newfoundland." In his book *The Anthropology of Music*, however, Alan P. Merriam argued for the "the study of music in culture" (Merriam 1964:6, emphasis added). He suggested that scholars should explore conceptualizations of music, individual and group behaviours in relation to music, along with the study of music itself (Merriam 1964:32). Merriam therefore importantly combined the study of music with the study of cultural practices that form the basis of ethnomusicological research and the "anthropology of music" (Merriam 1964; Nettl 2005).⁸

⁸ Later scholars elaborated on and added to Merriam's approach. John Blacking (1973) similarly argues for the contextual study of music. Using his research with the Vendas of South Africa, he discusses how musicality and music are shaped by and reflect culture and society. This idea that music may reflect "culture" and "society," reversing Merriam's focus, was further developed by Anthony Seeger in his book

The notion of "culture," which Merriam used unproblematically, however, has been widely critiqued in anthropology and other disciplines (see, for example, Abu-Lughod 1991; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Rosaldo 1993; Said 1978; Wolf 1982, 1999). Still, as Martin Stokes suggests in his discussion of music, identity, and ethnicity, "music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (Stokes 1994b:5). In other words, music is a means by which musicians form a sense of something they describe in terms of "culture" and assert differences and similarities among "cultures." In turn, many scholars have come to focus on performance rather than the structural or functional role of music within society. This has allowed them to explore differences and tensions in meanings and experiences within musical and societal practices and how these relate to broader issues of power (Stokes 1994b:2-4). Many ethnomusicologists (and anthropologists) therefore consider the performance of music as a social event, where more than just music "happens" (Stokes 1994b:5).

The performance and creation of identities through music has particularly been of interest to many scholars (Basegmez 2005; Cohen 1994; Dowling 2004-2006; Frith 1996; Leonard 2005; O'Shea 2008b; Rapuano 2005; Stokes 1994a). There has been some consideration of how music in Newfoundland is used as a means of expressing a nativist sentiment or a distinct Newfoundland identity (Colton 2007; Gregory 2004; Pocius 1988; Saugeres 1991; Thorne 2007). Some research is also beginning to analyze the connections

Why Sayi Sing? (1987). He explores how music both creates and reflects the whole of society, mirroring the structural turn in anthropology at the time. He describes the focus as "musical anthropology."

between Irish and Newfoundland music and how this relates to an expression of "Irishness" in Newfoundland (Byrne 1991a; O'Connell 2007; ÓhAllmhúirín 2008; Osborne 2007, 2010). Similarly, much scholarship on traditional Irish music has explored its use as a means of expressing "Irishness" and of reclaiming one's Irish roots when performed outside of Ireland (Basegmez 2005; Dowling 2004-2006; Leonard 2005; O'Flynn 2009; O'Shea 2006-2007, 2008b; Rapuano 2005; Williams 2006).

I take seriously the critique by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2004) regarding the analytical use of "identity." They state, "*Identity... tends to mean too much... too little... or nothing at all*" (Brubaker and Cooper 2004:28). Following their lead, I aim throughout this thesis to "go beyond identity," endeavouring for "conceptual clarity" through detailed descriptions and the use of more precise terminology (Brubaker and Cooper 2004:63). Brubaker and Cooper, for example, suggest using terms such as "identification," "categorization," "self-understanding," "social location," "commonality," "connectedness," and "groupness," among others, as a means of gaining analytical specificity and clarity (Brubaker and Cooper 2004:41-48).

Bearing these caveats in mind, the theoretical developments of scholars studying music and identity provide a valuable basis for exploring how individuals shape their lives through the production of music. Of particular usefulness are Simon Frith's (1996) discussions on how individuals and groups construct identities through the experience of performing music. He states that "music... describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social" (Frith 1996:109). This understanding of music is based on the premise that the formation of identity is a continuous process and that the performance of

music is a means of experiencing this "self-in-process" (Frith 1996:109). Through music, musicians express and create their own meanings; yet, these meanings are necessarily shaped by the historical, social, cultural, political, and economic context within which they play (Frith 1996:109-110). Frith's approach therefore allows me to explore individual meanings and practices followed by musicians in relation to the music they play, as well as the many ways that these are influenced by the context of musical production and the music itself.

This perspective also addresses three significant facets of musical performance and its study. In the first, discussed by Stokes (1994b) and at the forefront of Frith's (1996) theoretical developments, music is an event for the performance and construction of other meanings and practices, such as individual identities, for example. The second facet, discussed below in greater detail in relation to ideas of "tradition," holds the idea that meanings are assigned and negotiated in relation to the music itself. As Frith discusses, the experience of performing music necessarily involves both aesthetics and ethics (Frith 1996:124). What "sounds right" in the performance of music is learned and debated relative to ideas such as what is "traditional," "authentic," "Irish," or "Newfoundland," among other categories and meanings that may be assigned to the music (Frith 1996:110).⁹ As many scholars have pointed out and explored themselves,

⁹ A focus on musicians who play instrumental traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music, in particular, more readily allows for an exploration of these meanings. This accessibility is because instrumental music has no obvious meaning, unlike songs where the texts themselves may express meaning to which musicians or others may relate (Feintach 1983:208; Story 1988). The titles of tunes may have any number of associations, for example referring to specific individuals and historical events. These associations may have meaning for the musicians who play them, but it is not necessarily the case. Musicians are often at pains to remember the titles of tunes and many tunes have multiple names. A well-known and respected Newfoundland musician once commented that if you can remember the titles of all the tunes, then you do

the definition of "music" as a concept and activity itself is negotiated (see, for example, Attali 1985; Blacking 1973; Kingsbury 1988). Finally, the music shapes musicians' experiences through the sounds created, the bodily practices necessary for its production, and the social configurations through which the music is produced. The session and its practice as a primarily homogenous musical performance, for example, enforce certain social and musical conventions that in turn shape musicians' interactions with one another. I thus explore the various facets of the experience of playing music, what happens, what it means, and how it is structured and negotiated.

1.2.2 The study of "tradition"

The concept of tradition is a significant component in negotiations over the performance of "traditional" Irish (and) Newfoundland music. There is both academic and popular interest in exploring the term, which has been applied in many ways. Since the 1980s, scholars have focused on "tradition" as a "symbolic construction" (Handler and Linnekin 1984; Linnekin 1983). My own approach follows this idea in exploring *how* musicians use ideas of tradition in assigning meaning to the music they play and in negotiating this meaning with one another. This approach addresses how the qualifier of "traditional" on traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music shapes how musicians understand and practice this music. I therefore also consider in this section some of the differing definitions of "tradition" that have been used and the significant implications these have had inside and outside of academia. These discussions will situate my own

not know enough tunes. The meaning associated with instrumental music is then primarily created and asserted outside the music itself, by those playing it and listening to it, or associated with the context of the music (O'Shea 2006-2007:8). However, I consider how the music shapes musicians' experiences through these associated meanings.

exploration of the concept of "tradition," as well as the ideas and debates held by musicians.

In his well-known book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams observes that "tradition in its most general modern sense is a particularly difficult word" (Williams 1983:318). Nevertheless, Williams continues his exploration of the term suggesting that, "tradition survives in English as a description of a general process of handing down... But the word tends to move towards age-old and towards ceremony, duty and respect" (Williams 1983:319). Dan Ben-Amos (1984) also traces seven definitions of the term that have been used in the discipline of folklore, many of which are similar to those described by Williams. Ben-Amos, however, additionally specifies that tradition can mean any or all of the process of handing down, the material that has been handed down or the quality of the material that is passed on (Ben-Amos 1984:99-100). These approaches conceptualize tradition as a bounded entity that a person or group possesses and that is passed down through generations. Such conceptualizations were prevalent in much anthropological, ethnomusicological, and folkloristic scholarship until the later part of the 20th century (Handler and Linnekin 1984:273-274).¹⁰ Musicians in St. John's also apply "tradition" as meaning the process of handing down and the "material" or music that has been handed down, as well as drawing on ideas of "age-old," "duty," and "respect."

¹⁰ The fields of ethnomusicology and folklore have had a more explicit interest in "tradition" and its relation to music. Nevertheless, anthropology has also had a long relationship with the concept. Anthropologist Melville Herskovits once proclaimed that "one synonym for culture is tradition" (Bronner 2000:97). Alternatively, tradition is often seen as a part of culture (Bronner 2000:97). As a result, the focus of anthropology in understanding "culture" has also included considerations of "tradition."

This predominant conceptualization has two significant consequences. First, in understanding tradition as bounded, it is often opposed to modernity (Handler and Linnekin 1984:274). Renato Rosaldo discusses how the concept of culture in anthropology has been conflated with difference in defining a valid anthropological subject (Rosaldo 1993:201). "Primitive," "traditional," "other" have been used in contrast to "civilized," "rational," "us." As outlined by several scholars (Handler and Linnekin 1984; Sahlins 1999), this dichotomization is seen, for example, in EB Tylor's stages of cultural evolution; Karl Marx's stages to capitalism; Émile Durkheim's mechanical and organic solidarity; and Max Weber's traditional, charismatic, and bureaucratic systems of authority. Although Weber romanticized "traditional" societies, he nonetheless separated them as a distinct and earlier point of cultural evolution (Wilk and Cliggett 2007:124). With the later turn toward modernization theory, "tradition" was again contrasted with "modernity" and simultaneously devalued as the thing that was holding the "others" back from development. For example, W.W. Rostow's (1991) well known *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* ranked "the traditionalist society" as the first of five stages to economic development. As part of these distinctions, "traditional" is also often associated with nostalgic ideas of "community" and "place" and such associations have had a significant impact on how musicians interpret and experience the music they play. In addition, the devaluation of "tradition" extended beyond academia and was applied in social and economic policy and popular thought. As a result, musicians themselves have contended with such ideas at various points in Newfoundland history.

The second consequence of conceptualizing tradition as “a core of inherited culture traits” or as “a process of handing down” is that it also becomes something that can be identified, described, and collected (Handler and Linnekin 1984:273). Anthropologist Franz Boas, for example, hoped to collect the tradition and the culture of the Kwakiutl and other native groups, including material items and oral accounts, before they were lost to the encroaching influence of “modern” society. Scholars therefore sought to “identify and describe the essential attributes of cultural traits, rather than to understand our own and our subjects’ interpretive models” (Handler and Linnekin 1984:274). This approach also relied extensively on ideas of “authenticity” and the quest for the “authentic folk” or “authentic culture” characterized much of anthropology, folklore, and ethnomusicology in the past (Bendix 1997).¹¹ Similarly, musicians have sought to collect, preserve, and promote “authentic” Newfoundland culture and music, although they debate amongst one another precisely what this means.

In the past several decades, however, the concepts of tradition and authenticity have come into more critical focus in anthropology and other academic disciplines. Most now recognize that “authenticity as a criterion should not matter in attempts to understand and appreciate culture” (Bendix 1997:14). Rather, scholars have explored the various ways that “cultures” and “traditions” are constructed and interconnected (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Gough 2002; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Handler 1988; Handler and Linnekin

¹¹ “Authenticity,” like “tradition” has been applied in many ways over time. I discuss throughout this thesis many of the ways this concept is used by musicians, drawing on academic scholarship that explores various ways that individuals or groups interpret and employ the idea of “authenticity” (Eldenae 2002; Fife 2004; Lindholm 2008; Ray 2005a, 2005b). Similar to my approach to “tradition,” which I elaborate below, I explore how musicians use ideas of “authenticity” in assigning meaning to their music and how these ideas influence the role of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in their lives.

1984; Linnekin 1983; Rosaldo 1993; Said 1978; Wolf 1982, 1999, 2002). Handler and Linnekin, for example, argue strongly against the "naturalistic" view of tradition, discussed above, and suggest we explore tradition as a "symbolic construct": "we suggest that there is no essential bounded tradition; tradition is a model of the past and is inseparable from the interpretation of tradition in the present" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:276). Through Handler and Linnekin's approach, "tradition" is a construct or idea that is applied by individuals and groups in asserting connections to the past and thereby creating new meaning in the present.

Others have also explored how tradition can function as a vehicle for power, considering how it is used in various projects such as nationalism or class domination (Handler 1988; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992; Rosaldo 1993; Williams 1977; Wolf 1982). Raymond Williams (1977), in his book *Marxism and Literature*, discusses the concept of "selective tradition." He explores how the hegemonic class creates the dominant history, fabricating it from the range of available historical traditions to enforce hegemonic ideals (Williams 1977:115). The dissemination of this selective tradition depends on its institutionalization; that is, the socialization of the dominant view of history and perceptions of the world through schools, the family, and other areas of learning (Williams 1977:117-118). Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (1992) also introduce the concept of "invented tradition" in their edited volume *The Invention of Tradition*. In his contribution to the volume, Hobsbawm explores how certain "'traditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented" (Hobsbawm 1992:1). He also discusses how these "traditions" are used to socialize or inculcate certain ideals or values, particularly in support of nationalism.

Several scholars, however, have critiqued the idea that some traditions are obviously invented because of the implicit assumption that certain other traditions are "authentic" whereas those that are obviously invented are "inauthentic" (Handler and Linnekin 1984; Linnekin 1983; Ray 2005a, 2005b). As Celeste Ray argues in her work on those claiming Scottish ethnicity in North America: "that tradition is invented does not detract from its present meaning to those who emotionally invest in its practice" (Ray 2005a:6). In addition, Handler and Linnekin point out that all traditions have an element of selection and invention (Handler and Linnekin 1984:276). These various scholars shift the focus from the study of "traditional societies" or of "tradition" to a critical focus on the role of "tradition" in societies and in individuals' lives. They consider how tradition is used, by whom, and why. Scholars have also importantly explored how concepts such as "authenticity" or "tradition" are employed in legitimizing activities, how these are related to the commodification of culture, and how the search for the "authentic" or "traditional" are important in shaping peoples' lives and experiences (Bendix 1997; Edensor 2002; Fife 2004; Handler 1988; Kaul 2007; Lindholm 2008; O'Shea 2008b; Ray 2005a, 2005b).

Following Handler and Linnekin, I aim "to understand our own and our subjects' interpretive models" about "tradition" and "authenticity" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:274). This focus also follows Rogers Brubaker's (2004) suggestion to consider how groups form around categories such as "ethnicity," "nationhood," and "race" and Gupta and Ferguson's (1992) critique of assumptions that cultures and communities are tied to notions of place. As Brubaker argues, "as analysts, we should certainly try to account for the ways in which – and conditions under which – this practice of reification, this

powerful crystallization of group feeling, can work" (Brubaker 2004:10). Thus, while I discussed above some important ways "tradition" has been defined and used in popular and academic thought, rather than seeking to define these terms, I will attend to the different ways that musicians interpret these concepts, how they apply them to the conceptualizations and practices of "traditional" Irish (and) Newfoundland music, and how this shapes the role of this music in their lives.

I acknowledge that there often is such a thing as "tradition" or even "culture" and "authenticity" in the hearts, minds, and bodies of musicians, other individuals, and often myself too, in relation to the performance of this music. As suggested by Rogers Brubaker and Frederic Cooper (2004) and argued by Regina Bendix (1997), however, these terms should not be employed uncritically as "categories of analysis."

1.3 Thesis outline

The next two chapters provide additional background information to contextualize this thesis and my discussions of musicians' lives. Chapter 2 offers an overview of traditional music in St. John's, Newfoundland from the 1500s to the time of my fieldwork in spring/summer 2009. This serves to historically situate musicians' relationship with the music and with ideas of "tradition." Chapter 3 then outlines the methodological approaches I used during my fieldwork, which strongly influenced how I observed and experienced the music and my interactions with other musicians. The chapter explores the performative nature of my fieldwork, firmly situating myself as a participant in this music and in my own research. I also discuss the methodological and ethical issues that I face as a result of this participation.

Having established an historical and methodological context for my explorations of the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, this thesis considers musicians' musical pathways and their interactions as they meet in various music scenes in St. John's. Each chapter, or set of chapters, explores a different aspect of musicians' lives that are influenced by these pathways.

Chapters 4 and 5 work as a set to consider how, as musicians learn to play traditional music, their self-definitions and status become entwined with the music's performance. Chapter 4 explores musicians' ideas of what a traditional musician *should* be and presents the different musical pathways lived by musicians in St. John's. These discussions lay a foundation for an interpretive analysis of musicians' pathways in later chapters. Chapter 5, in particular, considers how tensions and comparisons between the ideal route to becoming a musician and the lived pathways of musicians combine with ideas of professionalism, authenticity, and talent and lead musicians to claim or assign status to themselves or others. The chapter therefore focuses on the politics of musicianship as negotiated among musicians, particularly in the context of sessions. I also show how, through these politics, musicians negotiate their own position within the music scene politically, socially, and musically.

Many musicians emphasized the important social connections they have formed through playing traditional music. These ties range from casual acquaintances to marriage. Chapter 6 therefore explores the different types of social relationships that musicians develop, the importance of these connections in their lives, and how they are influenced by the music and by sessions. In particular, I explore how musicians'

experiences are structured according to gender, age, and musical status. I thereby show the different ways of belonging in the music scene that musicians create and experience through the performance of this music and the social connections they create.

Many musicians also spoke about a sense of belonging to Newfoundland as a place that they developed through playing this music, which I explore in Chapter 7. I consider the many ways that musicians define "Irish (and) Newfoundland" music, how they come to make such distinctions, and the role the music and these distinctions play in creating a sense of identification with the place.

Finally, Chapter 8 offers a broad overview of musicians' musical pathways. It addresses, in particular, two possible routes chosen by musicians: to rely on music as a primary source of income or to rely on alternate means of employment. I explore the tensions among ideas of "work," "leisure," "authenticity," "tradition," and "music," how these contribute to struggles on the part of musicians in pursuing their musical pathways, and how they are significant in understanding the role of these pathways in their lives. I conclude by discussing how, for professional, semi-professional, and amateur musicians alike, their musical pathways contribute to their sense of well-being and to the construction of their life-ways.

Chapter 2: A brief history of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in Newfoundland

This chapter offers a rough historical outline of “traditional” music in Newfoundland from the 1500s to 2009. This outline provides a basis for understanding the social, economic, and political context in which musicians currently play traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in St. John’s. It touches on broad categories of music such as “folk,” “country,” and “rock” where they are relevant to the historical context of “traditional” music.¹² I show how music in Newfoundland has been influenced by musical, social, economic, and political processes from beyond the Island since its earliest European settlers and how these processes have interacted with local developments to create the traditional music scene in St. John’s. I also describe the sessions and venues that formed this scene during my fieldwork in the spring/summer of 2009.

2.1 Early settlement to confederation

The musical history of Newfoundland from the 1500s to 1949 – the time of the Island’s earliest European settlers to the year Newfoundland became a province of Canada – is characterized by continuous interconnections mixed with local developments as a result of settlement and continued contact with places beyond the Island. European interest in the Island began in the 1500s when fleets from Western Europe were attracted

¹² Such categories are, of course, difficult to define, but I use them with the intention of discussing the various interactions and influences of different musical styles in Newfoundland, rather than to reify and distinguish these types musically. I will explore later in this thesis how musicians consider “traditional” music as a category as opposed to “folk” or “popular” or others.

to the area for its fishing grounds (Nemec 1991:71).¹³ Settlement soon followed, starting around 1575 as the English established a base along the east coast of the Island (Mannion n.d.). The French also settled many other areas north and south of the English settlements (Mannion n.d.). Around 1675 the English began recruiting Irish labourers to work on their fishing vessels and they increased this recruitment following the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 (Mannion n.d.; Nemec 1991:72). By 1720 these labourers had also formed permanent settlements in Newfoundland, sometimes out of choice and sometimes as a result of being stranded by their masters (Devlin Trew 2005:45; Mannion n.d.; ÓAllmhuráin 2008:34). This settlement continued in growing numbers from the 1700s to 1831 (Mannion n.d.; Nemec 1991:77). St. John's was a primary point of debarkation for many Irish, though they also came to settle in several other areas including the Southern Shore, Trepassy, St. Mary's, Placentia Bay, Harbour Grace, Bonavista, Notre Dame Bay, White Bay, and the south coast (Nemec 1991:75; Rowe 1980:222).

Presumably early settlers brought music, songs, and instruments with them and continued to play this music in local communities. In relation to the historical influence of Irish music in Newfoundland, Gearóid ÓAllmhuráin, for example, discusses the presence of Irish language songs on the Island that were likely brought by Irish visitors and settlers beginning in the 1700s and lasted in some communities until the 1970s (ÓAllmhuráin 2008:35-36). In addition, local musician Christina Smith observes in her article "Crooked as the Road to Branch" that Newfoundland music has high quantities of singles (related to polkas) and doubles (related to jigs), which is similar to music in

¹³ Newfoundland was, however, previously inhabited by native groups such as the Beothak and Vikings briefly settled the Northern Peninsula of the Island around 1000AD.

Ireland (Smith 2007:140-141). On the other hand, reels, which were only beginning to gain popularity in Ireland at the time, originating from Scotland, are relatively rare in the Newfoundland repertoire (Ó Súilleabháin 1981:84; Smith 2007:140-141). These examples indicate the influences of early Irish settlers and Irish music on music in Newfoundland.

Yet, music in Newfoundland was also influenced by music from places other than Ireland. As mentioned, the English and French both settled on the Island and the English, in particular, formed a significant proportion of Newfoundland's early population (Mannion n.d.). In addition, most emigrants from Ireland bypassed Newfoundland after 1831 (Mannion n.d.; Nemeec 1991:77). Settlers from other areas, however, continued to arrive on the Island after this time. Highland Scots, for example, settled on the south-west coast of Newfoundland from the 1840s to 1860s (Higgins 2009). The music brought by these various settlers would likely have been combined as a result of some amalgamated settlement and tune names and tune versions changed over time as a result of the oral process (Smith 2007:140).¹⁴ Current analyses of music in Newfoundland suggest that Newfoundland tunes have Irish, as well as English, Scottish, and French origins, with some areas of the Island featuring certain of these influences more prominently (Osborne 2007:189). A professional Newfoundland musician who toured briefly in Ireland recalled someone there telling him "it's like you put it in a bowl for two-hundred years and just

¹⁴ Through this process, tunes are learned by ear, which allows each individual to add their own personal style to a tune in addition to changes that occur through the transmission process (similar to the broken telephone game played by children).

kept stirring it and then poured it out." The music that was "poured" out, along with local compositions, is generally accepted today to be "traditional Newfoundland music."

Music came to be played in various contexts including community dances or "times" and the purpose of instrumental music was primarily as an accompaniment for dancing (Osborne 2007:188-189; Quigley 1985; Smith 2007:149-150).¹⁵ While fiddles were originally the instrument used to accompany dances, in the first part of the 20th century they were largely replaced by the accordion (Smith 2007:149). The accordion was imported to the Island in the 19th century through trade and transport networks with Europe, where the instrument was initially invented (Fair 2009; ÓhAllmhúirín 2008:38; Smith 2007:149).¹⁶ This shift to use of the accordion was associated with a shift in the performance context of dances, into larger halls where the louder instrument could be better heard (Smith 2007:149).¹⁷

As seen with the introduction and spread of the accordion in Newfoundland, although common tropes portray communities as being isolated and having little contact beyond the Island, numerous sources continued to influence music in Newfoundland throughout the 20th century. Gramophones or phonographs became available in Newfoundland beginning in 1897 and were widely distributed throughout the Island by the 1920s and 1930s (Osborne 2007:190; Taft 1975:xii). Radio also became widely

¹⁵ See Quigley (1985) for an extensive discussion of the different contexts in which dances were performed in rural Newfoundland.

¹⁶ An instrument that was referred to as an accordion and that was similar to a modern melodeon was first invented in Vienna in 1829 (Fair 2009:81-88). Doris Maud Fair (2009) provides a detailed discussion of the history of the accordion in Europe and more specifically in Ireland. She explores how the instrument spread throughout Europe and elsewhere aided by European capitalist/imperialist expansion (Fair 2009:94).

¹⁷ The four-stop button accordion, while gaining in popularity only in these later contexts, is now perceived as the quintessential Newfoundland instrument. This instrument is commonly referred to as a melodeon elsewhere.

available by the 1920s, providing people on the Island with access to a wide variety of musical styles from Canada, the US, England, and elsewhere (Osborne 2007; Posen and Taft 1973; Webb 2008a; Webb 2008b). Radio shows like the *Big Six* and the *Irene B. Mellon* show played a mix of Irish and Newfoundland content, as well as music from the US (Fitzpatrick 2001; Webb 2008b:73). Evelyn Osborne also discusses in her article "Fiddling with Technology" how Cape Breton music, the Don Messer Show, country-western music, and contemporary Irish music played on the radio all affected the musical scenes throughout Newfoundland (Osborne 2007:195-198). Music records, instruments, and sheet music could also be ordered from catalogues such as Simpson-Sears (Posen and Taft 1973). These sources provided Newfoundlanders with access to a wide variety of music from places beyond the Island. Musicians were then able to learn this new music "by ear" and add to their repertoires (Osborne 2007:190-191).

The American military presence in Newfoundland during World War II also brought new performers to the Island and new dance contexts on the Army bases, as well as a new radio station (Posen and Taft 1973). Jeff Webb, however, warns against overemphasizing the US American influence during the war, showing the many ways that music in Newfoundland was always influenced by music from the US, England, and elsewhere (Webb 2008a; Webb 2008b). St. John's in particular, as one of the main ports, had significant contact with and access to music from other places. In their report on the "Newfoundland Popular Music Project" Shelley Posen and Michael Taft write that "from 1900 into the thirties... [St. John's] was probably as sophisticated, musically speaking, as any mainland city of the same size" and featured many performances by bands from the

mainland (Posen and Taft 1973). Thus, far from being isolated and remote, people in Newfoundland had access to music from a wide variety of sources that they adopted into their repertoires and that influenced the music they performed. As Webb succinctly states, "'traditional' music had been transmitted from generation to generation, but broadside, sheet music, song books, phonograph, radio, and itinerant musicians continuously introduced new forms" (Webb 2008a:119).

However, while many musicians were adopting new music and sounds into their repertoires, others were concerned with recording, preserving, and promoting the traditions of Newfoundland. Lise Saugeres suggests that the folk-song revival in Newfoundland was a continuous process that began with the publication of *The St. John's Advertiser and Fishermen's Guide: A Racy Little Song Book* by John Burke in 1894, sold at the Prescott Street Auction Mart in St. John's (Gregory 2004:n10; Saugeres 1991:92). Several more folk-song collections were published in the early 20th century including the Gerald S. Doyle's *Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* in 1927; Elisabeth Greenleaf's *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland* in 1933; MacEdward Leach's *Folk Ballads and Songs of the Lower Labrador Coast* in 1950; Kenneth Peacock's *Songs of the Newfoundland Outport* in 1967; and Maud Karpeles' *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* in 1934 and another by the same name in 1971, but based on the same fieldwork conducted in 1929 – 1930.¹⁸

Some individuals also began promoting Newfoundland folklore in the early 20th century. Best known is probably Joey Smallwood who began broadcasting as the

¹⁸ Karpeles, however, was primarily interested in collecting old British folk-songs through her fieldwork in Newfoundland (Gregory 2004).

Barrelman beginning in 1937 where he aimed to make “Newfoundland better known to Newfoundlanders” (Webb 2008b:96). He discussed anecdotes, stories, facts, and tall tales of Newfoundland, acting both as a folklorist and a promoter of Newfoundland “culture” (Webb 2008b:95-98). Smallwood stopped broadcasting in 1943, reporting that “his work had been accomplished now that Newfoundlanders no longer lacked confidence in themselves” (Webb 2008b:104). However, the point is that a conscious interest in the “traditions” of Newfoundland began as early as 1894 even as many musicians were adopting music from beyond the Island.

Thus, in the long period from 1575 to 1949 settlers brought music to Newfoundland that they developed for local dance contexts. Throughout this time, musicians also incorporated aspects of music from other places. Beginning in the late 19th century, however, people began to self-consciously collect and promote “Newfoundland traditions,” particularly folk-songs. The decades following confederation saw a continuation of this interest, by some, in the “traditions” of the Island. Yet, many Newfoundlanders also enjoyed and listened to other genres in preference to “traditional Newfoundland music.”

2.2 Post-confederation

Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949. The post-confederation period is often talked about as a period of modernization that led to a decline in adherence to

"Newfoundland traditions" (Cox 1980:153; Saugeres 1991:70; Smith 2007:139).¹⁹ One musician commented to me:

After confederation there was a looking down on Newfoundland culture in general and Newfoundlanders didn't want to be at it, you know. "Oh, you wouldn't want to be caught dancing that way, that was old fashioned. Those old songs, you wouldn't want to be listening to those old songs."

As recounted by this musician, in the time after confederation many people in Newfoundland communities no longer wanted to dance "old" dances as they once had (Quigley 1985:104; Smith 2007:140). Dancing was also frowned upon by the Wesleyan Methodist church, which had strong influences in some areas; some Newfoundland outport communities were resettled to larger towns; and radio and other musical sources continued to influence music in Newfoundland – all leading to the decline of "traditional" dances as a context for this music (Cox 1980:57; Quigley 1985). With a changing context and content of dance in Newfoundland, many musicians stopped playing the "traditional" Newfoundland dance music, no longer having a reason to do so (Osborne 2003:10, 2007:192).

Although Newfoundlanders were less interested in local traditions, "traditional" music from beyond the Island, along with other genres, had considerable popularity in Newfoundland (Osborne 2007; Smith 2007:140). Irish American music, in particular, had

¹⁹ Associating confederation and modernization with a devaluing of Newfoundland traditions is a common feature of musicians' and others' narratives in Newfoundland. The situation is not nearly so simple, as "cultural" practices were changing, devalued, and recreated long before confederation, as seen with Joey Smallwood's promotion of Newfoundland culture as the *Bareman*. In addition, aspects of "modernization" such as urbanization and the growth of a music industry also played a part in the later revival of these practices. As Jeff Webb argues, the cultural revival of the 1970s benefited significantly from the resources of Canadian Broadcasting Network (CBN) unavailable through the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland (BCN) prior to confederation (Webb 2008b:209). Confederation nevertheless serves as a demarcation point in individual narratives of change in their lives, even if change was a continuous process.

a strong influence on music on the Island. 78s of "old-time" Irish and Irish American recordings by musicians such as John Kimmel and the McNulty family were available throughout Newfoundland (Byrne 1991a:63; Osborne 2007:197). The McNulty Family was particularly popular and their music was sold and played over the radio across the Island. They also visited St. John's in 1953 (Byrne 1991a:63). As an indication of their enduring influence, several of the tunes played by the McNulty Family are still played at sessions in St. John's today (Byrne 1991a:64; personal observation).

As a result, during the 1940s to 1960s, Irish and Irish American music, along with various other music obtained from media sources, became privileged by musicians over local dance music or local versions of tunes (Byrne 1991a:66-67; Osborne 2007:198-199). As part of this process, the status associated with playing at dances was also lost, but performances could instead be validated against recordings (Osborne 2007:198). Radio sometimes even came to replace "fiddlers," when dances were still held, and these dances came to resemble other dances held across Canada and the US to country or rock music (Quigley 1985:103-104).²⁰ In addition, musicians from Newfoundland were themselves recording Irish and Irish American music. Well known musician Harry Hibbs, for example, recorded his first album in 1968, made up mostly of Irish content (Saugeres 1991:64,98; Taft 1975).

Yet, despite the decline of traditional dances and the associated music in rural communities, interest in preserving and promoting such local traditions, particularly in St. John's, was growing. Omar Blondahl recorded close to fifty of the songs from the Gerald

²⁰ "Fiddler" is often used to denote a musician playing any musical instrument, though many musicians did play fiddle or accordion.

S. Doyle Songbook between 1955 and 1965. He also collected local and popular folk-songs, performing them on the local radio station VOCM and on television (Rosenberg 1991). Blondahl thereby popularized much of the repertoire from the Doyle songbooks and other music he performed (Taft 1975:xvii). CBC began the show *All Around the Circle* in 1964, featuring bands from St. John's but also touring around the Island and presenting musicians from smaller communities (Fitzpatrick 2001). There were also a small number of musicians who recorded and performed some of the Newfoundland dance repertoire. Accordionist Wilf Doyle, for example, released his record "Jigs and Reels of Newfoundland" in 1956 (Taft 1975:xviii). There was therefore an increasing interest in performing local "traditional" and "folk" music in more formal contexts, such as recordings and radio shows, by musicians, even as this music fell into disfavour and disuse by many people and communities throughout Newfoundland.

As part of the growing (primarily urban) interest in this music, the decade after confederation also brought new venues for the performance of "traditional" music with the beginnings of sessions held in pubs in St. John's. Well-known musician Frank Maher became the manager of the Harbour Inn in St. John's in 1959. He would often allow musicians to bring their instruments and hold unscheduled sessions, joining in himself sometimes (Hewson 1998). His biography on the web page for his band the *Mahers Bahers* recounts: "most of the clientele were longshoremen and tradesmen but musicians were always welcome. Frank had his box handy behind the bar and was forever bringing it out for a tune and countless sessions" (The Mahers Bahers: Frank Maher n.d.). The Harbour Inn, then, introduced the pub as a venue for the performance of this music.

Thus, even as the performance of "traditional Newfoundland music" performed in the context of dances was declining in rural communities, there was increasing interest in "traditional" or "folk" music from Ireland and Irish America, along with other genres, through radio, recordings, and other media. A small number of musicians were, however, beginning to record and promote this "Newfoundland music," even as it was in the process of changing. Pubs, such as the Harbour Inn, were also beginning to offer the possibility for musicians to convene and perform in public places. These factors played a large role in the revival of the decades that followed.

2.3 The folk revival

Despite growing interest in collecting and preserving folk-songs and "traditional music," and the creation of some new contexts for their performance, the dominance of styles other than "traditional Newfoundland music" continued into the 1970s and later. Alex, a musician who was a teenager in St. John's at the time recalled, "traditional music was not a big thing here, it was not at all popular. If you heard traditional music you'd change the channel on the radio, or whatever." Similarly, musician Billy Sutton recalled how there was little traditional music to be heard in Harbour Grace where he grew up in the 1970s and 1980s,

There was one guy when I was growing up... he was a box player and he loves traditional music, and he could play a few tunes... Other than him b'y I don't know of anybody in Harbour Grace that ever played tunes. I don't know 'em, I'm sure they must have existed, but I never heard them. You know. By the time I was growing up, like I said it was all radio and country music and everything else, and it was the new thing, so the traditional thing started to die.

Interest in music from "other" places or local non-"traditional" music therefore continued in the lives and practices of many musicians and listeners.

The late 1960s and 1970s, however, also saw musicians, particularly in St. John's, deliberately trying to increase the popularity of local folk and traditional music. They built on the efforts of those in the previous decades who had sought to consciously promote and preserve it. This period is widely referred to as the Folk Revival or Cultural Revival, though in many ways the goals of this movement were a continuation from previous decades. As discussed, musicians and others have been collecting and documenting music from Newfoundland since the late 19th century. In addition, despite a focus on "local" traditions, music and musicians from Ireland and other places, as well as local developments in other musical genres, continued to influence music in Newfoundland as it always had, as clearly seen in Alex and Billy's recollections.

Nevertheless, Paul, a musician who was a teenager in the 1970s, recalled how many people started becoming more aware of themselves and their heritage during this time. The establishment of the St. John's Folk Arts Council in 1966, later to become the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society (NLFAS), marks a formal realization and a promotion of this awareness.²¹ A newspaper article from the Daily News in 1968 remarks how "The St. John's Folk Arts Council has succeeded in making the public fully conscious of Folk Arts and the dangers of these Arts becoming lost unless the necessary steps are taken to preserve them and to foster the creative expression of these arts" (Daily News, December 31, 1968). The ideas expressed in this quote and seen in the desire to collect, preserve, and promote "traditional" or "folk" arts, relate to ideas of "tradition" as

²¹ The St. John's Folk Arts Council (SIFAC) later became the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Council (NLFAC). In 2008 it was renamed to its current title, the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society (NLFAS).

a bounded entity discussed in the previous chapter. Folk Arts were something being lost that needed to be saved before they disappeared. The Folk Revival movement therefore brought a greater consciousness to people in Newfoundland about ideas of "heritage" and "tradition" and their significance.

Although the revival focused on preserving local practices, it was also influenced by similar trends throughout Canada and the world. There was widespread international interest throughout the 1960s and 1970s in "folk" music and culture, leading to the creation of folk councils to support and promote them. The SJFAC was established in response to the federal government's creation of the Canadian Folk Arts Council in 1964 that aimed to create a body of provincial councils to promote local culture for the 1967 centennial year exhibitions (Bill 2009:93). The Newfoundland council was headed by fourteen upper-middle-class individuals from St. John's interested in "heritage preservation" and their official mandate emphasized creating a "Canadian culture" (Bill 2009:94). The establishment of this council and its official purpose demonstrate how influences from beyond the Island even affect movements to preserve local "traditions."

The influence of SJFAC/NLFAC and local discourses in support of "heritage" and "traditions" in the 1970s led to the growth of bands that performed Newfoundland "traditional" and "folk music." These bands were part of the ongoing contextual shift in the performance of this music to an urban setting and from peoples' homes to public performances: "from the kitchen to the stage" as one musician observed. The St. John's Folk Music Club (SJFMC), for example, began in 1976 with weekly gatherings for the performance of traditional music, among other types (Hart and Murphy 1986). This "folk

night" was later taken over by the NLFAC. Performances also became a regular feature of the St. John's Regatta and the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival officially began in 1977. While the festival at that time had nowhere near the formality of large staged microphoned performances seen today, it represents a formal urban performance context for traditional and folk music.

One group that featured prominently in the revival in Newfoundland was Figgy Duff. Figgy Duff formed in 1975 and actively sought to make "Newfoundland music" more mainstream throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Saugeres 1991). Band members found the recordings from Newfoundland of previous generations, such as those of Harry Hibbs and Wilf Doyle, to be boring (Saugeres 1991:104-105). Instead, following bands from England like Steeleye Span and Fairport Convention, they adapted traditional music to rock music to make it relevant to an urban and contemporary setting (Saugeres 1991:129). However, they also collected songs and music from traditional rural musicians to include in their repertoire, thereby focusing on "reviving" Newfoundland traditional and folk music (Saugeres 1991:137). The example of Figgy Duff demonstrates very clearly how musical influences from beyond the Island are continually – in this case, very deliberately – incorporated into repertoires in Newfoundland, even with bands that aim to preserve and promote "Newfoundland music."

Similar popularizations and revivals were also occurring in Newfoundland instrumental music at the time, to which Figgy Duff also contributed. Musicians, such as fiddlers Émile Benoit and Rufus Guinard and accordionist Minnie White, were "discovered" from outport communities and they and their music were promoted

throughout the Island. All learned their music in an early outport dance context and continued to play the music after dances were no longer held; Émile Benoit, in particular, is also recognized for composing his own tunes (Fitzpatrick 2001; Maynard 2001b; Quigley 1995). As these musicians performed in folk festivals and concerts, the performance context of Newfoundland dance music increasingly shifted to playing for a listening audience rather than as an accompaniment for community dances. Through these processes, an awareness of and interest in local "traditional" and "folk" music was growing in Newfoundland.

Concurrent with these revivals in "traditional Newfoundland music," there was also growing interest in "traditional Irish music" in Newfoundland, following its revival in the United States in the late 1960s (Saugeres 1991:101). Several musicians from Ireland moved to Newfoundland at that time and started bands that became very popular throughout the Island. As Gary told me,

A whole bunch of Irishmen, probably about six or eight of them who had been in Toronto and who had either met people from Newfoundland or who had, they'd visited here, decided to come here and go to university or decided to move here and play music... Ralph O'Brien, Chris Hennessey, Fergus O'Byrne... Dermot O'Reilly, Dennis Ryan, a whole bunch of these guys. They were in groups like the Sons of Erin, Sullivan's Gypsies, Ryan's Fancy, groups like that. At the same time that was happening there was a lot of Newfoundlanders here influenced by groups like the Clancy Brothers.

Pat Byrne suggests this was therefore a second revival of Irish music in Newfoundland, with the influences of the McNulty family in the 1950s being the first (Osborne 2010:52).

The Sons of Erin played their first show in 1969 and Ryan's Fancy in 1971. Ryan's Fancy also began their own television series, airing on CBC not long afterwards, that some musicians remembered watching. One musician from St. John's recalled:

Ryan's Fancy, they were a real big hit because they were on TV as well as in places like the Strand Lounge at the Avalon Mall. I would have been a little bit under-age but you could get in and hear them play a show, it was great fun. It was all new.

These bands further popularized Irish (and) Newfoundland music, focusing primarily on folk-songs, doing tours throughout the Island and performing regularly in St. John's. Another musician recalls how "Newfoundlanders embraced this and [we were thinking] 'oh great our own musical heritage' and started singing Ryan's Fancy songs." The Irish (and) Newfoundland music played by Ryan's Fancy and other groups then came to be viewed by many people in Newfoundland as Newfoundland music.

Music from Ireland also continued to influence instrumental music in Newfoundland. Along with the many tunes, played by Émile Beroit, Rufus Guinchard, and other musicians that had Irish origins or that were a version of an Irish tune, musicians were forming their repertoire around the tunes they were hearing from Ireland. Kevin Broderick, from Bay de Verde, was well-known locally and in St. John's for his repertoire of Irish tunes, and often played with musicians visiting Newfoundland from Ireland (Osborne 2007:198). Bands such as Tickle Harbour also began recording tunes they learned from recordings of Irish groups such as Planxty, De Dannan, the Bothy Band, and the Chieftains. Tickle Harbour formed as a band out of sessions at various festivals and included musicians from Ireland and Newfoundland, recording their first album in 1979.

The Irish influence, however, extended beyond simply the inclusion of Irish music and musicians. A professional musician named Jeremy explained to me how techniques of arrangement for instrumental tunes that originated in Ireland were also

adopted in Newfoundland by bands such as Tickle Harbour that were playing and recording Irish (and) Newfoundland music.

Something really extraordinary happened [in Ireland] – a classical composer took a serious interest in traditional Irish music. Part of this is wrapped up in the political climate and patriotism and Ireland wanted to have a music that was different from the folk music that was going around in all these other countries. So anyway, Seán Ó Riada decided that ...he decided that it would be even more cool if you took this traditional music and started arranging it using classical ideas of arrangement...

He just said, well why not instead of having everybody play at the same time we kind of feature people, you know, like soloists as you would hear in a symphony. And, rather than having a blast of reels that starts loud and fast and ends loud and fast, we'll start with a slow air, we'll go into a reel and somehow we'll manage to go back into a slow air and into jigs or something... he actually formed *Ceoltóirí Chualann*.... he put these ideas into practice and he hired a bunch of musicians, including many of the founding members of the Chieftains.

Of course, Paddy Moloney from the Chieftains said, well I can do this. And so you got, it caught on! And you got groups like the Chieftains and Planxty and De Dannan. A lot of those groups in the 70s figured, wow this really is better. This really is more cool. It really does make the music more expressive. There is a danger for fiddle tunes to sound all the same and it's with arrangement and accompaniment that one tune can be distinguished from another...

Of course, Newfoundland has always had such fondness for Irish music. And that's still true. It's ongoing. In other words, a lot of Newfoundland music, or what's commonly played in Newfoundland is Irish. So, you know that some of those ideas about arrangement are certainly being used in Newfoundland music.

Jeremy's history discusses how Irish music came to influence music in Newfoundland in subtle ways, but also explores some influences on Irish music in Ireland as well. Tickle Harbour's band biography illustrates these influences as it explains their music is "a marriage of Irish and Newfoundland traditions. The band is acoustic, but doesn't shy away from fresh approaches to tunes, some familiar, some dug out of oblivion" (Tickle Harbour n.d.). Thus, Irish (and) Newfoundland instrumental music began to grow in popularity in Newfoundland as a result of bands like Tickle Harbour that incorporated ideas of arrangement used in Irish music, along with Irish music itself and Irish

musicians, but also featuring Newfoundland music and playing it in a Newfoundland context (Byrne 1991b).

In sum, in a continuation of processes from the previous decades, traditional music was moving from a community context in the form of local dances to an urban context played by professional bands and situated in lounges, pubs, and festivals in St. John's. Some groups such as Figgy Duff were actively trying to promote and preserve Newfoundland music, collecting tunes, songs, and musicians from outport communities. Other groups such as Ryan's Fancy and Tickle Harbour were embracing music from elsewhere, particularly Irish music, and performing on radio, television, and recordings. These beginnings of an urban traditional scene provided the context for the growth of sessions in St. John's in the following decades and the establishment of a local recording industry to preserve and promote music in Newfoundland.

2.4 Pub sessions and professionalization

The revival from the 1970s and 1980s spurred the growth of a variety of music scenes in St. John's. Following the popularity of groups like Ryan's Fancy, many other bands playing primarily vocal Irish (and) Newfoundland folk music began in the 1990s, including the Irish Descendants in 1990; the Masterless Men in 1991, playing Celtic bluegrass; Great Big Sea in 1993, playing folk-trad-rock; Shanneygannock in 1996, playing folk-trad-rock; and the Navigators in 2000, playing Celtic-rock, among many others. These bands toured across the Island, the rest of Canada, and internationally, often playing at pubs in St. John's at venues such as Erin's Pub and O'Reilly's Irish Newfoundland Pub.

While musicians had recorded albums in the previous decades, the number of recordings made by artists in Newfoundland continued to grow. Many of the bands mentioned above have recorded numerous CDs. The music thereby became increasingly professionalized and commercialized as it became a (primarily urban) industry. Newfoundland based recording labels were founded beginning in the late 1970s. Pigeon Inlet Productions by musician Kelly Russell was founded in 1979, Singsong Inc. was started by musician Jim Payne in 1989, and Amber Music formed by Pamela Morgan, Anita Best, both members of Figgy Duff, and Andre Wall in 1991. Home recording studios also became popular in the 1990s in Newfoundland.

In addition to the bands that performed and recorded mostly songs, new groups also formed to play and record instrumental Irish (and) Newfoundland music. Snotty Var, for example, was formed by a group of musicians who played together for fun at Forestry Canada but then received an East Coast Music Award (ECMA) for their 1997 record.²² Musicians from Ireland and Newfoundland also collaborated on a 2003 CD that focused on presenting the connections between Irish and Newfoundland music, entitled *Island to Island: Traditional Music from Ireland and Newfoundland*.²³ Young musicians have also been learning, playing, and recording traditional instrumental music. The Dardanelles who released a self-titled CD in 2009 represent one such group. Finally, individual musicians have also continued recording CDs of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland

²² The East Coast Music Awards began in 1989 to promote professional music from the "East Coast" of Canada.

²³ See Osborne (2010) for a detailed exploration of the historical, personal, and musical processes involved in the creation of this CD.

music including Daniel Payne, Dave Penny, Alan Ricketts, Kelly Russell, Christina Smith, Graham Wells, among others.²⁴

The professionalization and urbanization of the music, along with a focus on preservation and promotion, also brought a shift in traditional music to written media. Irish traditional instrumental music has been written down for over a century. Francis O'Neill's well-known Irish tune books, for example, were first published in 1903. With the exceptions of the few tunes published in folk-song collections, only in the past three decades have books that focused primarily on Newfoundland tunes (as opposed to folk-songs or tunes originating elsewhere) been written and published in Newfoundland. Kelly Russell and Christina Smith, among a few others, have produced such collections.

While many musicians met to play at house parties hosted by bands like Tickle Harbour, the opening of Erin's Pub in 1986 indicates how pubs became an increasingly important context for this music. This pub, which will be described in greater detail later, is owned and run by an Irish musician and, as local musician Gary recalled, "was the hotbed for about 10 years of Irish pub life." It provided a venue for new musicians to perform and "cut their teeth," as well as for social interaction and networking. Along with the growth of pubs, sessions became an important context for the performance of instrumental music. While private and informal sessions had existed previously, formally scheduled sessions began in St. John's in the 1980s and 1990s.

²⁴ Well-known Irish piper Paddy Keenan also recorded his CD *No Keen Aghair* in St. John's in 1997, produced with the aid of local musician and member of Tickle Harbour, Don Walsh. The CD included tunes and musicians from Newfoundland (PaddyKeenan.com 2002).

Several scholars suggest that “the session” as a context for the performance of traditional music started through the Irish diaspora in England and the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. These sessions were then transported back to Ireland and played a part in the revival of traditional music there (Kearney 2007:2-3; O’Shea 2008b:43-47). Hazel Fairbairn, however, argues that sessions within and outside Ireland were concurrent developments, and the growth sessions in Ireland were spurred by the efforts of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* (Fairbairn 1994:581-584).²³ This debate demonstrates the various influences on the performance of traditional Irish music in Ireland. Regardless of where they started however, sessions became a popular venue for the production of that music across Ireland.

The first formal sessions in Newfoundland were started by two well-known Irish musicians, Seamus Creagh, a fiddler, and Rob Murphy, a flute player, who moved to St. John’s in 1988 and 1982, respectively. A group of Newfoundland musicians I spoke with recalled:

Sam: So where did the idea of a session here come from?

Eric: All that Irish crowd.

Chris: It was an Irish thing developing, it was an Irish influence, yeah.

Eric: Yeah, that’s where the idea came from. It was Rob, and all that crowd.

Chris: Seamus and all them. It was a great idea.

Eric: It was a good idea, turns out.

Steve: Oh yeah, I’m loving it.

²³ *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* is an organization formed in Ireland in 1951 with the goal of preserving and promoting traditional Irish music. The organization is now found internationally, offering instruction, workshops, printed sources, and concerts relating to traditional Irish music. They also hold annual festivals known as the *Fleadh Cheoil*, meaning “feast of music,” which include competitions for children up to 18 years old and seniors, of which many young musicians in Ireland take part. These competitions culminate in the *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*, also known as the all-Ireland championships. The organization, however, is often critiqued for the level of standardization in tunes and performances that it has enforced, excluding personal and individual innovation, an issue which I discuss in chapter 4.

These sessions then took hold in St. John's in the late 1990s and 2000s as other local musicians joined in and, later, began their own sessions. Evelyn Osborne (2010) argues that the influence of these Irish musicians on the music performed in St. John's and in the development of a local session scene thereby represents a third revival in Irish music in Newfoundland.

The various sessions moved through a wide variety of venues throughout the 1990s and 2000s, some associated with NLFAS and their Folk Night and others run independently. These venues included Humphrey's Pub (no longer in existence), Bridgett's Pub (renamed to Brendan's, now called the Peter Easton's Pub), the Captain's Quarters, the Blarney Stone, and the Ship Inn (renamed to the Ship Pub). The Ship Inn/Pub has been a popular venue over the years, hosting Folk Night and Irish sessions, as well as a session that focused specifically on Newfoundland music in the 1990s. There was even a session held at Bitters, the graduate student pub at Memorial University of Newfoundland, on Mondays for several years in the 2000s. Many musicians also recall the session at O'Reilly's Irish Newfoundland Pub on George Street, held on Saturday nights from the late 1990s up until 2008.

However, some musicians who regularly attended the O'Reilly's session realized the potential of hosting their own sessions, partly as a source of income, and began several other scheduled sessions in St. John's. These have led to the prominent session scene present in St. John's today. Brian, a musician who plays at many sessions in St. John's, recalled:

I remember when a group of kind of break-off musicians decided to start another [session] at the same time at another bar... And here we are, you know, probably

five or six years later with six sessions on the go. And then you can literally run from one to another now... I think another reason the session scene kind of exploded though in the past five or six years, I would argue, is a lot of people have been around, a lot of people have been to Ireland, you know... You see how things work in other places, you see that Tommy Peoples hosts a session in Ennis every Wednesday night, he's been doing it for 30 years. So I think people saw that and figured, oh we could do that in St. John's too, we could have that model in St. John's too, so that coupled with the whole "I'm a musician and I've got to pay my phone bill and I need a hundred bucks" and you know, "how can I do that. Oh I know, I'll approach the bar and treat this as a gig," cause that happened too, and it's still happening. I think that coupled with the whole seeing how it works in other places, led to the explosion.

Brian's narrative outlines how sessions became a commercial venture for musicians and pubs, along with being a venue for musicians to play music. He also discusses how musicians' travels to Ireland influenced the session scene here leading to the current "explosion" in sessions in St. John's that will be explored in the next section.

In sum, in the past few decades, traditional music in Newfoundland has become a commercial and professional endeavour. This occurred through the influence and growing popularity of that music, as bands and individuals could now earn an income performing, as well as through the exchange of ideas about the performance of music in Ireland and elsewhere. Sessions also became a popular space for playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, also through the influence of musicians from Ireland. I now discuss the specific sessions and performance contexts that formed part of the music scene(s) in St. John's during the spring and summer of 2009.

2.5 The St. John's traditional music scene in 2009

During my fieldwork period, musicians could attend as many as seven public scheduled sessions *per week*, in addition to private or less regular gatherings that would occur and other performances such as Folk Night. On Mondays, beginning in early

August, there was a session at Erin's Pub. On Tuesdays, there were *three* sessions: Auntie Crae's in the afternoon and the Georgetown and Nautical Nellie's in the evening. On Wednesdays there was Fiddle Group, for those musicians who were members, as well as Folk Night at the Ship Pub later in the evening. On Fridays there was a session at Erin's pub. On Saturdays there were two sessions: one at Nautical Nellie's in the afternoon and then one at Shamrock city an hour afterwards, although this latter session ended in early June. Finally, on Sundays there was an afternoon session at Bridie Molloy's.

I attended many of these sessions nearly every week from May to August 2009, with the exception of Tuesday evenings at Nautical Nellie's. I provide a brief outline here of these key sessions and the pubs where they took place. I also touch on other venues and contexts for the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in St. John's.

2.5.1 The downtown sessions

I am categorizing the sessions within this section as the "downtown sessions." These include sessions at Erin's Pub, Nautical Nellie's, Shamrock City, and Bridie Molloy's. They had a number of shared features including a high level of professionalism and musicality, several musicians who attended or hosted all of these sessions regularly, and a common location in the downtown core of St. John's on either Water Street or George Street. While I draw on examples from specific sessions throughout this thesis, I also refer to the downtown sessions in a general sense, where appropriate.

The musicians at these sessions were mostly in their late twenties to early forties, with the occasional younger or older musician. They were mostly professional or semi-professional musicians who also played in other bands, with the occasional beginner in attendance as well. Visiting musicians from out of town, province, or country also sometimes came to the sessions, particularly the Friday night session at Erin's Pub. A mix of musicians from Newfoundland and elsewhere therefore regularly attended these sessions. The musicians were primarily male. Over a total of 9 sessions that I attended at Bridie Molloy's, the average proportion of women was 20 percent, and over 15 sessions at Erin's Pub the average proportion of women was 26 percent. I include myself in these statistics as one of the women when I played. At some sessions, no women played and I only once saw more women than men, when there were two visiting female musicians in town.

2.5.1.1 Erin's Pub

One session that I regularly attended during my fieldwork was the Friday night session at Erin's Pub, located on Water Street. This session began officially in 2000, though one person commented to me that they remembered spontaneous unscheduled sessions at Erin's before this time, often on Friday nights. The session was hosted by Graham Wells, a well-known local accordion player who also played with the Irish Descendants and previously performed in many other bands. The session usually started around 8:30 p.m., unless few musicians showed up for that week. It was the most dynamic of the downtown sessions, likely due to its long-running duration, having built a reputation, and having a prominent time-slot on a Friday night. I saw it grow to as large

as fifteen to twenty musicians playing in the session on a given night. It officially ended around 11:00 p.m. when the band was supposed to begin its performance, but on a good night and with an accommodating performer the session could run much later. There were regular audience members who often came to watch the session and the bar staff was usually the same every Friday evening.

Erin's was known as a musicians' pub as many of the local musicians have enjoyed hanging out and have played at open mic nights or in different band performances over the years. The pub opened in 1986 and was owned by Ralph O'Brien, himself a musician from Ireland who has made Newfoundland his home. He was also a member of the band the Sons of Erin. The pub interior was relatively small, with a stage in the back right corner from the entrance. Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) machines and the bar ran along the left wall. Musicians would sit either at the table closest to the stage, or the two rectangular tables (the only rectangular ones in the pub) near the windows looking out onto Water Street. The walls were painted green and sported various "Irish" decorations: posters for Guinness beer, a poster for the *Michael Collins* movie depicting the Irish tricolour flag blowing in the wind behind Collins, and shamrocks painted on the frosted windows to the bathrooms. (The Friday night session at Erin's has also continued in much the same form throughout the period of writing.)

From early August until early October, 2009, there was also a Monday evening session from 7:30 – 10:30 p.m. at Erin's. This session was hosted by Billy Sutton, a well-known multi-instrumentalist who also played in Celtic-Rock band the Fables. The pub was often close to empty during this session. One evening when I attended there was no

one but musicians and the bartender for much of the night. For the few months it was held, the number of musicians that would join and play ranged from two to eight. The atmosphere on Monday nights seemed to me more casual, with less drinking by musicians and without the Friday night crowd in the pub.

2.5.1.2 Nautical Nellie's

There were two sessions held at Nautical Nellie's throughout my fieldwork, one on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 – 9:30 and the other on Saturday afternoons from 3:30 – 5:30. The Saturday session began in the summer of 2008 and the Tuesday session in the spring of 2009. (The latter changed to Saturday evenings from 8:00 – 10:00 in September 2009 and both were ultimately cancelled when the pub changed ownership in the late spring of 2010). These sessions were both co-hosted by Graham Wells and Billy Sutton. I never attended on Tuesday as it coincided with the Georgetown pub session that will be described shortly. The Saturday session was usually much smaller than the one at Erin's Pub, often featuring only two to four musicians. It was advertised as "open to intermediate to advanced players" on theSession.org, a well-known web-resource for music, sessions, and open discussion about everything having to do with session music and sessions (was 2008b). The musicianship at this session was usually of very high-calibre.

The pub was located on Water Street, not far from Erin's, on the opposite side of the street. It labelled itself as a "true English-style pub," serving food as well as drinks (Nautical Nellie's n.d.). It was decorated with a nautical theme throughout, with dark heavily varnished tables. The edge of the bar was carved to appear knotted and there was

a chain stretched along its length. The bar ran along the left wall from the entrance, with a small space between the bar and the windows looking out on Water Street, enough room for a small table with chairs all around. This space was where the musicians would often sit. It was small, maybe six feet by six feet, though I saw as many as seven musicians squeeze into the area.

2.5.1.3 Shamrock City

Shamrock City was a relatively new pub in the spring of 2009. It was also located on Water Street, but further west from the other two pubs and near one of the entrances to the infamous George Street. I had heard much about this pub before I ever went from several people in town who thought it was very flashy and full of kitsch, with bright green and yellow Celtic knots painted on the windows of the pub and the name itself "Shamrock City." When I went inside, however, I was surprised to see that it was quite subdued with few decorations on the dark wood walls. There was a raised seating area directly on the right from the entrance door, marked off by a short railing, and the bar took up a large space directly to the left. The musicians sat at the tables by the window, looking out onto Water Street and, even though the windows were covered by the green and yellow knots, the area was well lit. The pub served food as well as drinks.

The Shamrock City session was started early fall 2008 but ended in early June 2009. It was also co-hosted by Billy Sutton and Graham Wells and took place 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. on Saturday evenings. This session was similarly advertised as an advanced session on theSession.org: "all are welcome, however, this is not a beginners session. It is more of an advanced session, and seating is generally limited to more advanced players, as it is

not a big venue" (was 2008a). I only attended this session once before it was cancelled by the pub which wanted ballad singers as performers in order to compete with the entertainment at other nearby pubs on a Saturday evening. That night's session was attended by five intermediate to highly advanced musicians. The space available to musicians was larger than that at Nautical Nellie's, where musicians were boxed in on all sides. I remember hearing comments from the musicians that night that the pints were very good, referring particularly to the Guinness.

2.5.1.4 Bridie Molloy's

The session at Bridie Molloy's, like that at Erin's Pub, began in 2000. (It was, however, cancelled in December 2010.) The pub itself was located on George Street and featured a large stage ahead and on the left from the entrance, with the bar right in the centre of the pub. There was seating available throughout the pub, some with limited visual access to the stage. The area between the stage and the bar was often left empty as an area for dancing during band performances. However, this was also where the musicians would set up their table to play. The session ran from 4:30 – 7:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoons. It was originally co-hosted by Graham Wells and Colin Carrigan but Billy Sutton later took Colin's place. The pub's prominent location on George Street often drew tourists for the session as did its extensive menu of Irish-themed pub-grub and merchandise for sale. The occasional regular audience member would come and watch the session, but not so many as would come to Erin's each week.

The session was often small, usually with three to six musicians playing. I always thought it was more casual than the other sessions, being held on a Sunday afternoon.

Sometimes there would be parents with their young children in the audience, having a late lunch or early dinner while listening to the music. In addition, although the musicians would drink their choice of beer for the day, they also would also often drink coffee and would often have plates of wings and nachos during or after the session. The audience was not as loud as at Erin's on a Friday night but often attentive to the music and musicians. However, the location on George Street also sometimes meant noise from other venues along the street interfered, particularly during the summer when many festivals were happening.

In sum, these downtown sessions were quite diverse. The numbers of musicians in attendance, as well as the pub and performance atmospheres varied significantly among sessions. Yet, they also featured regular hosts, performers, and performances with a focus on professional quality music, as well as similar locations in downtown St. John's. These commonalities are particularly evident when compared to the other sessions in town, at the Georgetown pub, Auntie Crae's, and Fiddle Group.

2.5.2 The Georgetown Pub

The sessions above contrast with the session at the Georgetown pub in many ways. The Georgetown pub session was the only scheduled public session in St. John's that I attended during my fieldwork that was not located in the downtown area, but instead is in the Georgetown neighbourhood on Hayward Avenue. While it was often thought of as a neighbourhood pub, one musician explained,

That pub, it has tamed a lot but it used to be the stories about it all involved drug deals and violence and very loud drunken people. And basically nobody who lived in the neighbourhood would actually go to that pub. I'm not sure where everyone comes from who goes there, but it wasn't in the neighbourhood.

Inside, there were two pool tables to the left from the door and VLTs directly to the right. The bar was located in the right corner from the entrance. The bartender was the same every week and even had a favourite tune, called "Lark in the Morning." The musicians would sit at two rectangular tables a few feet away from the door. The pub cat, Tuffy, a white and orange calico, would often come in and out of the pub during the session. There were also frequently a couple of patrons at the VLT machines. During the summer, however, there seemed to be a growing number of people who came for the purpose of seeing and listening to the session. The audience also often sought to interact with musicians, sometimes asking if they could sing a song themselves, which was welcomed, to an extent, by the session musicians.

The session itself had no paid host. A couple of amateur musicians, one of whom was from the neighbourhood, approached the bar owners asking if they could use the pub as a venue. They wanted somewhere they could get together and play, where everyone was welcome and no one was in charge. This session was held on Tuesday evenings starting at about 8:30 p.m. and usually ending around 11:00 p.m., but there was no set time. The session, accurately described in the 33rd annual Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival program as "very relaxed for all skill levels," was open to all players, beginner to advanced (Folk Arts Society 2009:37). While the occasional professional player would come to this session, it was formed mostly of amateurs of varying skills. It was also highly variable, with attendance ranging anywhere from two to nearly twenty players on different weeks. Given the right configuration of people, it also sometimes featured blues instead of traditional tunes, particularly later in the evening.

Musicians at the Georgetown pub ranged in age from their twenties to their sixties with most between thirty and fifty. Many of the musicians who played at Georgetown were from "away," meaning they were not born in Newfoundland. Several visiting musicians from out of province also came to the Georgetown session throughout the summer. In contrast to the downtown sessions, the gender ratio of musicians at the Georgetown pub averaged 44 percent women in attendance over the ten sessions at which I recorded attendance. (The Georgetown session is also ongoing throughout the time of writing.)

2.5.3 Auntie Crae's

There was a third session held on Tuesdays, along with the Georgetown session and the Tuesday Nautical Nellie's session. This session took place at Auntie Crae's in the early afternoon, usually around 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. It had been running since 1999 when Auntie Crae's moved to their location on Water Street, not far from the entrance to George Street and a few doors from O'Brien's Music Store. (The session ended in December 2010 when Auntie Crae's closed down.) Auntie Crae's was a "specialty foods store," that also served fresh coffee and tea, sandwiches, soups, and a wide variety of baked goods. Adjacent to the store was the "Fishhook Neyle's Common Room," a room with small and large tables for seating and windows that looked out onto Water Street where people could sit "no purchase necessary." There was a bulletin board directly to the left of the entrance with posters of concerts and other events happening in the city, and more flyers and local papers available on the ledge of a display area that also had a small decorated table directly to the right of the entrance. Across from the entrance on the

other side of the room was a display case featuring various items including fish hooks and a bodhrán. The small round table below and to the right of the display case often had a little red "musicians' seating" sign on it on Tuesday afternoons and this was where the musicians would sit.

The regular musicians at the Auntie Crae's session were known as the "Auntie Crae's House Band," featuring Frank Maher and Stan Pickett on accordions, Andrew Lang on mandolo, and Rick West on bodhrán. Often one or two other musicians would join for this session, but those four formed the core group. The comments on theSession.org for the session stated: "It doesn't matter if you know 2 tunes or 200. Come to play, come to learn, or just come to listen. The atmosphere is friendly and the food is delicious!" (Aindriu 2006). Occasionally the musicians would sing a song, or one of the regular audience members would ask for someone else in the audience to sing.

The age demographic of the Auntie Crae's audience was older than that at the other sessions. Many regulars came every Tuesday afternoon to have some lunch and watch the music, but parents also came with their young children for the same purpose, and there were many tourists throughout the summer. The small common room was often so full on Tuesday afternoons that if you did not arrive by noon you were likely to have to stand because all the seats were taken. Consistent with the quote above, the atmosphere was relaxed and friendly and musicians usually had lunch before playing. I came to know several of the regulars in the audience as well as the musicians during my fieldwork. One woman explained to me how she thought it was wonderful that at Auntie Crae's you could come in knowing no one and leave knowing everyone. Due to the limited seating

and the arrangement of tables, people often ended up sitting with people they did not know.

Similar to the composition of the audience, the age demographic of the musicians was also older. The ages of the Auntie Crae's band members ranged from their fifties to eighties. Still, often during the summer several young musicians in their twenties would attend as well. Given the time of day during the week, the audience and musicians were restricted to those without daytime jobs unless they came on their lunch break. The gender ratio at Auntie Crae's was overwhelmingly male with an average ratio of 15 percent women at the session recorded over eleven sessions.

2.5.4 Fiddle Group

In addition to the public sessions, I also sought to explore more informal music scenes. I therefore attended what is known as "Fiddle Group" during the period of my fieldwork and was also a member of this group for approximately seven months before my fieldwork officially began. Fiddle Group began with a group of five people who decided to take a course in Newfoundland fiddling offered at Memorial University through the School of Music in 2001. Following the course these people continued to meet once a week to practice and socialize with one another, picking up others such as myself along the way. The group would meet at someone's home, with the same person responsible for hosting most weeks, although the location would change if they were unable to do so. During my fieldwork, the group included 25 people who received the updates about where it was taking place for the week. The numbers who attended in any given week, however, generally varied from about five to fifteen. While the group could

be considered exclusive in that only certain people knew where it took place each week and were invited to attend (one visiting musician claimed that it was a "club"), it was open in the sense that anyone with an instrument who wanted to learn and play was welcome, no prior skill required.

The group consisted of amateur musicians, with only one musician who played traditional music professionally on a regular basis and a small number of others who had played other styles of music professionally. Most of the musicians were not born in Newfoundland and the age range of those who attended was from their twenties to eighties, with most being between thirty and fifty. Several members of Fiddle Group also attended the Georgetown session. Similar to the Georgetown session, the gender ratio was reasonably balanced with 48 percent of those on the e-mail list and 68 percent of those in attendance over eleven weeks being women during the spring and summer of 2009. (Fiddle Group has also continued throughout the time of writing, as has my own participation in the group.)

2.5.5 Other venues and events

There were also venues other than sessions where musicians played traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music during my fieldwork and that were part of the traditional music scene(s) in St. John's. These included folk festivals, concerts, Folk Night, and other performances in pubs. There were several folk festivals held throughout the province during the summer that focused on promoting and preserving traditional and folk music. I attended two of these. The first was the Shamrock Festival held on July 25th and 26th in Ferryland. The music at this festival included a wide variety of styles such as

pop, folk, country, Celtic-rock, Celtic-bluegrass, and traditional and was widely attended by local communities as well as some tourists. The second festival I attended was the 33rd annual Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival held in Bannerman Park in St. John's, an extensive festival that featured local and international performers as well as a diverse range of musical styles loosely related to "folk" music. Examples of other festivals that I did not attend include the Trails, Tales and Tunes festival in Norris Point (held May 14 – 23 in 2009) and the Beaches Accordion festival held in Eastport (July 10 – 19 in 2009).

Folk Night was a regular event for the performance of "folk" music, which often included traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music that I frequently attended during my fieldwork. As mentioned above, this weekly event was started in the 1970s by the SJFMC and was later taken over by NLFAS. It has been taking place on Wednesday nights at the Ship Pub. Some musicians who attended the sessions described above also attended folk night either as an audience member or a performer. Other performances that I attended over the summer include a concert by Conal Ó Gráda, a visiting flute player from Ireland, and Lynda Anderson and Bernadette nic Gabhann, two fiddlers from the Shetland Islands and Ireland, respectively. The concert took place at the Gower Street United church. It was organized by and also featured as backup performers several local musicians. They performed a variety of traditional instrumental music from Ireland and the Shetland Islands. While such formal concerts were relatively infrequent, the Irish themed pubs in St. John's, including Erin's Pub, Bridie Molloy's, O'Reilly's Irish and Newfoundland

Pub, and Shamrock City also had regular performers on most nights of the week, often performing some form of Celtic/folk music. I attended these only on occasion.

As mentioned, the music scenes in St. John's also included more private and informal settings, Fiddle Group being one example. Musicians would sometimes meet one another at their homes to play music and socialize in a less scheduled manner. I had less access to such settings, though I did meet other musicians at their homes for the purpose of playing some tunes on a couple of occasions. I will draw on all these venues and events throughout this thesis to explore and understand the traditional music scene in St. John's and musicians lives in and through these scenes. However, as I discuss in the next chapter, which outlines my methodological approaches during fieldwork that form the basis of this thesis, my focus is primarily on the many sessions in St. John's. I discuss my participation in these different venues, my interactions with musicians, and offer some reflections on how these influence my analyses.

Chapter 3: Methodology – Playing the field

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches I used throughout my fieldwork. I “entered” the field, however, long before my research was conceptualized and officially began. This chapter therefore begins with a discussion of these early introductions to playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music and interacting with musicians. I then outline my research goals at the beginning of my fieldwork and how they changed as it progressed. Having established how I came to my research topic, I discuss my approaches during fieldwork in undertaking participant observation and conducting interviews. This discussion includes my own roles in relation to other musicians, how they changed throughout my fieldwork, and how they influenced my observations and experiences of the music and musicians’ interactions.

My fieldwork, however, was not circumscribed to a neatly defined “place,” and so I also provide a theoretical discussion of my “field” and my place within it. I explore the performative nature of my fieldwork, situating myself as a participant in the music and my own research. I also discuss how my situatedness within my fieldwork (and the situation of my fieldwork within my life) manifests in the writing of this thesis.

3.1 Early introductions

I came to Memorial University of Newfoundland with an interest in studying oral traditions in Ireland. Not long after moving to St. John’s in September 2008 to begin my Master’s in anthropology, however, I changed my research location to Newfoundland. I was also invited to join Fiddle Group, described briefly in the previous chapter, only a month after arriving in the province. A second year master’s student in my program, who

was already a member of the group, learned of my research interests and that I play flute; he brought me to the group for the first time on October 8, 2008. After this first meeting I continued to attend almost every week.

I was not an active participant musically in my first several months since I was a beginner to playing traditional music, despite many years of playing classical and concert band music on the flute. Most members of Fiddle Group, however, started as beginners themselves and were continuing to learn the music and their instruments, so my role within the group was appropriate. I also became an active participant socially, engaging with other members in discussions and social events. For example, I participated in the group's performance at the local Folk Night held by the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society in early December 2009, a Christmas party held by one of the members, and a session at one of the local pubs for our accordion player's birthday. Playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music and socializing with musicians then became an important part of my life through my participation in Fiddle Group. Yet, my participation also meant that I met many musicians and was introduced to "traditional music" in Newfoundland long before my formal fieldwork began.

I also gained some ethnographic insight into my research topic before my thesis fieldwork began. During the fall term of 2008, concurrently with my early participation in Fiddle Group, I was taking a methods course entitled "Fieldwork and Interpretation of Culture" from Dr. Wayne Fife. One assignment entailed two self-reporting projects (see Fife 2005:107-116). By the time of this assignment in November 2008, I had some idea that my research would consider "traditional Irish music" in Newfoundland and so I

approached two members of Fiddle Group for the project. I asked them to take 10 - 15 photographs of what it meant to them to play Irish music and provide me with short descriptions of why they took each photograph. I was immensely pleased with the effort and creativity that they demonstrated in taking these photographs. This small assignment introduced me to the depth of meaning that individuals could attribute to music.

My analysis focused on the sense of identification with Newfoundland that these two members, who had moved to the Island in the previous decade, had found and created through playing this music. The assignment was therefore an early introduction for me to a theme that forms a component of this thesis: the sense of belonging and place that musicians form and express through playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music, discussed in chapters 6 and 7. My contact and involvement with Fiddle Group, while first being an important part of my life, became a useful resource in opening up questions about the St. John's music scene, the musicians, and the music. These understandings helped me develop my research goals and methods as I prepared my research proposal, and later provided a good foundation for "beginning" my fieldwork.

3.2 Research goals

My original research plan focused specifically on Irish music and exploring how musicians related to ideas of "Irishness" in St. John's through playing this music. I hoped to address these questions through participant observation, primarily at sessions, as well as through interviews and self-reporting projects with musicians playing this music.

There were four main areas of investigation relating to musicians that I hoped to address:

- The musical biographies of musicians, including how musicians came to play Irish music and the role it plays in their lives;

- Musicians' ideas of whether and how choice of musical style relate to an identity as "Irish" or as "Newfoundlander";
- Interpretations of what constitutes Irish music. In particular, I was interested in how musicians distinguish or delimit Irish and Newfoundland music, and why such distinctions are important, if at all;
- Perceptions about the government promotion of arts and culture as an industry, including issues of "authenticity" in relation to Irishness and Irish music.

I also hoped to address several facets of the historical, social, economic, and political context within which musicians play "traditional Irish music," including:

- The shifting perceptions and popularity of traditional music, including traditional Irish music, in Newfoundland;
- The changing portrayal of Irishness in Newfoundland by the tourism industry;
- The promotion of arts and culture, including the promotion of Irishness and Irish music by government policies;
- The influence of these policies on opportunities available to musicians.

As my research progressed, however, I realized that the boundaries between Irish and Newfoundland music were much more contested than I initially thought. Thus, rather than focus solely on musicians playing "traditional Irish music," I came to incorporate musicians with varying foci on Irish (and) Newfoundland music. I did this so as not to impose my own definitions of the genre and to include the many different understandings of how the styles/genres are defined, as discussed in chapter 7.

I also came to focus more on questions surrounding musicians' lives and the meanings they expressed about traditional music, rather than broader debates about the tourism industry and government policies. This shift was partially due to time limitations. But it was also because, while I continued to ask questions in interviews about these broader issues, the musicians I spoke with also focused most on narratives about music in their lives (often unprompted), the dynamics and importance of sessions, and the music

they played. Rather than being simply a window onto other topics and the primary locus of my fieldwork, the session itself therefore also became a primary focus of my research. Sessions were significant as a venue for the performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, as a site of interaction among musicians, and as an opportunity to see, hear, or experience topics discussed in interviews.

3.3 Fieldwork methodologies

My fieldwork officially began on May 7, 2009, the day I took my first field notes. When I began my research, as discussed above, I had already established contacts and knowledge of the place and topic. Since my research took place in the same city as my academic studies I also had my supervisor and friends nearby for feedback, support, or company at the pubs. Nevertheless, like many fieldworkers, I was concerned throughout much of my fieldwork with questions about whether I was “doing it right” in terms of putting my planned methodologies into practice. Regardless, I discuss here my experiences and methods conducting participant observation and interviews and how they will contribute to this thesis.

3.3.1 Participant observation

I spent the first month of my fieldwork exclusively on participant observation. Wayne Fife describes this process as one that starts with learning “through observation and analysis; then we test these analyses out by attempting to participate in the life world that we are currently studying” (Fife 2005:72). This brief definition provides a highly succinct summary of my fieldwork. During the first month, I proceeded to immerse myself in observing and then sometimes tentatively participating in the sessions at Erin’s,

Nautical Nellie's, Shamrock City, Bridie Molloy's, and Auntie Crae's, as well as Folk Night. I endeavoured to meet and interact with musicians and to learn about musicians' lives and the music they played.

I also continued to attend Fiddle Group as a member and musician. However, while I informed members of Fiddle Group of my research and the role I hoped they might play in it, my participation in the group and my relationships with its members changed little beyond what I had experienced during my first seven months of playing with them. From the start of my fieldwork I also attended the Georgetown pub session as a musician. I had previously been invited to play at this session by a member of Fiddle Group who helped start the Georgetown session. I was welcomed and fit in easily with the regular musicians partially because I had a compatible skill level, repertoire, and existing social networks.

With the exception of these two groups, however, I was an audience member for much of my fieldwork. I initially observed the downtown and Auntie Crae's sessions from a nearby table. I also spent much time at Auntie Crae's talking with members of the audience, several of whom were regular attendees. I initially felt a distinct boundary between my position in the audience and the inward facing circle of musicians at the various sessions. As a result, I worried about being an audience member because I was unsure that I would have enough contact with musicians. After attending the Erin's session for a couple of weeks, however, I began to pull up a chair just outside the circle of musicians next to a musician I already knew. The boundary was not as solid as I had

originally imagined and I was introduced to several musicians and met others due to my proximity and regular presence at the sessions.

After approximately a month, I became acquainted with several of the regular musicians at the downtown sessions and I told some of them that I play the flute and had also begun to teach myself how to play the tin-whistle. Many of them encouraged me to bring my instruments and join the sessions, supporting musicians' assertions that the session was a learning environment – an issue discussed in chapters 4 and 5. I spent several weeks answering to them that I felt I could not keep up and that did not possess the repertoire needed to participate while they responded that it did not matter. I did eventually join in the downtown sessions as a musician, beginning one evening in mid-June when I was sitting just outside a very large session at Erin's. The session had already been going for a couple of hours and a tune that I knew came up. I had my whistle in my purse, pulled it out, and played along, tired at this point of just sitting and watching. After this initial time, I would sometimes bring my instrument to Erin's, as well as to Bridie Molloy's, though often only after again being told to join and play. Eventually, I also began to play at Auntie Crae's, in a similar manner as I had at Erin's – one afternoon in late July I joined in on a tune I knew after sitting listening through much of a session. Yet, while I began to join the table of musicians and play along with tunes I knew, the skill level and repertoire at the downtown and Auntie Crae's sessions vastly exceeded my own. As a result, I continued to spend much time sitting, listening, and watching even if I was seated within the circle of musicians.

Being an audience member who made the transition into being a musician provided me with perspectives on the boundaries created and enforced between the two positions, how they can be crossed, and by whom. I draw on these insights in chapter 6, where I discuss the various social connections musicians form and the different ways musicians and others can “belong” at sessions. In addition, identifying myself as a beginner musician and joining the session allowed me a better understanding of the internal dynamics of a session. As mentioned, I gained insight into the importance of sessions to musicians as a musical and social context for the production of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. At first I conceived of the sessions primarily as a venue for meeting musicians who play this music, with some conception that perhaps the spaces were important in terms of the symbols displayed and boundaries asserted among musicians. Through my observations, discussions, and especially through participation, however, other dynamics seemed to emerge in terms of etiquette and interactions among musicians that brought the sessions much more into the central focus of my research, as will be evident in several chapters of this thesis.

Anthropologist Michelle Bigenbo, however, critiques in her article “Why I’m not an Ethnomusicologist: A View from Anthropology” the privileged status accorded to musicians as fieldworkers (Bigenbo 2008:29-32). She argues that music is often mistakenly seen as something that can only be understood and authoritatively discussed by musicians (Bigenbo 2008:29). Ethnomusicologist Burt Feintuch, in discussing his attempts to learn the Northumbrian small-pipes, suggests, for example, that participating and experiencing provided a different way of “knowing” that is based more on “feeling,

emotion and experience" (Feintuch 1995:303). I will discuss below the role of "insider" and "outsider" positions in anthropological fieldwork, but briefly, I do not claim that I gained a unique or special insight into the worlds of musicians by participating as a musician. As mentioned, my participation as a musician was similar in many ways to my participation as an audience member. "Feeling, emotion and experience" as ways of "knowing" are also equally available to audience members as musicians, only from a different perspective. Participating as a musician also had disadvantages. Such participation meant, for example, that others were more apt to forget that I was also a researcher. In addition, there were certain questions that I found more difficult to ask, such as questioning professional musicians about their opinions on beginners attending sessions since this would also require a commentary on my presence.

While sessions became my primary focus and the key locus of my participant observation, I did attend and participate in various capacities in other venues, such as band performances in pubs and Folk Night, as well as concerts, the Shamrock Festival, and the 33rd Annual Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival. There I would often join musicians in the audience to watch the performances, allowing me to meet others and discuss various topics sometimes relating to my research. I was also able to observe what networks would convene for certain performances, in what capacities, any symbols or boundaries that were expressed and asserted, and how performances differed from sessions as a context for "traditional music."

There were several other spaces that I could have attended regularly to meet musicians playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music, including a Women's Accordion

Circle that meets weekly at the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre, another weekly gathering of accordion players at the Mews Community Centre (though this was not active during the summer), and several public performances. However, due to limitations of time and scope I chose to concentrate on the role of sessions as a space of production for this music, with the occasional foray into other venues.

Through my participation I became further integrated into certain social networks of musicians. I also became a more skilful musician, with a larger repertoire as the summer progressed (though I still feel as if I have much to learn). One significant reason for this improvement is that I was taking time to practice at home. I justified this practicing as a form of fieldwork, partially to allow myself to indulge in the activity. However, it was also an appropriate endeavour in my assumed role as a beginner musician, essential if I were to continue learning, participating, and contributing at sessions. In addition, it provided insight into and experience of the learning processes involved in playing traditional music. My increasing proficiency also allowed me to become a much more active participant in Fiddle Group and the Georgetown sessions. This, in turn, allowed me a greater understanding of the interactions among musicians of various skill levels as I moved from being a relative beginner and occasional participant to an active contributor. These insights will be discussed in chapter 4 where I explore the process of becoming a "traditional musician" and chapter 5 in considering negotiations over hierarchies based on ability and status that take place at sessions.

The participant observation portion of my fieldwork formally ended on August 17, 2009, when I stopped taking field notes. My participation in sessions, however,

continues now throughout my writing process. This participation is no longer "fieldwork" but is an important part of my life, just as Fiddle Group was part of my life before my fieldwork began. What I observe and experience at sessions now does not form part of my research data, but it nevertheless continues to inform my ideas as I write this thesis (Gardner 1999; Hastrup 1992:124-125).

3.3.2 Interviews

Starting June 1, 2009, I began interviewing participants in order to gain greater insight into the meanings musicians attributed to playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music and their reflections on sessions as a context for its performance. Interviews and participant observation did not completely overlap as interviews included discussing aspects of musicians' musical lives beyond their participation and sessions, as well as topics that could not be easily engaged with while at a session. I draw on both these parts of my research throughout this thesis. Chapters 4 and 7, however, rely more extensively on interview material in considering musicians' musical experiences throughout their lives and symbolic meanings associated with place and culture that musicians attach to their music.

I chose participants from the musicians I met at the sessions and Fiddle Group, as well as musicians who were suggested to me because they had played at sessions in St. John's in the past. My goal was to explore the meanings a broad range of musicians attributed to this music and so I attempted to choose participants of diverse ages, backgrounds, genders, playing levels, etcetera. Participant demographics are outlined in the next section. I arranged most of the interviews by obtaining participants' contact

information at a session and then scheduling an interview by phone or e-mail. I endeavoured to be discreet about this process, to help maintain the anonymity of those who I did interview. I also did not speak about interviews while at sessions, again to maintain the privacy of participants. However, given the public role of many of my participants (as performers in a public place) and the fact that my topic was not considered to be particularly sensitive, I felt comfortable making requests for interviews while at sessions. Everyone I spoke with was willing to be interviewed, though most amateur musicians commented that they were not sure why I would want to speak with them, asking, "don't you want a real player?" Chapter 5 discusses how these comments relate to musicians' status as "traditional musicians." Nevertheless, such people were happy to speak to me after I explained my goals.

Despite the willingness and enthusiasm of many participants, scheduling interviews often proved to be a challenge. This was particularly the case during the peak of summer in July and August. Many participants were on vacation, had family visiting, or were trying to balance summer excursions with busy work or music schedules. As an indication, I conducted seven interviews in the month of June but only four interviews in the months of July and August combined.²⁶ Insights from these experiences, relating to the challenges musicians face in balancing work, family, and music in their lives, are discussed in chapter 8. As a result of my scheduling difficulties, I continued conducting interviews after my formal participant observation period had ended on August 17, 2009.

²⁶ Two weeks of July, however, were not spent exclusively on fieldwork. I travelled to Gros Morne National Park with my parents who were visiting me. Our travels through the Island, however, allowed me to occasionally speak with other musicians and gather information on performances and events outside St. John's.

Living in St. John's, of course, allowed me this flexibility and I completed my final interview in October.

I conducted a total of twenty interviews with seventeen different musicians, plus an additional two interviews, one with a pub owner and one with an NLFAS board member, for background information. Throughout these interviews I tried to allow participants time and scope to answer questions in ways that were meaningful to them. Yet, I also had specific issues to address and so the interviews followed a semi-structured format.²⁷ The questions addressed in all interviews were therefore quite similar on a general level, although how each musician interpreted the questions and the depth of their answers varied. (See Appendix A for an interview schedule outlining the general questions addressed with each participant.) This format then allowed me to compare participants' perspectives on different issues, such as how they delimited and defined "Irish" and "Newfoundland" genres, for example. For some interviews I also had individualized questions to ask, either relating to a specific observation made at a session or pertaining to a musician's particular experiences. As my fieldwork progressed, I also developed additional questions to ask participants, so I conducted three follow-up interviews to address these questions with early participants.

Interviews were done in a wide variety of locations, depending on participants' preference, including my home, participants' homes or work places, coffee shops, and pubs. I also conducted three interviews by phone with participants that were not presently residing in St. John's. I recorded all except three interviews using a digital recorder and

²⁷ See File 2005: 95-101 for a thorough discussion of semi-structured interviewing practices that is reflective of how I used them with participants.

transcribed the recordings. Two of the unrecorded interviews were done by phone before I had arranged a method of recording phone conversations and one was done while walking, making it impractical to record. I took copious notes during the phone interviews and wrote down as much as I could remember of what was said after each of the three interviews were finished.

Interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to two and a half hours of recorded discussion. Often I would speak with participants before and after the interview, sometimes having dinner or a coffee with them. Most participants who did not already know me well were curious about where I was from and why I had chosen this project. Participants were also aware of the digital recorder that I would leave sitting on the table between us, often saying they would not name names on the recording or speak about specific events. We would sometimes talk about these events after the recorder was turned off and while they remain in my memory, they are excluded from the discussions in this thesis unless I explicitly obtained consent for their inclusion. The interviews also became a learning process for me as a musician. They taught me about the history of the music, different techniques, methods, and resources for learning, as well as appropriate and inappropriate behaviour at sessions. Thus, the interviews almost doubled as lessons and I think contributed significantly to improving my abilities as a musician.

In addition to interviews, my original research plans had included asking participants to perform self-reporting projects that involved taking approximately ten to fifteen photographs of what it meant to them to play Irish (and) Newfoundland music. My hopes were to expand on the insights I gained from my original course assignment of

the same project with the two members of Fiddle Group. Several participants were very enthusiastic about the idea whereas others were ambivalent. However, participants' busy lives and my desire not to hassle them meant that no self-reporting projects were returned to me. While I think these projects would have added a fascinating dimension to my research, participant observation and interviews provided me with a significant amount of data and so I decided not to pursue them any further. Data from the two self-reporting projects that were completed for my methods course, mentioned previously, are included.

3.3.2.1 Participant demographics

In this section I outline the demographics of participants with whom I conducted interviews. These demographics provide an indication of the diversity of musicians and perspectives that I draw on throughout this thesis. They also provide an understanding of my participants relative to the broader demographics of musicians at sessions in St. John's, discussed in chapter 2, who formed the groups of potential participants.

Participants ranged in age from their twenties to their eighties. Two participants (12 percent) were in their twenties, twelve participants (70 percent) were between the ages of thirty and fifty, and three participants (18 percent) were over the age of fifty.²⁸ Eleven participants (65 percent) were male and six (35 percent) were female. Four (24 percent) grew up in St. John's, seven participants (41 percent) grew up in Newfoundland but outside of St. John's, and six (35 percent) were from places outside the province.

²⁸ The ages of my participants are not as varied as I originally intended. Numerous musicians in their twenties play traditional music in St. John's, of whom only two (12 percent) are included among my participants. These musicians did attend sessions, but not regularly, as they were often busy touring with bands or occupied with other summer projects.

Eight participants (47 percent) were married during my fieldwork and eleven (53 percent) were not, while five participants (29 percent) had children of varying ages.

I also included participants from each of the sessions to gain insight into varying opinions and experiences from different sessions. Twelve participants (70 percent) played at least once in the downtown sessions (based on my own direct observations and participants' self-reporting). Three participants (17 percent) played at Georgetown, six participants (35 percent) played at Auntie Crae's, and five participants played at Fiddle Group (29 percent). Evidently, several participants play at several venues and this also played a role in my choice of participants as they themselves could offer comparative reflections on the different sessions. Eight participants (47 percent) played at more than one session (Downtown, Georgetown, Auntie Crae's or Fiddle Group). In addition to sessions, twelve participants (70 percent) had either attended or played at Folk Night on at least one occasion during my field work, or I was told they had done so in the past.

In terms of profession, five participants (29 percent) were professional musicians who relied on music in various capacities (e.g. performing, teaching, or touring) to make a living. It is difficult to enumerate precisely how many participants would be considered semi-professional, meaning they make some money from music but also rely on other employment to make a living. Some musicians played professionally in other styles and others have played a few gigs for money but do not consider themselves to be professionals. However, nine participants (53 percent) had occupations outside of music, one (6 percent) was a student, and two participants (12 percent) were retired. My participants therefore allow me to explore the influence of age, gender, background,

session attendance, family commitments, skill level, among other factors, on the meanings musicians attribute to playing this music, how they define it, and its role in their lives.

3.4 Living and writing in the field

Having outlined how I came to my fieldwork and conducted my research, this section explores, on a theoretical level, the performative nature of my fieldwork. I thereby situate myself as an active participant in my research. On a practical level, however, the performance of my fieldwork also made it difficult to distinguish between "the field" and "my life" outside of fieldwork. I discuss how these complexities created ethical dilemmas for myself and participants in understanding my role as a researcher and how they affect the writing of this thesis.

3.4.1 Performing fieldwork

Rather than being a distinct "place" where I went to do my research, I performed my fieldwork in varying roles, times, and places. In the past decades, many anthropologists have critiqued notions of "the field" as a "place" that is an objectively bounded entity to be studied (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1973; Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997; Rosaldo 1993). In discussing her own fieldwork, Deepa Reddy suggests instead that "the field" is a collection of locations, events, and situations, "an almost random assemblage of sites that come into coherence through the process of fieldwork itself" (Reddy 2009:90). Reddy's definition fits well with the varied circumstances and places that became part of my field throughout my fieldwork process. The defining feature of this process was, however, my performing the role of researcher.

As previously discussed, many of the people, places, and times where I conducted fieldwork were regular features of "my life" before they became part of my "field." For example, what had previously been a casual Wednesday night at Fiddle Group, a trip to the pub, or a conversation with a musician became, at an arbitrary date, "research." They became part of my "assemblage of sites" as I performed the role of researcher, attentively watching, listening, participating, asking questions, and taking field-notes afterwards. In this manner, even practicing playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music *by myself* in my home became fieldwork. My fieldwork then was not a study of some neatly bounded "field," but rather took place in a wide variety of "locations" and was formed through the act of performing fieldwork (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Reddy 2009:90).

However, my role was not only that of a researcher, as I related to participants from a wide variety of positions. While I performed my research, I also performed music, claiming the identity of a beginner musician. I was often an audience member and patron at the bar as well. I was friends with many of the musicians – friendships that had either existed prior to my fieldwork or that developed through it. I could therefore be construed as a research participant in my own research, in more than the usual sense. I could, for example, have interviewed myself as part of my fieldwork.

The hallmark of anthropological fieldwork, participant observation, has always included the idea of embodied participation. The goal of this method is precisely "to participate in the life world that we are currently studying," in order to gain greater insights into the "native's" "life world" (Fife 2005:72). This participation, however, was once meant to be accompanied by an objective detachment. As Renato Rosaldo points

out, "often traced to Malinowski's legendary fieldwork, this view asserts that the optimal field-worker should dance on the edge of a paradox by simultaneously becoming 'one of the people' and remaining an academic" (Rosaldo 1993:180). Anthropologists were supposed to guard against "going native" and identifying too closely with those they were studying thereby sacrificing the objectivity of their research. Similarly, so-called "native anthropologists" who studied their own "culture" were considered to have the insider-scoop but could not achieve the objective distance necessary for scientific investigation (Rosaldo 1993).

Present-day anthropologists are increasingly situating themselves within their fieldwork, both in methodological practices and in writing (Abu-Lughod 1990; Conquergood 2003:352-357; Haraway 1991; Narayan 1993). As opposed to dichotomizing "insiders" and "outsiders," anthropologists consider their different roles and identities throughout their fieldwork and how this impacted on their research (Narayan 1993). The anthropologist is thereby not this outsider studying "the other" but formed of "multiplex subjectivities," positioning themselves and being positioned by others, with various identities according to the context (Fabian 2000; Narayan 1993). Thus, my participation within my field meant that I was not always an "outsider," observing my own attempts at participation. I sometimes was an "insider" and often was both an "outsider" and "insider" simultaneously. In addition, as Narayan points out, this insider-outsider status is likely shared by everyone to some extent, which is a theme I discuss throughout this thesis and particularly in chapter 6 (Narayan 1993:676).

These roles therefore created for me continuous a sense of ambivalence. I was often welcomed among musicians as a musician but in certain circumstances, such as "hanging-out" after sessions and pub-hopping, some musicians light-heartedly expressed concern about whether I was also researching. There certainly were many circumstances where I was a researcher as well as a musician or friend, among other roles. These "multiplex subjectivities" then created issues surrounding confidentiality and consent. Participants were very likely to forget that I was researching, particularly considering it was only my own act of performing fieldwork that separated my "field" from "my life." Yet, I did not wear a sign at any time labelling myself during the times I was researching. Attempting to balance ethical responsibilities to friends' and participants' confidentiality and privacy with my research interests is the challenge of this thesis and manifests in various ways throughout the writing process.

3.4.2 Writing in the field

As I write, I endeavour to ensure participants are aware of and comfortable with how their lives are included in this thesis. Kirsten Hastrup suggests that ethnography, in both senses of the word, is necessarily intrusive, saying "we hardly respect our informants' right to fall silent... for all our rhetoric about dialogue, ethnographic practice implies intrusion and, possibly, pain" (Hastrup 1992:123). I acknowledge the potential disturbance to peoples' lives as I theorize about them and imprint them in text. Rather than seeing my research as nothing but an intrusion, however, I prefer to consider my various roles and interactions with participants/friends/musicians as a continued negotiation over our relationships (Whitaker in press). Thus, I continue to obtain consent

throughout the writing process, which is, of course, made easier by my continued involvement within my "field." A continuous consent process also allows for this continued negotiation in our relationships with each other and my research.

Nevertheless, I am cautious about what to include in this thesis and how. In order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individuals, pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis, except where statements are already found on the public record or the individual explicitly gave me permission to use their real names. In these cases, participants are introduced using both their first and last names. In addition, the number of "traditional" musicians in St. John's is relatively small and most musicians know and can easily identify most other musicians. As a result, in most cases I only provide limited background information to musicians' words. In several instances I use different pseudonyms for quotes by the same musician, again aiming to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. While such measures may seem extreme for such an innocuous project as the study of music and meaning, this thesis explores precisely the highly integrated, important, and intimate role that music plays in musicians' lives. As a result, I do not treat lightly the thoughts, beliefs, and opinions that have been shared with me throughout my fieldwork.

Finally, I also attempt to provide an understanding of my own role within my fieldwork and how I came to understand the meaning of Irish (and) Newfoundland music in musicians' lives. I therefore include my own experiences with the music, attempt to portray my interactions among musicians, and consider how these affected my experiences and observations and how they may have affected participants' responses

and actions. I aim to situate myself within my field throughout my writing as I was situated throughout my fieldwork (Haraway 1991).

Chapter 4: Becoming a traditional musician

"I don't really consider myself a musician per say. But, I have always loved music and done something with it, ever since I was little," Alex told me at the beginning of an interview. Many other musicians I spoke with similarly distanced themselves from the label, asking me why I was speaking with them and not the "real" musicians. Outside of the context of thesis I would not call myself a musician either. Yet, Alex, for example, has played traditional music (vocal and instrumental) for many years and has played the occasional professional gig. This chapter, working as a set with chapter 5, explores the musical lives of musicians and how, as they learn and play traditional Irish (and Newfoundland music, their self-definitions become entwined with its performance. Some musicians claim the label of "musician" whereas others do not. Yet, these latter musicians nevertheless assert that they "have always loved music" and express shared ideals about what makes a traditional musician, even if they feel they have not yet achieved that status.

Following the idea of "musical pathways," discussed in chapter 1, this chapter provides a fairly straightforward presentation of musicians' ideas of what the route to becoming a traditional musician *should* be, the different musical pathways taken by musicians throughout their lives, and the tensions and comparisons between the two. I also consider how musicians create their selves in relation to these ideals of traditional musicianship, the role of musicians' narratives in constructing their musical pathways, and how these are connected with the larger contexts within which musicians have lived their lives.

These discussions lay a foundation for a more interpretive analysis of how musicians' pathways influence and become part of their lives in later chapters. Chapter 5, in particular, continues the explorations in this chapter, considering how musicians are evaluated on their musical pathways and their personal and musical performances. It considers how some musicians are granted status and authority based on these evaluations, leading to hierarchies among musicians, politics over musicianship, and thereby to statements that "I don't really consider myself a musician" by musicians like Alex.

4.1 Learning the ideal

Although there are many varied ways in which musicians are introduced to traditional music and go about learning it, which I explore in the next section, musicians had fairly consistent opinions about how traditional music was "traditionally" learned. Most insisted that even with the introduction of sheet music and recording technologies, traditional music continues to be rooted in the traditional aural process (Cope 2005:132-133; Veblen 1994:26). That is, the music is learned and played by ear. I explore how this process constitutes the ideal route to becoming a "traditional musician."²⁹ Yet, this process is not simply about learning how to play by ear. As anthropologist Rebecca

²⁹ A traditional musician cannot simply be defined as someone who plays traditional music because musicians did not all agree on what constitutes "traditional music." Some musicians restricted their definition to music that is anonymous and in the public domain. Others, however, included a broad range of music(s) in their definition, including newly composed tunes and songs from a wide variety of genres. Most musicians were wary of insisting on a definition for the music they play. "I'm bit leery of labelling it too much because again it can so easily just become this precious thing that never changes anymore," one musician explained. I am not trying to impose here a single definition of traditional music (or traditional musicians) or to suggest that there is any definition that is more "authentic" than another. As discussed in chapter 1, "tradition," like "authenticity," should not be used uncritically as categories of analysis. Musicians, however, were remarkably consistent in their discussions of the importance of the aural process and ideals associated with learning through this process. It is these shared expectations about learning and playing traditional music that I discuss.

Bryant argues about learning to play traditional Turkish music on the saz, "learning to play the saz did not involve learning to play notes on an instrument; it involved learning to become the type of person who could play the saz" (Bryant 2005:229). Thus, it is as much about the process of "empersonment," of learning to be the "type of person" who performs the ideal aesthetics, ethics, and embodied behaviour involved in playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, as it is about learning and playing the music itself (Bryant 2005:223-224; Sommers Smith 2001:111).

Musicians then share ideals of a conceptual archetype representing a "traditional musician" that includes simultaneously an ideal path and model end-point. Many musicians learn and perform the ideals necessary to be recognized as a "traditional musician." Nevertheless, drawing on Judith Butler's work on gender (1988, 1993, 1999), becoming and being such a musician is an ongoing, bordering on continuous, performative process (Bryant 2005).³⁰ That is, these ideals and musicians' musical personhoods are constituted *only* through their continued performance. As a result, these ideals are historically contingent and also continually negotiated. In addition, no one precisely empersons the archetype. The performance of music "gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be" and this experience is bodily, as well as aesthetic and ethical (Frith 1996:110, 125).³¹ Yet, as Butler suggests, the ideal is "'a compelling illusion, an

³⁰ By *continuous* I am not suggesting that musicians need to be performing music every hour of every day, or even a single hour every day. I discuss how, even while not playing, musicians may perform and emperson themselves to the ideals of being a traditional musician, through narratives, discussions, and stories about their lives and the music they play. In addition, the evaluation of performance is a cumulative process. A musician may have a bad day without significant consequences on their status, provided they have established some recognition among other musicians.

³¹ As discussed in chapter 1, Simon Frith (1996) also discusses similar ideas of self-creation through music to Bryant's (2005) idea of empersonment by connecting the performance of music and the construction of

object of belief” (Jagger 2008:22). Nevertheless, musicians must be aware of these ideals in order to participate in sessions and the traditional music scene in a manner that is seen as “correct” or “authentic” (Basegmez 2005:199).³²

Musicians learn these ideals through their repetitive performance – including through musicians’ narratives about themselves and their lives. With the growth of bands, public performances, and recordings, these ideals are increasingly part of CD liner notes, band and individual biographies, performances, popular books such as Barry Foy’s *Field Guide to the Irish Music Session* (1999), and academic discussions. In discussing the truths found in narratives, the Personal Narratives Group observes that “these exchanges and the knowledge they impart about emotional and physical well-being, communal values, aspirations or power become part of our reality” (Personal Narratives Group 1989:262). Thus, as musicians are exposed to the various ideals of traditional musicianship through these different mediums, they simultaneously come to incorporate them into their lives and their selves. In addition, following Butler, the repetitive performance of such ideals makes them seem self-evident.

certain identities. He concludes that “music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers the body” (Frith 1996:123). He also discusses how musicians create their identities through the collective performance of music and the experience of “living” certain ideas and ideals (Frith 1996:111,123). Music, according to Frith, therefore offers musicians a means to “try-on” different identities (Frith 1996:122). Frith differs here from Bryant (2005) who sees the process of self-formation as cumulative. I follow this latter perspective and discuss how musicians both work consciously and unconsciously to emporson themselves to these ideals bringing incremental change in themselves and their status relative to the ideal. This process follows through over time, as opposed to occurring through discrete musical events.

³² Other scholars who have studied the production of traditional Irish music in Ireland and elsewhere have suggested similar ideas of an ideal type (Basegmez 2005; O’Shea 2008b; Rapuano 2005). My conceptions of an archetype have much in common with Veira Basegmez’s idea of “ideal images of the Irish traditional musician” discussed in relation to her study of musicians in Dublin and Galway, Ireland (Basegmez 2005:199-202). She warns against seeing this “model” as static and bounded but she also discusses how musicians must also have knowledge of the model to properly participate in sessions (Basegmez 2005:199). Both these observations are relevant to the performance of traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music in Newfoundland.

Although the ideals of traditional musicianship are not nearly so naturalized as the ideas of gender that Butler is trying to contest, there are also ways in which these ideals are enforced (Jagger 2008:18). I discuss extensively in chapter 5 how musicians assign status relative to the ideal, which is a rough equivalent to social sanctions discussed by Butler for stepping outside the norms of the ideal categories (Jagger 2008:32). In the same sense, such sanctions are not always intentional evaluations of performance but part of an ethics that are learned in the process of empersonment (Bryant 2005:224).

I therefore use the word "ideal" in two interrelated ways throughout this thesis. The first usage refers to the epitome of musicianship – the archetypal image of a traditional musician. The second refers to the judgement of how a traditional musician *should* look, perform, think, and behave relative to the first sense of the "ideals" of traditional musicianship. Simon Frith discusses how these judgements are simultaneously aesthetic "(this sounds good)" and ethical "(this is good)" evaluations (Frith 1996:124). Bryant extends this idea to also incorporate the idea of empersonment: a "good" performance, musical and personal, by a musician is thereby linked to a judgement that they are "good at" music (Bryant 2005:224-225, 233-234).

I discuss below the specifics of this image among musicians in St. John's, which focus on empersoning and performing the proper aesthetics, ethics, and behaviour as achieved by learning through the aural process. I also discuss how these ideals are changed and negotiated to include "new" learning methods, such as playing at sessions and the use of recordings and formalized lessons. The following sections then explore musicians lived musical pathways, exploring how they integrate these ideals into their

lives and contend with ideas of what a traditional musician *should* be. I also consider how sessions, in particular, provide opportunities for musicians of all levels to interact, creating the scene for evaluations of musicians' performances based on which status and authority are granted, claimed, or contested. Yet, sessions also provide the opportunity for observation, experimentation, discussion and informal teaching of these ideals.

4.1.1 The aural archetype

The ideals that form the archetype of the traditional musician are based on ideas of how music was "traditionally" played in the past. One of the primary foci of such ideas is that traditional music was and should continue to be learned through aural transmission. Even if a musician learns from "the dots" – a colloquialism for sheet music – listening is emphasized as a necessary component of playing traditional music. As Amanda, a musician from away who has been playing for several years, told me: "there's an air and a feeling and a spontaneity I think. Even within the tunes that get changed all the time, in little variations throughout the tune you would never see or rarely see if somebody was just to pick up the notes and start playing it." Dave, a professional musician from Newfoundland, echoed Amanda's statement:

It's just so much easier if you develop the skill of being able to listen to this music, which has always been passed on that way, to learn it by ear... There's so much you learn from listening to it, you know, that it just doesn't. The whole character and the life of it, it's hard for that to get on the paper, you know.

As expressed by Dave and Amanda, the ideal way to learn traditional music is through listening, in order to learn the "the character and the life" of tunes, along with the tunes themselves.

Peter, a part-time professional musician from Newfoundland, also explained the "little variations" that are an important part of this transmission process:

Sam: So what about the traditional part of it... what makes it traditional?

Peter: I guess the way it's passed on, the way it's transferred. The fact that I and a whole lot of other people play tunes differently every time... the other thing about playing tunes as I'm sure you know, you play them differently according to how you're feeling... So yeah, I would argue the way the music's transferred, the way it's changed by each person. Even from person to person and within the same person, as I said.

Musicians are therefore also supposed to learn to perform traditional music with dynamism and "feeling."³³ What this ideal means is that one musician is not meant to repeat precisely the performance of another. Rather, while the essence of a tune is supposed to be maintained, a musician can and should produce their own interpretation (Sommers Smith 2001:112,118; Veblen 1994:23). More specifically, there is an element of improvisation involved in the performance of tunes. Musicians may add ornamentation, such rolls, grace notes, or slides, to the base structure of a tune or vary the notes of the tune itself in small ways, for example, making each performance of a tune unique.³⁴

Yet, as ethnomusicologist Burt Feintuch was gently chastised by his teacher, "'doing things deliberately is one thing – making mistakes is another'" (Feintuch 1995:301). Feintuch was learning the Northumbrian smallpipes in Scotland.

³³ Henry Kingsbury (1988) discusses how, in the performance of classical music, the "feeling" of the music is also of great importance (Kingsbury 1988:87). Yet, in classical music, the emotions are defined by the musical score, the written sheet of music that outlines what "feelings" are supposed to be created and how (Kingsbury 1988:87,94). The role of emotion in traditional music differs. While fast pieces are more often "fun" and "happy," for example, this is not always the case. In addition, the expression of feeling is generally supposed to originate from the musician and not the music. The performance of the music therefore changes based on what the musicians are feeling and is not wholly dependent on the music itself.

³⁴ Other methods of improvisation and variation include playing a tune in a different key or at a different speed. A jig can thereby become slow and lyrical versus fast and racing, for example. Different tunes are also often strung together to form varying sets of tunes.

Nevertheless, the observation is relevant to learning traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in St. John's. Even if each player must play with their own style, they also need to emperson the aesthetics of what "sounds right" (Bryant 2005; Frith 1996). Precisely what constitutes an aesthetically "good" performance is debated among musicians, an issue I will discuss in chapters 5 and 6. On a very basic and general level, however, a strong rhythm is essential in the performance of tunes, related to the music's history as an accompaniment for dances. With the influence of the music and recording industries, proper intonation, instrument tuning, and attention to technique are also significant to the proper performance of traditional music today.

Sessions, recordings, and the professional music industry offer significant resources for those hoping to hear and be exposed to these aesthetic ideals. However, the "traditional" way music is seen to be passed on is from family or community members, or from direct contact with musicians met while travelling or working (O'Shea 2008b:61; Osboene 2007:188; Smith 2007:159; Veblen 1994:24). Learning sometimes also worked as a system of informal apprenticeship with older musicians. Thus, traditional music is ideally transmitted from person to person. Virva Basegmez similarly discusses how, among her participants in Ireland, learning from older musicians in an informal manner continued to form part of the ideal (Basegmez 2005:202). In this manner, while each musical performance is meant to be unique, it is also supposed to maintain links with the "tradition" of the people with whom and places where a musician has learned.

Beyond aesthetic connections, links with "tradition" are also supposed to be maintained and created through memories and lineages that are passed on along with the tunes (O'Shea 2008b:61; Sommers Smith 2001:112, 118). Hillary explained this process:

It's so much more than that and there's no way that can be passed on in sheet music or in recordings. It should be taught by people and passed down by people from people. I'm just thinking, yeah, like that's so important. It's hard to put in words what I know about certain tunes but it's about the experience of learning them, like who did you learn them off of or where did you, what was it used for. Like, to learn the Running the Goat set and not know about the dance or not see the dance performed or perhaps to not know how to do it yourself. It's almost a crime. It's not doing justice to the tunes themselves.³⁵

Through performance and "the experience of learning," musicians create memories associated with tunes and continue the lineages of transmission. The aural process is then also a continuous process of emperment that gives the tradition meaning to musicians in the present.

In her own apprenticeship of learning to play the saz, Bryant argues that the associated process of emperment was a conscious endeavour (Bryant 2005:223). This process has much in common with Saba Mahmood's (2005) discussion of self-formation in relation to the mosque movement in Egypt.³⁶ Drawing on Aristotelian ethics, as well as theories of selfhood developed by Butler and Foucault, she shows how women in this

³⁵ Running the Goat is a set of four tunes consisting of "Running the Goat," "Round Old Ruby's Garden," "She Said She Couldn't Dance" and "Final Goat Tune." There is also an associated dance that is common among post-revival musicians and dancers in St. John's. The set originated from Harbour Deep (Maynard 2001a).

³⁶ The mosque movement is a religious movement that is part of the Islamic revival that has taken place in the past two to three decades in Egypt and other Islamic countries. It is based around the gathering of women, first in homes and then in mosques, to provide weekly religious lessons. These lessons aim to educate Muslims about how to integrate religious virtues and ethics into their daily lives, practices which the movement believes have been forgotten and disregarded with the increasing secularization of the state. As Mahmood outlines, this education "means instructing Muslims not only in the proper performance of religious duties and acts of worship but, more importantly, in how to organize their daily conduct in accord with principles of Islamic piety and virtuous behavior" (Mahmood 2005:4).

movement make themselves into pious subjects through their repeated acts of piety. They accumulate an "acquired excellence at either a moral or a practical craft, learned through repeated practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of a person" (Mahmood 2005:136). Mahmood therefore similarly focuses on the conscious efforts made by women to become pious individuals, as discussed by Bryant (Mahmood 2005:139).

I explore how, as musicians learn this music through the aural process, the music influences their lives in many ways as they learn to become dynamic and expressive players who are embedded within links of "tradition." While, in practice, I agree that this process involves some deliberate making of the self by all musicians, I suggest that in becoming a musician who plays traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music this process is *ideally unconscious*. Jeremy explained the traditional image of aural transmission:

When folk music was evolving, it was in regional styles and it did belong to everyone in the community and since people didn't have other options of entertainment it was the best thing going. Right, so everybody was familiar with it and they became fluent in that musical language.

In this idealized past, recalled nostalgically by many musicians, music was just a natural part of everyone's lives (O'Shea 2008b). This idea of unconscious fluency contrasts with the process of empowerment or self-formation discussed by Bryant and Mahmood. Although the goal in forming a pious self among women of the mosque movement is to make piety an unconscious act, conscious training is nonetheless seen as the necessary path to this unconscious way of being (Mahmood 2005:139). To the contrary, for musicians, the ideal image is that of a "natural" progression from hearing the music from others to beginning and continuing to play as part of the "traditional" process.

The significance of this unself-reflexive learning is discussed by both Deborah L. Rapuano (2005) and Helen O'Shea (2008b), in relation to the performance of Irish music in Chicago, USA and counties Clare and East Clare, Ireland. They consider how musicians who were born into the music and grew up hearing and playing it are better able to gain status and acceptance among the community of musicians than those who set about to deliberately cultivate themselves as musicians (O'Shea 2008b:91-97; Rapuano 2005:123-129). In the case of those who grew up in musical environments, exposure to traditional music provided both motivation and means for learning and playing (Feintuch 1983:210-212). In addition, many musicians describe this "traditional" way of learning by saying "tunes were passed on by ear." Such a description implies little effort involved in learning since everyone acquired familiarity or fluency from continued exposure. Performing the appropriate personal and musical styles thereby became "second nature" (O'Shea 2008b:37, 95; Rapuano 2005:126). As a result, they unconsciously and un-reflexively "became" traditional musicians.³⁷

³⁷ Helen O'Shea and Marie McCarthy discuss ideas held among Irish musicians that traditional music is tied to the geography of Ireland, associating both the physical and social landscape with the music (McCarthy 1999:173; O'Shea 2008b:76-77). Similarly, David Kearney (2007) argues that while "traditional Irish music" has been primarily an urban endeavour, narratives and ideals of the music remain tied to the rural landscape. O'Shea explores how the link between physical geography and music creates a sense of exclusivity about playing traditional music (O'Shea 2008b:91-104). Rapuano makes a similar argument, about the enforced necessity of ethnic identification to be recognized as a traditional Irish musician (Rapuano 2005:126-127). That is, O'Shea and Rapuano discuss how many musicians hold notions that to achieve the correct "Irish sound," one must necessarily be born in Ireland or born "Irish" (O'Shea 2008b:95; Rapuano 2005:126). This idea, in turn has the implicit assumption that only those who grow up in such an environment can sound "right" (O'Shea 2008b:96,104).

There is some discussion in Newfoundland about the links between geography and the production of music that I will discuss further in chapter 7. For example, Colin Quigley (1995) discusses how composer and fiddler Émile Benoit wrote many tunes inspired by his physical (as well as social) surroundings. There are, however, several musicians from beyond the Island who are recognized and accepted as traditional musicians among those who are from Newfoundland, although many of these musicians grew up with musical families as a source of musical exposure. Nevertheless, I am not making as strong an argument as O'Shea and Rapuano. I argue that the ideal is of growing up in a socially musical

In sum, for musicians in St. John's, the ideals of becoming a traditional musician include unconscious learning through the aural process directly from other musicians, to become a dynamic and expressive player. Such a musician is therefore able to individualize a tune, adding their personal style and "feeling" while also maintaining links with tradition, both musically and personally.³⁸ Of course, the idealization of unconscious learning is contested, as are the other ideals discussed here. Musicians like Jeremy recognize the same unconscious familiarity with music is not the norm today and musicians can consciously emperson the necessary ideals to achieve recognition as a "traditional musician." The next section also considers how other practices used extensively by musicians that are not directly part of this "traditional" image, such as sessions, recordings, and formalized lessons provide alternate opportunities for musicians to learn traditional music. In addition, I explore how these methods are negotiated against the ideals associated with learning through the aural process.

landscape, which is not necessarily linked to geography. In addition, the conscious process of empersonment, discussed by Bryant, is also an available path to becoming a traditional musician, but it is seen as a much more challenging process (Bryant 2005:232; Cope 2005:132; Rapuano 2005:128,155).

³⁸ There are many similarities between the ideals considered throughout this section and those discussed by other scholars relating to the performance of traditional Irish music (Basegmez 2005; O'Shea 2008a, 2008b; Rapuano 2005). The specifics of these ideal images for Virva Basegmez's participants in Dublin and Galway, Ireland, included "knowledge and appreciation of the music's historical background" that necessitated establishing some kind of connection with an "'authentic' musical life" (Basegmez 2005:200). They also included playing instruments seen as "traditional" and that the music be aurally transmitted in a casual and informal manner, ideally from older musicians (Basegmez 2005:201-202). In her study of Irish pub sessions in Chicago, USA and County Clare, Ireland, Deborah L. Rapuano similarly suggests that this ideal necessitates ancestral ties to Ireland, playing an acceptable instrument, being a highly skilled musician, and being male (Rapuano 2005:128-129). Helen O'Shea also discusses extensively how, in the standard image, a traditional musician is male (O'Shea 2008a, 2008b:105-118). Thus, some aspects of this ideal image differ from ideals held by musicians in St. John's. Musicians in St. John's, for example, are generally accepting of a wide variety of instruments, provided that they are played musically and appropriately. The aural process and maintaining connections to "tradition," however, remain an important part of performing traditional music across these various locations. I also briefly discuss the role of gender in sessions in St. John's in chapters 6 and 8.

4.1.2 "New" methods

As discussed in chapter 2, pub sessions only developed as a context for the performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music in the 1950s and did not become prominent in St. John's until the 1990s. As such, in terms of their historical development, sessions are not a part of the "image" of traditional music and its place in local rural communities. Yet, sessions can offer an incredible opportunity to musicians to learn traditional music and its ideals (Basegmez 2005:169; Cope 2005:135; McCann 2001:91; O'Shea 2008b:97-101; Sommers Smith 2001:120; Waldron and Veblen 2008:101). Gary, a Newfoundland musician who now plays professionally, explained:

You learn from playing with people who are better than you... So I like to encourage that because I was encouraged when I was squeaking through... I mean somebody said, "no Gary b'y, you sit to the table and you give us some tunes." And if they were slow or you played the wrong note, nobody ever said "that was terrible man, don't ever come here again," kind of thing. But I've heard that said to people. I've never said anything, heaven forbid.

Musicians continue to emphasize the importance of learning directly from other musicians. Apart from formal lessons, sessions are currently one the primary sources of contact with other musicians, providing the opportunity to play with those that are "better than you" (Basegmez 2005:169).

Sessions are also one of the primary contexts for the creation and recollection of memories associated with tunes (Sommers Smith 2001:120). When I asked musicians about whether they associated tunes with people or places, many of them recalled a session down at so-and-so's house a few years back or a night at the pub during a snow-storm. Sessions may also serve as a starting point for meeting musicians with whom to develop more in depth learning relationships, whether formal or informal. In addition to

their benefits for beginning musicians, sessions are opportunities for intermediate and advanced musicians to continue learning by gaining new repertoire, hearing new musical ideas, experimenting with other musicians, and creating and maintaining musical relationships.

Sessions have therefore been adopted wholeheartedly by most musicians playing in St. John's. Chapter 5 will discuss negotiations over what sessions should be in relation to ideals of egalitarianism and community in the midst of political negotiations among musicians over status and musicality. In addition, chapter 7 will briefly touch on debates over the "Irishness" of sessions in Newfoundland. Finally, I also discuss below the sometimes ambivalent experiences of musicians in attending and learning at sessions. Few musicians, however, questioned sessions themselves as a context for the performance of this music. The ideal of playing at sessions as part of the process of empowerment has therefore become a self-evident part of what it means to be a traditional musician.

The use of recordings for passing on tunes has also been widely adopted (Basegmez 2005:204-205; Cope 2005:133-134; Osborne 2007:191; Smith 2004:173; Veblen 1994:26-27; Waldron and Veblen 2008:102-103).³⁹ With recordings, musicians can still learn tunes by ear but with the added advantage that this can be done at almost

³⁹ Sheet music was used as a method for documenting and passing on tunes before recordings. For example, Edward Bunting transcribed the repertoire of harpers at a festival in Belfast, Ireland in 1792 (OShea 2008:9). Musicians in Newfoundland would have had access tune books from beyond the island through international trade networks, though my participants did indicate the transcription of tunes in Newfoundland has a much more recent history (Smith 2007:159). The use of sheet music for learning is not included in this section, however, as it has not received the same widespread acceptance as recordings and is not seen to fit as easily within the aural process. I will, however, consider its use in some depth later in this chapter.

any time: in the car, while walking down the street, shopping, or in the course of any number of other daily activities. Recordings have also allowed for a significant expansion in the number and styles of tunes that musicians learn. Instead of just learning tunes from people with whom a musician has direct contact, musicians can buy records of music or listen to radio stations from all over the world (Osborne 2007; Waldron and Veblen 2008). In addition, recordings can be repeated or slowed down to hear the intricate details of ornamentation or to more easily hear and differentiate the notes that form the melody. Currently many musicians use software available on the computer for this. Finally, musicians can record tunes at sessions that they can then take home and learn. This limits the need to learn a tune on the spot or wait until someone happens to play it again to hear it (Veblen 1994:26-27).

The use of recordings and even the process of slowing them down are, however, not new. While they did not provide the same accessibility to repeating tunes over and over, recordings played over the radio in Newfoundland in the early 1930s nonetheless provided musicians with a widely available new repertoire of tunes and songs to learn (Osborne 2007:190-191). The growing popularity of gramophones in the early 1900s also gave musicians access to wider repertoires, as well as the ability to slow the recording down by placing their finger on the record (Osborne 2007:190; Smith 2004:173). Older musicians often spoke to me of their collections of LPs that they ordered from abroad or acquired from other family members. The popularity of recordings has continued through different media as younger musicians mentioned fairly extensive CD or MP3 collections and the use of recordings available on the internet.

The system of direct contact for learning has been emulated as musicians follow other musicians through multiple albums, learning their style and technique and incorporating it into their playing. Musicians would often cite the record from which they learned a tune and some had a vast store of knowledge about different albums and players who they may never have met. Peter, for example, recalled:

I've listened to Johnny Cunningham for three years, I've listened to Paddy Glackin for two years. Not as organized as that but I find myself, you know, sometimes you listen to this band or Frankie Gavin or whoever. I'm just using fiddle players now but I could say the same about any instrument. So, I try, I listen, I'll try to incorporate that part of his playing into my own playing. But of course I do it differently, but something gets transferred. At the end of it, I'm not saying I sound like any of these guys, 'cause I don't. I sound like me. But my playing is no question influenced from all these guys.

Thus, extensive use of recordings can sometimes be seen as a substitute for or alternative to prolonged one-on-one contact with other musicians.

While recordings have been advantageous for musicians in many ways and have been widely adopted, their use is nonetheless negotiated in relation to the image of how music was traditionally learned and how it should be learned in the present. For example, musicians often emphasized how recordings are a single instantiation of a tune and should not be seen as the only possible interpretation. Dave commented:

One of my concerns with sheet music is, and recordings as well, is the idea that it represents a gold standard of a tune, sort of *the* version of a tune. And that's something that I think is dangerous, in a way, because I think that what the tradition thrives on is the sort of reinvention, the constant reinvention of itself. And so, while I think it's great to have a version of a tune, know where it came from and everything, and to be able to say "well this is this." But I think it's important also to keep it in a context and to say, "well this is so and so's version of a tune," but then not necessarily be married to that in your own playing of it and to be open to the idea that it can change.

Dave has concerns that both recordings and sheet music will restrict the dynamism and expression of musicians' playing, as they have the potential to codify tune settings and sets.⁴⁰ Hillary's discussion above also expresses concern that recordings and sheet music are not adequate substitutes for the lineages and memories that are ideally integral parts of learning traditional music (O'Shea 2008b:61). Yet, she also uses recordings for learning herself. Recordings are usually seen as much preferable to sheet music because they can convey more information about the feel and sound of a tune. In other words, they are more adaptable to the aural process. Their proper use and acceptance is nonetheless negotiated among musicians to fit with the ideal system of learning directly from other musicians.

Another method of learning that is increasingly common is the use of formal lessons, offered either individually or in groups (Basegmez 2005:205; Cope 2005:130-131; McCarthy 1999:16; Veblen 1994). The learning musician employs a more advanced musician for a set block of time, as opposed to "traditional" informal encounters with other musicians for indefinite periods of time or less formal apprenticeships. Taylor, who teaches lessons, explained this shift,

What makes it traditional is, I guess, it always was music that was in the aural tradition, music that was learned from another person as opposed to from being taught to you in an instructed method, you know, with notes and a teacher. But that's changing now too. A lot of traditional, what has been traditional music, the way of learning it is changing as well. It's becoming instructed and as it's becoming instructed it's being nailed down a whole lot more. So, you know, the individuality of each player is much less now I think because there's a teacher

⁴⁰ A "setting" is common terminology for a version of a tune. Some widely played tunes have multiple settings that could vary by player or regional style. There are, for example, Newfoundland settings of tunes that are also commonly played in Ireland.

saying don't do that or do this. Whereas before there was no teacher telling you that.

In addition to lessons with a teacher, there are also lessons available through media sources such as teaching books with recordings, YouTube, and internet websites that provide online instruction available to anyone with access, without ever meeting in person (Waldron and Veblen 2008).

While taught lessons formalize a relationship between student and teacher, many musicians attempt to teach in a way that is a continuation of what they see as the "old" or "traditional" way of learning. They teach students aurally, through repetition, sometimes also providing recordings and maybe sheet music (Veblen 1994:26-27). In her exploration of traditional Irish music-making in Ireland, Helen O'Shea discusses the teaching methods used by two well-known musicians, Mary MacNamara and Martin Hayes. These musicians try to teach students through formal lessons in ways that transfer the essential melody of tunes but allow for "personal expression and spiritual transcendence" (O'Shea 2008b:77). In this manner, formalized lessons have become a commonly adopted and generally accepted means of learning traditional music in Newfoundland and elsewhere. Teachers, like Mary MacNamara and Martin Hayes in Ireland, try to maintain the possibility for variation in the aural transmission process that is often seen as a key component of "traditional music," whether Irish or Newfoundland or other. Through lessons, learning musicians are often able to improve their skills and abilities with their instrument and the music. Lessons can help a learning musician with technique and possibly also teach the ideal aesthetics, ethics, and behaviours that are part of playing traditional music discussed above.

This ideal, however, is not always upheld and some musicians also question how formal lessons fit within the tradition. Peter commented:

An interesting thing I see happening is when you have an instructor teaching an instrument, fiddle or accordion or whatever, and they have say ten students, ten students are all playing, you know what I'm going to say. They're playing identical to each other and they're playing identical to the instructor... So, I see that happening a bit. I don't really like that because I don't understand that. I don't understand how if this is truly traditional music and it's open to interpretation and it's meant to be kind of embraced... I think if you learn from a tape, or if you learn from an individual that you sit with every Sunday night for two hours, or if you learn from a group of people, you're not going to really play like [those other people]. You're going to have influences from the people you're playing with obviously.

Peter's concerns are similar to Dave's concerns about recordings and sheet music and echo Taylor's comments about how lessons are changing the music. All these commentators believe musicians should be able to interpret the music and play with dynamism and expression, adding their own personal style to the tunes they learn. Lessons, on the other hand, restrict these qualities in a musician to the extent that teachers insist students reflect on their playing and what they are "supposed to do," leading students to play the same as their teacher and as each other. Even Taylor, who teaches "what has been traditional music," is unsure about how the new method of teaching fits with the ideal system.

Basegmez presents these debates as occurring between "purists" and "open-minded" musicians in Ireland (Basegmez 2005:203-211). While I have heard the label "purist" used, musicians in Newfoundland could not be easily divided into two such camps. Musicians often have internally conflicting and changing views regarding ideas of "tradition" and its practice by musicians in St. John's and elsewhere. Some musicians

who might otherwise be thought of as purists have no problem with the use of sheet music and have taught lessons themselves. In addition, as will be discussed, many musicians commented they do not worry about tunes being "traditional" as long as they enjoy playing them and they are played well. Being "played well" is, however, judged aesthetically according to the ideals I have discussed throughout this section.

The archetypal process for becoming a traditional musician is, then, in musicians' continual performance, continually negotiated according to technologies available and the ideas held by other musicians. There is no consensus, but there are nevertheless shared ideals of what a traditional musician *should* be and how to become such a person. In the next section I explore the different paths musicians have taken to and through the process of empersonment, which shape their relations with the music and each other. I show how musicians' self-definitions become tied up with this ideal image, as well as how musicians reproduce or challenge these ideals.

4.2 Musical lives

Throughout their lives, musicians' musical biographies follow unique pathways. No two are quite identical, as each person has different experiences with the music, the spaces of production, and their interactions with different musicians. Nevertheless, in their journeys of empersonment these pathways overlapped, following familiar routes. I divide musicians' experiences between those who were introduced to traditional music early on in life, for example through growing up in a musical family, and those who came to the genre later. This is an arbitrary division, useful for comparing musicians' paths, in the broadest sense, particularly in relation to the ideals discussed in the previous section.

Nevertheless, many musicians with early beginnings took breaks from playing or played other styles and were reintroduced to traditional music later in life. Similarly, musicians who began to play traditional music when they were adults may have had some exposure when they were children. Thus, the two sections of this chapter, as well as the two possible routes for musicians' pathways, are not mutually exclusive. Despite the variety of experiences, all musicians also contend with the ideals of the "proper" path to becoming a traditional musician, entwining their self-definitions with images of what makes a "proper" musician. Some apply narratives about their lives that follow the archetype, some contest the naturalness of the ideal path, and others struggle to understand how their experiences fit.

4.2.1 First beginnings

Among my participants who began playing traditional music when they were children, all except one discussed members of their families who also played as significant influences to beginning and learning to play.⁴¹ This one exceptional participant learned to play traditional Scottish music on the highland bagpipes as a child from a local teacher. His interest began when he heard the teacher playing the instrument at a festival and his parents subsequently paid for lessons. He spoke little of his early experiences, pursuing other musical interests later in life, but did speak of how his early exposure to traditional music aided him when he began playing traditional Irish (and

⁴¹ One additional participant, not included in this section, was influenced by a family member who played traditional music and began playing themselves at a young age. Yet, they learned traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music through the Suzuki system of learning classical music. This method will be discussed later in this chapter.

Newfoundland music. Music in the family, however, seemed to be the primary means for musicians to be introduced to traditional music early on in life.

4.2.1.1 Music in the family

In Finnegan's exploration of the factors influencing the music-making practices of musicians she found that having a musical family was one of the most influential factors to someone continuing to pursue music, across many musical genres (Finnegan 1989:308-311). Basegmez similarly found a musical family to be influential among musicians in Ireland, though not a necessary condition to playing music (Basegmez 2005:83-85). Among my participants, musicians' families were not necessarily active or skilful players, but nonetheless may have dabbled with instruments and given their children a basic introduction to traditional music.

In particular, many of those musicians born and raised in Newfoundland, mostly outside St. John's, recalled having instruments such as accordions or guitars around the house, and sometimes a parent who would play or was trying to learn. Ian recalled:

I think the first memory I have of being connected to music at all was my mother was always humming and singing Newfoundland songs... But then, when I was still a child, my mother ordered me a little tiny piano accordion from a Sears catalogue... And my mother could play it a little bit and I remember that was my first instrument... And my mother would show me stuff, occasionally.

Peter similarly recalled music around his house from an early age:

I was surrounded by music... within my house, my household, everything from at an early age, everything from church music to my grandparents whistling songs and singing songs. At family gatherings there was always some music being played and from what I can remember it was always traditional music and songs. Tunes and songs.

Peter's experiences are similar to Ian's, in that he recalls family members singing and playing traditional music from an early age. These two musicians and several others, who grew up outside St. John's, were exposed to instruments and some traditional or more general folk music as young children.

Most musicians from St. John's and beyond the Island said they began music in grade school or through lessons. While being most common for those from rural Newfoundland, there were, however, some musicians who grew up in and around St. John's who also had family who exposed them to traditional music from a young age. One musician recalled, "I started playing traditional music at a young age, that's the age of six. And my grandfather played and I guess that's kind of what got me into it." Similarly, there are other musicians playing in St. John's who grew up elsewhere in Canada but started playing traditional music and instruments from a young age. These musicians grew up in musical families and it was their family's influence that started them on the path to playing traditional music.

In my interviews with musicians I did not suggest where they should start their narratives, only asking them to tell me their "musical biographies." All the musicians I spoke with began sometime in early childhood. These musicians began with memories of their parents and families and their exposure from an early age to traditional music and instruments used to play that music. To these musicians, these early memories were significant beginnings on their musical path to later play traditional music. In addition, they all learned music *aurally*. None talked about being forced to play an instrument; doing so came about as a result of their exposure and the influence of those around them.

In this way, the experiences of musicians who learned music from their families fit with the ideal process of unconscious learning. I discuss below how musicians' narratives about their childhoods also help create these ideals, as well as provide a means of asserting their authority and status as traditional musicians. However, some claim to have experienced these similarities to the ideal biography more than others. In continuing their musical journeys, some took a straight path and others' paths wound through a variety of musical interests or they stopped playing altogether until later returning to playing traditional music.

4.2.1.2 Straight ahead

Several musicians continued on a straight path from learning and playing traditional music with their families, playing throughout their teens and adulthood, and some later became professional musicians.⁴² One musician, Derek, moved from playing with his family to later pursuing music on his own, joining bands, and playing professionally. When I asked him why he kept playing and how he came to play professionally he responded, "I just never stopped. Like, I just always felt like playing music and so I would go to open stages and jam sessions and I would meet bar owners and a lot of other musicians and they'd say come back tomorrow and I'll pay you." Similarly, Peter continued to play with his family, but later also met and played with musicians in St. John's, joining bands and playing at sessions.

These musicians have also used recordings for learning, along with tunes learned from their families or friends growing up. Peter, for example, is

⁴² These musicians are recognized as professional musicians by others, but precisely what that term means is debated, as will be discussed in chapter 5.

Self-taught of course... I learn by osmosis now. Like I'll buy a CD and I still buy CDs and I'll put it in the car and when I'm driving somewhere I'll just listen to it and listen to it and listen to it. Usually I can tell what key it's in, where to go with the fingers, I kind of see it before I play it, and I can play it, depending on the piece of course, but that's how I learn.

The specific recordings that musicians learned from changed depending on the musician's age. For example, those musicians who were learning in the 1950s and 1960s had recordings of the McNulty family and John Kimmel while musicians learning in the 1970s and 1980s learned from the Bothy Band, De Dannan, Planxty, Émile Benoit, and Rufus Guinched, among others. Musicians learning today continue to learn from these later musicians, as well as newer recordings from groups coming out of Ireland, Newfoundland, and elsewhere.

To these musicians, in many ways, playing traditional music was a "natural" progression from playing traditional music as children and therefore corresponds closely with the archetypal path to becoming a traditional musician. Some also present a narrative of their lives that fits with this ideal, of unconscious and spontaneous learning and becoming. Chris says, "I learned to read music in school and stuff. And [to play] mostly through listening and through playing with other people... I just learned what I liked." When I asked how he began to play in bands, he responded "it just kind of happened. I was down around hangin' about and meeting lots of people and it just turned into that, kind of on its own." Chris's response follows closely the image of a "traditional" traditional musician, learning from their social environment and family at a young age and unreflexively continuing on that path. The process of self-formation for these musicians was therefore not conceptualized as a conscious schooling of the self

musically or personally, as discussed by Bryant (2005) and Mahmood (2005). They had simply grown up learning the aesthetics, ethics, and behaviour associated with playing traditional music.⁴³

For Chris and Derek there was therefore little question about being a traditional musician or how they got there. In the process of learning the music through their childhoods and recounting narratives about those experiences, their self-definitions have become entwined with the music and those narratives. When I asked Chris why he played traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, his response was first that he needed to earn a living but it was closely and emphatically followed by a comment saying, "I also enjoy it, you know. It's what I do. It's part of how I define myself. I'd say that's true for all of these guys," referring to several other musicians present for our discussions. Faye Ginsburg, in discussing the role of abortion activism in creating women's identities, explores the role of narratives in constituting individual self-definitions. She comments how for women activists, "their sense of identification evolves in the very process of voicing their views against abortion" (Ginsburg 1989:78). In addition to the role of narrative in constructing musicians' selfhoods, Frith discusses how individual and collective identities are created through the very process of performing music (Frith 1996:110-111). Thus, as musicians express the proper narratives of their lives and

⁴³ There is nevertheless some conscious re-making of the self associated with those who otherwise unconsciously became traditional musicians and who claim these narratives. For example, those who grew up in rural areas would have had to learn to embrace the ideals of playing in an urban context upon moving to the city. I have been told that the ideals of playing in rural Newfoundland, primarily in informal contexts, is very different than playing in pubs in St. John's (R. Clark, public discussion, November 20, 2009). Even different sessions hold slightly different ideals about ethics, aesthetics, and behaviour, as will be discussed in chapter 5 (O'Shea 2008b:119-140). Thus, adaptability, both musically and personally, is also a necessary characteristic for traditional musicians who plays in multiple venues in an urban context like St. John's. In addition, when I asked specifics about musicians' learning process, at that point many would recall the many hours of practicing when they were younger.

perform music according to the proper styles, they create themselves as the "type of people" who play traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music (Bryant 2005; Mahmood 2005). These "correct" performances of musicians' self-definition in turn lend them a self-confidence and authority in their status as traditional musicians, which I discuss further below.

These musicians also constitute the archetype through their narratives and musical performances. As the Personal Narratives Group states, "the personal narrative, whether it reveals an acceptance of or a challenge to the given rules, also marks on an individual level the very process of reproduction or undermining of those rules" (Personal Narratives Group 1989:8). This statement could be extended to incorporate individual musical performances as part of the process of constituting or challenging "rules" or ideals, which I also discuss further in the next chapter. The narratives expressed by Chris and other musicians in this section reveal an "acceptance" of these ideals. When I first asked musicians to tell me their "musical biographies," they often omitted the work, frustration, and time that went into learning traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. These omissions, in turn, reproduce the ideal of unconsciously "becoming." The musical biographies of professional musicians are replicated in very similar form in public biographies, academic and non-academic interviews, and a wide variety of interpersonal relations.

However, not all of these musicians apply a narrative of their lives that seamlessly follows this ideal. Peter emphasized the work involved in learning and the conscious choice in pursuing music. "I remember consciously trying to become part of the scene.

And I did over time." Peter is referring to his transition from playing with his family to playing with others in St. John's. Peter's path was not dictated for him simply because he learned traditional music among his family at a young age, but it influenced his desire to pursue that path in other scenes, such as in St. John's. In this manner, even though Peter grew up in a musical social environment and learned the music through the aural process, he also questions the narrative of the archetypal traditional musician whose ability just flows out of his surroundings, emphasizing the self-conscious choices involved in learning and continuing to play. Of course, Peter is also integrated, through the aural process, into the music through memories and connections with his family, established and recalled through playing. He cited these as reasons why he continues to play and why he sought out other venues.

In a similar manner, those who pursued winding paths in playing music also challenge the "naturalness" of playing traditional music even if one is exposed to it from a young age. Yet, they also simultaneously draw on this model when they again perform traditional music and the proper aesthetics, ethics, and embodied behaviours later in life. The "challenge to the given rules" through their lived pathways, however, also creates new routes for musicians whose pathways do not follow precisely the archetypal path to becoming a traditional musician.

4.2.1.3 A winding path

Some musicians, who grew up exposed to traditional or folk music, chose to pursue other genres or other interests altogether before "returning" to traditional music. Their early experiences with their families, however, helped them when they again began

to play this music, as they remembered tunes from their childhood or had at least some ability to learn and play by ear. For example, full-time professional musician Billy Sutton had some early exposure to traditional music as a child, but chose to play mostly rock music when he began playing on his own.

I grew up I didn't listen to Celtic music, I mean it was on the radio and I knew of it and I knew some songs from being around the house that me father or me grandmother would sing, or me grandfather also played. So I mean there was always a certain amount of traditional music that I knew. But I didn't grow up playing trad music at all. I grew up a Zeppelin head. I grew up playing drums in the basement all my teenage years to Led Zeppelin and Ozzie Osborne and Motley Crew and you name it. You know, I was into the heavier stuff.

Billy was re-introduced to traditional music in his twenties through bands playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music, such as the Irish Descendants.

I just started playing stuff. Like, always could play the accordion I just hadn't, so I just picked up mandolin and kind of taught myself to play. From there came like bouzouki and tenor banjo and the mandola, cause they're all tuned similar. So I kind of started doing that, playing a bit more box again.

Billy describes how, when he did start playing "Celtic music" again, he was able to draw on his early experiences and play the accordion even though he had not done so for a long time. Thus, it was simply a matter of reactivating the embodied knowledge and aesthetics that he had empersoned as a child.

With Billy, we also see how different musical scenes can influence musicians' pathways. Billy became interested in playing traditional music again because of the active scene in the 1990s with bands touring and playing on a regular basis. This scene and growing presence of sessions also influenced Ian in returning to play traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. Ian first learned traditional music from his mother but through his twenties only played a little music while he was pursuing a non-musical

career and other interests. He was invited to the sessions in St. John's by another musician and that is what prompted him to attend and start learning traditional music again. The impact of an active traditional music scene is a theme that will be seen again later in this chapter when I consider musicians who were introduced to traditional music later in life, often after moving to St. John's.

In choosing to play other genres, or stop playing for periods of time, these musicians' lives contradict the necessity of the ideal path and demonstrate conscious choice in playing and learning. Yet, these musicians also learn and play through the aural process. They continued the process of empowerment as they returned to playing traditional music. Ian also said "it's a connection with my mother, my past. So that's important. It's the best connection I have really." He was re-integrating and re-creating the lineages and memories as he began playing again. The early exposure also lent some musicians, like Billy, a similar confidence and authority to those discussed in the previous section, who claim narratives similar to the archetype. As he said, "I just started playing stuff." While his own pathway contests the ideal path, he performs his status partially in his ability to question it, simultaneously reaffirming the ideal and his connection to it through a narrative of unreflexive performance.

As discussed by Finnegan and Basegmez, music in the family provides musicians with early exposure to the style, repertoire, and instruments for playing traditional music. It is important to note, however, that exposure from a musical family does not always lead someone to choose to pursue music. My participants were all musicians and so were among those who did make that choice. As I have shown throughout this section,

musicians who learned traditional music starting at a young age also emperoned themselves to the ideals of being such a musician in the process. Whether they pursued a straight or winding path, they were integrated into lineages of tunes and musicians and drew on the embodied behaviour, aesthetics, and ethics that they learned as children when playing later on in life. For many, their narratives about their early experiences also provide a means of reconstituting the archetype, as well as their own connection to its ideals. I now consider the experiences of those who consciously chose to learn traditional music later in life without the early exposure of these musicians who took a winding road.

4.2.2 Later introductions

Many musicians, particularly those who came from away or grew up in St. John's, began to play traditional music later in life. These musicians often had early experiences with music, but this was usually in the classical genre. I will discuss all aspects of these musicians' musical pathways, since the musical knowledge musicians gained as children, even if this was about classical music, affected how they related to traditional music later in life. For these musicians, playing traditional music was clearly a deliberate choice, albeit influenced by the musical scenes at different points in their lives. In this manner, their learning resembles more closely the self-conscious process of emperonment discussed by Bryant (2005) and Mahmood (2005). I will discuss how musicians contend with this process and with the behaviours, ethics, and aesthetics that they are learning to emperon.

4.2.2.1 Music lessons

One way that many musicians first were exposed to music was through lessons, either private or taught in grade school or high-school. Gerry, who grew up outside St. John's and who was discussed in chapter 1, for example, recalled that his first musical experiences were taking piano lessons. Frank who grew up in St. John's similarly recalls,

I was in grade school and my sister was taking piano. So, there was a piano all of a sudden that appeared in the house and so I was given the opportunity to start to take piano, which I did. And I stuck with it for a couple of years, but as soon as I could drop it I did, because it was not nice for me.

Amanda, who is from away, also recalled how her mother put her in piano lessons that she did not enjoy.

So my mom put me into lessons...I was about 8... So, I went into piano lessons and I hated them. And god, 6 or 7 years, and as soon as I had the option to quit, I quit. And funny, because that's when I started playing the piano.

Many musicians shared similar beginnings to their musical paths and many often disliked the experience, regardless of where they grew up (Cope 2005:128-129).⁴⁴

Classical beginnings, however, are not always a negative experience. Some musicians actively pursued this genre early on in life and became active members of the classical music scene. Nancy a musician from Newfoundland who played both classical and traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music from a young age recalled pleasant experiences from both.

⁴⁴ There were various reasons these musicians disliked lessons or playing and chose to quit. Many said they struggled with the strict demands of classical technique. Frank recalled that one of the reasons he stopped taking piano lessons was that it was not "cool" at the time, as well as being an unpleasant experience. He switched to guitar for a short while but eventually gave that up as well. Amanda simply said she "hated" lessons, though did continue to play piano after quitting. Musicians' pathways therefore did not end if they quit playing classical music; they often chose to pursue other genres and eventually came to play traditional music.

It'd be like a family affair, we'd all be going to lessons back and forth and group classes and fiddle music and it was a big part of what we, you know, just a big part of that community, and summer camps... I sort of concentrated on classical violin... I don't know, I picked up, like I started playing orchestras and chamber music regularly. So, symphony and chamber symphony. I was quite young but I did that for a while, and I played flute in band.

Nancy shows that playing classical and traditional music are not necessarily contrary endeavours, though they are often seen as such. In St. John's, young musicians can actually receive an introduction to "traditional Newfoundland music" through classical lessons.

The Suzuki music program, called the Suzuki Talent Education Program (STEP), also offers fiddling classes run by teacher Christina Smith. Students are taught traditional Newfoundland music and have opportunities to perform in various venues, such as cruise ships and the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival (Smith 2009). The STEP fiddlers program provides a good example of how classical training can be complementary to learning traditional music, though, as I also discuss below, musicians also contend with differences in how music is conceived and in aesthetics between classical and traditional music.⁴⁵

Students' lessons, whether Suzuki, Conservatory, or less formally organized, shaped their paths and experiences in particular ways as they later began learning how to

⁴⁵ My participants primarily learned classical music through two methods: the Conservatory or the Suzuki method. In Canada, the Conservatory method of learning includes a system of examinations based on pieces of written music, as well as musical theory and ear training. The Suzuki method, on the other hand, is based on a "Mother Tongue" model. Students begin at a young age, they learn by ear, as well as through written music, and the learning system incorporates family involvement, as well as group and private lessons. Suzuki trained musicians that I have met had strongly developed skills at playing by ear, as this is how students first learn to play classical pieces – through constant repetition of recordings (Suzuki Talent Education Program of St. John's 2008).

play traditional music. Before turning to that question, however, I will discuss how these musicians were introduced to traditional music and began learning it.

4.2.2.2 Introductions to traditional music

Many musicians, myself included, began playing traditional music later in life and often this introduction occurred after moving to Newfoundland. For those who came from away, the active traditional music scene that they were exposed to through living in St. John's was a significant part of the reason for their interest in learning and playing. These musicians had a sense that the music was a major part of the place. Amanda told me, "I moved here... you know, you can't live here without being exposed to traditional music." There is a sense among many musicians, as well as many non-musicians, that Newfoundland is a musical place. Some musicians recalled bands or individuals they enjoyed listening to when they moved to the Island and many attended Folk Night, which allowed them to meet other musicians and hear the music.

Fiddle Group became a common pathway for musicians moving to Newfoundland to start playing – again myself included. For the founding members of Fiddle Group, the course offered in Newfoundland Fiddling at Memorial University in 2001 was the impetus for beginning to learn. They "just kept meeting after that course was done," Tracy told me. New musicians in town are referred to the group by others who recognize it as an avenue for learning and playing. Sandra recalled,

[I] moved here and did nothing for a long long [time] with music.... I ended up meeting Tracy and the fiddle group, I met her down at the Folk Club and [a musician] introduced us 'cause I was looking for a group to play with. Irish music, 'cause I didn't want to go into the classical thing... And so when I went and stood in the hallway for three weeks, I was really shy and then all of a sudden

the bug bit me, and I just picked that fiddle up and I'd walk around the house playing it like a rock instrument.

Erica, another member of Fiddle Group, similarly recalled,

Erica: I started off kind of just going at it, you know, just trying to figure out where the notes were, just getting accustomed to it myself and I was looking for a fiddle teacher. I was also playing with Sally on the weekends... and just playing with Fiddle Group.

Sam: So you managed to get involved with Fiddle Group and sort of pick up there?

Erica: Yeah, through Sally. Actually, I was talking with [a musician], and he's like you've got to get in touch with this lady named Sally, and that's how I got involved with Sally at first and then with everybody else.

Erica and Sandra share similar experiences in that both were referred to Fiddle Group by another musician they had met and the group served as a primary pathway for learning. The group has not recently recruited new members; I am the most recent member to join – and I joined in October 2008. Nevertheless, Fiddle Group continues to meet to learn and play. The route is therefore kept open by those who continue to walk it and by other musicians who recognize this route and refer others to it, as occurred for Erica and Sandra.

More recently, Georgetown has begun to serve as a similar route that is more publicly available. For example, James had played folk music for many years and had dabbled with instrumental traditional music in the past, but he really only began playing Irish (and) Newfoundland instrumental music when someone told him of the Georgetown session and he decided to try it out. This route has therefore been similarly created and maintained through the actions of particular musicians in town over the two years prior to my fieldwork, during, and continues today. Other musicians mentioned university courses elsewhere that prompted their interest in playing traditional music. Often it was a

family member or friend that provided the initial impetus for learning. Duncan Cameron, a professional musician, commented in a public discussion about my research (November 20, 2009) that in his experience people often hear a single band performance or CD that they love and this is what begins their interest, as seen with Gerry Strong at the beginning of this thesis. As seen in Sandra's discussion, many musicians also saw traditional music as an alternative musical endeavour to classical music, which, as discussed, many did not enjoy. Following their introduction to traditional music, musicians began on the route of learning their instruments, learning new tunes, and learning the ideals associated being a traditional musician.

4.2.2.3 Learning a tradition

I was at the Bridie Molloy's session one Sunday afternoon in my usual position: sitting at the table and listening quietly. One of the musicians, Steve, asked me if there was a tune that I would like to play. I did manage to think of a tune to suggest, but then I refused to start it myself, too shy or scared. Steve then said he could not remember how that tune started and asked me how it went. I immediately started the tune not thinking to be nervous and only then realizing that he had tricked me into starting it. Yes, I admit, I am gullible. The other musicians then joined in and played along.

Learning to play traditional music involves learning a repertoire of tunes as well as learning the aesthetics, ethics, and embodied behaviour to become the "type of person" who plays traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music (Bryant 2005). In the example above, Steve was teaching me appropriate behaviour at a session, to start tunes and to play with confidence. He was also offering me the experience of doing so. For musicians

who begin playing traditional music later in life, the process of empowerment is necessarily a conscious endeavour. In this sense, musicians' learning processes follow closely those described by Mahmood (2005) regarding the self-formation undertaken by women in the mosque movement in Egypt. As with the goal of following an unconsciously pious life, although these musicians work consciously to learn the music and its ideals, they aim to one day be able to perform those ideals without thinking about them. Sessions constitute an important context this learning takes place.

I explore in this section several of the methods that musicians employ to achieve these goals of musical empowerment. Yet, I also discuss how these musicians struggle in trying to model themselves and their pathways according to the "image" of a musician who also learns unselfconsciously, simply absorbing the music and the sounds from their social environment. In addition, many of these musicians had previously empowered ideals of performing classical music that they had to unlearn or shift in their playing of traditional music. These discussions are significant in considering evaluations of musicians' performances and the politics over musicianship discussed in chapter 5.

One of the significant means of learning this music and its ideals is attending sessions. The example given above, where I was tricked into starting a tune, shows how sessions can provide support to beginners, to help them grow as players and learn from others, including learning the necessary confidence involved in playing. This learning occurs through experiences of playing the tunes, as well as discussions with other musicians and observations of those who represent the ideal image. Anne explained why she continued to play and to attend sessions: "it's the challenge, the quest for getting

better." Sessions are also significant for learning musicians to develop connections with other musicians. Thus, with the hope of gaining the sound, the tunes, and the knowledge, along with the fun and the socialization that I will discuss in chapter 6, many learning musicians attend sessions enthusiastically.

Yet, sessions can also be a source of fear and discomfort when learning musicians feel they cannot participate or they are left playing alone without the sense of confidence that those that claim an identity as a musician seem to embody. This lack of confidence was seen, for example, in my refusal to start a tune. One musician, Adrian, who has been playing traditional music for many years, similarly explains:

Adrian: I'm so nervous at the sessions. If they ask you to play a tune, well I don't know what to play or I'll get like these memory slips

Sam: oh, I know.

Adrian: It's the scariest thing. But it's nice talking afterwards and they're encouraging. They're like "oh that was a great couple of tunes," or "can't wait to play again."

The performance of certain behaviours, such as starting tunes, continues to make Adrian nervous even after playing for many years and with the encouragement of other musicians. Rebecca Bryant suggests, again referring to playing the saz in Turkey, that "the exact memorization of thousands of songs is not simply about developing one's repertoire but about developing oneself as the type of person who is capable of calling on that tradition" (Bryant 2005:230). Thus, Adrian, I, and others who consistently experience memory lapses at sessions and nervousness about our ability to contribute and play tunes have not yet become the "type of person who is capable of calling on that

tradition." That is, we are still emperoning ourselves to the ideals of becoming a traditional musician.⁴⁶

Yet, we also devise strategies to help our learning and playing at these sessions. We therefore negotiate our own pathways in order to learn in a variety of ways as we try to "become" traditional musicians. Such strategies include working on tunes and practicing at home, attending the beginner-oriented sessions, meeting with each other to learn new tunes, recording sessions to learn from later, and taking formal lessons. Other scholars have observed similar strategies that learning musicians employ (Cope 2005:135; O'Shea 2008b:111; Smith 2006). Many learning musicians listen extensively to recordings and attend other performances of traditional music. Most members of Fiddle Group were, for example, present at the concert by Conal Ó Gráda, Bernadette nic Gabhann, and Lynda Anderson, three musicians from Ireland and the Shetland Islands.

These activities all offer musicians examples or direct instruction in the music and the ideals associated with it. As the Personal Narratives Group points out: "we consciously and unconsciously absorb knowledge of the world and how it works through

⁴⁶ The different performances of this self-confidence and knowledge are clearly seen when comparing Adrian's discussion of learning tunes with that of Peter, who is a recognized professional musician. Adrian and Peter both acknowledge they have more to learn. Adrian comments,

It boggles my mind how much there is to know about it... It's so intimidating and, well it shouldn't be, but it's like this whole other world. Being able to pair tunes beautifully or I don't know much about different keys or what keys flow well to each other.

On the other hand, Peter says that "every session I go to now, I hear tunes that I don't know, but I'm not intimidated by that like some people are. I'll get around to it eventually." With a near infinite supply of tunes, there is therefore always more to learn, even for the most accomplished of musicians. There is always also the challenge of performing them in creative and expressive ways. The unpredictable nature of sessions also brings the new challenge each week of combining musically with new musicians and different instruments. Thus, just as musicians are continually emperoning themselves to the ideals of being a traditional musician, musicians are continually learning musically as well. Yet, the contrast seen in Peter's lack of intimidation, as opposed to Adrian's ambivalence, stems from a knowledge held by Peter that he nevertheless contributes to the session and can perform the ideals of being a traditional musician both musically and personally even if he still has more to learn. Adrian, on the other hand, remains unsure.

exchanges of life stories. We constantly test reality against such stories, asserting and modifying our own perceptions in light of them" (Personal Narratives Group 1989:261). Through attending sessions and concerts and listening to recordings, amongst other methods, learning musicians consciously and unconsciously "absorb knowledge of the world." Anne's acknowledgement of the "challenge" of learning, for example, demonstrates her conscious efforts to learn. Thus, through these means, musicians hope to absorb the proper sounds and technique, the aesthetics, ethics, and embodied behaviour associated with this music, as well as the tunes themselves, learning to "become" a "type of person" who plays traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. We also constantly assess our own performance and that of others relative to these ideals, judging how we have improved and what more we have to learn (Mahmood 2005:139).

In considering the use of sheet music by some musicians we can see how learning musicians adhere to ideals of expression and dynamism associated with playing traditional music. This occurs even though many such musicians do not consider themselves to be "musicians" and are not assessed to have sufficiently emperoned the ideals of being a traditional musician to be recognized as such. Many musicians who came to traditional music from a classical background use sheet music, either as their primary source for learning new tunes or as an aid. There are many resources available to musicians who can read music, such as a plethora of tune books and online websites (Waldron and Veblen 2008). TheSession.org, for example, allows users to submit ABC

and sheet-music to tunes, and request notation from others.⁴⁷ I myself have used this resource extensively and many others have said they do as well.

Yet, many of those who use sheet music as their primary method of learning struggle with the process. They see traditional music as allowing and encouraging expression and dynamism. As seen below in the narratives of two musicians, however, the traditional transmission process is often contrasted with ideals of classical knowledge that include seeing music as an entity distilled in a piece of written sheet music. Thus, they struggle to achieve the traditional ideals since they grew up emperoning the aesthetics, ethics, and behaviour required of classical music.⁴⁸ Frank expressed his frustration to me as we talked about the use of sheet music in an interview,

I was able to make sense of tunes that I was hearing by being able to read them. You know simple notation was, a book of tunes and that, I guess enabled me to continue on and then have something else to refer to. I think that's part of what I now blame as one of my short-falls, you know. After years of studying the piano and you're taught that music is something that's on a page. There, this is it! [Frank held up and pointed to a piece of paper in front of him] Then you try to do something with it, but there it's on paper. What a hoax! What a mistake to try to teach people that. Because music is, it's so, it wasn't something that you listened to.... So now in retrospect, I realize that I had this early reliance of getting the visual cue of notes on a page that I didn't realize was going to mean, you know,

⁴⁷ ABC is a notation developed by Chris Walshaw in 1991 as a simplified method for writing out tunes using ASCII characters (Waldron and Veblen 2008:101). This allows rotated tunes to be more easily transferred across the internet than sheet music or the "dots."

⁴⁸ The differences in aesthetics, ethics, and embodied knowledge between classical and traditional music are not as great as often perceived and portrayed by musicians. I discuss below how sheet music is used by many traditional musicians in learning, passing on, and preserving tunes. Technique and musical precision are also important in the performance of both classical and traditional music, particularly in professional performances. Henry Kingsbury (1988) also argues that there is much interpretation and personal feeling involved in the performance of classical music. As Kingsbury states, "the analytic distinction between textual and aural transmission of music is at most an imprecise one. A distinction between these categories should be conceived metaphorically in terms of a broken, or even dotted, line" (Kingsbury 1988: 94). Nevertheless, the differences (real or perceived) between these two categories are significant for musicians in interpreting their struggles with traditional music and in delimiting what it is that makes music "traditional."

I'd have to somehow get away from that, not use that as the basis for learning and the music, and I still find that that's a handicap.

As Frank expresses here, he actually feels his classical music training is a hindrance to his ability to learn traditional music. Rachel expressed similar struggles,

I don't think there's a problem in having it to start... But it's a big problem in relying on it... In some ways I think it's much better to never have, not to be able to read music. Yeah. I mean it is. I shouldn't even say "in some ways." I think it is much better not to be able to read music and also not to have had sort of formal classical training because it's just, it's hard to lose some of that. It's hard to relax. I think the real fiddle players are, they just do what their body's telling them to do, or their fingers, not really worried about rules or form and all that.

While the influence of sheet music on traditional music was asserted by one musician to be "more of a 1700s kind of issue than a 2009 kind of issue," some musicians continue to struggle with its role in 2009, as seen in Frank and Rachel's discussions. Both musicians expressed struggles with learning to play by ear and doing "what their body's telling them to do, or their fingers" – an embodied knowledge they did not learn from classical music. In addition, they also struggle with the personalization and variation involved in the performance of traditional music, accustomed to the idea that music is contained within "a page."

These musicians recognize the ideals embedded in traditional music. They each continue to remake themselves consciously after the model traditional musician that would have unconsciously emperoned these ideals. In order to become "traditional musicians," however, they also feel they have to unlearn previous musical knowledge, which might mean un-emperoning themselves from the model of a classical musician or otherwise (O'Shea 2008b:96). This is a much more intricate process than simply acknowledging that a traditional musician should play by ear. As Rachel says, "it's hard

to lose some of that.” It is often held that fully trained classical players sound like beginners playing traditional music when they first start (Corcoran 1992:7). Thus, we can see how the beginnings of a musicians’ musical path affect their later travels. Their musical beginnings meant they struggled as they tried to emperon the archetype.

As a result of these musicians’ struggles and their non-ideal background, Frank, Rachel, and other musicians in similar positions usually stress their own lack of ability. Both questioned me about why I would want to talk to them as musicians when they are just trying to learn. Yet, just as musicians’ narratives of their musical childhoods served as a means of constituting their self-definitions according to the ideal path, discussed above, learning musicians’ discussions about their musical struggles provide a means of constructing their selves according to those same ideals.⁴⁹ This occurs as musicians think about what those ideals are and try to incorporate them into their playing.

As Nicholas Thomas (1992) argues about the objectification of tradition, as the social practices of a particular society or group are described and discussed, they come to constitute that society or group. The performance of traditional Irish music and dance comes to characterize the social existence of rural Ireland, for example, for insiders and outsiders alike (Rapuanò 2005: 57). Thomas states, “in a dialectical process, the group and the particular practices are redefined as they come to connote each other” (Thomas 1992:215). On an individual level, as Rachel and Frank think and talk about the practice

⁴⁹ The narrative process differs in both cases, although the effects are similar. For musicians who grew up with musical childhoods, their narratives offer a way of reconstituting those childhoods according to the ideal path. On the other hand, for learning musicians who struggle with how their lives fit that path, their narratives about their musical struggles relative to the ideals provide a means of integrating those ideals into their lives and their selves. The first is based on establishing confluence between musical lives and ideals and the second is about interpreting and incorporating differences.

of traditional music, as well as through their performance of music itself, their self-definition becomes "redefined." Learning musicians' narratives about Newfoundland being a "musical place" and its influence on their performance of this music, for example, represent a recognition and empowerment of ideas that associate traditional music with specific places, discussed further in chapter 7. As such, these musicians' lives and narratives simultaneously help refute the ideal path as the route musicians necessarily must follow to become a traditional musician and reaffirm that path as they try to reconstitute their selves according to the ideal.

As Thomas indicates, however, this is a two way process and the practices themselves may change. The process of change with regards to sheet music is partially underway. Many do not see the use of sheet music as completely contrary to the playing of traditional music. Several musicians have combined the aural process with their skills at reading. For example, Walter has learned primarily by ear even though he came to play traditional music later on in life. He is currently a recognized traditional musician who plays professionally. Yet, Walter employs methods that he finds useful, such as ABC, though he also commented that he liked ABC because he can see the notes and listen to a tune at the same time. He thereby continues to emphasize a listening component to learning traditional music. Several other recognized traditional musicians actually said that they wish they could read sheet-music. Like Walter, they see it as a useful skill for playing gigs, passing on tunes, and preserving the music. These musicians, however, have already become recognized as traditional musicians. Sheet music, to them, would merely be an addition to their constructed selves, not a barrier to their re-making. Its use

is therefore negotiated within the ideal of playing traditional music and it continues to be debated as musicians form and reform ideal versions of what it is to be a traditional musician.³⁹

Similarly, a classical background is not considered a drawback to all musicians who play traditional music. In fact, the Suzuki method of learning can be complementary to the aural process of traditional music. This method is another common pathway through which musicians came to play traditional music. The St. John's STEP fiddlers program that allows for students to learn classical music and traditional music simultaneously means that those who learned through the Suzuki method did not express similar struggles as musicians who had learned according to the Conservatory method. Instead, they talked about how their training served them as they had well-trained ears for learning through the aural process. Gail who had first learned classical music through the Suzuki method, commented "I did Suzuki as a kid, so have the ear... I think I learned almost everything by ear... I never sit down with a book unless it's something that I've heard." Gail and other musicians who learned through the Suzuki method had grown up learning that music could be learned both aurally and through sheet music and so they did not conceptualize the two as opposed endeavours.

³⁹ Through my own experiences I can see how sheet music is both an aid and a hindrance. I began learning using sheet music, as did many other members of Fiddle Group and those with classical backgrounds. Yet, I struggled to remember pieces in sessions where sheet music was not accepted, or even to keep up in Fiddle Group where it was allowed. As I learned, through interviews, how others went about learning traditional music I began to try learning by ear, even picking up a few tunes while playing at sessions. I found the method much easier to adapt to playing with others and I had more confidence in playing. At the same time, referring to sheet music can speed up the process of learning a tune and serve as a check on what my ear and fingers have learned.

As this classical method does not provide all the same ideals of personhood, those who take up the performance of traditional music must still remake themselves, but they have already learned some of the ideal embodied knowledge. As more and more musicians from a classical background play traditional music, the conceptual distance between the two genres gets closer. Many musicians have and continue to borrow instruments and musical ideas from classical music and classical musicians (see, for example, the discussions about the band *Cooltóirí Chualann* in chapter 2). In addition, the aesthetics of proper intonation, tuning, and attention to technique, which are a significant component of the performance of traditional music today, overlap with aesthetics of classical music.

Yet, currently musicians continue to uphold the ideal of an aural process that emphasizes variation and dynamism in performances. Musicians like Rachel and Frank therefore continue to contend with the task of becoming a "traditional musician," remaking themselves and entwining their self-definition with traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music and its ideals. The different routes taken by musicians and the levels of emperment of these ideals, in turn, have a significant influence on their status within the traditional music scene in St. John's and beyond. The next section provides a more in-depth analysis of how musicians are evaluated on their musical and personal performances and their musical pathways, leading to politics over musicianship as musicians are granted status and authority based on such judgements.

Chapter 5: The politics of musicianship

Sandra, a musician who does not describe herself as such, insightfully told me:

If you want to get into the politics of it, everybody should be a musician. Everybody is a musician. If you hammer on a coffee table, you know, there, that's your percussion. You could be a musician. So there's that whole idea of who is a musician anyway? Who has the right to pick up an instrument? Well, everybody should in the ideal world. But that said, I don't necessarily want to be playing *Mussels in the Corner* on a Friday night all night. I want to play way fast, you know what I mean. It's all relative. I can't play as fast as those guys.⁵¹

Sandra comments that "in the ideal world" "everybody is a musician." Yet, as seen in the example that opened the previous chapter, not everyone in St. John's considers themselves a musician, disclaiming the status and meanings associated with that label. Drawing on the discussions of musicians' musical pathways in chapter 4, this chapter explores the politics of becoming a traditional musician.

I first explore the different factors that contribute to assessments that a musician is "good at" playing music and a "good musician," thereby influencing their status and authority within the traditional music scene of St. John's (Bryant 2005; Frith 1996). Yet, authority is only relevant within a social context. I therefore consider musicians' participation at sessions around the city and explore the many hierarchies enacted and negotiated when musicians play collectively and how these influence musicians' participation in sessions. I conclude by considering how, through these political negotiations, musicians are led down certain routes or choose certain pathways. These choices are part of musicians' process of empowerment and shape their social locations within the session scene of St. John's.

⁵¹ "Mussels in the Corner" is often perceived and promoted as a quintessential Newfoundland tune. As such, several musicians commented how they saw it as somewhat "cheesy" and it is rarely played at sessions.

5.1 Negotiating status

I was sitting at Fiddle Group one night. We were playing at a house out in the Battery that week.³² I had had a lovely stroll walking there on a not-too-hot summer evening with another member. There were big bay windows behind me looking out into the harbour as we sat around the dining room table, gossiping, and chatting as usual. We were talking about membership and doing introductions because there were a few people present who were not regular attendees. Tracy mentioned Derek, who had attended Fiddle Group once before. She said he was a really good player and that she thought he played professionally. I brought up that I had recently spoken him and he had mentioned he was interested in attending the group again. "Why?" Tracy asked me and I replied that I thought he liked to play whenever he could. The conversation moved on to other topics.

What Tracy really meant by asking "why?" however, is that she thought Derek was too good a player to want to play with us. Derek was accorded higher status, because he played professionally and because Tracy judged his playing ability to be far beyond that of most members at Fiddle Group. As musicians follow their musical pathways and learn to play traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, they also emperson themselves to the archetypal image of a "traditional musician," as discussed in chapter 4. As part of this process, however, some musicians' musical pathways and performances follow more closely to these ideals than others. As such, these musicians both claim and are granted status and thereby authority as "traditional musicians." I explore in this section how the elements of the ideal musician are combined with a wide variety of other ideas such as

³² The Battery is a well-known area of St. John's located at the entrance to the harbour and built into the rocky slopes of the area.

talent, ability, musicality, professionalism, and authenticity that influence aesthetic and ethical judgements of musicians and their musical and personal performances.

5.1.1 Talent and ability

Notions of acquired ability and inborn talent influence musicians' ideas of how to achieve status as traditional musicians and whether it can be done. As discussed, the archetypal ideal emphasizes effortless learning from a musical social environment. Nevertheless, there was a sense that musical ability and the necessary personhood could be deliberately acquired.

Bear: Once you learn one tune, well you'll get another one. Once I learned to play a tune all it was a little bit of patience...

Sam: And a lot of practice.

Bear: And a little bit of talent... and a bit of age. You've got to age with it too you see. It's no good learning to play for two hours and drop dead, that's no good. You got to play it and live for a while so it'll, so you can get into it.

The self-reflexive project of emperment is then a viable, if not ideal, path to achieving status as a traditional musician. Yet, there is no question that it is also a long road, regardless of when someone started on it. As Bear says "you've got to age with it too."

Thus, one of the measures by which status is "traditionally" assigned to musicians is age, based on their emperment and continuation of ideals of tradition (Basegmez 2005:168; O'Shea 2006-2007:6). The presence in St. John's of many musicians who have been playing traditional music since they were children, however, creates a configuration where a significant number of younger musicians have been playing longer than many older musicians, at least in the context of sessions. This situation was also observed by Basegmez among her participants in Ireland (Basegmez 2005:168). Those younger musicians who started and continued this process from when they were five or six years

old, for example, have been expanding their repertoire, learning technique, and emperoning the ideals of being a traditional musician for almost twenty years by the time they are twenty-five. I, on the other hand, will be forty-three by the time I have twenty years experience playing traditional music.

Thus, despite their age, many young musicians have had time to acquire musical ability, repertoire, and technique. This sometimes leads to frustration about one's musical path and lower confidence in one's ability for older musicians who have nevertheless been playing for only a few years and similarly to some awe for the young musicians judged to have great musical ability. In addition, the seeming difficulty in learning later in life may be compounded because many believe learning music is an easier process as a child.⁵³ As a result, differences in ability and thereby status between older learning musicians and younger advanced musicians are enhanced.

In addition, ideas of inborn talent are conflated with ideals of unconscious learning and mystify this process of learning and emperonment (Rapuano 2005:158). Despite encouraging words of just needing "a bit of age" to acquire musical abilities, as Bear says, you also need "a little bit of talent." John Blacking (1973) has argued, based on research conducted among the Venda of South Africa, that musicality is culturally constructed. Yet, there was a sense among many musicians that some people just do not have it. Walter told me of his wife that "it's just not in her" when I asked him if she played. Others cited examples of family members who had been listening to tunes for

⁵³ This belief was shared by adult learners of traditional music in the UK, studied by Peter Cope (2005:132).

decades who still could not tell the difference between two tunes, or different types of tunes, and so certainly could not play them.

Henry Kingsbury observes, of the classical conservatory system, how “the various manifestations of talent... can be seen as manifestations of one ‘thing,’ namely hierarchal inequality” (Kingsbury 1988:82). This observation extends to the performance of traditional music in St. John’s. In this manner, through ideas of talent and unconscious learning, musicians are granted a higher status for their musical abilities as opposed to those who are not judged to have been born in the right environments or with the right skills (O’Shea 2008b; Rapuano 2005). Thus, those who are seen to be talented are seen to be born “good” musicians and thereby naturally “good at” playing traditional music and able to produce music that “sounds good.”

5.1.2 Musicality, professionalism, and authenticity

The emphasis on talent and ability is also compounded by a focus on musicality and virtuosity through the influence of the music and recording industries (O’Shea 2008b:27; Sommers Smith 2001:116). At one time in Newfoundland, the measure of a good musician was how danceable their playing was (Smith 2007:150). The shift in music to a listening context and the spread of recordings led musicians to compare their own playing to that on recordings, which emphasized the music itself rather than the social relations it helped create (R. Clark, public discussion, November 20, 2009; O’Shea 2008b:27).³⁴ Standard tuning, clear intonation, detailed ornamentation, and improvisation have all become important to the aesthetics of playing traditional music in Newfoundland

³⁴ I explore in chapter 6 how musicians do create social relationships at sessions, but also how these differ from community dances.

(Smith 2004:173). What it means precisely to be good at playing traditional music has then changed dramatically in the past hundred years, integrated into the archetype through the production and consumption of recordings, professional concerts, and participation in sessions by professional musicians.

The rise of a professional class of musicians is another significant influence of the music industry, though this has happened only recently in St. John's and though it is actually very difficult to separate the categories of "amateur" and "professional" (Finnegan 1989:13-14; Osborne 2007:192; Stebbins 1992:38-46). The question is not just whether a musician gets paid but includes their musical ability and social networks, among other criteria. Nevertheless, self-proclaimed amateur musicians almost always assign greater status to those they judge to be professionals as seen, for example, in Tracy's comment about Derek's desire to participate in Fiddle Group. This status is assigned in part because professional musicians are usually believed to have greater musical ability and musicality, although one professional musician pointed out to me that this is not always the case.

All of my participants who are recognized traditional musicians in St. John's are also professionals in some capacity.³⁵ As a result, a musician's status, derived from his/her connections to ideals of tradition, is combined with their professionalism, ensuring their high position in the musical hierarchy. Rapuano (2005) observed a similar confluence of hierarchal positions held by musicians playing in Chicago. In addition,

³⁵ The confluence between professional and traditional musicians may be exaggerated among my participants, many of whom I met at professional sessions in an urban centre. I am aware of recognized traditional musicians who are not professionals, though they are rarely seen at the sessions in town. They are also usually older musicians who are accorded respect for their age, as well as for their connections with the performance of traditional music in community dance contexts.

those who rely exclusively on music for a living are accorded special status as "full-timers."

Thus, the confluence of professionalism, musicality, talent, and ability grant such musicians significant status and thereby authority. By the same token, musicians who do not feel they have put in the same effort and do not want to do so deny their status as musicians. Alex, who opened the previous chapter, explained "If I'm not a musician it's simple, I'm just doing it for fun and if it's not perfect then that's too bad [i.e. not a big problem] because I'm not a musician." In doing so, however, the significance of work that Alex nevertheless does put into his music goes unacknowledged, since he is just doing it for "fun" (Rapuano 2005).

Alex's comment also contrasts "fun" with "work," implying that the two are contrary endeavours. The ideals of being a traditional musician emphasize "feeling" and "expression" and so performing as work runs the risk of losing that "authentic" expression of self. I pick up this discussion, as well as a further consideration of full-time musicians' status, in chapter 8 in relation to ideas that "authentic" music is performed as a "leisure" activity and not work. There are also tensions between the hierarchies discussed in this chapter and ideals of community learning that are associated with egalitarianism and communalism. Musicians are therefore judged not only on their professionalism and musicality, but also on their sociability, particularly at sessions. Others will comment that so-and-so is a "lovely player," but they will also point out whether they are a "lovely person." Such a person is welcoming of others and easy and

fun to play and get along with. Alternatively, musicians might discuss how another musician is unwelcoming, arrogant, and imposing.

Thus, many professionals attempt to re-embed their music within the relations of the archetypal musician, of playing with others and of creating memories and lineages by disassociating themselves from the professional status. As one full-time professional musician commented:

I don't even, when I say I'm a professional musician, I'm also not too attached to whatever that means, you know. I play music and I suppose in the strictest sense yeah, I'm a professional, but that can mean so many things. I mean I meet players all the time and I kind of don't like it in a way because they say, you know "oh I can't play with you because you're a professional." There's this intimidation thing that comes with and I don't think that way at all. I'm just another person playing.

These musicians focus on a more egalitarian ethos that is about sharing music with one another, rather than competitiveness in their playing and ability (Basegmez 2005:164; O'Shea 2008b:97-101). Such ideas about sharing music and playing with others contributed to Derek's inquiry about joining Fiddle Group, even if he is a much more skilled player than most members.

5.1.3 Evaluating status

The label of "musician," that Alex and several other people who regularly play music disclaim, myself included, therefore has a wide variety of associations with ideas such as ability, talent, professionalism, musicality, and authenticity. In the case of traditional music, it is also associated with musicians' performances of the ideals discussed in the previous chapter: a traditional musician should play dynamically and expressively, but also maintain links with "tradition" through lineages of tunes, styles, and musicians. As musicians contend in various ways with becoming the "type of

person" who plays traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music they assign status to themselves and to others based on their performance of the component ideas and ideals. Performances are therefore simultaneously expressions of musicians' ability, musicality, authenticity, professionalism, talent, and connections with ideals of "tradition."

In relation to playing the saz in Turkey, Rebecca Bryant discusses how mastery is also expressed, at least partially, in a discourse of correctness, which includes both performing and judging what "sounds right," as well as what is a good tune or who is a good player (Bryant 2005:227-230). Musicians will encourage and compliment "good" performances, or provide negative reinforcement to unsuccessful performances, and this too is part of what it means to be a musician. As Gary indicated in chapter 4, some musicians have been asked to leave the table or told their playing was "terrible." I also discuss below the many other subtle and not-so-subtle ways such judgments are enforced.

Yet, such judgements, as well as individual performances, are not just about assessing status; musicians are also asserting the *authority* to create music in a particular way. In discussing the performance of classical music in the United States, Henry Kingsbury observes that "musical performance... [is] inextricably intertwined with the negotiation and reproduction of social inequality" (Kingsbury 1988:105). In disclaiming the label of "musician," learning musicians simultaneously grant the authority to make judgments to those who do claim that status. We are, in effect, saying that we are less talented, less professional, less musical, or less "traditional" than those who are "musicians." We thereby submit ourselves to learning and playing according to the ideals of those who are "musicians" until we achieve that status ourselves.

As Sandra observed at the beginning of this chapter, however, "it's all relative." Most professional traditional musicians in St. John's would similarly emphasize their lower status relative to the "super stars" of traditional Irish music. In addition, precisely what constitutes "good" music is a matter of some debate, seen with the various factors that contribute to such assessments. For one musician a "good" performance may involve a complex tune, played fast and with intricate ornamentation, meeting professional/industry standards for performance. Another may define it as a performance where all musicians were able to participate and musicians were successfully able to blend with one another. Another still may consider a "good" performance to be one that is true to ideas of how this music was historically played on the Island – generally considered to be fast but with little ornamentation. The emphasis on different ideals of "egalitarianism" or "professionalism" therefore relate to different ideas of what is important in creating "good" music.

The performance of traditional music therefore involves a politics in negotiating different definitions of good music, as well as who has the authority to assert these definitions, to make assessments others' of musical performances, and to enforce established hierarchies. As a result, the hierarchies among musicians, along with the measures used to evaluate a musician's performance, are not static. The next section explores some of these politics, considering how musicians negotiate their relative status at particular sessions and in the session scene as a whole in St. John's and, in the process, assert different ways of playing "good" music.

5.2 Playing musical politics

As a result of their associations with ideas about "community" music-making, sessions are often portrayed as egalitarian and spontaneous.⁵⁶ It is true that generally "sessions follow no precisely preconceived or rehearsed plan, they involve variable numbers of musicians, and in principle they usually welcome both strangers and beginners" (Fairbairn 1994:567). Helen O'Shea, however, critiques extensively and convincingly the romantic portrayal of sessions as open, informal, and harmonious (O'Shea 2006-2007, 2008a, 2008b). She explores the negotiations over meaning within sessions and argues that traditional Irish music as a nationalist symbol in Ireland, maintained through discourses of ethnicity, locality, and authenticity, is inherently exclusive (O'Shea 2008b). These politics exist in various forms in most session contexts, regardless of their focus on Irishness or Irish music, and other scholars have also discussed the hierarchies, informal rules, conventions, and etiquette that organize the unfolding of sessions and musicians' interactions (Fairbairn 1994; Rapuano 2005; Stock 2004).

Some scholars and musicians attribute the politics and hierarchies at sessions to their commercialization and commodification, although others argue that these dynamics existed beforehand (Basegmez 2005:169; Kaul 2007:704; McCann 2001:92; O'Shea 2006-2007:8). Sessions are certainly influenced and shaped by economic interests, including the professionalization of musicians discussed above (Kaul 2007; McCann 2001; Rapuano 2005). What seems most likely, however, is that while musicians have always negotiated their status with one another, the introduction of one or two paid hosts

⁵⁶ "Community," like "tradition" and "authenticity" is itself a very contested term.

to a session, which occurs at the downtown sessions in St. John's, adds additional lines of negotiation (O'Shea 2006-2007:8; Rapuano 2005).

This section thus considers how the different factors contributing to a musician's status are applied in various ways in the contexts of specific sessions in St. John's. I also discuss how musicians negotiate the tensions between ideals of egalitarianism and community music-making and the hierarchical divisions that exist among musicians, asserting different ideas of what is important in playing this music, as well as how these negotiations influence the ways that musicians are able to participate in these sessions.³⁷ I consider first sessions that strongly adhere to ideals of egalitarianism. I then consider the professional sessions in town. I explore how these sessions emphasize ideas of musicality and professionalism, yet, in maintaining connections with ideas of community music-making, are accepting of learners. In both cases I consider how conventions and rules of etiquette enforce different ideals in practice and how the relative status of individuals may influence the direction of a particular session and the application of social sanctions.

5.2.1 "Egalitarian" sessions

Some musicians focus on an egalitarian and inclusive ethos when organizing a session. Different individuals may take a leading role throughout the night. The temporary leaders can be those with the most confidence, repertoire, enthusiasm or simply someone who has a tune they would like to play. Jonathan P.J. Stock (2004), for example, provides an excellent analysis of how informal leadership roles direct the course of an evening. Yet, without a designated leader, no one has explicit formal control

³⁷ Later chapters will explore further political negotiations regarding the social structure of sessions, the music's and sessions' connections to particular places, and their use for economic gain.

over the session. In St. John's, Fiddle Group and the Georgetown session constitute two such sessions. These follow primarily a "democratic" system, to use the descriptor of one musician, whereby the level of ability and repertoire of the majority of members in attendance direct many of the tunes that are played and their speed. Yet, musicians at these sessions are also generally attentive to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate.

In following such a system, these sessions are often attended more widely by learners. As mentioned, many learning musicians are referred to these sessions and they constitute a familiar route for such musicians to follow. The Georgetown session was started precisely because some learning musicians in town wanted a session that was open to everyone and where no one was in charge. Fiddle Group is similarly known to be composed largely of learning musicians. In addition, although an individual holds Fiddle Group in their home each week, the session is generally seen to belong to the whole group. As a result of the composition of these sessions, the tunes are usually played at a slower pace. Musicians at these sessions are also allowed to noodle quietly along with tunes and learn them through playing with others.³⁸ The private and off the beaten track locations where Fiddle Group and the Georgetown sessions take place facilitate this focus on learning rather than on creating performance-quality music.³⁹

³⁸ "Noodling" refers to the process of playing notes in the key of a tune in order to determine the "correct" notes.

³⁹ As discussed in chapter 2, the Georgetown pub is located away from the downtown area of St. John's within the Georgetown community. The pub is thought of as a "local" pub, but few members of the community go there on a regular basis. It is therefore much more of a secluded venue than the publicly advertised and easily accessible sessions located on Water Street, which is the main downtown area of the city.

James, who attends only the Georgetown session stated, "I love the idea that it's open and that you can be o.k. to make mistakes or whatever." While several musicians indicated that the presence of a few solid musicians at any given session provides an anchor for the others to participate and "make mistakes," musicians like James also emphasize that they like the focus on inclusion and learning regardless of musical ability. Some musicians attending Fiddle Group explained that the group is their only opportunity to play and practice because of other obligations in their lives.

The particular conventions that govern these sessions, specific to each group, ensure inclusive participation and organize the unfolding of the evening over time. For example, Fiddle Group usually starts each week by playing two jigs, the "Road to Lisdoonvara" followed by the "Swallow's Tail Jig." The group also ends each session by playing "Velvet in the Wind," a waltz written by Émile Benoit. Sometimes the music will continue beyond this last tune, but it marks the time when most individuals leave for home or to attend Folk Night at the Ship.⁶⁰ In addition, our sets of tunes are rarely changed and new tunes are introduced only sporadically to the group. These conventions ensure that musicians have a manageable and consistent set of tunes to learn and a supportive non-performance group to practice and play with, as well as a sense of consistency in their playing each week.

The goal of these sessions, reflected in their particular conventions, is therefore not on making great music. Tracy, who has been playing with Fiddle Group for many years, explained:

⁶⁰ Stock observed a similar purpose of the closing tune at a session in Sheffield, England (Stock 2004:63-64).

We're not performing and we know the quality of our music. And I don't mean to bring everybody down with me when I feel that way, or with the lowest common denominator sort of thing, but the fact is that, as you know, as a group that's how it is. You know, we are willing to include all those people so, or all of us me included, so that's how it's going to sound.

The status of the session as a whole is assessed relative to "objective" evaluations of musical quality and professional standards of performance. As Tracy says, "we know the quality of our music." In organizing the session, however, members focus on ideals of egalitarianism and inclusion. While Tracy indicates the playing of the group revolves around the "lowest" denominator, in practice the group plays according to the ability of the majority of musicians. Beginners have the opportunity and support to become part of this majority, but at the same time more advanced players must also adhere to conventions that could constrain their performances. These conventions explain why Tracy questioned Derek's desire to play with the group.

The Georgetown session is not so routinized, as players move in and out from week to week. As a result, there is no sure way to know how beginner-oriented any particular session will be. Yet, consistently there are regular players and common tunes and sets that are played, along with an active effort to include all individuals regardless of their ability. At one point, all of the tunes and sets played at the session were posted publicly on Georgetown.org, the Georgetown community website. This distribution of information provided advance knowledge of the repertoire played at the session to anyone with internet access. The existence of a finite and not too large list is also some indication of the consistency of tunes and sets that are played there. In addition, similar to Fiddle Group, musicians will work to include all individuals in the session. If a musician

has not played many tunes that night, they will often be asked if there is something they would like to play.

The openness and public venue, however, also allows more advanced players to join. If such players form the majority for the evening, they may in turn leave the beginners behind in their desire to "play way fast," as Sandra observed at the beginning of this chapter, or to play new and exciting tunes and not standards the likes of *Mussels in the Corner*. Yet, as I discuss below, there are various ways that conventions and etiquette are enforced, sanctioning inappropriate behaviour, maintaining the openness of these sessions, and emphasizing that what is important is that everyone is included and plays together.

5.2.2 Professional sessions

Tunes at the other sessions in *St. John's* are played faster with more of a focus placed on the "quality" of music, in relation to professional/industry standards of performance. This different emphasis organizes these sessions in distinct ways to those discussed above. Beginners are not often referred to these, but they may be invited by regular attendees, as I was. Such invitations require pre-existing connections to regulars at a session. A musician might make these through attending *Folk Night*, volunteering at a festival, attending the sessions as a listener, or even at their work-place. For learners, these invitations can play an important role. The musician who offered the invitation acts as a sponsor to the other musician, particularly if they are a learner (see, for example, Fair 2009:13). Ian, who was invited to a session downtown many years ago through existing connections to a musician there, said, "I eventually went. They made me welcome, the

crowd did. I just stayed. I think it was being invited and feeling that I had learned enough that I could probably play one or two tunes to actually offer something." An invitation legitimizes a learning musician's presence in the session to other musicians and to themselves.

Of course, individuals can also join a session without receiving an invitation. In Ireland, it has been frequently observed that learning musicians make "pilgrimages" to sessions across the island and particularly to sites of "authentic" traditional music such as Clare, in search of master musicians to learn repertoire and style from (O'Shea 2008b:98-99). They seek to become part of prestigious lineages and to create their own memories and stories associated with the tunes. This gains them "cultural capital" and status back home along with new musical abilities (O'Shea 2008b:78-104). Learning musicians in St. John's similarly may choose to join the more advanced sessions in town in hopes of new opportunities to learn from players who are "better than you." In other words, learning musicians attend these sessions precisely because of the status, ability, and musicianship of the advanced musicians.

Hazel Fairbairn, however, discusses how these sessions differ from other forms of musical apprenticeship in that musicians are supposed to join by playing the full melodic line, rather than being offered a different musical role based on ability (Fairbairn 1994:586). This system is maintained by rules of etiquette, shared by most musicians at professional sessions, holding that you should not noodle. That is, you should not play tunes that you do not already know how to play. This etiquette differs from the conventions at Georgetown and Fiddle Group that allow some noodling and accept that

some people will play along with tunes they do not yet fully know. A musician who began attending sessions as a beginner many years ago, but is now recognized as a proficient traditional musician, observed, "if you're a beginner then you sit in the session and mostly don't do a thing." Noodling muddles the sound and makes it more difficult for other musicians to hear and play.

Fairbairn suggests that this system derives from the historical development of traditional music in Ireland, seen also in Newfoundland, which was originally based on solo performances for dances but has evolved into a group endeavour (Fairbairn 1994:585-597). While this history likely has a significant influence, the focus at these sessions on quality music, influenced by music and recording industries, also shapes this system. The professional musicians at the downtown sessions encourage learners to attend. As Gary said "you learn from playing with people who are better than you." Yet, they also want the session to sound good, which necessarily restricts the playing of learning musicians. This focus on quality occurs partially because it is a paid gig for some of the musicians and has implications for their reputations as professionals and their ability to get gigs later on.

The presence of a paid host is, then, a significant source of organization at these sessions. The pub pays the host to ensure that the music is of a certain quality and that the session takes place, thereby setting expectations for the music and the musicians in attendance. Hosting musicians insist that, to them, a session is the same whether they are hosting the session or not. Yet, they have a vested interest in ensuring the professional quality of the music. As one regular musician at these sessions said, "you want to be

adding always, not taking away. If you're taking away from what's going on, you should be quiet and enjoy the music." Such a focus, in turn, shapes the participation of learners.

Yet, the majority of musicians at these sessions are advanced players. Even following a "democratic" system, these musicians hold the majority of seats at the table. At the same time, they are themselves often negotiating their relative status with each other. During my fieldwork, for example, there were two skilled professional musicians from "away" living in St. John's and attending many sessions. While these musicians were genuinely and enthusiastically welcomed at the sessions by the local regular musicians, the sessions nevertheless also served as a venue, at times, where these musicians could competitively showcase their abilities. They vied for status as the best fiddle player or the person with the best tunes or the best stories behind them.

These negotiations take place through the direct performance of music. "The proportional distribution of the melodic lead" reflects hierarchies among individuals (Fairbairn 1994:585). Hosting musicians generally lead many tunes or suggest that specific other musicians start a set, directly indicating to whom they are giving leading authority to for those particular tunes, which is itself an expression of authority. Alternatively, some musician may start a tune without being directed. Acquiescence to their choice is signalled insofar as other musicians join in. On the other hand, if musicians leave to get a drink, go to the washroom, or begin chatting with one another, they thereby withdraw their support and leave the performer to go it alone. On some occasions, letting a musician play alone may be a sign of respect and appreciation for their music, but that is distinguished by the attentive listening offered by musicians,

yelps, and comments of support during the tune. Often a guitar and bodhrán will join in such performances.

These various negotiations that take place are also reflected in the spatial arrangement of chairs (Fairbairn 1994:585; O'Shea 2006-2007, 2008b). While musicians form a rough circle, certain spots are preferred to others relative to the walls of the pub and other musicians. At Erin's, the hosting musician has a spot where he sits each week, with his back to the wall, facing the door and some of the "audience." Other advanced musicians generally sit nearby, also with their backs to the wall. Colin Hamilton comments that similar arrangements are common at sessions where "musicians tend to form a closed circle with session leaders in the middle of the group. If they are seated in a circle, however, some will be facing the punters... and it will generally be found that the highest musicians... are seated in this advantageous position" (O'Shea 2006-2007:6). These "musical chairs," as O'Shea refers to them, are as much a part of the negotiations over individual hierarchies as are as other aspects of performance (O'Shea 2006-2007).

Yet, as discussed in chapter 4, the "traditional" image of how traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music was learned is based around direct contact with family or community members. As such, both scholars and musicians connect sessions to the practice of community music-making and community dances that once formed the social context for the performance of this music in Ireland and in Newfoundland. In considering the practice of sessions in Ireland, Hazel Fairbairn concludes that "the session recreates the intimate involvement between local people at a house dance" (Fairbairn 1994:597). Similarly, in discussing Irish pub sessions in the United States and their connection to a

sense of "home" in Ireland, Deborah L. Rapuano states "the pub session recreates a sense of community that is essential for the continued connection to a homeland" (Rapuano 2005:113).⁶¹ Several of my participants also assume a connection between the practice of sessions in Newfoundland and dances or "times" that occurred in rural areas.

Regardless of historical accuracy (see chapter 2), these assumptions reinforce the idea that a session is a part of "traditional" music making practices in a community environment. As a result of these idealized paths, in which traditional music should be learned directly from other musicians, and because most advanced players were once themselves in a position where "where you sit in the session and mostly don't do a thing," advanced musicians are generally encouraging of beginners participating respectfully in the session. I was invited to play at the downtown sessions as a learning musician on numerous occasions. Yet, I was always aware of the expectation that it should be *good* music that is played.

The limited musical role available to beginner musicians and the focus on quality influence who chooses to attend the downtown sessions. One musician who generally does not attend these sessions nevertheless explains her acceptance of how they are structured: "Cause they want to do their own cutting edge style or their own playlist... They should be allowed that. Again, they're professionals mostly or they're excellent at what they do. And so they might end up leaving people out." Here, again, we see how the presence of professional or highly proficient musicians organizes the structure and control of sessions. Yet, beginners support this organization because of these musicians'

⁶¹ Chapter 7 will explore further the connections to "places" that musicians form through playing this music.

expert status and ability. Helen O'Shea suggests in her analysis of the negotiations that take place at sessions that "beginners cheerfully accepted their low status" (O'Shea 2006-2007:7). O'Shea's statement is perhaps slightly exaggerated. Nevertheless, beginners who continue to attend are well aware of the etiquette governing their participation and they generally try to adhere to it to ensure their continued acceptance and because of their own support of the professional musicians and the quality of music they play.

Their respectful observance of etiquette is also a performance of their role as a learning musician – another example of Rebecca Bryant's observation that the process of apprenticeship is a matter of both learning to become "good" and "good at" (Bryant 2005:224-225, 233-234). That is, it is not simply learning the ideals but also performing them. Observing etiquette shows respect for traditions and for other musicians. This idea may seem contrary to the ideals of "community" learning and sharing. As will be discussed in chapter 6, however, a musician who does not observe "common sense" and disrupts the music also disrupts the goal of making good music together and is thereby at odds with the sociability of these sessions.⁶²

5.2.3 "Getting it"

I was at Erin's for the session one Friday night. It was a busy night, not long before the Folk Festival. When I arrived around 9pm, the session was well underway.

⁶² The Auntie Crae's session is considered little throughout this chapter, for reasons of analytical clarity and space. Yet, it provides an interesting case study. As discussed in chapter 2, the session at Auntie Crae's was advertised as open and welcoming to beginners. There was no paid host at these sessions and the regular musicians were careful to support the participation of learning musicians, asking them to start tunes and encouraging them to continue attending. Auntie Crae's also had a relatively consistent repertoire. Yet, the session was also very fast, often more so than other sessions downtown. In addition, the session had more of a performance dynamic due to the regular audience members and the influx of tourists during the summer, emphasizing the quality of the music. There are clear tensions here between ideals of inclusion, musical preferences and styles of those leading the session, and demands of the audience.

There were already nine musicians playing along with a few musicians in the audience without their instruments. I pulled up a chair outside of the circle, pulled out my instrument, sat, and listened. It was a hot humid night, the air was dense, and everything was sticky. I would get up from my chair and my shirt would peel off of the back. There was a smell of sweat; but there was also a lot of music, good music, and really good musicians. Several more came in throughout the night, many sitting outside the circle since there was no more room around the musicians' tables. There was much playing and little chatting. Many other musicians stopped in the pub to listen as they heard the music outside while walking by: a good night.

Partway through the evening, a young man came into the pub with an instrument. A musician who was not playing that night gave up his seat for him. The young man was sitting behind and to the right of me and I moved over so he could be a little closer to the circle. He said he was from away but really liked the music scene here. He would play little bits of a tune when no one was playing, but while the music was going he would play long slow notes. I wrote in my field notes "he was really quite off and I didn't mind at first but after some time it was getting annoying right in my ear. He asked if I played the flute (it was sitting on the table beside me). I said I did and would if I knew the tune. He said I should just mess around, that's what he does. I didn't comment, but to me that's the exact opposite of what I thought you should do... While he was up getting a drink I shifted my chair to be closer to another musician, but this effectively blocked off the young man." When speaking a few days later with Andy, a musician who had been there that night, he agreed with me that you should only play tunes you knew, demonstrating

our own adoption and support of such rules of etiquette. Andy also commented how such people can be such enthusiastic players but have no sense of "decorum."

As discussed above, conventions and etiquette upheld by the regular musicians at sessions serve to direct the session throughout the evening. Such etiquette differs among sessions according to different emphases on inclusion, egalitarianism and musical "quality." Noodling is generally acceptable at Fiddle Group or the Georgetown sessions, provided it is not disruptive of the session. It is, however, much less acceptable at the downtown sessions, though can be done very quietly. The Fiddle Group and Georgetown sessions generally play regular sets of tunes and include all players regardless of ability. At the same time, an individual may be censured for playing too many tunes that others do not know or at a speed that is unachievable by most. The downtown sessions will similarly include all respectful players at the session table, but musicians will play a vast repertoire of tunes throughout the night. Anyone is welcome to join in if they are able and provided the music remains a certain "quality."

Social sanctions are applied at all sessions to ensure musicians conforms to the various etiquettes and conventions and maintain the social system of the session. Shifting my chair in the example above, while rude on my part, also enforced a sanction on the young man for behaviour deemed inappropriate. He was playing tunes he did not know and disrupting the session for other players. Mumbling, grumbling, glaring, moving chairs, playing different tunes, in different keys, at different speeds are all tactics that can and are used to enforce the etiquette and conventions of a session (see also Basegmez 2005:168-172; Fairbairn 1994:567-568; McCann 2001:91-93; O'Shea 2006-2007:9-13,

2008b:130-134). As Anthony McCann comments, the session "is the site of focus for a complex system of codes and etiquettes, humiliations and value reinforcements that are distilled from the wider context of the Irish traditional scene" (McCann 2001:92). Certain individuals are thereby included or excluded from the session in various ways, either explicitly or implicitly. Most musicians, however, enforce etiquette and conventions because doing so ensures the quality of the music and sociability for everyone else.

Yet, this sanctioning is also a political process. No musician with any sense would attempt to exclude the hosts of a session or their friends who are regular attendees, since the session, in effect, belongs to those musicians. They also have status as recognized professional musicians. In addition, the hosts have the authority granted to them by the pub owners as being "in charge" of the sessions. Similarly, musicians who are welcomed regulars at sessions often have more flexibility in pushing the boundaries of these rules.

In relation to women's participation in the mosque movement, Saba Mahmood (2005) discusses how, although women adhere to a standard corpus of Islamic doctrine, they are able to choose precisely how they follow this doctrine where rules and practices are unclear. Yet, she also discusses how women's ability to negotiate and make choices in relation to ambiguous Islamic doctrine is, in fact, predicated on their knowledge of and adherence to those very traditions (Mahmood 2005:179). I may noodle along quietly with a tune at the downtown session if I think I will not disrupt the music because I know I am recognized as a respectful participant. In addition, sanctioning is not an everyday occurrence. Musicians at all sessions are often very welcoming, supportive, and encouraging. But this support depends also on the musician "getting it" – that is, the

unwritten conventions of participation – at least to some extent. It means being able to interact in an acceptable manner musically and personally. Musicians are then, in turn, able to negotiate precisely how they want to follow the ideals of musicianship, emphasizing certain ideals of inclusion, for example.

5.3 Political pathways

Musicians choose which sessions to attend based on the routes available to them or they may forge new pathways on their own. The politics involved in such choices are clearly evident in considering the cases when sessions overlap, as was the case Tuesday evenings during my fieldwork. Brian also discussed in chapter 2 how a group of musicians started a new session at the same time as another that was already being held. He commented on the negotiations that took place at that time:

I remember being part of this discussion and it all seemed so important at the time, but in retrospect it was foolishness. You know, where do your loyalties lie? Are you going to stay here because you've been goin' for ten years or are you going to suddenly pack up and go with those guys 'cause they're good players?

The choice discussed by Brian was between “loyalties” to certain musicians and to a particular session, as opposed to wanting to play with those “good players” who started the new session. Similarly, choosing which session to attend on Tuesday nights would make a statement about “loyalties” as both the Georgetown session and Nautical Nellie’s session occurred at the same time.

Those advanced musicians who attend Georgetown or Fiddle Group, and there are a few, are choosing to emphasize sociability and ideas of equality over always making great music. Similarly, learners who attend downtown sessions are actively seeking to improve their musical ability and thereby their status within the music scene. Within

sessions, musicians negotiate their relative status and ideals through their choice of tunes, keys, and speeds. They may play, for example, a tune that everyone knows or alternatively another tune that only a select few players know. Each choice makes a statement and is a means of navigating one's own place within the session scene. Through a beautiful performance of a complex tune, a musician may increase their recognition and status as a player within the session. Yet, that musician may also be seen to be simply showing off if the tune was started at an inappropriate time or with the knowledge that few others could participate. Part of becoming a "good" musician is learning to be "good at" making such musical statements appropriately.⁶³

As discussed in chapter 1, Simon Frith argues that through the performance of music, musicians create their individual and collective identities. He states that "music... articulates *in itself* an understanding of both group relations and individuality" (Frith 1996:110-11). Helen O'Shea (2006-2007, 2008b), however, critiques this conception of individual and collective identity formation as always being a homogeneous and harmonious process. She uses her experiences of attending sessions in East Clare, Ireland, to explore the tensions in collective music-making. She concludes that Frith and several other scholars tend to "idealize the process of making music together (as if it *always* produced a transcendent experience) and to elide the experiences of participants (as if *everyone* had the same experience)" (O'Shea 2006-2007:15). The discussions throughout this chapter clearly illustrate the competing interests and tensions that are part

⁶³ These choices are not always "politically" motivated. Musicians often choose the tunes that happen to come to mind at a given moment or ones they simply enjoy playing. Similarly, other musicians' decisions join in or not are not always an evaluative judgement. A musician may simply have to go to the washroom at that particular moment. Yet, each choice is nonetheless a choice with implications for other musicians participating in the session.

of musicians' experiences in attending sessions in St. John's, also experienced by O'Shea.

Music therefore does not act simply as a mediator of individual group relations allowing them to "create" certain identities (Frith 1996:109,122). Music is a means by which musicians *negotiate* different meanings and possibly introduce and create new meanings and practices in the process. As O'Shea argues, the process of making music with other musicians is "as much about engaging with difference... as it is about the pursuit of sameness" (O'Shea 2006-2007:17). Frith similarly comments that music provides a means for groups to understand themselves "as a particular organization of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference" (Frith 1996:111). Yet, rather than attending to how individuals develop a feeling of "groupness," Frith assumes that such groups are automatically created by the simple process of performing music together (see Brubaker 2004; for a useful analysis of related problems).

Musicians do not necessarily come to agree on the meaning or experience of their music even as they play together collectively. Negotiations are continuous and ongoing and the social context may be altered through them, as musicians create new pathways for themselves and others who may follow. I suggest that taking part in these negotiations and politics is also significant in establishing a musician's membership within the traditional music scene and their understanding of and adherence to the shared ideals of its performance (Peace 2001).⁶⁴ It is therefore an important part of becoming a traditional

⁶⁴ I draw here on Adrian Peace's (2001) research in a small village in rural Ireland where he explores how the process of debate and negotiation among individuals acts as means of establishing and maintaining community membership. I elaborate on this idea in relation to social connections among musicians in the next chapter.

musician. I elaborate on this point further in chapter 6, in considering the role of these political negotiations in creating social connections among individuals. I explore the feelings of "groupness" that musicians do experience while also taking into account the competing interests at sessions and different structural forces embedded in the music.

Chapter 6: Playing music together

It was Wednesday night, Fiddle Group night. Except, this week an e-mail had been sent to the group to say that we were convening not to play, but to listen. A couple of well-known and well-liked professional musicians were leaving town and there was to be an impromptu session featuring most of the top-notch players in town. The group was going to "say goodbye, have a pint, and be inspired." The session was underway as we all arrived one or two at a time at the Duke of Duckworth, a popular pub in the downtown area of St. John's. Everyone found a seat but made sure to leave enough room for the other musicians (the ones who were playing). There were at least fifteen musicians participating in the session by the end of the night. Fiddle Group was also out in significant numbers with at least ten members in attendance. We all sat and chatted, mostly amongst ourselves. Sandra was telling me about some of her experiences playing at different sessions, for example, while we also listened to the great music. Occasionally someone would have a short chat with one of the performing musicians while they were taking a break. Everyone there, playing or otherwise, was having a pint, a good time, and enjoying each other's company.

While this example illustrates the influence of status on musicians' position at the various sessions discussed in the previous chapter, it also demonstrates how sessions are important spaces of socialization for musicians, whether they are performing or not. This chapter therefore explores the social relationships that musicians form with one another, particularly at sessions, and the role these relationships play in their musical and non-musical pathways. I first consider the different ways that musicians develop relationships

at sessions. I also explore how these relationships are shaped by the structure and ideals of the music and of sessions. In particular, musicians' gender and age have a significant influence on their social experiences. Yet, I also show the varied types of relationships that musicians form and how these extend beyond the session table into different networks of relations and constitute a significant part of musicians' lives. I conclude by considering how sessions provide musicians with different ways of belonging by participating in different capacities as musicians, learners, or audience members.

6.1 Social music

Sessions are one of the primary venues for the production of traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music in St. John's and, as such, their explicit purpose is to play tunes with other musicians. The previous chapter explored how different sessions in St. John's emphasize different goals and ideas relating to musicality, professionalism, and egalitarianism, among other factors. Yet, as one advanced musician observed about why he attends Fiddle Group: "It's not the music, it's the people. The people are fabulous" (Gan 2007). Sessions are therefore seen as a social event as much as a musical event (Fairbairn 1994:567). This section explores how musicians establish and maintain social relationships through the performance of this music and through participation in sessions.

Sessions are associated with drinking, socializing, and having a fun time (Fairbairn 1994:583; Sommers Smith 2001:120-121). A good session is also good "craic," to use the Irish term.⁶⁵ The party atmosphere of the pub and the attentive playing of music are sometimes seen as opposed endeavours (Fairbairn 1994:588-589; O'Shea

⁶⁵ Craic is a Gaelic word, frequently used in Ireland, but I have rarely heard it in Newfoundland. The term generally refers to having a fun time and enjoying good company and good conversation.

2006-2007:7-10; Sommers Smith 2001:120-121). Nevertheless, the excitement of a fun night out, a few good pints, and music among friends may also contribute to the energy of musicians' performances and an engagement with the music and other musicians. Musicians at all sessions therefore discussed and demonstrated throughout my participant observation how the people they met at sessions were an important part of their experiences, along with the music.

Various scholars have explored how sessions and the networks of musicians playing traditional Irish music constitute a community (Fairbairn 1994; McCann 2001; O'Shea 2006-2007, 2008a, 2008b; Sommers Smith 2001; Waldron and Veblen 2008). As discussed in chapter 5, many musicians and scholars relate the practice of sessions to ideas of past community music-making practices. In Raymond Williams' analysis of the term "community," he suggests that most definitions refer either to "actual social groups" or they indicate "a particular quality of relationships" (O'Shea 2008b:99; Williams 1983:75). Both senses of the term have been applied to sessions by musicians and scholars and I similarly explore the "quality" and "groups" of social connections that musicians develop.

Williams points out, however, that tensions can arise from the two definitions (O'Shea 2008b:99; Williams 1983:75). Using Williams' analysis, Helen O'Shea also observes that rather than focusing on inclusion, ideas of communalism are inverted in some sessions in Ireland, creating exclusive expressions of community (O'Shea 2008b:99-140). As I have discussed, she concludes that the session is about "difference" as well as "sameness" (O'Shea 2008b:139-140). She also follows this conclusion by

questioning why many musicians and scholars insist on retaining such notions of "community" when there is clearly much more to the picture (O'Shea 2008b:139-140; O'Shea 2006-7:18).

O'Shea tentatively suggests that in adhering to the rosy picture of sessions as "communities," "we foreshadow the illusory treasure of authenticity through an imaginative cultural narrative that seeks wholeness and community, a sense of home where the heart is, yearning for what cultural theorist Iain Chambers calls 'the myths we know to be myths yet continue to cling to, cherish and dream'" (O'Shea 2008b:140). In other words, we simultaneously adhere to ideas of a world rooted in an ideal "traditional" and "authentic" life that is closely tied to this music. I agree with O'Shea's suggestion, but I think that these ideals also have a considerable impact in shaping the sessions and musicians' participation in them, even if they are "illusory" in certain regards. Chapter 4 discussed in detail how musicians' selves become entwined with these very ideals of what it means to be a traditional musician. In addition, for many musicians, the significance and strength of this "imaginative cultural narrative," of having a sense of communality with other musicians, may override the politics, feelings of ambivalence, frustrations, and other less positive feelings and experiences involved.

I therefore consider how some musicians feel a sense of "community" through these connections and emphasize the important sense of belonging this has brought them.⁶⁵ Those who make these references are often musicians who have come from away or those who have left the Island and formed music communities elsewhere. Others,

⁶⁵ Musicians' sense of belonging in relation to ideas of place will be explored in the next chapter.

however, prefer to define these connections in other ways. Most musicians refer to the music "scene," which includes the networks of musicians, the pubs, the concerts, and the sessions – in other words, the overall context. This is the terminology that I have applied consistently throughout this thesis. Some musicians also refer to the social networks, with only partial seriousness, as "clubs" or simply as their music friends or the session crowd. Thus, following my treatment of "tradition" and "authenticity," I do not seek to define and demarcate the session "community" and impose this analytical category upon musicians nor, in contrast with some scholars, do I set out to disprove the myth of community. This chapter rather explores the experienced feelings of "groupism" or "communalism" held by musicians and how these are created or contested (Brubaker 2004).

As part of this exploration I also consider how this particular music and its associated practices shape the connections that musicians create.⁸⁷ As Frith states, "while music may be *shaped* by the people who first make it and use it, as an experience it has a life of its own" (Frith 1996:109). In its performance, music is a bodily practice (Bryant 2005; Frith 1996). It therefore has a material existence through the sound produced as well as through the bodies of the musicians who perform it. This materiality is ephemeral in performance contexts but also more lasting and tangible in the bodily modifications experienced by musicians (Bryant 2005:233-234). Readily apparent modifications may

⁸⁷ I discussed in chapter 1 how my approach to the study of music explores its performance as a "musical experience" (Frith 1996). Music is therefore a site where more than just music "happens," as seen in chapter 5 where I considered how the performance of music was also a political process. Music is also a practice onto which other ideas and meanings are embedded. As discussed in chapter 4, performing traditional music is intimately intertwined with ideas of "tradition" that influence musicians' interpretations of how the music should be performed, by whom, and how the music is connected to ideas of the past. In this chapter I consider how the music itself has a role in shaping individual and group experiences.

include calluses on musicians' fingers (mostly by string players), finger nails cut certain lengths (for string players, these are often different lengths for each hand) or muscular adaptations to the requirements of playing a particular instrument. Yet, as discussed in chapter 4, part of the process of becoming a traditional musician is to incorporate into one's self embodied behaviours based on particular aesthetics and ethics (Bryant 2005; Mahmood 2005). Musicians thereby incorporate every tune they learn into their bodies through both muscle and aural memory. One of the strangest experiences I have felt is joining in on a tune that someone has started and being able to play it, while not having a clue what the tune is.

In addition to these effects on the bodies of individuals, conventions about how the music should be performed have an influence on how musicians interact and perform together. Frith further states:

Once we start looking at different musical genres we can begin to document the different ways in which music works *materially* to give people different identities, to place them in different social groups. Whether we're talking about Finnish dance halls in Sweden, Irish pubs in London, or Indian film music in Trinidad, we're dealing not just with nostalgia for "traditional sounds", not just with a commitment to "different" songs, but also with experience of alternative modes of social interaction. Communal values can only thus be grasped, as musical aesthetics *in action*.⁶⁸

(Frith 1996:124)

⁶⁸ Frith's discussions here of the material existence of music are static. He argues in this passage for considering how the social configurations of particular musical genres materially shape individual experiences - "the different ways in which music works *materially* to give people different identities" - as though the music and the social context are both homologous and unchanging (Frith 1996: 124). Musicians do not necessarily agree on the meaning or experience of their music even as they play together collectively and these meanings and experiences change through time. Performing traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music collectively at sessions, for example, is a historically specific practice. In Newfoundland it started to take hold only within the past thirty years. However, when considered within a particular historical, social, and cultural context, the idea that music has a part in shaping individual and collective experiences is useful in exploring "alternative modes of social interaction."

The music shapes musicians' experiences based on genres and conventions, as indicated by Frith, but also the subtle and not-so-subtle differences on emphasis in musical expression, discussed in chapter 5 (Frith 1996:124). I therefore consider how the relationships that musicians form with one another are organized and created in relation to the music and its social and material practices.

6.1.1 Collective music-making

Connections develop, at least in part, through the simple act of sharing a space and through the collaborative act of sharing in a musical performance. Rachel, who attends Fiddle Group, explained:

It's also interesting because as much as there's this connection that everybody experiences with this, it's not like you're all best friends outside of this.... So it's kind of cool that in spite of all that... there's something in some ways bigger than that....

I know some of those [musicians] that hang out together. But [some also] just say ok, that's enough of you, I'm glad we won't see each other until next week... But at the same time, [they'll say] you better be there next week. You know, they don't want to go unless you're there too, even though you [don't] completely meld really well or something.

As Rachel comments, some musicians would prefer not to hang out with one another outside the session. Yet, they nevertheless feel a connection to one another that is "in some ways bigger than" their differences outside the session.

As Hazel Fairbairn observes, "sessions dissolve boundaries" musically and personally, providing an opportunity to establish such connections (Fairbairn 1994:583). Rules of etiquette also enforce the sociability of the session and the collective nature of performance. Vince explains, "I mean, nobody minds if someone plays a new tune obviously. But if you come and all you play is stuff that you can play, you've just missed

the most important thing about a session, which is playing with other people.” An individual who only plays by themselves is seen to wreck a session as much as an individual who is “taking away” from the quality of the music. Similar sanctions are therefore applied to such individuals. The musical conventions of playing in a group also enforce the collectivity of a performance. In performing music at sessions, all musicians perform the same melodic line.⁶⁹ This melody is given only limited harmonic accompaniment in sessions and at the discretion of the players. In addition, while each individual is meant to improvise and individualize a tune, in performing music as a group, the constraints on this improvisation are significant. Musicians do not “solo” as with jazz music. Their individuality simply adds interest to the collective sound.

Fairbairn therefore argues that through this process, musicians at sessions “coming from all walks of life, express their *commonality* through the activity of playing music together” (Fairbairn 1994:583). Fairbairn is referring the *Fleadh* sessions in Ireland, but her comment offers some insight for sessions in St. John’s. Sandra, a member of Fiddle Group similarly comments how “everybody there has a reason – their personal reason for being there. Mine was, well actually mine was to play the fiddle, but what it became also was this little family.” Even if these musicians have nothing else in common, they share the music. The process of a shared musical activity creates a line of sameness across other lines of difference (O’Shea 2006-2007:17). For some, like Sandra, this commonality eventually extends into close relationships among musicians.

⁶⁹ Rhythm instruments, including guitar, bodhran and sometimes bouzouki, are exceptions.

In addition, through the process of *empersonment* musicians come to share ideals about the music and its performance, although, as discussed, they do not always agree on the specific emphases of these ideals. Frith states that part of the experience of performing music is that “communal values” are constituted through the act of musical performance which is a kind of “aesthetics in action” (Frith 1996:124). As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, sessions provide a venue for musicians to learn and negotiate the personal and collective ideals and values associated with traditional music. As musicians share in the music-making process in sessions, they also become incorporated into lineages of tunes, share in stories of a great or terrible session, along with gaining knowledge and experience of listening to and playing the tunes themselves. The “introverted” circle of musicians thereby, theoretically and ideally, includes all musicians, even if they are not playing (Fairbairn 1994:584). In the opening example, Fiddle Group was included in the session in certain ways as we listened, socialized, and learned, simply by being there.⁷⁹

6.1.2 “Give us a tune”

The sharing of music also binds people together through processes of exchange, which can be understood in the context of a gift-cycle (Kaul 2007:794-795; McCann 2001). The social function of the gift is best known in its exposition by Marcel Mauss, who argues that the process of giving, receiving, and reciprocating creates links among

⁷⁹ The circle includes all musicians under certain conditions and in different ways, as explored in chapter 5. Through its introversion, however, non-musicians are mostly excluded (Fairbairn 1994:584). The audience is not redundant; they contribute to the overall atmosphere of the session and are included in some of the fun and socialization (O'Shea 2006-2007:6). This is particularly true of regular audience members. I also discuss below the different ways that musicians can “belong” at a session that are not necessarily predicated on complete inclusion and participation.

individuals (Mauss 1990). Anthony McCann suggests that in sessions "the gift is the risk of self, the tunes, the songs, the chat, the shared experience, the history of personal endeavour" (McCann 2001:93). Thus, it is not just tunes that are given. The gift is the performance of tunes, of ideals, of socialization, of history or stories, and of personal expression. Peter similarly states that "music is a performance, it's meant to be shared, it's a gift, it's a talent that was meant to be shared with other people." Certainly, musicians will sometimes say "give us a tune," when asking a person to play a tune or a set of tunes.

Thus, part of the social and musical interaction at sessions is that each musician should be able to "offer something," whether their wit, their social presence, or their music (Fairbairn 1994:567). As Ian indicated in chapter 5, he only began attending sessions once he felt he had something to contribute. It is precisely the ability to "offer something" that brings intimidation for beginning musicians in joining a table, unsure whether they have anything to contribute. In other words, they feel they are unable to reciprocate the gift of performance that the other musicians offer. It is here that the legitimation offered by an invitation serves to support an individual's joining and participating in a session. Yet, the feeling that a musician is unable to contribute or that they are not capable enough as a musician may also discourage them from joining the session table, even at the beginner sessions. A musician's status is therefore also closely tied with this system of exchange. The ability for some musicians to "give" more reflects hierarchies of musicianship among musicians and acts as a symbol of their wealth of knowledge, level of empowerment, and authority within the traditional music scene.

However, in becoming part of a session and offering their social presence and the few tunes they might know, beginner musicians nevertheless begin to integrate into the cycle of exchange. They thereby begin to become part of the networks of giving and receiving. As memories of people and places become entwined with the tunes, the spirit of the giver may then be passed along with the gift. The relationships that musicians establish are then maintained, at least in part, through the obligation to reciprocate (Mauss 1990; Wilk and Cliggett 2007:158-159). Rachel explains, "Would I keep playing if I were by myself? No. I think not, if I didn't have this group [Fiddle Group]. I feel like it's a responsibility to this group [to continue attending]... I don't mean that I would be happy to give it up, but [playing with a group] forces you into it." In addition to "the quest for getting better," mentioned by Arne in chapter 4, the connections that musicians form with other people at sessions provide further reasons to *continue attending*. Once a musician has been to a session there is a sense that they should continue to attend in order to reciprocate the gift of tunes, drinks, or conversation they were given at previous sessions. Tunes, people, events, and memories thereby all become tied together in playing traditional Irish (and Newfoundland) music at sessions.

6.1.3 "You feel like you're inside the music"

While the sharing of music creates connections among musicians, some musicians and some sessions emphasize playing "quality" music, as discussed in chapter 5. The focus among musicians is thereby less on the social function of the music than on the music itself (R. Clark, public discussion, November 20, 2009; O'Shea 2008b:27). This distinction is particularly evident when compared with how traditional music was used as

an accompaniment for dances. The measure of a good dance musician was one who was good at keeping time and keeping the dance going, not the one with the best tonality or fanciest ornamentation (Smith 2007:150). The purpose of the music was to facilitate the communal activity of dancing. On the other hand, assessing the "quality" of music in relation to professional standards of performance is based on seeing music as an objectified entity that can then be aesthetically judged.

Yet, a focus on a certain quality of music may serve an additional social function in developing relationships among musicians. While this emphasis is related, at least in part, to the session's role as a paid gig for the hosts, one professional musician explained "you notice sometimes it goes places that it doesn't go other times. And when it really gets going and starts to work and pulsate the way the session should." Focusing on quality music therefore may also serve as a means of creating a certain quality of experience. When a session "goes places," the speed of the tunes increases, the amount of chatter decreases, and the musicians are engaged. The session is "flying" (Fairbairn 1994:568). Frank, a self-proclaimed amateur musician who primarily attends the downtown sessions, similarly expresses that it is:

Total escape from the worries of the world, it's an absolute escapade, like it's a departure. It's somewhere else, you're not anywhere else. When you're in the music that's where you are and you're nowhere else. So long live Irish music and sessions, you know....When it's somebody sitting across the table from you playing on the fiddle or bouzouki or whatever, accordion, your music then is alive and gets inside you and you feel like you're inside the music or something.

Helen O'Shea refers to this "pulsating" or "escapade" as being in the "heart of the music" (O'Shea 2006-2007, 2008b). This engagement is emotional, cognitive, and physical. Musicians' bodies move in time with the rhythm of the tunes and their embodied

movements create the melody.⁷¹ They are listening to and responding to other musicians and feeling and expressing the music, as an ideal traditional musician should.

The idea of this collective engagement has much in common with Émile Durkheim's (1976) theories of solidarity and "effervescence" that he explored in relation to religion and society. In his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim argues that individuals participating in a religious ritual come to share an emotional experience (Durkheim 1976; Rawls 2004:168). He argues that they experience an "effervescence," which is "a sort of electricity... Every sentiment expressed finds a place without resistance in all the minds... each re-echoes the others, and is re-echoed by the others" (Durkheim 1976:215-216; Rawls 2004:169-170). Durkheim argues that these collective emotional experiences create the sacred, which in turn enforces social solidarity (Rawls 2004:170-172). This effervescence can be compared with the feeling that a session "goes places" as musicians create and experience the "heart of the music." The "sacred" can similarly be compared to the music and its collective ideals. As Rachel commented, "there's something in some ways bigger than" a single individual's participation. Frank's comment certainly echoes Durkheim's description of the experience.

Helen O'Shea briefly considers how sessions in the context of "Willie Week," a yearly traditional music festival in Malbay, Ireland, are also permeated by a sense of *communitas* among musicians (O'Shea 2008b:97-99). The concept of *communitas* originates with Victor Turner who, using Martin Buber's words, explains it as "being no

⁷¹ Alcohol consumption may also contribute significantly to this feeling of "escape."

longer side by side (and, one might add, above and below) but with one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves toward one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from *I* to *Thou*" (Turner 2008:127). *Communitas* occurs during periods of liminality and is thereby a temporary experience in "anti-structure." Willie Week, for example, provides a liminal space wherein the politics and hierarchies in sessions and the wider traditional music scene are temporarily suspended in the spirit of shared learning and enjoyment, although O'Shea also discusses how conflicts over different ideals and goals persist (O'Shea 2008b:97-99).

Tim Olaveson (2001) argues, however, that Turner's concept of *communitas* and Durkheim's idea of collective effervescence are closely related to each other, although Turner's explanations are more developed and precise. Both concepts relate to achieving a temporary reality wherein individuals have a collective emotional experience (Olaveson 2001:107). Both concepts also capture the idea that in collectively performing music together, musicians are working toward a common goal of musical expression. Sometimes this common goal coalesces into a "flowering" of shared experience wherein the session is "flying" and musicians feel a sense of *communitas*/collective effervescence, momentarily transcending their differences and becoming one with the music and each other.

The goal of achieving this emotional, cognitive, and physical engagement with the music and other musicians is an important factor in many musicians' participation in sessions (Fairbairn 1994:568; O'Shea 2006-2007:15-17, 2008b:136-137). However, not

all musicians are interested in creating great music and focus instead on simply playing with one another. Thus, different musicians at sessions have different goals that structure the performances and musicians' experiences in different ways. These variations lead musicians to form different relationships with one another. The sharing of music and other gifts is common among all sessions. The gifts may vary in quality, size or appreciation, but all musicians become part of the cycle of exchange to some degree. Yet a focus on quality may limit the access to this cycle for some musicians. There is therefore some tension between the different types of relations musicians try to create at sessions and different ways of achieving these relations.

As Adrian Peace (2001) argues in relation to community membership in a rural town in Ireland, however, negotiating these tensions, as well as the politics discussed in the previous chapter, are also means by which connections among people are created and expressed. "What is ultimately important is that the ability to act as an interpreter of, and the capacity to function as a contributor to, the significant narratives in circulation over time, constitute a key criteria of community membership in their own right" (Peace 2001:73). Thus, just as musicians must learn to negotiate the politics of musicianship in order to become a traditional musician, these negotiations also play a part in the social relationships that musicians form with one another, as well as in the integration of musicians into the traditional music scene in a wider sense.

6.2 Structured relationships

Although the sessions and the music both provide various means by which musicians establish social connections with one another, they also shape musicians'

experiences in particular ways. I consider specifically the participation of women and elder musicians at the sessions in St. John's. I show how the music "works materially" and constrains these musicians' ability to participate in sessions through their location in pubs, as well as the influence of specific styles of playing (Frith 1996). Thus, while musicians choose their own musical pathways, the routes available to certain musicians are limited and directed in particular ways.

6.2.1 "They're not ladies, they're session players"

As seen in Chapter 2, the gender divisions between the downtown sessions and Auntie Crae's relative to Georgetown and Fiddle Group are noticeable. The average percentages of women at Bridie Molloy's, Erin's, and Auntie Crae's during my fieldwork were 20 percent and 26 percent and 15 percent, respectively. On the other hand, the average percentage of women at Fiddle Group and Georgetown were 44 percent and 68 percent, respectively. Gender divisions at public sessions have also been noted in Ireland (Basegmez 2005:86-90; O'Shea 2008a, 2008b:105-118; Ragano 2005:105-110).

Throughout Newfoundland and throughout the city of St. John's I have been told that there are many women who play traditional music. There is, for example, the women's accordion circle, which is meant to be "an informal, safe, and supportive environment for women of all ages to perform, experiment, and share stories about making music with their accordions" (Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society 2010). I know little else about the accordion circle except that it has sufficient numbers and interest to meet every week. Yet, I only saw one female accordion player attend a session during the summer, at the Georgetown pub.

When I asked my participants why they thought so few women attend the public sessions, few were willing or able to provide a critical explanation. Many musicians commented that the current gender distribution at sessions is "just the way it is" at the moment and the gender disparities do not have any greater significance. Some suggested it was simply a historical cultural trend or a reflection/function of women being restricted by other responsibilities. Rachel, a musician who is from away and who plays almost exclusively at Fiddle Group explains:

I haven't seen anything where I think that it's discriminatory. I just think that it's just the way it evolved, just like women don't fish. You know it's just part of, well, how are you going to learn to play the fiddle when you're looking after all of those youngsters?

It is certainly true that female musicians discuss their many obligations that interfere with their musical pursuits. Other responsibilities are therefore a likely contributing factor to women's low attendance at sessions. Yet, male musicians also spoke of the many other demands on their time, as will be discussed in chapter 8.

As Rachel suggests, no musicians claim that the sessions are discriminatory against women and many of the regular musicians at the downtown sessions said they would be happy to see more women participating. As I have discussed, several musicians encouraged me to join the sessions and told me that they hoped I would continue to attend. Despite the encouragement, several factors may contribute to the different gender compositions of the sessions in St. John's, including historical associations of the pub as a male space and the gendering of the music.

In relation to their research in Ireland and the United States, Helen O'Shea and Deborah L. Rapuano both discuss extensively how the space of the pub, where most

sessions take place, is gendered (O'Shea 2008a:56-58, 2008b:106-112; Rapuano 2005:105-110). Historically in Ireland women did not enter pubs unless they were the "dregs from the gutter" as Kitty Leyden, one of O'Shea's participants, commented (O'Shea 2008a:57, 2008b:57). Similarly, in Newfoundland, I was told that in the 1950s it was very uncommon for women to be in pubs and most pubs did not even have a women's washroom. While this is no longer true today, the historical legacy of the pub as a male space remains, circumscribing appropriate behaviour for women who attend (O'Shea 2008a:59). From my own experiences and anecdotal evidence, women continue to feel uncomfortable entering a pub alone. I also discuss below how some women also feel they have to change their dress or do not feel like they are fully accepted as females in the pub and as participants in the music.

The speed of the music and the emphasis on quality at some sessions may also relate to a gendering of the music. Some musicians also commented about a competitiveness found at sessions that they do not particularly enjoy. For example, when I asked Terry why she thought there were so few women at some sessions, she explained:

There's a lot of testosterone in the sessions. I'm not interested in playing music as fast as I can play it and I'm not interested in playing the music as loud as I can. I'm interested in music and if you're playing fast and loud, that's not music to me. I don't know about other female musicians if they find it, you know, just a little too high testosterone for them. There's a sort of competitiveness that creeps in. I'm not interested in that. I'd soon go to the amateur sessions and play, if you go to the amateur sessions there's lots more women there.

Most musicians asserted it was the quality of playing that mattered for a musician to be readily accepted at the downtown sessions. As discussed in chapter 5, however, there are different ways of measuring the "quality" of music. Terry suggests that the focus on the

objective quality of the music, rather than social relations, as well as defining "quality" as "fast" and "loud" may reflect gendered bias.

Sherry Johnson discusses how male playing in fiddle competitions in the Ottawa Valley, Ontario, Canada is seen as powerful, strong, confident, and aggressive (Johnson 2006:99). Some of my participants similarly indicated that there were distinctions between male and female playing. One professional musician, for example, said that women have "a different attack on it, a different approach to it like." Johnson comments that such differences may not *actually* exist between men and women's fiddle styles (Johnson 2006:100). Yet, she also observes that "the characteristics attributed to a masculine style... are considered also to be characteristics of good fiddling" (Johnson 2006:99). The gendering of musical style may therefore influence musicians' status at sessions as they are judged relative to gendered assumptions of how the music should sound. The perception that the professional sessions are fast and loud may also limit the participation of women who are "not interested" in performing in such a manner. Terry, for example, would rather attend the amateur sessions, where she acknowledges the playing abilities are lower, but she also commented how she finds the playing more musical (according to alternative definitions of musicality) and free of the competitiveness or "testosterone."

In addition, the performance of "good" music at professional sessions requires musicians to play with a particular personal, as well as musical, style. Kath Weston (1990) explores how labour productivity in blue-collared jobs in the United States is embedded with a wide variety of gendered assumptions. She discusses mechanics, for

example, take up gendered displays, such as literal muscle flexing, working with live circuits, or without safety equipment to demonstrate their strength and thereby establish reputations as “hard” workers” (Weston 1990:145). At the same time, female workers are judged on their abilities as mechanics relative to these gendered ways of demonstrating skill and productivity.

In a similar manner, at professional sessions musicians demonstrate the quality of their music by playing confidently and assertively. They do so by starting tunes, leading other musicians in sets of tunes, and unflinchingly “going alone” should the situation arise. My refusal to start a tune at Bridie Molloy’s, discussed in an example in chapter 4, was not a good performance of confidence and assertiveness. Yet, when Steve tricked me into it, he was informally teaching me that is how I should perform at these sessions. The difficulty for women is that such displays may conflict with female musicians’ usual performances of femininity. One of O’Shea’s (2008a, 2008b) participants in Ireland, for example, discussed how she was harassed by musicians and audience members in the pub for her confident and expressive playing (O’Shea 2008a:61). She then felt she had to learn to perform in an “acceptable” feminine manner so as not to draw unwanted attention to herself, which, in turn, interfered with her performance of the music (O’Shea 2008a:61). I did not observe any harassment of women who performed in Newfoundland. Yet, starting and leading tunes and “going alone” are, in essence, about drawing attention. As I have argued, in doing so, musicians demonstrate their emersionment of the ideals associated with traditional musicianship and assert their authority to create music a particular way.

Thus performing with assertiveness is a necessary component of participation in many sessions.

As a result, O'Shea suggests, in relation to her research in East Clare, Ireland, that those women who are accepted at sessions are generally accepted as honorary males (O'Shea 2008a:59-60, 2008b:110-111). This observation also seems to describe the situation at sessions in St. John's. Allison, a female musician who has attended the downtown sessions regularly, commented to me: "They've kind of accepted me as one of the boys, I think, to a degree." Rather than simply saying they accept her at the session, she phrases it that she is "one of the boys" and only "to a degree." Similarly, one evening at a session a fellow musician objected when another called myself and a friend "ladies," responding "they're not ladies, they're session players." One woman also commented that she did not wear skirts to the session because she thought she would not be taken seriously. There is therefore limited social space for women to participate as women in sessions (Weston 1990).

Female musicians in St. John's and elsewhere, however, devise strategies amongst themselves and individually in order to learn and play (O'Shea 2008a:61-63, 2008b:112-114). They meet in spaces like Fiddle Group and Georgetown to learn together, start their own sessions, practice on their own, and may attend sessions together for mutual support and companionship. It is important to emphasize that all musicians are genuinely encouraging of female players and happy to have them participate. Yet, the

musical pathways of female musicians are influenced by structural constraints associated with the music and the contexts in which it is performed.⁷²

6.2.2 Bearing the tradition

The sessions in St. John's feature many young players in their twenties and thirties. Although older musicians are generally respected as "bearers of tradition" and may have been mentors to some of the other session musicians, fewer participate in sessions (Basegmez 2005:168; O'Shea 2006-2007:10).⁷³ Again, the space of the pub influences this participation. Late night sessions with some focus on partying may appeal less to an older demographic (Basegmez 2005:80). In addition, the tunes and styles played at a given session are directed by the host and regular attendees, which also influence older musicians' participation.

As with most genres of music, the tunes that are popular one generation fall into disfavour the next. This may seem contradictory in a style that is based on playing "old" music by definition. Nevertheless, with a near infinite supply of traditional tunes along with new compositions, the repertoire at a session can change dramatically over the years. Even some tunes that were commonly played at the beginning of my fieldwork with Fiddle Group seem to be less commonly heard among the group now. Yet, as

⁷² I have briefly considered how gendered meanings associated with the social space of the pub, with the music, and with personal styles of performance shape women's participation, circumscribing how they must perform to play "good" music. Questions of gender, however, conflate with issues of status, age, life-paths, and professionalism, to name a few, in complex ways that I do not have the scope to address in this thesis, but would constitute a significant and fruitful area of investigation.

⁷³ Aantle Crae's is an exception as it has the oldest age demographic of all the sessions. Aantle Crae's is primarily formed of a group of friends who have been meeting together each week since they started the session, most of whom are retired. The session also takes place in a café during mid-day, differing from the other sessions all of which take place at night. Those who have full-time day jobs and short lunch hours are unable to attend, partially accounting for the different age demographics.

previously explained, the tunes and sets played at Fiddle Group remain relatively stable over time when compared to other sessions. One well-recognized and respected older musician explained to me that he does not often attend the sessions downtown because he no longer knows most of the tunes that they play, commenting that the music changed but he did not. Other older musicians do continue to learn tunes and join sessions. In addition, because of the respect accorded to such musicians due to their age and skill, their participation would be accommodated if they did choose to join in a session. Nevertheless, the change in tunes over time may affect the participation of older musicians, particularly when considered on a broader scale in terms of the historical context of the music and its performance at sessions.

There has been a dramatic shift in the past sixty years in the performance contexts for playing traditional music in Newfoundland and in the music style/genre that is played. As a result of the decline in popularity of traditional music and dancing in the 1950s, many musicians stopped playing traditional tunes altogether. While the development of the session provides a new venue for performing traditional music, the session differs from dances in that musicians play in groups rather than solo or in pairs. In addition, the style of music played at sessions is faster and more ornamented and the repertoire has a much higher content of contemporary Irish tunes (Basegmez 2005:81; Fairbairn 1994:595; Osborne 2007:192). As an example of the distinction between styles, Evelyn Osborne discusses how Newfoundland musician Kevin Broderick was well versed in the Irish repertoire, but was never employed for dances (Osborne 2007:193). Yet, Broderick was well-known and respected among session musicians in St. John's and performed

with several visiting Irish groups, illustrating the distinctions made between dance musicians and session musicians (Osboene 2007:193,198). Thus, many older musicians who were comfortable and highly competent playing for dances may not be comfortable playing at sessions.

Factors such as gender and age therefore shape musicians' paths to and through sessions and the ways musicians relate to one another. Musicians must negotiate more than simply their relative status according to their musical ability and connections with tradition. They must also negotiate the social and musical routes available to them. Yet, I now discuss how the music and sessions are nevertheless of great significance in all musicians' lives because of the social connections they form.

6.3 Musical social lives

Scholars have approached the social process of collective music making in various ways, as an expression of culture/society, as a reflection of culture/society, and as a means of creating culture/society (Blacking 1973; Merriam 1964; Seeger 1987). More recent theories also consider how, through collective engagement with the music, musicians create their collective identities (Frith 1996; Stokes 1994a). This focus on abstract conceptualizations of "identity," however, fails to account for the more substantial relationships that musicians form, discussed by Durkheim and Mauss and captured by these earlier theories of musical performance (Durkheim 1976; Mauss 1990). These relationships extend beyond identification with one another or with shared meanings and ideals.

Relationships have substance in a connection, through the exchange and sharing of tunes and through negotiation of their meanings. I explore in this section how these relationships are of great significance in musicians' lives as, for example, "second families" for musicians, networks of support of various kinds, and even business networks. I also discuss how the presence of sessions all over the world allows musicians to develop connections and feel a sense of "home" anywhere in the world there is a session taking place. I conclude by considering how this music and its performance at sessions provide musicians with a place to "belong" musically and socially, even as they simultaneously contend with the structure and politics of the music scene that shapes their pathways and their participation.

6.3.1 Creating networks

Sessions provide a connection for people, with a shared interest and love for the music. Vince, who has been playing at the downtown sessions for several years, explained:

I mean you get to socialize with people. I don't socialize a lot, I'm busy with work and so it's the one thing that I do that does bring [me] into contact with other people a fair bit. And, you know, there's a lot more to it than playing music as you've probably figured out. There's a camaraderie, there's a support and that we give to each other and it's just getting out and having friends who are interested in the same thing you're interested in.

Musicians create a wide variety of connections with one another and develop relationships of various sorts when they participate in sessions. Some musicians form close friendships or even family-like relations that extend outside the session. Some have met their future wives or boyfriends at sessions, for example. Other musicians meet each week at a session and rarely have a conversation. Musicians support one another

throughout their lives, offering advice, updating each other on news, or just having a fun night out and a bit of "camaraderie."

Members of Fiddle Group, in particular, strongly emphasized the social connections that they developed through playing with the group. Rachel explained,

It was a connection for all of us, you know. It was probably more social than music. I don't mean that we did more social things, we did a lot more playing probably than what we do now. But, you know, it was a connection because I had been here for two years at that point and not really connected with people. And Sally was new here. Joe was new. It just formed a, I don't know, making a sense of a sense of community or belonging or something like that, at the time.

Rachel, and others, created a sense of belonging for themselves through playing traditional music with other people.

Sandra similarly commented above that she likened Fiddle Group to a "little family." While lengthy, her full explanation is worth quoting.

Sam: You said fiddle group has sort of become a little family, does that play into why you still play?

Sandra: Oh yeah, for sure, why I still go to Fiddle Group. If Fiddle Group for some reason ended tomorrow, I'd still play my fiddle and probably I'd seek out other venues. But Fiddle Group was... like two things in one, you know like Certs. Two mints in one. You're too young for that, it's a commercial. Anyway, two mints in one. Fiddle Group was this outlet for me to get back into playing an instrument, which I'd abandoned, learn completely new music, which I really got into even though I thought I was going to hate, and meet these really weird but hilarious people that come from all walks of life. That, all of a sudden I'm networking people... And I mean it's not just a how you can use people but it's the friendships that have come from that group are unbelievable. So, absolutely I don't want to lose that... And you know I can't tell you it's just been this cascade of friendships that have developed from that group. Yeah, and friends that are family. Because most of us are from away and when you're not near your family at thanksgiving or Christmas or your birthday or whatever it is, it's really nice to have people who celebrate that with you or who you can celebrate with.

Sandra's comments touch on several ideas discussed in this chapter. She comments how the social connections she has formed with members of the group play a significant role

in her continued attendance, showing the ties between people and music: "two mints in one." She also comments how Fiddle Group is made from people of "all different walks of life," also reflecting Fairbairn's and O'Shea's discussions of the "differences" among individuals at sessions, as well as the "samenesses" they develop and come to share with one another (Fairbairn 1994; O'Shea 2006-2007, 2008b). Sandra also particularly emphasizes how "the friendships that have come from that group are unbelievable." As both she and Rachel discuss, the group, and sessions in general, provide regular contact with others for the collective purpose of playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. We share in important celebrations such as birthdays. It has also provided musicians from away, including myself, with a sense of home, "belonging" or "family" in Newfoundland.⁷⁴

While these strong family-like connections were emphasized primarily by members of Fiddle Group, as well as by musicians who play music with members of their biological families, musicians develop other connections at sessions that are significant in their lives. Musicians often hang out afterwards, particularly on a Friday or Saturday night, enjoying later performances or heading to other bars. Musicians also network at sessions. As Sandra says, "it's not just how you can use people." The social connections developed among musicians help them in other facets of their lives. Professional musicians will often meet future band members and network for gigs and the session can

⁷⁴ The system of exchange at Fiddle Group provides some explanation of these deep feelings that members develop. In sessions where there is less focus on the quality of music, the system of exchange is generalized; there is little accounting of how much each individual participates or the quality of their "gifts." Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has discussed how a system of generalized exchange is found among close social relations, such as family (Wilk and Cliggett 2007:163). The private setting of this group also facilitates these close-knit relations, as well as members shared experiences of coming from "away."

also provide a venue for a bit of additional practice in playing with one another. Others will meet contacts who can help them with computer work, offer tips on finding a place to live, help with renovations, ask about good places to visit, and any number of other ways musicians may network at sessions. The news that individuals share also keeps everyone up to date on the happenings in the city and throughout the music scenes. Thus, the connections musicians make through their musical pathways extend into many other aspects of their daily lives in St. John's.

6.3.2 A global network

In addition to social connections formed within St. John's, the practice of sessions for playing "traditional Irish music" allows musicians to make connections that extend beyond the city limits to the rest of Canada and other countries. There is a roughly common repertoire of tunes played at Irish sessions across the world. As an example, I was searching for videos of sessions on YouTube and came across one in Istanbul showing musicians playing two tunes ("the Mountain Road" and "the Golden Keyboard") that I also know how to play. Taylor, who plays mostly Newfoundland music, explains the usefulness of a common Irish repertoire: "there's a wonderful thing about that 'cause you can go anywhere in the world and you can have a session and you can play the same music." Several of my participants suggested that the sessions are tempered by the local tradition, for example the playing of "Newfoundland tunes" and local settings of tunes at sessions in St. John's. Much of the repertoire played in St. John's, however, is derived from old and new recordings of Irish and Irish-American musicians, as well as from tunes

brought by Seamus Creagh and Rob Murphy who instigated the practice of institutionalized sessions in St. John's.

This common repertoire and the presence of sessions in most major cities across the world, as well as in many smaller locations, means that individuals can travel, join sessions, and form social connections with musicians from anywhere. Musicians similarly travel to Newfoundland and attend sessions while in town, meeting the local musicians. These unexpected participants may not be completely random. They may already be acquainted with the regular musicians at the session through already existing connections. These connections could influence which sessions they attend. Yet, there are also many resources for finding sessions without pre-existing contacts. Many of the sessions in St. John's are listed in the *Scope*, the local St. John's entertainment newspaper. There are also many websites and listservs that provide listings of sessions around the world. *TheSession.org*, for example, has an extensive listing of the sessions in different places including most of the sessions in Newfoundland. The listing often provides descriptions and comments on the session, which also may influence a musician's choice of where to attend.

Musicians join sessions during their travels to connect with old acquaintances, meet new musicians, and to have a few tunes and a fun time. As Ryan commented "You know, the tunes are recognizable and there's a communality to it. You go to another city and you know the tune, there's an immediate connection." Perry, referring mostly to his friends who tour with bands and travel often, similarly explained "that's the thing, they can go anywhere, right, and a lot of them are playing the same tunes. So, you sit down,

meet the boys. It's a real little club man."⁷⁵ Invitations and existing connections play an important role in situating a musician within a session. When an unknown musician joins the table, however, after a few tunes someone will usually ask them where they are from. At this point the visiting musician can establish their relations within existing networks and begin to create new connections. The presence of sessions all over the world thereby provides musicians with a place to "belong" in almost any major city.

6.3.3 "Belonging"

I began this chapter by describing a particular session, featuring a gathering of many musicians in town to play and Fiddle Group to listen. This example is particularly illustrative of two interrelated ideas about the development of social relationships and social networks through playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, particularly in the context of sessions in St. John's. These ideas are captured by two distinct definitions of what it means to "belong:" (1) "to be a member of" and (2) "fit or be acceptable in a specified place or environment" (Soanes and Stevenson 2008).

As per the first definition, playing this music provides musicians with an opportunity to become "a member of" the music scene of St. John's, as well as anywhere else that a session can be found.⁷⁶ In the opening example, the performing musicians and Fiddle Group felt they were members of their respective social networks. We also continued to establish and maintain social relationships with one another as we listened

⁷⁵ Perry's comment also reveals an implicit gendered assumption. While "the boys" is a common expression, it also implies that most participants at these sessions are generally male.

⁷⁶ Musicians may also develop connections without physically attending sessions, through online newsgroups, websites, forums, social networking sites, among others media dedicated to traditional music. Thus, while I have dealt with relationships developed through physical contact with other musicians throughout this chapter, virtual contact may also provide a means of becoming integrated into various social networks and developing relationships with other musicians.

and were "inspired." In addition, when a new musician joins a session and begins to establish networks of relations, or draw on already existing ones, these interactions provide a means to locate one another hierarchically and an opportunity to integrate into these new networks. This chapter has explored the many different social relations that musicians form through playing traditional music. These include learning relationships, friendships, familial relations, or simply regular contact with other individuals on a regular basis for a shared purpose. These relations are formed through gift exchanges, through shared activities, ideals, goals, and even through negotiations. Many musicians talked about the significance of these relationships in their performance of this music. The creation of these connections is even integrated into the ideals of playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music through ideas of community music-making practices and the creation of lineages of musicians and tunes.

In addition, as a result of these ideals, audience members and non-performing musicians are conceptually included in the music, even as they are explicitly excluded from the introverted circle of musicians. This situation leads me to the second definition, where musicians "belong" in the sense that they are "acceptable" in the environment of the session. That is, all musicians, playing or not, have a place to "fit" even if they do not necessarily become members. I have discussed extensively how individuals are excluded from the session in various ways and how hierarchies and negotiations over status lead to different degrees of inclusion. In addition, I have considered how the music, the social context at sessions of this music, and various judgements of how it "should" be played constrain and shape the participation of individuals along age and gender lines. The place

a musician “belongs” may sometimes be outside the circle, or at least not completely inside. The opening example illustrates this contradiction. Fiddle Group did not join in and play with the performing musicians. Yet, we nevertheless had a place where we “fit” at the session – where we belonged – even if we were not playing.

There is, however, some tension between these different definitions of belonging, illustrated by Rachel’s discussions about her participation in Fiddle Group. I asked Rachel, for example, if she would like to join the professional sessions one day. Her response was,

Yeah, I would love to. I would love to, yeah. But, at the same time too, about that, I just feel it’s really nice there’s all these different sessions going and everything because I feel like there are, it would be probably no different than our group, it feels like there are clubs, clubs of music. I don’t know that I’m really welcome at something [else]. Well, certainly the way I play right now, but I feel like I’ll improve and maybe there will be a new group that forms with new people and stuff where I don’t feel like I’m, not infringing, but... Anyways, it just seems like it’s a little bit like different clubs around the city but, it’s alright, it’s only because I can’t play that I feel that way.

Among all musicians, Rachel was the most expressive about how important this music is in her life for feeling like she belongs in Newfoundland and for making a “family” here by being a member of Fiddle Group. Yet, she also feels constrained to the “club” that she is currently in. Her musical pathway has given her a place to fit within the social networks of musicians. Yet, she wonders where that pathway might lead, if anywhere, hoping that “a new group” will form where she may also belong (become a member) as she continues to grow as a musician.

Keith Negus and Patria Román Velázquez argue that a focus on “belonging” in discussions relating to music and identity ignores the experiences of “disaffiliation,

ambivalence and disengagement" (Negus and Román Velázquez 2002:141). Negus, Velázquez, and other scholars, however, focus on belonging as the "powerful crystallization of group feeling" (Brubaker 2004:10). It is also important to consider the various ways of "belonging" that do not always result in warm fuzzy feelings. That is, belonging does not always mean membership and belonging can also simultaneously bring feelings of ambivalence. At the same time, these feelings of belonging are nevertheless of great significance in musicians' lives and an important part of musicians' continued participation in sessions in various positions as musicians, listeners, and audience members.

In negotiating these tensions, some musicians also create new routes and new "environments" for themselves. Musicians start up new sessions, develop new relationships with other musicians, and work at becoming better musicians, thereby shaping their own pathways. As a result, many musicians have multiple places to belong, at the many different sessions that are part of their pathways. Some musicians are also quite happy with where they fit and where they are members. I continue this discussion on belonging in the next chapter as I explore how the performance of this music also helps musicians develop connections to Newfoundland as a place. Yet, I also discuss how musicians interpret Newfoundland in different ways, leading to different ways of "belonging" to the Island, as well as how these various interpretations constitute sources for debate among musicians.

Chapter 7: Experiencing Newfoundland

Wayne, a musician from Newfoundland, talks about the music he plays.

What my slant on it is that I like learning music from people, learning music from people here [in Newfoundland] and I like learning music that has a story attached to it here. It makes it meaningful for me. And there's so many cool things that happen when you start doing that because you start playing music in places where it has a story, it has a connection to that place. And you start playing music, you know, sometimes by chance for people who recognize it and who have a connection with it as well. That's a really cool thing to have happen.

To Wayne, music has a story in certain places and among certain people. Many other musicians also spoke about how they felt connected to the Island through playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music or through playing music that "belongs to us."⁷⁷ This chapter therefore explores the connections that musicians like Wayne make between music and "place."

I first consider how musicians make distinctions among Irish, Newfoundland, and Irish Newfoundland music and musicians' debates over how these various musical genres and styles relate to Newfoundland. I then explore the different ways that musicians conceptualize and experience Newfoundland, how they employ distinctions in their music to express or create these ideas of the Island, and how musicians locate themselves in places through the music they play. I show how, through these ties between music and place and through the delimitation and performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, musicians create a sense of identification with and belonging in Newfoundland. I conclude with a discussion of how the creation of meaning relating to place is significant in musicians' musical pathways and in their lives.

⁷⁷ A third definition of belonging is introduced here, one commonly used in relation to ideas of place in Newfoundland: "to be a native of, to come from," as described in the Dictionary of Newfoundland English (Story, et al. 1999:s.v. "belong, v").

7.1 The music of Newfoundland

As discussed in chapter 4, musicians have a numerous ways of defining "traditional music" and several argue against delimiting and enforcing the boundaries of a tradition. Yet, most if not all musicians agreed that music should be learned through the aural process and preferably directly from other musicians. Through this process of handing-down tunes through generations, the music becomes linked to the places it has been played over many years. "Traditional" music is thus generally accorded strong associations to "place" and "culture," because the music is considered to "belong" to a particular group of people developed over time in a specific place. This section explores the various ways that traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music is seen to "belong" to Newfoundland and to specific places on the Island as a basis for understanding musicians' musical associations with place.

In understanding the role of place in musicians' lives, I draw on Margaret C. Rodman's (1992) work on "multi-vocality" and "multi-locality" where she argues for scholars to consider the multiple ways in which physical space can be imbued with meaning. She explores how "places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places" (Rodman 1992:643). That is, places are experienced and conceptualized in multiple and sometimes contested ways and through various means, which are based on connections among people, places, and historical contexts (Rodman 1992). In particular, I explore throughout this chapter the many experiences, understandings, and

representations of Newfoundland held by musicians on the Island and the many ways they go about creating and expressing these meanings through their music.

The process of delimiting musical genres or styles is therefore laden with meaning beyond the categorization of music itself.⁷⁹ As anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes, observes, "music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (Stokes 1994b:5). Musicians negotiate the form and content, as well as the social and historical connections of the music they play, in turn negotiating different ways of interpreting and representing "Newfoundland" and "Ireland," among other places.

7.1.1 Different perspectives

The distinctions between Irish, Newfoundland, and Irish Newfoundland music and their relation to the Island are not clear-cut. Chapter 2 outlined how, throughout its history, music in Newfoundland has been formed of local developments along with influences from beyond the Island. Music, ideas, and musicians from Ireland constitute one particular influence that is often emphasized. Settlers from Ireland contributed to the early repertoire on the Island. In addition, music from Ireland and elsewhere continued to

⁷⁹ At a conference about traditional music in Ireland, music researcher Sean Corcoran debated how many "traditions" there are on the Island (Corcoran 1992). He comments that, musically, there is one tradition covering all of Ireland and much of Britain. Yet, he observes that many people consider there to be two traditions on the island, one Protestant and one Catholic. He also suggests, however, that perhaps there are thousands of traditions, one for each little area, similar to regional dialects (Corcoran 1992:8). Corcoran concluded his discussion saying "music is simply music" implying it is people that create the distinctions among regional or local styles, which is also my argument relating to distinguishing Irish (and Newfoundland) music (Corcoran 1992:8). Yet, I disagree that music is ever "simply music." The definition of what constitutes "music," versus sound or noise, is itself a human production, as is the assertion that something is "simply music," which carries ideas as to whether music is purely an aesthetic practice or one that serves other functions (see Attali 1985; Blacking 1973; Kingsbury 1988).

be imported through radio, recordings, sheet-music, and musicians' travels and then adopted and modified in Newfoundland by local musicians. "Traditional Newfoundland music" is therefore a broad and nebulous category and difficult to define or distinguish from "traditional Irish music."⁷⁹

Musicians recognize this intricate history and everyone that I spoke with acknowledged that music in Newfoundland has origins in and influences from many places beyond the Island. Musicians, however, have varying opinions as to how to define the music of Newfoundland. Some musicians focus on historic local developments of the music, whereas others incorporate both ongoing and historic connections with other places, and others still conceptualize the music of Newfoundland to be the same as Irish music. Scholars have also tried to understand what constitutes the Island's music, investigating its history and technical details, how these compare to music from other places, as well as how they differ among different regions within the province (O'Connell 2007; ÓAillmhuráin 2008; Osborne 2007; Smith 2007).

Through the associations of "traditional music" with a "place" and "culture," many musicians distinguished "Newfoundland music" by emphasizing the ways in which the music has changed over generations since it was introduced to the Island, to reflect the character of the place and its people. Andrew, a professional musician who focuses on playing this music, explained:

⁷⁹ I focus on "Newfoundland" and "Irish" categories. It is, however, important to note that it is equally difficult to distinguish "Newfoundland" music from "English" music or "US American" music, which have also significantly influenced music in Newfoundland. "Irish music" is similarly ill-defined as a category since traditional music in Ireland is an amalgam of influences from places such as Scotland, England, and the United States over many centuries (see O'Shea 2008b:5-52; Ó Súilleabháin 1981).

The unique Newfoundland music is stuff that actually is ours and belongs to us and has been changed by Newfoundland. That's what I consider to be Newfoundland music. The other stuff is Newfoundland too. And of course, as I said before, it all depends on where you draw your boundary, and everybody's going to draw it a different place. I can't tell you where to draw it. You've got to draw it yourself.

Andrew clearly distinguishes "Newfoundland music" as music that "belongs to us and has been changed by Newfoundland." That is, the music is different and irrevocably changed from its Irish and other origins and is therefore the unique possession of Newfoundland.

As Andrew suggests, however, other musicians draw these boundaries differently. Many musicians emphasize the ongoing and historical connections that music in Newfoundland has with music from Ireland and elsewhere. For example, Josh, a musician from away who plays professionally, commented:

For me the Irish music that they play is Newfoundland music and well, it's a part of it. Well it's not, it's Irish music. There's a huge Irish influence in Newfoundland, in my opinion there should be. You shouldn't be separating out, well this tune was written by a Newfoundlander and therefore that's good and you can play it - it's Newfoundland and this isn't.

Josh distinguishes Irish music and Newfoundland music based on the music's development in Ireland and Newfoundland, respectively. At the same time, however, he emphasizes how "you shouldn't be separating out." Many musicians like Josh commented on how the music is part of a "spectrum," "spans the gamut" and that it is "so hard to separate the two." Such arguments are sometimes made deliberately, counter to the position of musicians like Andrew. These musicians emphasize the connections between musical genres and styles as opposed to concentrating on the unique local developments of the music on the Island. As such, they tie the music to the place where it

"originated" such as Ireland or Scotland, but also regard it as part of "Newfoundland music" through its historical and social ties to the Island.

Some people in Newfoundland also see little or no distinction between Irish and Newfoundland music. Josh even starts out by saying that "the Irish music that [musicians in Newfoundland] play is Newfoundland music." This conjunction has occurred, at least in part, through the extensive popularity that Irish music, including tunes and songs within the genre of Irish pub-band music, has gained on the Island. Andrew explained:

People who aren't musicians have an interesting way of looking at it, because there's a very interesting misconception about Irish music in Newfoundland. Since the seventies people think, a lot of Newfoundlanders think that Irish music IS Newfoundland music... But I mean a lot of the younger people have never actually heard this old [Newfoundland] music... They know and they've been told that we have a heritage of wonderful traditional music. But they haven't heard any of it so they assume that what they're hearing [the Irish music] is traditional Newfoundland music... It's Irish music, you know. And you can go to Boston, you can go to Korea and hear the same music, played the same way, with the same arrangements.

Andrew is emphasizing his own perception of "Newfoundland music" but also discusses clearly how Irish music has become conceptualized as the music of Newfoundland. Few musicians share this perspective, but nevertheless contend with it in negotiating their musical pathways, as seen in Andrew's narrative.

In sum, while all musicians acknowledge the influence of music from Ireland, they emphasize differently how such music relates to Newfoundland. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins argues that "cultures are generally foreign in origin and local in pattern" (Sahlins 1999:xi). The different standpoints discussed above focus differentially on "foreign origins" or "local patterns." In one sense, any music that is played by a local musician could be considered "Newfoundland music," as it develops a local connection

through its performance on the Island, despite any foreign origins. I discuss later in this chapter how these connections are created. Certainly many musicians incorporate much music that originates from Ireland and elsewhere as part of the Island's music, emphasizing how Newfoundland is constantly constituted through foreign influences. Others, on the other hand, emphasize the *historical* developments of "Newfoundland music" on the Island, focusing on the local patterns created over time.

As a result of these different processes of local developments and foreign influences throughout Newfoundland history, musicians apply degrees of differentiation among genres and styles as they incorporate or exclude these various influences and developments in their definitions of the Island's music. Andrew, for example, commented in our discussions that he sees older Irish music as much more connected to Newfoundland than the "latest Sharon Shannon CD" as a result of the older music's longstanding performance and local development on the Island.⁸⁰ Irish (and) Newfoundland music that has been in Newfoundland for the past thirty years, introduced by bands such as Tickle Harbour and Snotty Var, as well as more recent groups, is not seen as irrelevant to Newfoundland and its people.⁸¹ Andrew says "that's Newfoundland music too." Yet, for some musicians it does not have the same connection to the place as music that has been evolving here since its early settlers. "It all depends on where you draw your boundary," as Andrew clearly stated. Precisely where these boundaries are drawn is a topic of debate among musicians and I discuss below how different delimitations are based on different measures of authenticity and different ways of

⁸⁰ Sharon Shannon is a professional and very well recognized accordion player from Ireland.

⁸¹ See chapter 2 for a discussion of the historical contexts of these bands.

interpreting and experiencing Newfoundland. First, however, I discuss the specific distinctions that musicians make in their music.

7.1.2 Making distinctions

Musicians focus primarily on two aspects of the music in applying distinctions: the tunes themselves and the performance style.⁸² Tunes composed by Newfoundlanders, such as Rufus Guinard and Émile Benoit, are widely considered to be Newfoundland tunes.⁸³ Musicians also talk about the peculiar settings of tunes associated with nations or subnational regions.⁸⁴ Hillary, a musician who has been playing traditional music since she was a child, commented that “the setting has this really heavy lineage. It’s entrenched into a place and also specific players, you know this particular setting was passed down, played by certain players but passed down to the next generation.” Hillary sees the versions (settings) of tunes as deeply tied to specific places through their production by

⁸² While an increasing number of tunes in Newfoundland are written down, when performed in an aural context alone there is limited separation between the structure of tunes and their performance. O’Connell, for example, includes tune structure in her description of style (O’Connell 2007:91).

⁸³ Generally in traditional music the composer is anonymous. Anthony McCann discusses how the anonymity of traditional tunes in Ireland is changing as musicians copyright material they have composed or collected (McCann 2001:91). Yet, he also observes that most traditional musicians prefer for their tunes to be absorbed into the public domain and the authorship forgotten (McCann 2001:91-92). Even if the author is known, however, as with Rufus Guinard and Émile Benoit, the process of composition also incorporates music from elsewhere, complicating the origins of tunes. See Quigley (1995) for an analysis and discussion of the composition practices of Émile Benoit.

⁸⁴ Hazel Fairbairn points out that performance style, which can include settings of tunes, refers to three interrelated scopes of musical performance (Fairbairn 1994:569). “As a generic term it refers to a national idiom, within which there are regional distinctions. Individual style refers to a musician’s unique relationship with one or both of these” (Fairbairn 1994:569). Chapter 4 considered the development of a personal style as part of the process of empowerment to becoming a traditional musician. I consider here primarily ideas of a “national style” that Fairbairn refers to. Yet, musicians also have varying conceptions of regional styles within Newfoundland. Christina Smith suggests there are four styles across the Island, whereas musician and scholar Evelyn Osborne mentions she considers there to be six or more (Osborne 2007:189). O’Connell (2007) follows Smith in analysing four regional styles plus an “old-time” fiddle style that is not seen as regionally rooted. O’Connell also explores how these variations relate to styles played in Ireland. Some musicians also commented that tune settings could differ from one community to the next in Newfoundland. Thus, there are “Newfoundland” settings of tunes, which are different when compared to Ireland or elsewhere, as well as localized settings that are specific to certain communities or regions.

players in these places over generations. The tunes are therefore localized through their variation or composition by local players, contemporarily or historically.

Newfoundland musician Christina Smith (2007), for example, discusses how Newfoundland has a high quantity of "crooked" tunes. A crooked tune is one that does not fit within a symmetrical set of eight bars, seen as "normal" for most dance tunes (Smith 2007:142). The tunes have extra or fewer beats added at the beginning or the end of a strain. Wayne, whose comment about music and place opened this chapter, explained,

But Newfoundland tunes... there's lots of little twists and turns in them, you know, like extra bars and extra beats... like off the surface you'd just say they're fucked up Irish tunes and if you can't get past that you may never appreciate them. But luckily now there's enough people who are actually playing them with enthusiasm and respecting them for what they are... I don't think that any music is inherently interesting or better than another type of music. But it needs someone who digs it to play it, you know.

Smith argues that the crookedness of these tunes is tied to local dancing practices that constituted the contextual purpose for the performance of this type of music throughout much of Newfoundland's history (Smith 2007:151). As dances were primarily accompanied by a solo performer there was no need for musicians to keep in time with one another as in ensemble playing, allowing musicians to extend or shorten the length of strains based on the needs of the dancers (Smith 2007:153-154). "Crooked" tunes are therefore seen as tied to the character and history of Newfoundland through their performance by musicians and dancers.

Many musicians, however, point out that these and other "Newfoundland tunes" nonetheless have foreign origins and influences. Musicians regularly cited popular tunes

on the Island such as "Auntie Mary," which is also known as "Cock of the North" and originates in Scotland.⁸⁵ As Ben, who plays at numerous sessions in St. John's, said:

I'd argue to anybody, including people who have studied this and been in the business way longer than I have that, show me a tune that is a pure Newfoundland tune. And what does it mean? Does it mean a tune that's composed by a Newfoundlander in Newfoundland? Because even those are influenced by outside sources, you know, and they're pretty rare. Knowing who composed a tune is pretty rare, with the exception of some of the Émile Benoit and Rufus Guinhard [tunes]. But even Émile and Rufus have said and have written, "I got this tune from an old French tune I heard, I just took it made it into my own," or "I changed this part around."

In defining a Newfoundland tune, Ben acknowledges that musicians adapt and change the tunes they play locally, but he nevertheless emphasizes that everything is "influenced by outside sources." He even questions whether "a tune that is a pure Newfoundland tune" exists. His discussion very clearly contrasts with those of Wayne and Andrew, who focus primarily on the local ties of Newfoundland music in Newfoundland.

While Ben questions the existence of a truly Newfoundland genre, formed of truly Newfoundland tunes, he also suggested to me that there is perhaps a Newfoundland style of playing. Bridget O'Connell discusses how style includes repertoire, as well as ornamentation, variation, structure, timbre, and tone production (O'Connell 2007:91).⁸⁶ Just as tunes and settings are seen as "entrenched into a place" these styles are also connected to specific locales and sometimes related to the geographical landscape itself (O'Shea 2008b:66). O'Shea, for example, observes how Irish musician Mary MacNamara explains "the characteristic swing and bounce" of her music as a reflection of "the

⁸⁵ One musician commented that even "Massels in the Corner" which, as previously discussed, is often promoted or perceived as a standard Newfoundland tune, has origins in a tune from County Kerry, Ireland.

⁸⁶ Although there is limited distinction between the structure of tunes and performance styles, musicians like Ben use these ideas separately in trying to understand and define the music they play.

mountains and drumlin hills of East Clare" (O'Shea 2008b:66). Musical elements, specific note variations, specific types of sounds produced by instruments, or specific ways of playing a tune are therefore embedded with meaning that are associated with and produced by the places where they are commonly and historically played.

Ben comments that the Newfoundland style is "very fast, very driving." Smith also explains that traditional Newfoundland tunes "are played with few ornaments and with a strong pulse which is equally divided; eighth notes and sixteenth notes are played with no 'lilt' or 'swing'" (Smith 2007:142). These qualities are seen in the performance of polkas as singles in Newfoundland, where beats are emphasized differently to produce a straighter sound. Smith suggests this practice is also tied up with the history of dancing across the province. In playing for dances, musicians "have little choice but to shrug your shoulders and realize that the important thing for those on the floor is that their feet hit the ground in time with the music" (Smith 2007:158). As few dancers were formally trained, the simplest means for keeping dancers in time with the music is to emphasize each beat equally instead of subdivisions where dancers must complete a figure in a certain amount of time (Smith 2007:158). Thus, a "Newfoundland style" of playing is similarly connected to the history of the Island and its people.

Against the tendency to clearly differentiate styles by region, many scholars have discussed how distinguishing styles in Ireland is an elusive process (Kearney 2007; McNamee 1992; O'Shea 2008b:58-59; Sommers Smith 2001:114-116). The debates over what constitutes "Newfoundland music" illustrate the similar difficulty of clearly connecting regionalism and musical style nationally on the Island and to more localized

regions within Newfoundland. In addition, styles change over time. I have heard some musicians say that music in St. John's is increasingly being played in an Irish style as opposed to the old Newfoundland style, even when musicians are playing Newfoundland tunes. This is occurring as musicians learn from recordings or directly from contemporary Irish musicians and adopt the music and technique into their repertoires. Despite the difficulty of defining regional styles, however, these associations between music and place continue to resonate with performers throughout St. John's and beyond (Dowling 2004-2006:130; Kearney 2007; O'Shea 2008b:53-77). The next section explores how these assertions and different delimitations of "Newfoundland music" allow musicians to identify with different ideas of Newfoundland and create a sense of place on the Island.

7.2 A musical place

Through different ways of interpreting how traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music belongs to Newfoundland, musicians themselves create a sense of connection and belonging to the music and the Island. However, musicians' conceptions and experiences of the Island are multi-vocal and multi-local. I explore how musicians both create and express different ideas of Newfoundland through their performance and delimitation of this music. I first consider musicians who focus on playing "Newfoundland music" and how they assert, express, and promote being from Newfoundland through playing music that "belongs" to them. I then focus on musicians who play a variety of Irish (and) Newfoundland music. I explore how these musicians relate to the historical and contemporary influences on Newfoundland from Ireland and elsewhere and how these

influences become part of their experiences of the Island. I conclude with a consideration of how the production of music in places also creates ties of memories and meaning between music, musicians, and place regardless of musicians' musical focus.

My differentiation of musicians based on musical focus is made for analytical clarity and to illuminate how musicians' particular sense of belonging may also be constituted through debate and opposition. There are, however, a wide diversity of opinions and practices relating to the distinctions among styles and genres and how these are tied to Newfoundland. As discussed, several musicians argue that "you shouldn't be separating out" the music. Some musicians' ideas will therefore cross-over between sections. Moreover, some who have a broad definition of Newfoundland music and play much contemporary "Irish music" will operate according to a narrower definition of the Island's music in certain circumstances. Performances off the Island are one such example. Similarly, musicians who feel a particular emotional attachment to "Newfoundland music" may nevertheless play a diverse repertoire in their participation in the St. John's music scene.

7.2.1 Music that "belongs to us"

Frank, a self-proclaimed amateur musician from St. John's who plays at several of the downtown sessions, explained his preference for learning "Newfoundland tunes."

I think maybe it's just a sentimental attachment. See, if they're Newfoundland tunes, then maybe that's when I feel like I have to try a bit harder to know them all, because of that.... Yeah I'm not sure what it is but like there's some other reason to [learn Newfoundland tunes]. There's some extra meaning to a Newfoundland tune.

Several musicians in St. John's and across the Island focus specifically on playing "Newfoundland music" and others like Frank feel a "sentimental attachment" to this particular music. I explore how this special "attachment" is created as musicians draw on ideas of "historical authenticity" and "emotional authenticity" to establish a sense of continuity with previous generations and assert their love of the music and the places it is associated with. I also discuss how musicians express and create representations of Newfoundland as a valued and unique place through these claims to authenticity, as well as through the contraposition of Newfoundland music to other genres, particularly Irish music.

7.2.1.1 Experiencing the past

Charles Lindholm (2008) discusses in his book *Culture and Authenticity* two interrelated ways that individuals employ the concept of authenticity: based on origins, in other words based on accuracy to an original or past source or a traceable genealogical lineage; and based on content, such as emotional expression. Other scholars have made similar categorizations of the ways in which "authenticity" is applied. Tim Edensor (2002), for example discusses the idea of "emotional authenticity" in relation to Scottishness and the popular Hollywood movie *Braveheart*. He suggests that, regardless of the historical accuracy of particular "traditions," the ability of a product to satisfy the emotional needs of the audience allows them to claim an "emotional authenticity" for that product (Edensor 2002:156). Similarly, Celeste Ray (2005a) refers to Edensor and comments that "heritage" is not necessarily the same as "history." Yet, she also points out that identifying with some form of "ancient origins" is nonetheless emotionally appealing

for many people (Ray 2005a:9). Both Edensor's and Ray's discussions relate to Lindholm's idea of authenticity based on content: the idea that an emotional expression is the *true* expression of something, such as the "self" or a "people." For example, an expression of Scottishness may not be historically accurate to practices in Scotland, but if it accurately reflects an imagined idea of what constitutes "Scottishness" then it may constitute emotionally authentic expression.⁸⁷

Most musicians consider "traditions" and musical styles that have been passed from generation to generation on the Island to be historically authentic in their ties to the development of Newfoundland. The music thereby has a "story here," as Wayne discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This connection is further extended as the music is seen to be "of the place" and part of musicians' experiences of place, at least conceptually, throughout their lives.⁸⁸ By playing music that is seen to be part of Newfoundland, musicians, in turn, create their own sense of connection to the Island.

Using this idea of "historical authenticity," many musicians attempt to remain faithful to "old" styles of playing. As Christina Smith concludes in her article on

⁸⁷ I am not making an claim about actual continuity or about genuineness of emotional expression on the part of musicians, only using the "historical" and "emotional" qualifiers to distinguish the different ways in which the idea of authenticity are applied by musicians.

⁸⁸ By a conceptual experience I mean that while musicians may not all directly experience "traditional music" early in their lives, there is nevertheless a wide and general sense that Newfoundland is a musical place. One young musician explained her experience of associating traditional music with Newfoundland: I think like Newfoundlanders and Irish people they really appreciate their music. Like, they may not know a lot about the different types of tunes or different you know polka versus a hornpipe or this or that... but they know that it's important to their culture and they know that, you know they're proud of it. Sometimes it doesn't make any sense why they're so proud of their music, but they know "oh yes, like there's a fiddle there's an accordion, oh yes that's good music."

The way in which this music features on the radio, TV, tourism ads, and festivals, among other media and venues, links "traditional music" to ideas and experiences of Newfoundland even if the music is not materially a part of those experiences. See, for example, Overton's (1996) discussions of the "romantic" portrayal of "Newfoundland culture" for tourism promotion.

"Crooked as the Road to Branch: Asymmetry in Newfoundland Dance Music," "those of us involved in developing the Newfoundland and Labrador 'listening tradition' have the responsibility to learn, play, and teach these tunes as we discover them" (Smith 2007:160). These musicians therefore maintain the "crookedness" of tunes, for example, rather than viewing them as "fucked up Irish tunes," and play in a style that they connect to the music's performance for community dances in the past. Lindholm points out that strict adherence to notions of historical authenticity is impossible as music technologies, instruments, and performance contexts change through time (Lindholm 2008:28). Nevertheless, musicians create a sense of belonging to the music and to the place by adhering to links between the tunes and performance style relative to previous generations.

Musicians who focus on this music generally identify as Newfoundlanders who play music that "belongs to them" in the sense that the music "comes from" the place.⁸⁹ Popular music scholar Simon Frith explores the relation between musical performance and collective identities. He comments, "music... stands for, symbolizes and offers the immediate experience of collective identity" (Frith 1996:121). The connection Frith makes between the "experience of collective identity" and music offers insight into how musicians create a sense of belonging as they play this music. Frith concludes "music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers the body, time and

⁸⁹ Musicians from away do distinguish between Irish (and Newfoundland) music, but I am unaware of any such musicians who focus primarily on playing "Newfoundland music." As discussed, musicians emphasize the performance of "Newfoundland music" as part of their identification with Newfoundland and their self-definition as Newfoundlanders. Within Newfoundland, place of birth has a very significant influence on identifying as a "Newfoundlander." I discuss below, however, how performing Irish (and Newfoundland) music helps musicians from away create a sense of connection to Newfoundland, as well as how many musicians from away see these different styles of music as connected to Newfoundland.

sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives" (Frith 1996:124). Wayne, for example, discussed how significant and exciting it is to him to play music that is connected to the people and place of Newfoundland:

I don't deny the links [with Irish music], I think they're there certainly. But I sort of don't see them as defining the music, because that would mean you're just saying it's just Irish music.... and I don't think you have to listen to it for very long to realize that you're not. It's kind of something that is a personal mission of mine... to further embrace what it is that actually I enjoy about the way music is performed by the people that I've met here and the kind of place that [the music] has. I think that there's something exciting that's there to sort of be done... I think that it is very exciting to think about, to approach the music as not just being Irish music but to try to look for what was there in it that kind of drove it and [why] you maybe personally find it enjoyable and exciting.

Through the active performance of this music and ideologies that associate "traditional" music with the past, musicians like Wayne both embody and conceptualize continuity between the music they are playing and the performance of that music by Newfoundlanders in previous generations.

Thus, musicians also use ideas of emotional authenticity in constructing these "imaginative cultural narratives." They combine historically "authentic" musical forms (crooked tunes and particular musical styles, for example) with nostalgic ideas of how it was played in community dance contexts – "what drove it" – and the idea that this music is a part of this place and its people. Musicians are thereby able to place themselves within lives of continuity connecting them to the Island, its people, and their past. As anthropologist Wayne Fife suggests, in relation to tourism experiences at L'anse aux Meadows and Noerstead in the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland, it is the conjunction of these ideas of historical and emotional authenticity that effectively offers this

experience of identification and continuity (Fife 2004:149).⁹⁸ These ideas of authenticity, in turn, allow Wayne (the musician) and others to feel a sense of belonging on the Island. The next section explores how the actions of these musicians, in distinguishing and performing "Newfoundland music," also shape conceptions and experience of the Island through the representation of the music and the promotion of its value and significance.

7.2.1.2 Re-presenting Newfoundland

By asserting and performing "traditional Newfoundland music" musicians also focus on its uniqueness and value, particularly in relation to the domination of Irish music. As considered in chapter 2, musicians discuss how, prior to the folk revival movement in the 1960s and 1970s, Newfoundland traditions were devalued and individuals stopped playing and dancing the "old" way (Smith 2007:141-142). Through the influence of radio, visiting musicians, and other factors, musicians and the people of Newfoundland adopted other musical styles, including Irish and Irish American music. Historian Pat Byrne argues that Irish American music by the McNulty Family gained such popularity in Newfoundland because it provided Newfoundlanders in the 1950s with a style of music that they could relate to but that was accorded greater legitimacy because of its performance on the radio and its American origins (Byrne 1991a:67). This

⁹⁸ Fife relates ideas of historical and emotional authenticity to modernist and postmodernist cultural forms, respectively (Fife 2004:150). He explores how the forms are revived at these two Viking heritage/archaeological sites, through which the visitor is best able to attain "a glimpse into a life that could have been lived by the tourist [or musician] if he or she had been born in a different time and place, a life that might plausibly be thought to have actually been lived by other people" (Fife 2004:149). Musicians do not have archaeological sites or reconstructions to help offer a tangible "glimpse" of how things were or might have been. Nevertheless, considerable work has been conducted by collectors, ethnomusicologists, folklorists, anthropologists, and other academics, providing historically "authentic" information about past life-ways on the Island and about musical forms and practices. They also have shared narratives and ideal images about how it once was part of community experiences and community dances, as discussed in chapter 4.

popularity continues through to the time of writing (January 2011) with the subsequent growth of sessions, Irish dance, and Irish music in St. John's and around the world.

However, with the interest in local "traditions" beginning in the late 19th century, culminating in the folk revival in the 1970s, musicians in Newfoundland began asserting the validity and importance of "traditional Newfoundland music." Musicians from St. John's re-contextualized traditional music that they collected from rural Newfoundland with the aim of preserving and promoting it. They used various established media such as radio, television, folk festivals, and formal performances to demonstrate and promote the value of the music. Lise Saugeres (1991), for example, explores how popular Newfoundland revival band Figgy Duff fostered a "nationalist identity" through the promotion of "Newfoundland music."

Saugeres' consideration of the band shows how musicians can shape conceptualizations and experiences of a place through the shaping of music and its meanings. She explores how Figgy Duff aimed to promote and preserve Newfoundland "traditions" through which they claimed and expressed identification as Newfoundlanders. They simultaneously promoted the legitimacy of such a form of self-representation by collecting tunes and songs from rural communities throughout Newfoundland and performing them in local communities, along with larger formal venues such as the Arts and Culture Centres and internationally. They also adapted the music to the contemporary genres, particularly rock music of the time (Saugeres 1991:18). In doing so, they did not focus on historical authenticity in the form of their music, but rather localized it in the content, such as song lyrics and tune melodies, which

were seen as continuous with practices in rural Newfoundland in the past (Saugeres 1991:136). In their adaptations they also appealed to "emotional authenticity" as they focused on keeping the music alive and argued that they were making it relevant to people and musicians at the time (Edensor 2002; Saugeres 1991:129). The band therefore attempted to reconceptualise and portray Newfoundland traditions as a legitimate form of self-representation, relevant to people's lives in contemporary Newfoundland.⁵¹

These ideas of Newfoundland and Newfoundland music as unique and valued are, however, also produced in opposition to other conceptions of the Island. Contrary to the sentiment discussed by Byrne, Newfoundland singer Anita Best, who was a member of Figgy Duff, has argued against what she sees as "Irish cultural imperialism" (Saugeres 1991:103). She asserts that Newfoundland's cultural traditions, including its music, should be understood as distinct from their Irish heritage. Despite the many connections between Irish and Newfoundland music, the music of Newfoundland is therefore promoted in contraposition to Irish music, which has been seen to dominate musically as well as culturally. In other words, a significant factor in defining Newfoundland music,

⁵¹ Eric Hobsbawm points out that the historical connections of any "tradition" that is part of a revival are necessarily invented due to the break in continuity with past practices. In addition, "revived" practices are often deliberately changed, as is the case with Figgy Duff (Hobsbawm 1992:7-8). Despite elements of "invention" in Figgy Duff's music, the promotion and performance of "traditional Newfoundland music" provided band members a way of relating to Newfoundland through ideals of historical continuity and connection with the people of Newfoundland.

Saugeres, however, points out that, at the time, many people throughout Newfoundland did not find Figgy Duff's music appealing as they were seen by some to be imposing their image of Newfoundland upon others (Saugeres 1991:199-205). As such, Figgy Duff's promotion of Newfoundland music follows Handler's conception of nationalism whereby "sameness" overrides "difference" (Handler 1988:6). Figgy Duff, however, was not in the position to create a nation of Newfoundland in the same way as the Quebec ministry of cultural affairs, discussed by Handler. I am not arguing that the views held by Figgy Duff about the meaning of "Newfoundland music" applied to people throughout Newfoundland, or even to anyone outside the band. Nevertheless, their image of Newfoundland as a nation informed their performance of the music and their performances in turn allowed them to identify with ideas of Newfoundland as a nation.

for some musicians, is precisely that it is *not* Irish music. This position was seen in Andrew's narrative above.

Asserting these musical distinctions provides many musicians, in turn, with a means of creating a distinct representation of the Island and its people. In his introduction to the edited collection *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall suggests that "identities are constructed through, not outside, of difference" (Hall 1996:4). This suggestion is similar to O'Shea's argument that musicians simultaneously engage with "sameness" and "difference" in their performance of music (O'Shea 2006-2007). Distinguishing Newfoundland music from "other" styles, and particularly from Irish music, is therefore important for many musicians in constructing and expressing a certain representation of Newfoundland (Stokes 1994b). The place, its music, and its people are represented and experienced as unique and "just as good," rather than simply a version of Irishness that is part of the empire of "Irish cultural imperialism."

This symbolic production of Newfoundland also affected the music scene in St. John's and how later generations of musicians experienced the place and its music. The influence is clearly seen in Andrew's narrative above. Andrew was learning traditional Newfoundland music in the 1980s and was influenced by the revival movement's interest in preserving and promoting the music of Newfoundland. He comments, "Well yeah, I am a Newfoundlander and I feel that unless we play the repertoire, nobody else is going to play it." To Andrew, playing this music is an important part of his identification with Newfoundland as a Newfoundlander. Walter, a musician from Newfoundland who plays professionally also commented that it was important also to play this music because "our

music is just as good as everybody's music," again asserting the value and difference of Newfoundland music from Irish music and other styles. It is also important to them in representing and promoting the uniqueness of the place by performing music "nobody else is going to play."

Yet, Walter also plays much Irish music, indicating the impact of the representations promoted by groups like Figgy Duff on the traditional music scene of St. John's today extends to musicians who play a wide variety of genres and styles. For example, all musicians from Newfoundland that I spoke with who play professionally off the Island discussed that they make a point of playing "Newfoundland music" when performing elsewhere. Chris, a musician who plays at many of the downtown sessions and has a diverse repertoire of Irish (and) Newfoundland traditional music comments:

When I play professionally, especially off the Island I try to put the focus on Newfoundland music because that's where I'm from and that's kind what I have to offer you know... that's not to say I wouldn't play music from anywhere else, but I tend to promote that [Newfoundland music] first.

Several musicians similarly mentioned that when they play at festivals on the Canadian mainland or Europe, they focus on playing the music of Newfoundland even if they play a mix of Irish (and) Newfoundland music when in St. John's or elsewhere in Newfoundland.

Evelyn Osborne (2010) also explores how Newfoundland musicians who performed on the *Island to Island: Traditional Music from Newfoundland and Ireland* CD emphasized the local developments of music on the Island. The CD was produced in 2003 as a collaboration between musicians in Ireland and Newfoundland. The liner notes explain that the album is meant to represent "the coming together of two traditions, which

have more in common than might appear at first sight... a meeting of cousins" (Browne 2003). The Newfoundland musicians who performed on this CD are musicians who play an extensive repertoire of Irish, as well as Newfoundland, tunes. Despite these claims to commonality, Osborne shows how musicians maintained the "crookedness" of local tunes and did not specifically focus on those originating in Ireland. Through these differences, local musicians emphasize the uniqueness and distinction of the Island's music, though they also simultaneously acknowledge and incorporate historical and contemporary ties of the music to Ireland. The promotion of this music off the Island and the musical choices made on recordings such as the *Island to Island* CD by such musicians is thereby a continuation of the project expressed by groups like Figgy Duff, of promoting Newfoundland music and thereby the people and the place.

Thus, the performance of Newfoundland music provides musicians with a sense of connection to Newfoundland through historical ties that the music is seen to have to Newfoundland's past and to the people of Newfoundland. The music is seen to "belong" to the place and to the people who perform it, as opposed to Irish music that belongs to someone else. Such a sense of belonging is therefore not wholly inclusive. In delimiting the boundaries of what "belongs," some music and some musicians are placed outside. Irish music is seen to not belong to Newfoundland in the same way as Newfoundland music. Yet, the promotion of their music as "just as good" also allows musicians to represent Newfoundland and its people as unique and valued. This promotion, in turn, contributed to the later growth of the traditional music scene, which includes many musicians who perform "Irish music" from the "latest Sharon Shannon CD." In the next

section I show the many ways that musicians who play a broad repertoire of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, like those who performed on the *Island to Island* CD, similarly relate to and identify with Newfoundland.

7.2.2 The place of Irish (and) Newfoundland music

A young musician from Newfoundland named Hillary related to me an experience of playing tunes at a session in St. John's. Hillary explained "I played some tunes the other day. It was a stratum of Newfoundland tunes and Irish tunes in the set. And I was like 'is that ok, is that cool?' and they're [the other musicians] like 'of course, mix and match and it's all a part of our culture, right?'" Hillary's concern about whether to mix tunes demonstrates the way in which the performance of different genres or styles is meaning-laden. Yet, the response of other musicians that "it's all part of our culture" also demonstrates that music that is seen as originating from Ireland becomes associated with a different context in Newfoundland. This section explores the various connections to place that musicians form through playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music.

I first consider how musicians create ties to Ireland through playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music. Yet, I also show that the sense of connectedness that musicians form relates primarily to Newfoundland through multi-local conceptions of the Island. I explore how musicians use ideas of historical authenticity through which they connect their playing to the music's history on the Island, how they express an emotional attachment to Irish music as music that they love to play, as well as how musicians experience Newfoundland through the situation of Irish music in the St. John's music scene.

7.2.2.1 Ireland and Irish (and) Newfoundland music

Just as “Newfoundland music” is seen as tied to its historical development in Newfoundland, “Irish music” is considered to be a product of its evolution in Ireland. As a result of these associations, some musicians create connections with ideas of Ireland through playing this music. Several scholars have explored how performing Irish traditional music offers musicians elsewhere a means of expressing and creating a sense of “Irishness” and a connection to a “homeland” in Ireland (Leonard 2005; O’Shea 2008b; Rapuano 2005; Smith 2004). This has been particularly argued about musicians found in areas of more recent migration from Ireland, such as the US.⁵²

Some musicians from Newfoundland and from away similarly associate their playing of Irish (and) Newfoundland music with a connection to their Irish heritage. Vince, a Newfoundland musician who plays at the downtown sessions, explained “my family tree is mostly Irish with a bit of English mixed in there and so it’s some kind of a connection with that and with Ireland and with England where my family came from when they first moved over here.” Vince connects his heritage and his playing of Irish music, allowing him to maintain some connection with Ireland. Vince, however, also emphasizes connections to England, demonstrating that his performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music does not relate solely to Ireland. Several musicians also asserted that Irish is not part of their family backgrounds and so connecting to an Irish heritage has little to do with why they play this music.

⁵² As discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of migration from Ireland to Newfoundland occurred before 1831, much earlier than migrations during the Famine to other areas of the Irish diaspora. As a result, Irish music in Newfoundland has a longer history on the island than elsewhere, allowing more time for the music to develop local connections and “stories” on the island, as many musicians discussed.

Musicians, however, relate to Ireland in other ways. Several musicians in Newfoundland, including some of those who focus on playing Newfoundland music, have travelled to and toured in Ireland. Irish musicians have also travelled to the province and been highly influential in the development of sessions and the traditional music scene in St. John's. Many musicians have family members, friends, and acquaintances from Ireland or have lived there themselves. Musicians also learn from contemporary recordings of Irish music and through their learning and playing acquire detailed knowledge about music and musicians in Ireland, including regional styles, bands and performances, lineages of musicians, and their musical and personal characters. Thus, musicians develop a relationship to Ireland and places within the country through their knowledge of the place, their personal experiences, and their social ties.³⁵

Musicians continue to create new ties to music and musicians from Ireland as they travel, learn new tunes from recordings or personal contact. Several Irish musicians, for example, came to St. John's in 2008 for the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCO) held by Memorial University. In the summer of 2010 musicians in St. John's also organized the first annual Feile Seamus Creagh, in honour of the Irish musician who died in 2009, featuring several well-known Irish performers. There were many formal and informal sessions held during both events where musicians exchanged tunes, developed

³⁵ Musicians, of course, develop ties with individuals from many different places through the performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, as discussed in chapter 5. The connections made with musicians from Ireland are, however, often emphasized as a result of the significant influence musicians from there had on the musical history of Newfoundland (see, for example, ÓAllmhúirín 2008). Government initiatives such as the Ireland Newfoundland Partnership (INP) and Irish Business Partnership (IBP) in Newfoundland, the growth in popularity of "Irishness" in many places around the world, and a general association of Ireland with "traditional music" through phenomena such as Riverdance likely also influenced the prominence and significance of these ties (see Lalor 2009; Scathill 2009; Walsh 2008).

new social relationships, and renewed old ones. Yet, while musicians in Newfoundland form connections with Ireland in various ways through playing Irish (and) Newfoundland traditional music, I now consider how these connections also relate Newfoundland for musicians playing on the Island.

7.2.2.2 Experiencing the past

It is often difficult to separate precisely where musicians situate their music as some would jump between talking about music in Ireland to talking about the same music in Newfoundland, discussing the historical ties of the music and personal relations on both sides of the Atlantic. However, while many scholars see the playing of Irish music in areas of the Irish diaspora as a way for musicians to reclaim their Irish roots (Rapuano 2005; O'Shea 2008b; Leonard 2005; Smith 2004), many musicians playing in St. John's claim quite the opposite. Most were clear in identifying themselves as being from Newfoundland, or as relating to Newfoundland because of residence here, despite the intricate musical, historical, and interpersonal relations with Ireland.

A discussion I had with Billy Sutton will clarify my point. Billy plays at and hosts most of the downtown sessions and has a varied repertoire of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, as well as musical genres other than "traditional music." In our discussions Billy moved between talking about the history of music in Newfoundland and regional styles in Ireland almost seamlessly, relating tunes to their Irish origins and talking about friends and travels to Ireland. Because of these connections, I asked him, "do you ever find that people sort of assume you're Irish or try to be Irish because you play this music?" He responded that he had not thought about it much but that people were free to assume what

they wanted. I followed up wondering whether any assumptions bothered him and he said "it doesn't bother me at all, no, doesn't bother me at all. I'm from Newfoundland and I'll be quick to tell somebody really fast where I'm from." From Billy's discussions, it is clear he knows much about Ireland and has a relationship with the place through people and knowledge of its history. Yet, Billy identifies with Newfoundland, "where I'm from."

In a similar manner to those musicians who focus on "Newfoundland music," many musicians like Billy tie their performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music to Newfoundland's history. However, different aspects of this history are emphasized in portraying the connection of the music to Newfoundland. These musicians may emphasize the "Irishness" of the Island despite its mixed heritage, their own family heritage or that of their communities, or simply the long history of Irish music on the Island. Again drawing on Frith (1996), through ideas of the historical connections of Irish music in Newfoundland and through the performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, these musicians establish continuity between the music they play and its history in Newfoundland. As with musicians who focus on "Newfoundland music," they situate themselves within Newfoundland by locating their playing within certain lines of musical and historical continuity. They continue to connect their playing to past generations in Newfoundland, their own ancestors, and the place. This connection, however, is made to different conceptualizations and experiences of Newfoundland as those expressed by the

musicians discussed above, one wherein the Island's music is constituted through many influences and not its uniqueness.⁹⁴

The incorporation of "Irish music" as part of Newfoundland's musical makeup and the employment of ideas of historical authenticity to establish these links are seen in a discussion between Chris and Perry. These two musicians play a wide variety of Irish (and) Newfoundland music and learned much of their music from family members and friends in Newfoundland, as well as from Irish recordings and musicians.

Perry: There was never a bouzouki player in St. John's before – or there was never a pipe player, there was never a tenor banjo... There was accordion players and fiddlers. But I mean, there was never the likes that there is now. And that's not sayin' its better or worse, it's a different thing.

Chris: It's different all yeah.

Perry: It's different altogether. Still playin' the same tunes, which is what kinda gives it the continuity, right. So you're still playin' tunes that your grandfather might have played for a dance, but you're playin' in a completely different context. But it's the same music and it's of the place, it's part of it. And it's livin' man, it's alive.⁹⁵

Even though the music is "different altogether" they connect it to the history of Newfoundland, identifying with the Island through their playing of music that is "of the

⁹⁴ Keith Negus and Patria Román Velázquez critique Frith's conception of musical performance as a processual expression of identity, in other words as a continuous process of identification (Frith 1996; Negus and Román Velázquez 2002). They argue that scholars nonetheless must assume the ethnicity of the group playing music, that the "Irish" necessarily express their identities through "Irish music" for example, in order to analyse the identities that musicians are constructing or expressing (Negus and Román Velázquez 2002:136-137). They say that to take a thorough non-essentialist stance "then we would have to accept that any type of musical sound (however categorised) could 'construct' as any type of social identity" (Negus and Román Velázquez 2002:137). I am, however, suggesting this is the case for musicians in Newfoundland. "Irish music" (contemporary and older imports in Newfoundland) allows musicians to construct a sense of identification and connectedness with Newfoundland. This connectedness is therefore not necessarily an expression of "Irishness."

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider other musical styles, there are many musicians who play jazz, reggae, blues, gypsy guitar, rock, klezmer and classical music, among other genres, in Newfoundland. Several musicians that I spoke with played these styles as well as "traditional music." It is important to consider how such musicians may relate to different conceptions and experiences of Newfoundland and places on the Island in their own ways through the music they play.

⁹⁵ A bouzouki is a stringed instrument that has Eastern European origins. In addition, Perry's reference to "a pipe player" refers to the Uilleann pipes a kind of bag-pipe played primarily in Irish music.

place." Chris asserted earlier in the discussion that "I consider myself a Newfoundland player," similar to Billy's comment that "I'm from Newfoundland," despite many connections these musicians form with Ireland. The music may be considered "Irish music," but it is nevertheless seen as part of Newfoundland. Through the performance of this music, Billy, Chris, and other musicians thereby create connections with their past, their families, and the Island.

Musicians also discuss how the music continues to be adapted to the local scene in St. John's and in Newfoundland, creating new ties to the Island and shaping the music of the place. New music, musical ideas, or instruments that are introduced to the local music scene are thus absorbed within these ideas of continuity. An extract from a discussion found on theSession.org regarding the import of a C#/D (Irish-tuned) accordion to the local music scene by accordion player Graham Wells is particularly illustrative of how influences from Ireland are adapted by Newfoundland musicians and related to Newfoundland.⁹⁶

Stjohnsman [February 9, 2008]: Speaking from experience, the vast bulk of older accordions in Newfoundland are either C/G or A/D. Single row accordions are either D, G or A, with the odd C turning up as well. Graham Wells and a few other younger guys who are into emulating Irish players are moving into C#/D, but that is a very recent phenomena. Bob Hallett of Great Big Sea plays two-row Hohners, as does Mark Hiscock of Shanneyganock. Their wet-tuned sound would

⁹⁶ Accordions in Newfoundland prior to the past decade were primarily diatonic, known elsewhere as melodions. These were single row or double row accordions able to play in one or two keys. Graham Wells is said to have introduced the first chromatically tuned button accordion to the St. John's music scene. Doris Maal Fair (2009) provides a thorough discussion of how these accordions became associated with Irish music, such that they are often referred to as "Irish tuned" button accordions. These double-row accordions are able to play in any key and are generally tuned either C#/D or B/C along the rows. Fair similarly shows how this accordion has uncertain but likely European origins but argues "when the Irish got their hands on the instrument, accordion music in Ireland changed, and with it, the traditional music" (Fair 2009:118). Irish musicians adapted and adapted this instrument into their music thereby making it a part of the music scenes in Ireland. The instrument and the music was also picked up by other musicians and continued to develop in new contexts around the world, including Newfoundland.

probably be considered 'Newfoundland style' by most locals who have any interest in this...

...
Buck [February 28, 2008]: ... By the way, st john'sman. The number of players learning or switching to C#D or B/C is a lot higher than you seem to know. These players are not emulating Irish players, they are playing Newfoundland music. The box is evolving in Newfoundland my friend. The capabilities of the Irish tuned boxes are a tremendous advantage and are in my opinion better suited to Newfoundland dance music.⁹⁷

(TheSession.org 2007-2009)

Stjohnsman suggests that players in Newfoundland are simply "emulating" Irish players by using "Irish" instruments and playing "Irish" tunes. Buck, however, argues they are not playing it simply because it is "Irish." He maintains links of continuity in suggesting that musicians "are playing Newfoundland music" but are adapting new instruments to the music and to the local music scene. Interestingly, just as musicians who focus on "Newfoundland music" argue against the conception that Newfoundland music is the same as Irish music, so does Buck and many other musicians who play Irish (and) Newfoundland music. They thereby see the music as "belonging" to Newfoundland, even though it is also acknowledged as Irish music. These various influences of Irish music on the traditional music scene in St. John's in turn influence later musicians' experiences of the city, Newfoundland, and the music.

7.2.2.3 The St. John's music scene

Although many musicians promoted the playing of "Newfoundland music" in the 1960s and 1970s, contemporary music from Ireland also continued to be adopted into local repertoires. Musicians from Ireland who moved here and introduced sessions to the scene in St. John's also brought their own repertoire of tunes that musicians from

⁹⁷ I have copied this excerpt as it was posted, including spelling and typographic errors.

Newfoundland learned and began to play. Musicians in Newfoundland also learned music from Ireland as they exhausted the recorded material of Newfoundland music. Wayne explained,

There was just no more tunes to learn, when I was learning tunes. I just ran out of Rufus Guinard tapes and Figgy Duff tapes and Émile Benoit tapes. I'd learned everything off of them. And, all of a sudden there was this really deep well of Irish music and of course I learned tunes from there.

There were a small number of recordings of "Newfoundland music" as Wayne indicates. Once musicians had learned the tunes, they often turned to the vast supply of recorded Irish music and active traditional music scene in Ireland. In the process, musicians created new ties to people and music from Ireland that were then incorporated into the traditional music scene of St. John's.

Newly introduced Irish music therefore became a strong presence in the St. John's scene beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, alongside the promotion of "Newfoundland music" by bands like Figgy Duff, and this prominence continued into later decades. For musicians learning and playing traditional music in St. John's in the 1990s and 2000s, Irish (and) Newfoundland music was simply a part of the local music scene. Although these musicians recognize that much of the music has come from Ireland fairly recently and continue to learn from contemporary Irish musicians, to become part of the scene and to play with other musicians at sessions within the city necessitates learning this repertoire. As a result, Irish (and) Newfoundland music, including contemporary music from Ireland, is seen by many as part of the music of Newfoundland.

The integration of contemporary Irish music as part of the Island's music and the influence this has had on conceptualizations and experiences of the local music scene are

particularly clear in considering musicians who have moved to St. John's from away. As one member of Fiddle Group expressed it "you can't live in St. John's and not be affected by Irish music and the whole Irish culture. It's an underpinning of this particular area" (Gan 2007). The group plays a mix of tunes that are recognized as being from Newfoundland and others that are part of the standard Irish session repertoire. Yet, Rachel who also plays in Fiddle Group discussed how,

It really does put you more in this place. If I didn't have that [the music] I don't know that I would feel as connected to Newfoundland, definitely, definitely. Yeah East Coast trail or not, I don't think I'd feel as connected to this place. I almost feel in some ways that I have a bigger connection than some people who are from here who don't know what Auntie Mary is.

I will discuss later how the playing *in* places forms an important part in "place-making" for musicians and creating a sense of belonging in Newfoundland. Yet, several members of Fiddle Group, like Rachel, saw their playing of Irish (and) Newfoundland music as part of Newfoundland culture regardless of tune origins. Auntie Mary, for example has origins in Scotland.⁹⁸

Sheaukang Hew, an ethnomusicologist who grew up in Malaysia, makes a similar conclusion in locating the Irish, Celtic, and old-time music she played in central Oklahoma. She reflects, "this music, be it Irish, Celtic, or old-time has helped me cross the ethnic boundary and find my place in American society" (Hew 2006:211). To these musicians, Irish (and) Newfoundland music is part of Newfoundland and part of their experiences of the place since it is part of the St. John's music scene. Interestingly, the

⁹⁸ These musicians acknowledge differences between "Irish" and "Newfoundland" music and generally have an understanding of the significance of such distinctions to Newfoundlanders, but these differences have limited significance to musicians from away. The music (be it Irish or Newfoundland) is all a part of their experiences of living in Newfoundland.

connection Rachel makes to Newfoundland through the music she plays is stronger than the connection she feels experiencing physical geography of the Island represented by the East Coast trail, which she sometimes hikes.

Many of these musicians also express their love of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, claiming an emotional authenticity in the music they play. Several musicians commented, for example, that they simply learned tunes that they heard and they liked regardless of tune origins. Walter, who asserted the importance of playing Newfoundland music, nevertheless commented that "I just want to play the music. It's so good," referring to his performance of Irish music. Thus, the music may be linked with Ireland or elsewhere and musicians may relate to Ireland as a place through their family heritage, social connections, and symbolic associations. The primary meaning that musicians associate with this music, however, relates to Newfoundland. By the same token, through playing this music musicians feel "connected to Newfoundland."

Musicians who play Irish (and) Newfoundland music in St. John's relate their playing to Newfoundland in many ways. They see Irish music as contributing to and as a part of the musical development of Newfoundland and therefore as part of the history and culture of the Island. These players also play music that falls within more restricted conceptions of "Newfoundland music" such as music that was composed by Émile Benoit and Rufus Guinard. They, however, do not focus on such tunes alone but play a wide variety of music that they nonetheless consider also to be "Newfoundland music," in different ways.

In doing so, they also contest narrower conceptions of what and who "belongs" to Newfoundland. In other words, rather than seeing the Island as subjected to "Irish cultural imperialism," these connections are created through an idea of Newfoundland wherein all forms of Irish (and) Newfoundland music are reflective of and embedded within the place and the music scene. This distinct conception of the Island demonstrates the multi-local experiences of place held by musicians, as well as debates among musicians over these different experiences and how the Island *should* be conceived and represented. Through these various links made between music and place, musicians also feel connected themselves to Newfoundland as they become part of the local music scene and play music that is seen as "part of our culture."

I now consider how musicians also create a sense of place in Newfoundland by creating and recalling memories and meanings through the production of Irish (and) Newfoundland music in specific places on the island.

7.2.3 Places and memories

Another way in which musicians connect their playing to Newfoundland and to particular places across the Island is through the active production of music. As discussed in chapter 4, musicians create memories associated with tunes that themselves become associated with people and places. The creation of memories associated with place is not unique to the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. Sarah Cohen (1995), for example, provides a detailed exploration of how memories become entwined with places and with ideas of places through various musical styles, seen through the life

of an elderly Jewish man. The production of music in places is precisely how a "story here" is created, as discussed by Wayne at the beginning of the chapter.

The photographs provided to me by Sandra and Rachel, two members of Fiddle Group, in their self-reporting projects conducted for my methodologies class, are illustrative of how playing music in a place entwines the music with musicians' memories and experiences. I asked them to provide me with ten photographs of what it meant to them to play Irish (and) Newfoundland music and short descriptions associated with each photograph.⁹⁹ Both Sandra and Rachel provided me with photographs of places in Newfoundland and places representing Newfoundland. For example, Rachel provided a photograph of the dining room where Fiddle Group is often held. On the table, amongst other things, are scattered sheets of music and her fiddle and bow. She associates the process of learning and playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music with this particular room, describing the photo as "the room where the music has grown."

The association of music with places spreads out from the single room. Rachel also provided a photograph of the house where the group meets and socializes prior to practicing. Sandra provided a photograph of drawings compiled into a tableau of many of the locations in which Fiddle Group has met throughout St. John's, primarily the houses of members of the group, but also significant public locations within St. John's such as The Ship Inn, O'Reilly's pub, and The Duke pub. As Ruth Finnegan observes in her analysis of local musicians' musical pathways in Milton Keynes: "the musical pathways (like others) can be envisaged as stretching out and crisscrossing through the town..."

⁹⁹ See File (2005:107-116) and chapter 3 for a more thorough description of self-reporting projects that is reflective of the way I used them with Rachel and Sandra.

musical participants marked out their own social and spatial settings by the pathways they drew through the town" (Finnegan 1989:317-318). Thus, music becomes not only associated with a room in a house, but also with buildings, venues, and other meeting places throughout St. John's. These places become familiar and meaningful as musicians play in them or pass through them at sessions each week.

As seen in the previous sections, the association of music and place spreads out to represent Newfoundland as a whole. Rachel provided photographs of popular St. John's landmarks: evening settings of both St. John's harbour and Signal Hill. Signal Hill is perhaps one of the best-known landmarks and heritage sites in St. John's. It is arguable that as such an iconic landmark, the association of Irish (and) Newfoundland music with this site of Newfoundland heritage is a simple one that does not necessarily indicate any personal significance. However, Rachel does not simply relate the music to Signal Hill as a landmark, but to the experience of the place. "The music has a sense of old in it always, just like an evening walk up Signal Hill," she explained. This illustrates how musicians experience places through their music, as well as how meaning and significance becomes associated with Newfoundland, including its geographical landscape, through the process of learning and playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music in Newfoundland.

These experiences, meanings, and associations can also be recalled through music. Sara Cohen considers the vivid evocation of memories through listening to, dancing to, and playing music, in turn recalling the places where they were produced in the process (Cohen 1995:437-440). Frank, the self-proclaimed amateur quoted above who plays at many downtown sessions, similarly related:

They do, they come up, tunes you haven't heard in all of 15 or 20 years all of a sudden, "oh yeah I loved that tune, I haven't heard it or played it, I forgot about it" and somebody plays it [and] it's there, it's wonderful. You know that's one of the joys about it, when you hear this beautiful piece that you completely forgotten about that somebody pulls out of nowhere and plays. And so those kinds of surprises are a real delight today, when that happens... You know it's a connection to not just the tunes but to an earlier time. I guess everybody associates their own life and history, things, and people and events and tunes to this. So all these things they'll interconnect somehow. I guess you realize you're playing stuff and oh yeah certain memories are kind of revived by hearing these tunes, and it's a wonderful recollection and connection, you know. Feels like you're reliving some of this, some of these past times that you have with people.

The performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland therefore provides another way for musicians to situate themselves and their music within Newfoundland but also to recall places as they play certain tunes later in life or in another situation.

The recollection re-establishes these connections along with making new ones as tunes are replayed. Ben, who moved away for a time, for example, recalled "that's when I really started to practice, cause I was homesick, oh my was I ever homesick. And I found a really good therapy for me was to play music from here [Newfoundland], you know." Ben also plays a wide mix of Irish (and) Newfoundland music and sees many connections between the music of Newfoundland and the music of Ireland. Through playing this music while he was away he could recall a connection to the Island, to his home, and to his family there. Thus, musicians create associations between places and the music they play in their own lives through the performance of music in different places. They re-establish these connections and associations, as well as create new ones, as tunes are played at a later date in new places.

In sum, I have tried to show throughout this section and this chapter the multiple ways that musicians experience and conceptualize Newfoundland and the many ways that

traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music and its delimitation are implicated in this process. Although musicians have a multitude of experiences and ideas about the Island and its music, sometimes in opposition to one another, the associations of music and place allows musicians each in their own way to create a sense of belonging, identification, and connection to Newfoundland. These attachments allow musicians to feel like they have a place on the Island, or to create one for themselves. I now consider the significance of the creation of meaning in relation to place as part of musicians' musical paths and as part of their lives. I show that the sense of place associated with this music is part of musicians' process of empowerment in becoming a traditional musician.

7.3 Paths to and through places

Most musicians assert that non-musicians do not distinguish between Irish (and) Newfoundland music. They commonly relate stories of how friends, family, or audience members, some of whom have been listening to traditional music for decades, are unable to distinguish between one tune and another and so certainly cannot distinguish the music of Newfoundland from the music of Ireland or elsewhere. For example, I was told a story about well-known Irish musician Brendan. Brendan was playing at a session in Germany at an Irish pub. He was there for a folk festival. The session had been running since midnight. At around six in the morning it was Brendan's turn to buy a round of drinks for everyone. As he was standing at the bar ordering, the bar-tender commented to him how 'you Irish, you're so amazing, you played the same tune for six hours and you still play with so much gusto!'

These stories illustrate that the ability to hear distinctions among tunes and styles, as well as the significance among musicians of making such distinctions, is learned. As musicians follow their musical pathways, in learning and playing traditional music and in attending sessions over multiple weeks, months, and years, musicians learn to delimit the music and the varying conceptions of place associated with that music. As with the political negotiations discussed in chapter 5, musicians also choose where to locate themselves and their playing amidst these distinctions. Musicians' pathways are highly influenced by the music scenes within which they play and the musicians from whom they learn. Becoming part of these lineages of transmission is part of the ideal pathway to becoming a traditional musician. Musicians, however, may also promote a style, or shape their playing by actively integrating the styles of certain other musicians or "regions" into their own. Musicians therefore choose or are led to certain pathways in their music.

Creating and learning associations between place and music are therefore a part of musicians' process of emperment. Rebecca Bryant also suggests, relating to her exploration of learning the saz in Turkey, that this process is about becoming "a good Turk of a particular type" and not just a musician of a "particular type" (Bryant 2005:224). Her connection between music and the role of "place" in the process of emperment is useful in understanding musicians' connection to Newfoundland. I have discussed throughout this chapter how musicians identify with Newfoundland through playing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music. As Bryant explores, however, this identification extends to empermenting ideas and experiences of place. This is not only a

discursive process. It is also part of learning the aesthetics, ethics, and behaviours associated with particular places, incorporating them, and performing them.

For musicians from away, the social interactions and the playing of this music was also a process of learning and becoming part of "Newfoundland culture." Sandra observed that she is "now making a mean moose stew, the Newfoundland connections go far." Through playing Irish (and) Newfoundland music she meets and interacts with people in Newfoundland. She learns more than just music from other people – how to cook Newfoundland dishes, for example. Thus, through the process of learning music and the associated social interaction, she is becoming integrated into the place and the "culture." She even goes as far to suggest that "perhaps honorary status as Newfoundlander is in your [her] future." Thus, for many musicians, playing the music is also about emporsoning particular ideas and practices of Newfoundland and its people, though precisely what these are may differ from person to person.

Places are multi-local – they are conceptualized and experienced in multiple ways (Rodman 1992). Musicians' conceptions and experiences of Newfoundland therefore differ from one another. To some, Newfoundland is a unique place with a unique music that is distinct from Ireland and its music. To others Irish music and connections with Ireland play a significant part in constituting Newfoundland. As mentioned, there is a popular conception that Newfoundland is an "Irish" place. Musician and scholar Gearóid ÓhAllmhuráin, for example, expresses in detail the extensive "Irishness" of traditional music in Newfoundland throughout its history (ÓhAllmhuráin 2008). These, however, are only two among many perspectives. Neither the idea of "Irish imperialism" nor that

of Newfoundland as an ostensibly "Irish place" capture the complexities and variations of how musicians conceive of Irish (and) Newfoundland music and how it relates to Newfoundland and places on the Island.

As with politics over status, the performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music is a political negotiation over how to conceptualize, experience, and represent Newfoundland. This is seen as musicians choose which music to play, with whom, and for what purposes, such as the performance of "Newfoundland music" off the Island, in turn creating certain images and experiences for other musicians. Through these politics, through playing music they see as "belonging" to the Island in various ways, and through the process of empowerment, musicians create a sense of place and belonging in Newfoundland (Peace 2001). They empower connections to the past, to other musicians, and to particular locales throughout the city. Musicians' musical pathways provide them with a means of "becoming" a certain type of musician, but also a certain type of person who has associations with Newfoundland (in its various guises). Thus, the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music is intimately intertwined with musicians' sense of selves, their social networks, and their connections to place(s), thereby constituting their lives in intricate and significant ways.

Chapter 8: Playing to work and working to play

I went over to Rachel's house one evening to do an interview. Rachel is a member of Fiddle Group, who I have known since I first joined. She had made me dinner and we were sitting in her living room talking about the importance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in her life. I asked about when she first started playing and whether the connection between the music and the sense of belonging in Newfoundland that she now felt, as discussed in chapter 7, was a part of why she had wanted to learn. Her first response was, "I didn't think it would change my life, that's for sure." She had started learning simply because she thought it would be a fun and easy activity. She came back to this issue later in the interview, concluding that "I wasn't wise enough to know that [it would have such an impact]."

This chapter explores how musicians' musical pathways fit into their lives, in the broadest sense, discussing various ways that musicians "make a living" at music. A living is commonly conceived of as either a means of earning income to support oneself (or the income itself) or a particular way of pursuing one's life. I consider two levels of inquiry in questioning the relationship between music and "living": (1) how traditional music is conceived and represented as a practice and an activity; and (2) the actual role played by this music in musicians' lives as a whole. I show how music is commonly seen as a "leisure" activity. It is something musicians do in their "free" time for pleasure and enjoyment, as opposed to "work," which is associated with toil and exertion. In considering lived pathways of musicians, however, I consider two routes musicians may take: to become full-time professional musicians and rely on music as a "living" or to

play music part-time (as amateur musicians, for example) and earn an income from alternate means of employment. A closer look at these routes shows that such ideas of "work" and "leisure" as opposed endeavours are insufficient for understanding the role of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in musicians' lives.

These routes are not wholly distinct, as differences between professionals and amateurs are not easily delimited and part-time professionals dance somewhere in between (Finnegan 1989; Stebbins 1992).¹⁰⁰ Analyzing them separately, however, throws into relief the different social, ideological, and economic forces with which musicians contend. I explore how the performance of this music is an integral part of "living" for musicians on both routes and how representations of traditional music as a "leisure" activity actually contribute to struggles that musicians experience in pursuing their musical lives. Yet, I also show how musicians support such representations, at the same time as they reinterpret the relationship between "leisure" and "work." They insist that playing music is (and indeed should be) fun and enjoyable, but it is also much more in that it involves much work, is an integral part of their lives, and, for some, a source of income. As Rachel said, playing this music changed her life.

8.1 Representations of traditional music

This section considers the different ways that traditional music is commonly represented and how these representations relate to ideas of music and tradition as

¹⁰⁰ Part-time professional musicians, for example, earn an income from their music, which can sometimes be a significant contribution to their overall earnings. Yet, they do not rely on music as their sole source of income and share many struggles with amateur musicians in terms of finding time to play amidst other responsibilities in their lives. Overlap between the routes of full-time professional musicians and other paths is further seen as musicians change routes throughout their lives, some professional musicians give up this economically uncertain life in search of more financial security. Similarly, amateurs and semi-professionals may choose to become full-time professionals later in life.

"leisure" and "self-expression." Similar to what Steven Feld observes about the development of the "World Music" industry, a "politics of representation" is entwined with the performance and promotion of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music (Feld 2004:64-65). In exploring the relationships between music, labour, leisure, and the image that musical performance should be "effortless," Karl Hagstrom Miller observes that "contemporary fans, music industry pundits and scholars have continued to frame music as a form of recreation, self-expression and leisure... to imagine music as a direct outgrowth of personal genius, natural talent or even a simple product of one's social identity" (Miller 2008:428). "Authentic" music and tradition are therefore ideally seen as something that musicians choose to engage in for fun and traditional music, in particular, as a form of self-expression.

Chapter 4, for example, discussed in detail the ideal image of a traditional musician as someone who learns music almost by osmosis from their social environment, is connected to lineages of musicians through the tunes they play, and performs dynamically and with "feeling." This thesis therefore contributes to and supports representations of music as "self-expression" and "fun" through my discussions of the various ways this music is implicated in the lives of musicians, including their self-definitions and their social and local connections. The Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society similarly describes the people the organization represents in their mandate:

We are the folk of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have been for a long time. We are the folk who sing, dance, tell stories, create with our hands and play countless instruments. We are the folk and this is our art... Our new positioning is Living Our Traditions. What this means is that while we continue to preserve the cultural past we are well aware that artisans are creating traditions at this very

moment. Folk art does not mean old art. It means the expression of a unique people in a unique time. There is no greater time than now to live our culture.

(Best n.d.)

"Traditions," including musical traditions, are portrayed in this mandate as an expression and a part of people's lives as they "live their culture."

These representations of traditional music are, however, also opposed to ideas of "work," even if musicians do rely on music to earn an income. Marjorie L. DeVault discusses how "folk" understandings of work often take it to mean a "necessary but unpleasant activity – what people 'have to do'" (DeVault 1991:238). As such, "work" often has negative connotations that contrast with ideas of traditional music as a form of self-expression and source of enjoyment. Part of these negative connotations stem from how commodities – products of labour, both paid and unpaid, that come to be "objects of economic value" – are seen to be alienated from all meanings embedded in their production and use (Appadurai 1986:3; Marx 1990:953-955). As Marx states, "when they thus assume the shape of values, commodities strip off every trace of their natural and original use-value, and of the particular kind of useful labour to which they owe their creation, in order to pupate into the homogeneous social materialization of undifferentiated human" (Marx 1990:204). In other words, commodities are voided of any individuality and expression associated with their producers and production. "Music" and "tradition," on the other hand, are supposed to be entrenched with meanings associated with particular values, people, and places.

Frank, a self-proclaimed amateur musician who plays at the downtown sessions, very eloquently described this process of alienation in commoditization and how he sees

traditional music as a means of fighting and counteracting it. He therefore challenges any move toward the commoditization of traditional music:

Well Newfoundland music is, to me... it's a big part of the lives of some people here. Not everybody, but some people... You can take it with you. You can get so much from it. It gives you so much you can return, you know, take that away and share it with other people. So it's all part of that whole side of our psyche and our humanness that we have to do more to keep alive, because the forces of the almighty dollar are at work to wipe all this away and to extract as much of our earnings from us for other people's purposes. And if we don't hang on to the few things that are dear and important and worthwhile then we'll be just standing in line at Wal-Mart or wherever else...

Because the stuff that comes out of the shopping centres isn't worth much, you know. That's likely to just turn [us into] slightly insane kind of unhappy people, frustrated people who have no real meaning in their lives and have no soul. They don't know what life is all about. They have no real life, I think. Sadly. Because they have nothing to, I guess nothing that they can love to that extent. Nothing that they can find that kind of deep meaning to attach to.

As seen in Frank's discussions, it is important for him to assert a distinction between traditional music and "the stuff that comes out of shopping centres." This is because, as Frank sees it, commodities "have no real meaning" and "have no soul" and thereby cannot be the expression of a people or individual and their production certainly cannot be fun.

There is some debate among musicians and scholars whether musicians are, in fact, producing commodities when performing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, particularly in the context of sessions.¹⁰¹ In sessions with a paid host, the

¹⁰¹ Anthony McCann discusses how some musicians are copyrighting traditional tunes that were otherwise part of the public domain (McCann 2001:90-91). This places the music in the realm of private property as a commodity for exchange (McCann 2001:95). I will not be pursuing this area of investigation on the commodification of tunes, as few musicians concerned themselves with whether the tunes they played were in the public domain. For sessions, pubs and bars must pay a fee to SOCAN, which covers any live or recorded music that is played (see SOCAN 2009). Nevertheless, McCann's argument that sessions remain situated in the realm of gift-exchange rather than commodity exchange is significant in demonstrating the

performance of music is being exchanged for payment. Thus, for some musicians, the presence of a paid host is indicative of a session's commodification. Musicians are concerned that as these hosts direct the sessions and become more interested in creating a successful performance, the session will no longer fulfill its role as a "social learning event" and as a communal activity.

One musician who plays the occasional professional gig commented, for example: "sessions for me are much better without money." Terry, a professional full-time musician who does not host any sessions, also observed that she and many other musicians prefer playing at amateur sessions where there is no paid host and it is less of a performance.

It's much more, to me, [the amateur sessions] it's much more about music and much more about culture. This is culture that happens in people's lives day to day. It's not a commodity to be bought and sold you know. That's, to me, much more interesting than you know, and ok, fine, I can play a lot better than all these people can. But I don't care.

Other musicians commented that paid sessions were more formal and more organized. Similar to Frank's narrative, all these comments refer to the idea that sessions as work and music performed and sold as commodities are less authentic than those performed without "external" incentives such as earning an income. Instead, sessions and music as an "amateur" and "leisurely" activity is seen as "much more about culture" and "much better" because the unpaid efforts of musicians express their genuine desire to play this music and its significance in their lives.

negotiations and contentions among musicians and scholars as to the role of music as a commodity in sessions and in the larger traditional music scene.

Adam R. Kaul (2007) argues that sessions in Ireland, including those with paid hosts, have become commercialized but not commoditized. He makes a distinction between the two categories based on the retention of productive control on the part of musicians.¹⁰² Deborah L. Rapuano, on the other hand, argues that whether or not musicians are being paid, all musicians participating in sessions are indeed producing commodities because the session conforms to many characteristics of a work-place and generates profit for pub-owners (Rapuano 2005:207). These debates over the commoditization of traditional music conducted by musicians and scholars alike are therefore significant in contributing to or challenging the common representations of music and tradition.

Despite ideas that work is an "unpleasant activity" and that its products have "no soul," DeVault observes that work nevertheless "refers to activities that those with public, politically powerful voices take seriously as socially necessary" (DeVault 1991:238). That is, because work is associated with earning an income, it is seen as more important than "leisure" activities such as music, except when music is used as work. In its relation to "paid time" work has even earned a place in the dictionary as part of what it means to have a "living" (Williams 1983:335-336). Leisure is nonessential and fun, whereas work is necessary but "unpleasant."

¹⁰² Adam R. Kaul explores how sessions follow a "triangle of consumption" (Kaul 2007:709-711). The entertainment provides pub-owners with drink-purchasing customers, the musicians are provided with a place to play, and the audience are delighted by an "authentic" display of local music (Kaul 2007:709-711). Yet, he also argues that sessions remain an "authentic" venue for the production of traditional music because of the productive control that musicians retain: "The loss of control is not significant enough to conclude that traditional Irish music sessions played in Dublin are somehow 'commodified,' 'inauthentic,' 'false,' or 'staged' solely for the benefit of tourists" (Kaul 2007:714). I disagree that as analysts we can define any session as "inauthentic." Yet, musicians do use a discourse of authenticity in this manner and these claims reinforce the image of sessions as a social and "community" space for musicians.

Evidently, these distinctions are not so clear-cut in individuals' lives and experiences. Raymond Williams points out one contradiction in separating "work" from "leisure," in that leisure often takes much work in terms of effort, time, commitment, and often financial investments (Williams 1983:336). The separation between "work" and "home," "work" and "leisure," and "public" and "private" is also often critiqued for ignoring the experiences and activities of women (DeVault 1991; McCloskey 2002). DeVault (1991), for example, argues for a reclassification of women's activities in their homes as "work" and a better understanding of the concept in order to recognize women's unpaid labour and their many experiences of "caring work." Taking the lead from DeVault and other, primarily feminist, scholars who question definitions of work and leisure (Abel and Nelson 1990; Chambers 1986; Deem 1982; di Leonardo 1987; Henderson 1996; Luxton 1980; Mellow 2006; Seron and Ferris 1995; Smith 1987; Thompson 1990; Wearing and Wearing 1988), I explore how musicians reinterpret these categories in relation to the performance of music. I argue that the representations and distinctions discussed in this section are simultaneously essential to but insufficient for understanding the role of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in musicians' lives.

8.2 Earning an income from music

This section considers the route taken by full-time professional musicians. There are many musicians in St. John's who rely on music as their primary source of income – making a "living" at music, economically speaking. Compensating musicians for their playing is not a new practice in Newfoundland. Émile Benoit, for example, was paid for playing at dances in and around Black Duck Brook in the 1920s and 1930s (Quigley

1995:15). Relying on music as a primary source of income, however, only recently started to be common (Osborne 2007:192).

In "working" at music and earning an income, the lives of musicians on this route immediately complicate the distinctions between "work" and "leisure." I discuss, however, how these musicians struggle to earn a sufficient income and how representations of "authentic" music and tradition contribute to these struggles. This occurs as musicians are seen to want and love to play, regardless of the money that is paid to them. Yet, I also show how these musicians assert their love for and dedication to their music through the sacrifices entailed in living as a professional musician. They thereby claim to be living the ideal musical life and are accorded status and recognition for their position.

8.2.1 Making a living making a starving

Music is not a particularly easy way of making a living either in the sense of economics or of lifestyle. Many musicians pointed out that relying on music was far from a lucrative form of employment and one referred to it as making your "starving," rather than making a living. There is a great deal of economic uncertainty in relying on music for income. Professional musicians therefore use music in various ways to earn a living. They perform at gigs, including formal concerts, band performances, and sessions. Some also teach music, create and sell instruction books or tune books, compose, record, and produce, among other possible activities. The many ways that music is used by musicians as a source of income indicate the need for economic diversity to make sufficient wages to survive off music.

Playing gigs is seen as a particularly difficult way of earning a living as these can be irregular and unpredictable. In addition, they require late nights and often involve a great deal of drinking. One musician who does not play full-time nevertheless observed that "I was getting drunk a lot at the session. Do you know what I mean? Like being a little bit hard on my body.... It's not just the drunkenness. I think, for me, the social life, it's hard. It's hard to maintain." Ingrid Fraser (1981) explores in detail the experiences and struggles of musicians working in bars in St. John's in the late 1970s and similarly observes it was hard work and not particularly financially rewarding. She also discusses how, while musicians in general were generally accorded a "special" status for their musical abilities, playing full-time in bars was often seen as low-status (Fraser 1981:119,131). In addition, musicians had to contend with a wide variety of "occupational hazards" associated with pubs and bars such as drunken patrons, exploitative or unhelpful managers, or inappropriate involvement and attention on the part of audiences (Fraser 1981:252).

Session gigs offer a more regular income to musicians than most staged-performance gigs, particularly in the case of sessions that have been running for many years, such as Fridays at Erin's Pub. Sessions also end earlier in the evening, allowing musicians to maintain a regular sleep schedule should they choose to. Nevertheless, sessions are easily cancelled by pub owners. The session at Bridie Molloy's, for example, was cancelled after ten years in December 2010. In addition, similar to other gigs, sessions are associated with much drinking and musicians often stay out late to socialize, along with the other "hazards" mentioned by Fraser. Sessions alone also do not provide

full-time musicians with a sufficient income to support themselves. Thus, sessions are preferred as gigs, but do not constitute a significantly easier way to make a living.

As a result of these difficulties associated with relying on music as a source of income, some musicians struggled to earn a sufficient living and others worried what the future would bring. In her study of musicians in Ireland, Virva Basegmez points out that most musicians within the pub-gig scene were between the ages of 18 and 30 because older musicians no longer enjoyed such gigs, lived further away, and had more responsibilities such as families (Basegmez 2005:80). The age range among musicians in St. John's is wider and there are some full-time professional musicians in their fifties and sixties. Retirement also provides new opportunities for musicians who previously had other careers to spend more time performing music, but without the financial stress experienced by younger musicians. Thus, age seems to be a less limiting factor in St. John's than in Galway and Dublin, Ireland. Nevertheless, musicians have concerns about using music for a living for the rest of their lives.

These concerns are seen clearly in Dave's narratives about his music and his plans for the future. I asked Dave if he thinks anything changes about the music for himself or for other musicians when playing professionally. His answer was lengthy, but I will quote it in full because it captures a great many of the tensions that full-time musicians navigate:

Dave: I've always tried to keep my eye on that [love of music] as being the thing that sort of leads me on through it. I've been aware [that it could be] something to just become drudgery, just become a job. So, I've tried to avoid [that]. I just try to prevent that from happening by putting too much pressure on it and by making it too much about the dollars and cents.

Sam: Do you think that happens to some people?

Dave: Yes, I think it does... Yeah, and I can see why it would happen. I'm in a position now where, financially, I'm taking on more and more responsibilities and it becomes seductive to start looking at this as more of a cash cow. Like, how can I make more money from it, as that possibility is there. You know, just because at thirty-something I'm reaching an age where I want to have some security down the road. It's put me in a position where, on the one hand, I'm thinking, ok well how can I approach my work as a musician in a way that will provide that for me and, on the other hand, there's part of me that's saying you need to do something else too in order to find that security. You need to think, you need to come up with other things that you can do because you can wear this out so quickly.

And you can, I've always found that very sad. To look at people who I know started off with a real love for it, but to whom it's just a job and there's sort of a get in and get out attitude with it. And I think no matter how good that may appear on the stage when you're watching it, there's something that's missing when it's like that. For you and for other people as well. Yeah, I always just thought it was sad, I never want that to happen.

So as I reach this point in my life, it's just something that I sort of a question in my head. Like how do I navigate this time, you know. I don't want to be in like my mid-fifties and still have no security in my life. No financial security or anything. And that's partly for me and it's partly for the people in my life as well. I don't want to be a burden on anyone if I happen to get sick or anything else. And I don't want to be still going from gig to gig and desperate to make to make ends meet all the time. I think that that will put me in a position where I will have to ride the music so hard that I lose what it was, what it was about. I lose the joy in it and I don't want that to happen.

Dave expresses several concerns, including being able earn a liveable income in the future and have financial security. He is also concerned that even if the music can provide him with a more than sufficient income that he will "lose the joy in it" as it becomes "just a job." Dave is therefore trying to balance a life of playing traditional music for income and of playing for fun and love, contending with ideas that music should be a form of self-expression and played for "the joy of it."

The politics of representation regarding the "authenticity" of selling music as a commodity therefore offers some insight into musicians' struggles to earn a sufficient income and the significance of balancing the joy and the job. The emphasis on

"authentic" music as performed out of a "love for it" masks the reality that pubs gain profit from both musicians and patrons from the sale of alcohol during performances, in exchange for a relatively small contribution to musicians (Feld 2004; Miller 2008; Rapuano 2005). As Kael Hagstrom Miller observes in relation to views of music as "effortless" productions, "the surprisingly broad conspiracy of silence about musical labour... has pushed the work involved in making music to the margins of both musical performance and musical scholarship" (Miller 2008:438). In other words, because of the idea that musicians perform traditional music for fun and as a form of self-expression, their labour in learning and performing goes unacknowledged. As a result, as Rapuano observes, "the ideology that upholds the notion that what the musicians do is not work, prevents virtually everyone from viewing it otherwise. In turn, it enables those who benefit from the musicians' unpaid labor to reap the financial rewards without considering upon whose backs it has been made" (Rapuano 2005:179).

As seen in Dave's narrative, there is also a sense that something is "missing" in the performance of musicians who play as "just a job." It could therefore be conceived that high wages for musicians would encourage more individuals to play for the money rather than for love. In an article considering wages for nurses, economist Anthony Heyes (2005) argues, for example, that increasing wages would reduce the quality and quantity of work because individuals would join the profession for the money. On the other hand, lower wages imply that those who become nurses do so as a vocation – something they are devoted to and want to do – and, as a result, they work harder, longer, and more efficiently. Heyes argues that his economic analysis applies to vocation work in general,

which could include musical work (Heyes 2005:568).¹⁸³ Thus, the confluence of ideas that “authentic” music is played for joy and is not “just a job” simultaneously hides and supports the use of musicians for financial benefit without providing a sufficient living for those musicians.

However, as discussed above and throughout this thesis, musicians themselves contribute to and support such representations about the “authentic” pursuit of traditional music. Rapuano argues that musicians’ support of this ideology only demonstrates the pervasiveness of the system of exploitation (Rapuano 2005:180). Yet, I think it is also important to understand musicians’ own interpretations of their work and their performance of the music and tradition. I explore how, even if musicians are producing commodities for the market, the music continues to have meaning and importance in musicians’ lives beyond its monetary exchange value. This meaning is significant in musicians’ continued desire to play music full-time, other musicians’ support of professional players, and the status of full-time musicians within the music scene (Rapuano 2005).

8.2.2 Reinterpreting musical work – “Just a fine life”

All five musicians that I interviewed who use music as their primary source of income spoke about how they became full-time musicians because of their love for the music they play. Dave, who discussed above his worries about the future, comments: “I started to really, you know, really fall for that music and it was necessary to get all these [instruments] and try to make those sounds too, you know.” Derek, another full-time

¹⁸³ I discuss below traditional music can be conceived as a vocation, providing a useful means of understanding musicians’ re-interpretations of their musical work and leisure.

musician from away also discussed his love for the music he plays and its capacity for emotional expression, saying "I like playing music because I love art and I love expression and I love sound." These musicians chose to become full-time musicians because of the opportunities available to do so and because of their love of the music and the enjoyment they derive from playing it.

These musicians also assert their dedication to the music through the financial sacrifices entailed in performing full-time. As full-time professional musician Taylor comments: "I think doing it for the money just means that you're probably much more dedicated to it than, you know, the people that aren't doing it for money." In this manner, musicians assert that they are performing traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music because they "want to." As one regular attendee at the downtown sessions commented of the regular hosts at these sessions, "I think it's saying a lot about what they want to be doing." Thus, through these assertions of their love for and dedication to the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music, musicians claim the emotional authenticity of their playing and insist the music is not "just a job" (see Edensor 2002).

Claims to the authenticity of musical work are made particularly in relation to the performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music in the context of sessions, as opposed to standard staged performances directed at an audience. Peter explains, "I don't always like to be playing. That's the beauty of the session, you come and go, you can put the fiddle on the table for an hour if you want to go talk to your friend at the bar and have a pint and then sit back down and listen." Musicians discuss how, unlike in most workplaces, they

have control over what tunes are played and they are free to socialize with one another or to leave the session table, echoing Kaul's (2007) argument.

Another professional musician explains why he likes playing at sessions: "I just prefer to sit down and play and play for meself and me buddies as opposed to havin' to get up there and play 'Dirty old town' for tourists or anyone else... Sessions are like, all about me. Or all about him [referring to another musician]." Musicians distinguish between the tunes that they play that are "traditional" and the standard Irish bar-band repertoire that is not seen to be real "traditional" music.¹⁰⁴ For professional musicians, then, the session is a venue in which they can play the "real" traditional music that they want to play, which is not the standard musical pub fare of "Dirty Old Town" that they are often paid to play in performances. These assertions therefore contest Terry's statement in the previous section that amateur sessions are "much more about culture."

Thus, as seen in these narratives, full-time musicians support representations of "authentic" music as based on "self-expression" even if these representations are used by others to justify their exploitation. They insist that the session is the same for them whether they are being paid for it or not. Steve, a professional musician who has hosted many sessions, explains "I go to sessions where I don't get paid and play the same as I would if I was. It don't change it, like to enjoy the music as much. It changes it that it puts [food on the table]." Yet, Steve makes one important modification in his comment about the representations of traditional music discussed in the previous section. He insists

¹⁰⁴ Learning to distinguish traditional and non-traditional music is another part of the process of empowerment, as was the process of learning to distinguish local, regional, and national styles, discussed in Chapter 7.

that the use of sessions and the music for money are significant in his life for providing food and other necessities of living, while simultaneously being a source of enjoyment. These musicians thereby complicate categories of work and leisure. They contest ideas that work is necessarily an unpleasant activity, insisting that it can be both necessary and fun.

The idea of music as a vocation therefore fits more closely with the experiences of full-time professional musicians than traditional understandings of "work" that have been outlined. Few musicians described their work as a "calling" or their purpose in life, which is often entailed in how a vocation is conceived. While I emphasized above the choice involved in becoming a professional musician, as seen in chapter 4 it was often something these musicians "fell into" as they were learning and playing at sessions, open-mic performances, or with their families. Considering music as a vocation also does not eliminate the challenges for musicians that are discussed above, as seen in Heyes' argument. Muriel Mellow points out, however, that "artists, doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, and others... use this language [of vocations] to talk about their deep commitment to their occupations" (Mellow 2006:8). Thus, the idea of a vocation captures the idea that musical performance is work, but nevertheless something musicians choose to engage in and derive pleasure from.

As a result of such re-interpretations of musical work, most musicians, full- and part-time alike, concluded that professional musicians deserve to be compensated for their music and are not being compensated sufficiently. Musicians recognize that others may sometimes attend sessions as "just a job." As Julie A. Nelson and Nancy Folbre

(2006) argue of nursing, however, counter to Heyes (2005) idea that "a badly paid nurse is a good nurse," there are individuals who pursue professions just for the money in all fields. They also point out that there is no clear link between wages and performance and there is therefore little reason to assume that the performances of individuals in particular vocations, such as nursing or music, will be differentially affected by higher wages than, say, company chief executive officers (CEOs). Further, Nelson and Folbre humorously question when there will be an article entitled "Why is a Badly Paid Executive a Good Executive?", revealing the power structures involved in defining wages in different professions (Nelson and Folbre 2006: "Conclusion").

A musician's attendance at sessions for the sole reason of earning an income then becomes part of the reinterpretations of the relationships among music, work, and leisure and of negotiations over hierarchies and who can define what constitutes an "authentic" musical performance. Despite musicians' general support for paying full-time professional musicians and the status of such musicians within the traditional music scene, social sanctioning may be applied to hosting musicians if they do not follow the proper system of exchanges and detract from the sociability of a session. Musicians will simply stop attending the session. Pubs may similarly be sanctioned if they stop offering free beers or start enforcing unwanted rules on musicians. These rules may include how many sets musicians must play, who can participate, or the length and number of breaks musicians may take. These processes again demonstrate musicians' shared insistence that the music and the sessions remain under their control and as a source of meaning, fun, and expression, even if they are also a source of income.

The narrative of a young musician named Pat from St. John's demonstrates the conflicting interpretations and internal debates experienced by musicians about what it means to use music for work. I asked Pat to comment on the practice of having paid hosts at sessions:

It is a bit strange. Yeah, I remember when I first learned, you know like one or two people will get paid, but everyone's playing and contributing. It's a bit strange. But I mean, they're good and they do bring a lot to the sessions. Cause sometimes no one will show up and it will just be them or, if it's some of those wintery nights like... I mean they are professionals, right. They spent a lot of time and energy into learning the music or growing up, you know that's their choice, that's what they do, so I think it's important that they are sort of honoured with money and they need to live, they need to pay the bills. I guess it has always been like that... in the past music was something you did on the side, in the past it was your entertainment. I think that's how it's going to be for me, but now people have started specializing and choosing to do that for a living. So it's, for the people it makes sense. Well it's good. It's good, it's proper I think.

Pat debates within this narrative the role of "work" at a session. Musicians connect ideals of egalitarianism and communal music making with the session, which are contradicted by the presence of a host who has control over the session. Pat, however, concludes that there is a need for these musicians to make money, later stating that "our world is changing" in discussing the marketing, selling, and use of recordings in traditional music. Many other musicians similarly explained the presence of paid sessions by the necessity for full-time musicians to make money and put food on the table, as seen in Steve's comment above. A few musicians also observed that there would be fewer sessions for everyone to partake in if these musicians were not being paid to host them.

Yet, Pat also tries to challenge the equation of paying hosts with the music's and session's commodification. Pat's discussion reinterprets payment as a form of gift-giving (K. Gordon, public discussion, November 20, 2009). The money is a gift in reciprocation

for performance of the music. Gifts are often contrasted with commodities in that gifts retain a spiritual remnant of the giver, binding people together in the exchange cycle (Wilk and Cliggett 2007:159). Later scholars have complicated this dualism by exploring how objects can shift between gifts and commodities, depending on the context (Appadurai 1986; Wilk and Cliggett 2007:161,165). In their exploration of economic anthropology, Wilk and Cliggett argue that gift exchange may simultaneously have emotional, social, political, and economic aspects (Wilk and Cliggett 2007:170). As such, the process of gift exchange captures many of the different roles of this music in full-time musicians' lives.

In this exchange system, we can also see how musicians may receive other "gifts" in reciprocation of their "tunes" and participation. Musicians are often given free pints from the bar and sometimes a plate of food. Vince explains: "the session has pints as well. So if you'd come and play you get a drink which is worth something as well I suppose, in the long run." Similarly Peter comments "pints are a preferred currency." Musicians thus attempt to define the meaning of their musical exchanges not as commodities that are devoid of meaning, but as gifts that "always incorporate some magical essence of the giver that persists and gives value to an object" (Wilk and Cliggett 2007:154). As discussed in chapter 5, gifts are a significant part of the exchange of tunes and performances at sessions and play an important role in maintaining social relationships among musicians.

By moving the exchange of money for music into the realm of gift-giving, Pat reasserts the "authenticity" of musical performance, as distinct from the production of

commodities and in support of representations of traditional music as "self-expression." In such an interpretation, the work that these musicians perform in learning and playing tunes is also simultaneously acknowledged along with the necessity for these musicians to earn an income. Pat and other musicians thereby also reinterpret the performance of music by full-time professional musicians. Musicians' support of representations of traditional music are therefore not simply acceptance of a hegemonic ideology that justifies their exploitation, but a challenge to the idea that work must be an unpleasant activity and devoid of meaning.

In recognition of these musicians' dedication to the music and financial sacrifices, full-time musicians are accorded additional status within the session scene as "full-timers" for the "guts" it takes to play music for a living. One musician who has occasionally been paid for playing said, "they've got nerve" and "I've got a lot of respect for people who can do that." Musicians, in general, are accorded special status for their "talent" and "ability" (Kingsbuey 1988). There is a mystique that surrounds the production of music, applied particularly to professionals. "Musicians" are separated out as a category unto themselves, uniquely "gifted" in their musical abilities (Bigenho 2008:29; Gaztambide-Fernández 2010). Chapter 5 discussed how these musicians are idealized as they come to represent the ideal images of being a "traditional musicians."¹⁰⁵ As a result of their musical abilities and empowerment of the ideals associated with

¹⁰⁵ Martin Dowling also observes how "regional styles are in fact derived from the characteristics of a dominant virtuoso who serves as a prototype for the region with which they are identified" (Dowling 2004-2006:130). These "virtuosos" are almost always professional musicians, popularized and recognized through recordings. Regional styles have less popular recognition in Newfoundland as in Ireland to where Dowling is referring. Nevertheless his observation illustrates how, as professional musicians come to represent the "authenticity of the tradition," they are also seen to embody the music of a particular place.

playing traditional music, professional full-time musicians come to represent the ultimate realization of living a musical life.

In this manner, professional full-time musicians are able to have their proverbial cake and eat it too. They make a living – in the economic sense – from their music, although this is not always an income sufficient to support themselves. The music is also part of their living in providing them with fun, a source of self-expression, and various other aspects of significance and meaning. Thus, as full-time musician Steve expresses, relating to using sessions as a gig, “bein’ able to do it a number of times a week and make money at it is just fuckin’ brilliant. It’s makin’ me very happy right now, just a fine life.”

8.3 Music for fun

There are also many musicians in St. John’s who rely on careers other than music to provide their primary income. Gerry, for example, whose story opened this thesis, was an x-ray technologist. Other musicians work as students, teachers, professors, archivists, engineers, day-care managers, nurses, and doctors, among many other careers. In this section, I explore these musicians’ struggles as they try to find time and space to perform their music.¹³⁶ Although the performance of music for these musicians matches closely with representations of “authentic” traditional music as a “leisure” activity, I consider how these representations nevertheless contribute to musicians’ struggles as their careers and families are given social priority. Yet, I also show how, although these musicians do

¹³⁶ I am using “space” here to refer to the idea that musicians have (or do not have) the opportunity to play music. A musician may have time available, but if they also have responsibilities that conflict with music, then they do not have space for its production. Musicians with visitors, for example, may have much “free” time, but the structure of their circumstances often means they are unable to practice at home or attend sessions in their normal capacity.

not use music as a primary source of income, the performance of traditional Irish (and Newfoundland music nonetheless provides a means through which these musicians "make a living" as the performance of traditional music becomes an important pursuit in their lives, as well as a source of "fun."

8.3.1 "Hidden musicians"

I was at Bridie Molloy's one Sunday afternoon.¹²⁷ As I took a seat at the session table, I was introduced to a woman named Anna who I had not met previously. She was in from out of town but was well acquainted with many of the musicians in St. John's. She had a baby in a wrap against her chest and a fiddle with her. She joined the table and played a few sets as the baby sat quietly. But when he started to cry, she stopped playing to soothe him. It was only when another woman, a tourist in the audience, offered to hold him for her that she was able to resume playing. I saw her again at other sessions and she was continuously contending with a conflict between the desire to play and the need to watch and care for her young baby when her husband was unavailable.

Many musicians spoke to me about their struggles to find time and space to play music amidst their other life-paths, such as their careers and families. They expressed frustration at being unable to dedicate as much time to their music as they would like. Frank, a self-proclaimed amateur musician who has been playing for many years explained:

But, you know, family life and domestic considerations and commitments are not always compatible with music and so sacrifices have to be made. Means you can't do everything you'd like to do... Can't play every night, can't play every session

¹²⁷ I am borrowing the phrase "hidden musicians" used by Finnegan (1989) to describe the activities of "amateur" musicians in Milton Keynes, England. My use of her term is discussed further below.

in town, can't go sometimes even to performances you want to hear because it's stuff you don't want to miss but you've got to miss it.

Many musicians had similar comments about how work meant they could not attend sessions or performances or would have to leave early. I have also struggled with balancing the time demands of the writing of this thesis and justifying taking the time to go to one or two sessions a week, or sometimes more.

Having young children seemed to significantly influence musicians' musical pathways, particularly in the case of women, as seen in the example of Anna. Some consideration was also given to how gendered spaces, music, and aesthetics shape women's participation in sessions and the different social relations they formed in chapter 6. As feminist scholars have explored, women like Anna often have little or no time available to dedicate to music and other "leisure" activities, while also fulfilling their responsibilities of raising children, caring for families, and other "work" (Chambers 1986; Deem 1982; Thompson 1990). O'Shea similarly observes that several successful women musicians in Ireland discussed difficulties in being able to play music while raising a family (O'Shea 2008a:58). Decisions about joining particular bands, for male and female musicians alike, were also influenced by their family situations. Musicians with children would join groups that generally did not go on extended tours but stayed based in St. John's so as not to miss their child's first step or first word.

Musicians' struggles to find time to play music sometimes lessened as their musical pathways intertwined with other aspects of their lives. Their families would sometimes become interested and involved, attending sessions or dances, or, if they played music themselves, then family time was often combined with musical

performance. Yet, much as musicians found ways to accommodate playing music, they wished they could attend more sessions or even had time to practice more often. Some musicians therefore expressed a sense of envy of full-time musicians whose primary responsibility, as their primary source of income, is to play music. Peter explains,

I wish I had more time to do it and I'm envious of some of my friends who, I'm somewhat envious of some of my friends who do nothing but play music. There's days I'd love to get up in the morning and just play fiddle for six hours if I wanted to. However, that doesn't pay very well. So you do have to go to work to support yourself and that kind of stuff. So I try and balance the two. And luckily I have a wife and an extended family who support that. Cause it can be very demanding. So it's a big part of my life.

Peter says that this music is a big part of his life, a comment that I discuss further below. Yet, he nonetheless struggles to balance his music, his family, and his career, among other responsibilities and interests he may have.

Popular conceptualizations and representations of traditional music as a "leisure" activity and form of self-expression contribute to these struggles. Both play and leisure, which encompass the idea of "playing music," are understood as activities done during "free time" (Huizinga 2000:8; Williams 1983:336).¹⁰⁸ As a result of these ideas, "real" work is given social priority in these musicians' lives because this work is seen, at least in part, as a necessary component of "living" by earning an income. Play and leisure, on the other hand, are not (Huizinga 2000:8). In addition, while De Vault (1991) discusses how work is given social importance over family "care," both activities are seen as more "socially necessary" than music that is popularly classified as pure "leisure."

¹⁰⁸ Not all leisure activities are play activities. Sun-bathing on the beach, for example, would generally be considered leisure, but is no way involved in "play." In the case of music, however, it is closely tied with ideas of "play" (see Huizinga 2000:158-165 for a discussion of the similarities).

Many self-proclaimed amateur musicians also themselves insist that their performance of music remain in the realm of leisure. When I asked Alex why he did not consider himself a musician, he explained:

Alex: Not considering myself a musician frees me to just have fun with the music and enjoy it for what it is and not have to put enough of an emotional and psychological [effort]... I don't want to have to be stressed about being a musician. So, that's really the main reason not to. If I'm not a musician it's simple, I'm just doing it for fun and if it's not perfect then that's too bad because I'm not a musician.

Sam: Do you think people who are musicians then have sort of that stress?

Alex: Yeah, I think a little bit... I'm good enough in terms of natural talent and ability. I could get myself to that level if I worked really hard. But I don't want to work really hard. So basically it's [a] self-definition to allow me to just enjoy it and have fun and to not actually have to work more than I want to or be stressed about it.

In his discussion, Alex contrasts music as work and music as fun. He prefers to maintain music as fun, insisting that his performance of music remain in the realm of leisure. He thereby refuses the status and label of musician, which is associated with a certain level of ability, talent, and professionalism, and with work.

Interestingly, the pursuit of music for leisure (as opposed to work) is more commonly associated with representations of "authentic" music and tradition. Yet, it is the professional musicians who are recognized within the music scene for their commitment to their music. In her exploration of musicians' playing of Irish traditional music in Chicago, USA and County Clare, Ireland, Deborah L. Rapuano observed that "musicians who are paid are not honouring the age-old 'sacred' tradition. Yet, ironically they are the professionals who are entrusted with carrying on the authenticity of the tradition" (Rapuano 2005:200). Rapuano further discusses how the significance of music as "leisure" and "fun" creates a cultural ideology that enforces distinctions between

"professional" and "amateur" musicians (Rapuno 2005:199-200). These distinctions are further re-enforced as few part-time musicians would choose the life of a full-time professional musician for themselves, because of the work and financial sacrifice necessary to follow that route. As Peter says, "that doesn't pay very well" and Alex comments that it brings "stress."

As a result, as feminist scholars have argued of the domestic, kinship, and other work conducted by women outside of the "workplace" (DeVault 1991; di Leonardo 1987; Luxton 1980), the efforts, contributions, and labours of part-time musicians often go unacknowledged. This is one reason for Finnegan's (1989) use of the term "hidden musicians" in the title of her book. She explains that the word reflects the limited research on local music-making practices, as well as how these practices are "hidden" from musicians themselves in their naturalization in every-day life (Finnegan 1989:4). The next section, however, shows that the performance of traditional Irish (and Newfoundland music is a significant part of musicians' lives and provides them with a means of "living" in terms of pursuing their lives in a particular way. Collectively, the contribution of part-time musicians to the traditional music scene is also significant. As such, the performance of this music does not simply constitute "leisure," but what Robert A. Stebbins (1992, 2007) refers to as "serious leisure." In such a pursuit, musicians have a "career" and "vocation" in the performance of traditional music, even as it is their primary activity for fun, enjoyment, and socialization.

8.3.2 Serious leisure – “It’s like eating and drinking and breathing”

A common experience for many musicians is an “obsession” with the music. This is particularly evident among musicians who began to play later in life and who must contend with the obligations and responsibilities of their other pathways. This obsession is sometimes referred to as “catching the bug” and also leads musicians to play in unusual circumstances, such as in the car while waiting at a stop-light. This experience is also not restricted to musicians playing in St. John’s or in Newfoundland. An Irish tin-whistle site “The Chiff & Fipple” semi-jokingly coined the term “Whistle Obsessive Acquisition Disorder (WhoA),” which included as symptoms “playing the whistle at inappropriate times and in inappropriate situations,” as well as the propensity to accumulate a large collection of whistles and spend time looking at whistle related web sites (Dale n.d.-b). It also provides warnings against activities such as whistling while driving (Dale n.d.-a).

This “obsession,” however, is expressed in many more mundane and subtle ways. Some musicians will listen almost exclusively to traditional tunes on the radio, CDs, or MP3s, while walking, driving, working, and in many other circumstances. Hillary, for example, comments “obviously I love it, I don’t know – something about that music, when it’s played well it just, I don’t know, it’s like I go crazy. I become obsessed with it, like often I could listen to the same tune ten times in a row just to [learn the tune]. A lot of people think that’s annoying.” Musicians therefore spend a great deal of time playing music, sometimes to the detriment of other responsibilities such as making it to class or getting to a meeting on time or to the annoyance of friends, family, and other non-musicians.

Musicians also come to organize their lives around playing music. Some choose which cities to live in based on the presence of an active traditional music scene or will drive several hours to attend a session if there are none nearby and many attempt to arrange their daily and weekly schedules in order to attend sessions. For example, during much of the writing of this thesis, I would not schedule any other activities or obligations on Fiddle Group night in order to attend and I would plan my day accordingly.

Thus, although playing music is often considered a non-essential to life, as Huizinga argues, of "play" in general, it nevertheless is a vital part of living:

It becomes the accompaniment, the complement, in fact an integral part of life in general. It adorns life, amplifies it and is to that extent a necessity both for the individual – as a life function – and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and social aspirations, in short, as a cultural function.

(Huizinga 2000:9)

Finnegan similarly observes of her "hidden musicians":

Far from being the kind of marginal and unstructured activity often suggested by the label 'leisure', with its implication of residual items somehow left over from 'real' life, these musical practices [of amateur musicians in Milton Keynes] were upheld not by isolated individuals in an asocial vacuum or by people merely trying to fill the time to 'solve' the 'problem of leisure', but through a series of socially recognised pathways which systematically linked into a wide variety of settings and institutions within the city.¹⁰⁹

(Finnegan 1989:299)

¹⁰⁹ Finnegan did not observe the struggles to find time for their musical pathways among musicians playing a wide variety of musical genres in Milton Keynes, England as reported by musicians in St. John's (Finnegan 1989:306). St. John's, however, has a unusually active traditional music scene with an abundance of sessions in numbers which, from anecdotal evidence, are only otherwise found in much larger major cities and then in a much less concentrated area. For example, Toronto has numerous sessions per week but these take place in different areas spread across the much larger city. Many of the sessions in St. John's, however, are concentrated along two adjacent streets and the others are located at most a twenty-minute walk away. Milton Keynes, on the other hand, has approximately the same size population as St. John's and so inhabitants likely have fewer musical commitments or opportunities per week, accounting for the different tensions surrounding musicians' musical pathways.

Even among musicians who did not speak so explicitly about a need or desire to play or listen to this music all the time, they generally accorded a high importance to playing this music and their musical pathways influenced or figured as a major component in the organization of their daily lives.¹⁰³

Musicians' performance of traditional music therefore follows closely to what Robert A. Stebbins (1992, 2007) refers to as "serious leisure." Stebbins (1992) outlines how this type of leisure can be pursued in the capacity of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer and consists of six characteristics:

1. The "occasional need to persevere" and contend with struggles over learning, technique, or fear of performance, for example;
2. A career in the particular pursuit, marked by progressive achievement and continuity;
3. The output of effort in order to gain particular skills, technique, and knowledge;
4. The attainment of "durable benefits" such as self-actualization, social interaction, belonging, and well-being;
5. The development of sub-cultures with particular "beliefs, norms, events, values, traditions, moral principles and performance standards"; and
6. The tendency to be highly involved with the particular pursuits, demonstrating great enthusiasm and frequently talking about or participating in the particular pursuit, often to the annoyance of friends and family.

(Stebbins 1992:6-8)

This list of characteristics clearly captures many musicians' experiences in relation to the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in St. John's discussed throughout this thesis. As such, similar to professional musicians, the role of traditional

¹⁰³ Musicians' discussions of their struggles to find time to play music can also be seen as a performance of the emporsoned ideals of becoming a traditional musician. In continuing to assert the importance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music in their lives, musicians are maintaining that significance, even if they are not playing.

Irish (and) Newfoundland music in part-time musicians' lives is akin to a vocation (Stebbins 1992:8).¹¹¹

In this manner, although part-time musicians framed their performance of this music in terms of leisure and fun, it is also a necessary part of individuals' lives.

Musicians, for example, also talked about how playing traditional Irish (and)

Newfoundland music was closely tied to their happiness. As Alex expresses:

I've always recognized that having music in my life is a very rewarding and wonderful thing. There's many times when I feel like if I played music in a day it's a good day. And if I haven't played music, then I feel kind of grumpy and like I didn't accomplish anything. So, I don't know if it's like that for a lot of people, but certainly I recognize this in myself. That, if I'm playing music regularly, that's a good thing.

When musicians do not find the time to play music they feel "grumpy," indicating that playing this music has broader affects than a few minutes or hours of fun while playing.

Peter similarly explained that he is more productive at work.

But again, I started off saying I've been really lucky, and I have been lucky. Because I've always had an employer that understood that when [Peter] is playing music he's happier and he's more productive. And it's still that way, you know... and people know it's a huge part of my life.

¹¹¹ There are important similarities between amateur and professional musicians' pursuit of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music as an activity. As Stebbins (1992) discusses the two groups are closely related and constitute a system more than distinct categories. Part-time musicians' participation in this "serious leisure" activity leads them down a similar route in learning and playing as professional musicians. These musicians all learn the same repertoire, espouse the same ideals, play at the same sessions together. Differences between the groups are therefore a matter of scale in terms time, effort, dedication, ability, and other evaluations of professional status, and there is much overlap. Yet, the recognition and status given to professional musicians grants them a distinct position of authority within the system of relationships among musicians. Full-time professional musicians' reliance on music as their primary source of income also introduces distinct challenges and opportunities, some of which were discussed above. Nevertheless, the idea of "serious leisure" characterizes the activities of full-time musicians as much as amateurs and part-time professionals, just as the idea of a vocation provides a useful way of understanding the experiences of musicians on both routes.

Musicians' musical pathways therefore significantly influenced their "animate existence" and their "vitality," even as part-time musicians struggled to find time to play. Stebbins actually argues for the general encouragement and promotion of "serious leisure" in the 21st century as a source of personal fulfillment and an enhanced quality of life (Stebbins 2007:134).

Amateurs' (and part-time professionals) pursuit of "serious leisure" is also significant in contributing to broader social structures and cultural functions (see also Finnegan 1989; Geertz 2005; Huizinga 2000). As Finnegan concludes in considering the role of local musicians in British society at large: "too often the major focus is 'occupation' or 'economic' institutions, while activity that can be labelled as 'leisure' or even 'culture' is taken as peripheral, not a serious part of 'real' social structure... it is partly through the often-invisible work of such people... that, ultimately, the institutions and traditions of our society are perpetuated and recreated" (Finnegan 1989:331). Similarly, feminist scholars have argued that the unpaid labour of women has significant influences on economic institutions, social structures, and even in supporting the leisure activities of others (di Leonardo 1987; Thompson 1990).

The ties of traditional music sessions to institutions such as schools or churches are not nearly so strong as the choral and band groups that Finnegan considers. There are also significantly fewer musicians engaged in the production of traditional music than women performing domestic labour and other activities. Nevertheless, part-time musicians play an integral part in contributing to sessions, concerts, and other performances throughout the city. Part-time professional musicians are often performers

or organizers at these. Amateurs frequently attend concerts and performances as patrons and supporters, form the primary host of volunteers at events such as the annual Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival, buy local musicians' CDs, and attend sessions. Without these musicians' participation, professional sessions and the traditional music scene would be unable to continue in their current form. The participation of part-time musicians within the local music scene is therefore essential to maintaining and supporting a wide variety of economic and social processes.

In sum, as seen with Alex's comment above that he wants to maintain the "fun" in music, representations of traditional music as a leisure activity are significant for musicians. Some refuse to even talk about "practicing" music because they want to reframe their playing of the music in terms of enjoyment instead of work. These conceptualizations of music contribute to part-time musicians' struggles to find time to play music and to distinctions in status and authority between amateur and professional musicians. While the performance of music as an amateur activity follows ideas of an "authentic" leisurely pursuit, it is professional full-time musicians who are recognized for their dedication and musical abilities. Yet, part-time musicians also assert that this leisure activity is of great importance in their lives, reinterpreting the music's representations in subtle but important ways. Earning an income is then not the only way that musicians "make a living" at their music, as these musicians organize their lives in various ways to accommodate their musical pathways as much as possible; their performance of this music contributes significantly to both full- and part-time musicians' sense of happiness and well-being; and the lives and actions of these musicians contribute significantly to

the overall traditional music scene and therefore are of social, as well as individual, significance. The performance of this music is therefore a *serious* leisure endeavour that constitutes a “vocation” and career for these musicians.

For all musicians, the performance of traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music is therefore an integral part of both “animate existence” and of “vitality” – of life. Across all musical and local backgrounds, skill levels, ages, and genders, musicians expressed their love for the music they play. Playing music, of course, is not always an enjoyable experience. I have also discussed throughout this chapter how assumptions that music and tradition should be performed out of love and self-expression contribute to many struggles experienced by full- and part-time musicians. Nevertheless, musicians continue to learn and play with overall enthusiasm each week, or as often as they are able. As Finnegan puts it:

One common impression given by very many participants was that their musical pathways were of high value among the various paths within their lives... music-making was one of the habitual routes by which they identified themselves as worthwhile members of society and which they regarded as of somehow deep-seated importance to them as human-beings... From the point of view of both individual participants and the localities through which they [musicians' musical pathways] ran, they constituted one set of purposive actions – an invisible structure – actions through which people chose to conduct their lives.

(Finnegan 1989:306-307)

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, when I asked Gerry Strong why he played this music, he responded that “it’s like eating and drinking and breathing... just one of those things you got to do.” None of “eating,” “drinking” or “breathing,” to which Gerry compares his performance of Irish (and) Newfoundland music, are optional activities. To

the contrary, they are essential to sustaining life and are therefore of "deep-seated importance to them as human beings."

Chapter 9: Conclusion – Living with music

St. John's, Newfoundland has an active and vibrant traditional music scene. This scene developed, in part, through the influence of the cultural revival movement that was active throughout Newfoundland, and particularly in St. John's, during the 1960s and 1970s. This period was the culmination of long-standing efforts beginning in the late 1800s to collect, document, and promote Newfoundland culture and traditions. Irish and Irish-American music imported to Newfoundland from the early years of European settlement and more recently through radio, recordings, and Irish musicians who moved to the Island in the 1960s and the 1980s had a strong influence on the local music scene. The later arriving of these musicians, for example, started the first formal scheduled sessions in Newfoundland. The practice of sessions was then adopted and embraced by musicians in St. John's leading to an "explosion" in the number held throughout the city in the late 1990s. During my fieldwork in the spring and summer of 2009 there was, at one point, as many as seven regularly scheduled public sessions *per week*, in addition to private and less regular musical gatherings that occurred. Reflecting the various influences on the local music scene, musicians at these sessions play what I have termed "traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music": a mix of music with historical origins in Ireland and elsewhere, music that was more recently imported to the Island, and music that was composed or evolved locally.

This thesis has offered an ethnographic portrayal of the lives of musicians who play this music and of their participation in sessions. These musicians come from a wide variety of local and musical backgrounds, ages, and genders. They also participate in this

music in diverse ways, playing in different types of places, and attending with varying frequencies. I have sought to demonstrate the deep personal and social meanings that this music holds in common for all these musicians and the important role it has in their lives. As such, this thesis has been organized so that each chapter, or set of chapters, considers an aspect of musicians' lives where this music plays a part. I have explored how, through playing this music, musicians' self-definitions and status become entwined with its performance (chapters 4 and 5); how they develop social connections and integrate into social networks (chapter 6); how they create a sense of place, culture, and belonging in Newfoundland (chapter 7); how they develop a sense of well-being and happiness (chapter 8); and, for some, how they earn an income (chapter 8). Chapter 8 thus concluded by arguing that, for these musicians, this music and its ideals are of "deep-seated importance to them as human beings" (Finnegan 1989:307).

Yet, musicians' experiences in learning and playing are also much more complex than this "romantic" image of the music and of sessions (O'Shea 2006-2007, 2008b). They struggle with learning traditional music and its ideals (chapter 4); negotiate the politics of musicianship and status (chapter 5); contend with exclusions embedded in the structure of the music and its social conventions (chapter 6); debate what and who "belongs" (chapters 6 and 7); and struggle to balance playing music with other responsibilities in their lives, such as raising a family (chapter 8). These politics, hierarchies, and exclusions are as significant to understanding the role and importance of this music in musicians' lives as the feelings of fun, communality, and belonging.

The core of my analysis has therefore centred around three themes that weave throughout the different chapters and that address these complexities. The first has considered the relationship between being "good at" music and being a "good" musician (Bryant 2005). This relationship is based on the process of *empersonment*, discussed in chapter 4. That is, learning to play traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music involves learning a repertoire of tunes, sets, techniques, sounds, and technical skills. Yet, in the process musicians also learn to become a "certain type of person" with a particular set of aesthetics, ethics, and embodied behaviour. Musicians also learn and share an ideal "image" of what this "certain type of person" *should* be and the ideal route to getting there.

In particular, the process of *empersonment* is available to all musicians, but a musician ideally should learn through the *aural* process, learning almost by osmosis from their musical and social environment, generally as a child. Following such a route, a musician should learn to play *expressively* and *dynamically*. They should also become integrated into lineages of tunes and musicians. These lineages develop as musicians become part of the system of reciprocity involved in sessions, sharing tunes, stories, drinks, and sociality with others. As musicians learn traditional music, they also learn how to distinguish between different styles of performance and different sub-genres and the significance of doing so. In St. John's, for example, musicians learn to distinguish "Newfoundland music" as a distinct genre from "Irish music." Through these distinctions and through playing music *in* particular places, musicians also develop connections to those places and their "traditions." Through the process of *empersonment* musicians are

therefore creating themselves and being created according to the image of the ideal traditional musician.

Musicians are also evaluated on their musical and personal performances of these ideals. Through such aesthetic and ethical judgements, some musicians are seen to be "better at" music and "better" musicians than others. Other ideas such as professionalism, ability, talent, musicality, and authenticity also contribute to such evaluations. Chapter 8 discussed how, for many, professional traditional musicians in St. John's come to represent the ideal musical life. Such musicians are thus granted status and authority within the traditional music scene giving them the influence to reinforce or challenge particular ideals, albeit within the overarching image I have outlined. They do so as they set the direction for particular sessions, encourage particular individual performances or sanction others, and perform themselves for others to observe, absorb, and judge.

In delimiting ideals of performance, what the music and musicians *should* be, however, musicians are also setting limits on who and what belongs. Considering different ways of "belonging" constitutes a second but closely related theme explored throughout this thesis. The process of emperment provides a means of creating this "belonging." As musicians are integrated into lineages of tunes and musicians, they are also integrated into particular sessions and social networks. Many musicians also spoke about a sense of belonging in Newfoundland they felt as they developed ties to particular places on the Island. Belonging, however, is also predicated on the process of emperment; musicians must "get it" and be able to observe the proper etiquette and play according to the appropriate musical and personal styles, at least to some degree. By

implication, some people, ideas and places will be excluded, or at least not wholly included. Particular ways of defining "good" music thereby impose constraints on the musicians engaged in its performance. As outlined in chapter 6, the performance of "good" music at professional sessions, for example, is associated with performances of masculinity, thereby limiting the participation of women.

The boundaries of what "belongs," however, are highly contested and in becoming "traditional musicians" musicians do not become part of a homogeneous or even harmonious group, although ideally the music they produce is. Helen O'Shea argues, referring to sessions in Ireland, that they are about engaging with "difference" as much as "sameness" (O'Shea 2006-2007:17). This statement certainly holds true in St. John's and characterizes my third key theme. Musicians differed and debated about how to define traditional Irish (and) Newfoundland music; how it was related to Newfoundland; how it should be played in the context of sessions; what constituted a "good" session and "good" music; how "new" methods of learning, such as recordings and sheet music, should be used; and whether and how traditional music should be used as a source of income, to name a few. Thus, even as musicians share ideals, there is much variation in how these ideals are expressed.

It is through the process of negotiating these different lines of "sameness" and "difference" that musicians negotiate their pathways through the traditional music scene. Musicians thereby demonstrate that they "get it" and "belong" as they have emperoned the ideals necessary to understand and participate. Yet, in the process, they are also negotiating *where* they belong and creating themselves as the particular type of

"traditional musician" they want to be. As discussed in chapter 4, when I questioned one musician, Chris, about why he played this music, he responded that it was how he "defines" himself. There were other musicians present for this discussion and one of them followed up by making a joke of Chris's serious comment:

Steve: Would you be a reel now or a jig?

Chris: I'm a slide man.

Steve: Wicked, right on.

Steve's comment reveals shared understandings about the music and its significance between Steve and Chris. While a joke, Steve was also asking Chris to choose *how* he defined himself through this music, by relating his selfhood directly to specific types of tunes. Thus, as musicians are led down certain routes, choose to follow others or create new paths for themselves, they create their own place within the traditional music scene of St. John's and establish their musical pathways within their lives.

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