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Sociology on the Rock

Department of Sociology
Memorial University

sociology@mun.ca



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Photos accompanying this issue of *Sociology on the Rock* are available online at sociologyontherock.wordpress.com.

Roger Krohn (1931-2012), An Inspirational Sociologist

By [Doug House](#)

When I started the third year of my undergraduate degree at the new campus of Memorial University in 1962, I still had no clear idea, like many students, of what I wanted to do. I had tried physical education but decided that sports would be the fun part of my life, not my life's work. I was interested in psychology but was more interested in human behaviour than experiments with rats and other animals. I decided to enroll in an introductory sociology course, not really knowing what sociology was.

I still vividly remember the first day of class. The professor came in — he was young, blond, wore thick glasses and, when he spoke, had a slight but attractive speech impediment. He started to talk and to write certain key words and phrases, rather illegibly, on the blackboard. He spoke quietly but passionately. He told us that there is a common human nature; that human nature is universal; that human nature is plastic; and that man (in the generic sense in which the term was used at that time) is a social product. He traced out a simple diagram on the blackboard showing how social organization, culture and personality are interdependent and mutually determinant. He explained that sociology aspires to be the science of human social behaviour and, to the extent possible, to be objective and value free. Nevertheless, he implied that there are moral implications to the worldview he was presenting, a view that is inherently humanistic, egalitarian and democratic. I was to learn later that the professor, whose name was Roger Krohn, was to maintain his passion for sociology and live by the moral principles implied by the sociological perspective for his whole life.

Taking that introductory sociology course from Roger was transformative for me. I decided to major in sociology and do an honours degree, which meant that I had to take six soc courses (full-year courses in those days) and write an honours dissertation during my final year. I studied social psychology under Roger, who introduced us to the exciting ideas of Sigmund Freud and George Herbert Mead. With just three other students, I had the privilege of studying the history of sociological theory with Roger. This was really like a graduate seminar, where we explored the great thinkers of the nineteenth century, mainly Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Roger had a way of bringing the material to life by relating it to what he called the great social question of the time: the paradox of poverty and plenty that characterized nineteenth century capitalist industrialization, a paradox that still plagues our world today. We didn't call it that at

the time, but he was taking a sociology of knowledge perspective that related the great thinkers to their social context and political perspectives.

I was not the only young Newfoundlander who was profoundly influenced by Roger Krohn. Several of my classmates went on to become professional sociologists as well. Ralph Matthews, for example, influenced by Roger but also by Noel Iverson (another young sociologist who had studied under Don Martindale at the University of Minnesota), left Memorial to do his Ph.D. at Minnesota and went on to have a distinguished career in sociology at McMaster University and the University of British Columbia.

It wasn't until much later that I learned a little about Roger's biography. He was born and raised in rural Minnesota in the towns of Howard Lake and Blue Earth. He spent time in the U.S. Army in Germany during the time of the Korean War. Then he returned to do his B.A. at St. Olaf College in 1953 and his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. Roger was never one to temper what he truly believed for small "p" political reasons or to further his own career. This sometimes got him into trouble. Early in his career, he dared to disagree with his thesis supervisor, the well-known social theorist Don Martindale — Roger insisted that Marx, not Weber, was the great original thinker and refused to change his thesis to suit his supervisor's point of view. Nevertheless, he successfully defended his thesis, and Martindale must have respected him because, in 1960, he recommended him to Memorial University as "a very able young man," imaginative and very likeable and personable.

Roger was not the very first sociologist to teach at Memorial, but he was the second sociologist who spent several years here, from 1960 to 1964. Although he and his former wife, Mary, a social worker, loved Newfoundland, Roger was also interested in more metropolitan mainstream North American affairs. He spent one year at Ohio State University before deciding that he felt more comfortable with life in Canada than in the United States. He applied for and was appointed as an Associate Professor at McGill University in 1965. He came to love Montreal and carried on as a full-time faculty member at McGill until his retirement at age 72. I reconnected with Roger in 1968 when I decided to do my Ph.D. at McGill. He was my supervisor and instructor in economic sociology, the sociology of knowledge, and the sociology of science. My wife, Jeannie, and I enjoyed three great years in Montreal, including time spent with Roger and his two children, Paul and Martha.

My most vivid memory is of my Ph.D. thesis defence. I flew back from Calgary, where I had my first job as an Assistant Professor, and stayed at Roger's house the night before my oral examination. The custom was that the Chair of

the examination committee would invite the supervisor to ask the first question of the candidate. Roger and I stayed up late and, aided by a few scotches, I was well-primed to answer the fairly straightforward question that we agreed Roger would ask me. Needless to say I was dumbfounded when, invited to ask the opening question, Roger came out with something that was completely different from and much more complex than what we had agreed to. As was his wont, Roger's mind had continued to churn all night and, by the next day, he was much more excited about a new idea than he was by the now boring issue we'd discussed the night before. But that was Roger, you had to love it! (Fortunately for me, another professor intervened to say "That's a stupid question." He and Roger got into an argument which gave me time to compose myself, and things went well from there on.)

Roger was first and foremost a teacher and a purveyor of ideas. He loved to teach and he loved to discuss ideas with students and colleagues, as well as taxi drivers, shopkeepers and all kinds of people. This was wonderful for those of us who had him as a teacher and as a colleague. The only downside, in career terms, was that Roger's published output was less than his intellect would lead one to expect. He did write several books and articles in economic sociology and the sociology of science. I have often thought that, if he had been more career-oriented and more of an academic entrepreneur, he could have written a great introductory book in humanistic sociology before Peter Berger, or a great book in theory before Anthony Giddens. But that wasn't Roger's passion. He continued to inspire students throughout his career. My own son, Matthew, went to McGill as an undergraduate student in the 1990s. Thirty years after his father, he took courses in sociology from Roger. After Roger died in December 2012, Matthew wrote the following tribute to his favourite professor.

Roger was a wonderful person and a truly original, innovative thinker. I took several of his courses at McGill. There was a real beauty in the way he looked at the world, and his idea that economic, political, and natural systems really cannot, in the end, be meaningfully distinguished, is something that colours my outlook on the world to this day.

As his daughter Martha stated in her eulogy to her father at his memorial service, "Teaching was Dad's passion." After his retirement, Roger found a new outlook for this passion by leading a study group at the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement. In the words of one of the members of the group: "I joined

his group and realized to the full his depth and magnitude of thought... We studied immense phenomena such as the dynamics of oil in the present time, and the evolution of empires, the Dutch, the British, the American, the Chinese.... A great experience guided by a leader with a powerful mind and a keen sense of democracy.”

Jeannie and I are fortunate in that we visited Roger and Suzanne, his loving partner for 30 years, at their house on Hutchison Street in Montreal last May. Roger was looking older than the last time we'd seen him a few years earlier, but his mind was as sharp as ever. He started questioning me about the Newfoundland fisheries and, somewhat to my embarrassment, seemed to know more about it (or at least have firmer ideas about it) than I did myself. He had maintained his interest in Newfoundland and Memorial University over all those years, and he talked of his plans to pay one more visit to Newfoundland last summer, plans that were never realized because he subsequently decided to postpone his trip for a year because he was so involved in his latest project. That project, Martha later determined, was no less than to prepare a course on the challenges of President Obama's last term.

Roger Krohn's legacy is not mainly the books and articles he wrote, but rather the fountain of ideas he created that live on in the many minds he influenced spanning three generations. He was indeed an inspiring sociologist.

The Clipboard

By [Stephen Riggins](#)

Ph.D. student Paula Graham has started a [Cinema Politica](#) chapter in St. John's. Cinema Politica is a Montreal-based, non-profit network of community and university associations which screen popular documentary films related to social justice. More than forty people attended the first screening in St. John's. She has received financial support for this initiative from the department of sociology; her efforts were reported in *The Telegram* and *The Independent*.

Shattered Ground (a film about fracking) will be shown on July 16. Previous films in the St. John's series have been *The Pipe* (a film about the impact of oil on a small Irish village) and *Surviving Progress* (on human evolution).

Paula Graham has also been awarded the Professor Peter Hart Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship honors research that focuses on Irish history or politics, Newfoundland and Labrador history and politics, political violence, or revolution. According to department head Karen Stanbridge, Peter Hart was a real (and

provocative) force in the scholarship of political contention, never fearing to challenge “accepted” versions of the circumstances surrounding incidents of political violence in Ireland and elsewhere.



John McLevey successfully defended his Ph.D. thesis at McMaster University on June 24th. John has a B.A. (H) in sociology from Memorial University and has been the webmaster for *Sociology on the Rock* since its creation. As of July 1, he is an Assistant Professor in the University of Waterloo’s Centre for Knowledge Integration in the Faculty of Environment, cross-appointed with the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies. In the coming academic year he will teach a knowledge integration course in the sociology of creativity, and a third-year knowledge integration/sociology course in the sociology of science and technology. He will be continuing his research on think tanks, and working on new projects about (1) free and open-source software hackers and (2) debates about climate science in opinion pieces.



Allyson Stokes will be defending her Ph.D. thesis at McMaster University on September 6th 2013. Allyson also has a B.A. (H) in sociology from Memorial University. Her thesis is a study of gender and work in cultural industries. Her case is the fashion industry in Toronto, with substantive chapters addressing the devaluation of work, fame dynamics in design, and the gendered organization of creative careers. She did 61 interviews, an analysis of award recipients in design, and a media analysis of canonization processes in fashion. She begins an appointment as a Visiting Researcher at the University of Waterloo in September, where she will continue her research on gender and cultural industries as part of a research group with people from knowledge integration, sociology and legal studies, philosophy, and women’s studies.



Seantel Anaïs is presently an Assistant Professor in the department of sociology at the University of Victoria. She completed her Ph.D. at Carleton University in 2012 where her research was supported by a SSHRC doctoral fellowship. Her thesis *Disarming Intervention: A Genealogy of Non-Lethality* was nominated for the Senate Medal for Outstanding Academic Achievement. *Disarming Intervention* traces the history of non-lethal weapons such as tear gas, rubber bullets, and electroshock devices. Prior to accepting a teaching position at the University of

Victoria, Dr. Anaïs taught courses on legal and social theory at Carleton University. She completed B.A. and M.A. degrees in sociology at Memorial University; and her publications include an article on the politics of poverty, food relief, and self-help in volume 24 of *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*. Seantel has also published articles in the journals *Security Dialogue*, *Deviant Behavior*, *Current Sociology*, *Discourse Studies*; and contributed chapters to edited volumes on the sociological aspects of the law.



The MUN department was well represented in this year's Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences despite the fact that the meetings were held on the other side of the continent, in Victoria. Graduate students and faculty giving papers at the annual meeting of the Canadian Sociological Association or at the meetings of other academic associations included: Jamie Baker, Emmanuel Banchani, Ailsa Craig, Paula Graham, Lisa Kaida, Chris Martin, Stephen Riggins, Yujiro Sano, Stephanie Sodero, Karen Stanbridge, Mark Stoddart, and Liam Swiss. Among the past MUN students and faculty presenting papers were Cecilia Benoit, Robert Brym, Rebecca Holland, John McLevey, Gloria Nickerson, Marilyn Porter, and Allyson Stokes. Two incoming MA students presented papers, Collins Nwabunike and Jillian Smith.



Yujiro Sano was awarded a \$10,000 research fellowship by MUN's Institute for Social and Economic Research for his projected M.A. research "The Unpopular Destinations: Successful Economic Integration of Immigrants and their Children in the Atlantic Provinces of Canada."



Sociology honours student Jessica Barry has been awarded a prestigious Joseph-Armand Bombardier Master's Scholarship. She will continue her studies in sociology at McGill University in the fall.



Kelly Greenfield won a gift certificate from the MUN Office of Public Engagement for her First Place presentation at the Aldrich Interdisciplinary Conference. "Kitchen Party in Cambodia: The Role of Public Engagement in International Development" was based in part on her personal experiences in Cambodia.



Eric Tenkorang received a \$71,000 SSHRC Insight Grant for his project “Marital Violence against Women in Ghana: Causes and Implications.”



Catherine Kenny, undergraduate sociology major, presented a paper at the Dalhousie Undergraduate Arts and Social Sciences Conference in Halifax. The title of her presentation was “Empowering the Consumer through Critical Debate: Canadian and British Governmental Responses to Genetically Modified Foods.”



Honours student Jessica Barry was selected to take part in the American Sociological Association’s Honours Program at the 2013 annual meeting in New York City. Information about the program can be found [on the ASA website](#).



Mark Stoddart’s research project “The Intangible Benefits of Tourism: The Battle Harbour National Historic District as a Tourism Anchor” received funding from the Harris Centre Applied Research Fund.



Susanne Ottenheimer’s sociology students donated over six hundred dollars in her honor in December to the Gathering Place where Susanne volunteers. “The fact that the students had organized this without my knowledge truly surprises me. I was very honoured and humbled by what they had done — it absolutely made my Christmas, said Ms. Ottenheimer, who puts an emphasis on local poverty and homelessness when she teaches the course on social inequality.” You can read more about the story on today.mun.ca

Recent and Forthcoming Publications

James Baker (forthcoming) “Just Kids? Peer Racism in a Predominately White City,” *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees*, 29(1).

Stephen Crocker’s book *Bergson and the Metaphysics of Media* is schedule to be released by the Palgrave Macmillan publishing company in August.

Lisa Kaida (2013) “Do Host Country Education and Language Training Help Recent Immigrants Exit Poverty?” *Social Science Research*, Vol. 42(3), 726-741.

Anton Oleinik (2013) “The 2008 Financial Crisis through the Lens of Power Relationships,” *Journal of Economic Issues*, 47(2), 465-474.

Stephen Harold Riggins (2012) “A Square Deal for the Least and the Last’: The Career of W.G. Smith in the Methodist Ministry, Experimental Psychology, and Sociology,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 27(2), 179-221.

Employment Opportunities in the Non-profit Sector

By Maria Browne

Students often do not have a clear idea of what they are going to do after they graduate from university. Many are not aware of the types of jobs they can get with their degrees, how they should go about their job search, or how they can make themselves more appealing to potential employers. Students may not realize the array of opportunities that the non-profit sector has to offer or how they are truly great contributors to our society. Recently, I had the opportunity to conduct interviews with several accomplished representatives from various non-profit organizations in St. John’s, and their comments shed insight into the workings of these associations.

In Newfoundland, the non-profit sector encompasses an astonishing 4,759 organizations. Only one quarter of these organizations are located in the city of St. John’s. The remaining 75% are dispersed throughout the province. Employment in this sector can be found almost everywhere, and the job prospects that it offers are as broad as those of the private and public sectors. According to the provincial government website, the non-profit sector in Newfoundland and Labrador is “as exciting and diverse as our province.”

The non-profit sector may be an appropriate option for recent graduates attempting to gain employment because it has the advantage of being less competitive than its for-profit counterpart. This is due to the fact that non-profit wages are lower than those of the opposing sector. According to Robin Grant, founder of the organization *For the Love of Learning*, which offers an “alternative education program for resilient youth,” non-profits tend to be at the mercy of the governments and philanthropic agencies that fund them. Employment, she says, “is not

necessarily stable because of the nature of the non-profit sector. But outside of that, there are no limits to what people can do.” Thus for students who wish to gain experience and build their resumes, it may be an excellent match.

Currently the sector is facing numerous challenges all over the country, and our province is no exception. According to the *HR Council for the Non-profit Sector* in September 2011, the sector is experiencing declining recruitment due to an “aging workforce and a low national birth rate.” The report also acknowledged that there has been an “increase in service demands on the sector as governments vacate the areas of service delivery and either freeze or reduce funding to some programs.” Consequently, even more pressure is being placed on non-profit organizations to provide these amenities to the community, and they are struggling to fulfill the demands.

Despite these challenges, the report also acknowledged the positive aspects of working in the non-profit sector. Although foundation endowments and donations have decreased and become less stable, 86% of respondents from the HR Council 2011 survey reported that their number of paid staff had remained the same, if not increased. Thus the employment positions are still available. Actually, according to the *St. John’s Volunteer Services* website, the non-profit sector in Canada has over 1.3 million paid employees.

The message for graduates is that there are very real jobs in the non-profit sector, and as these organizations work to overcome their current challenges, they are all the more in need of motivated and qualified new workers. Students would do well to invest the time and energy into making themselves as appealing as possible to not-for-profit employers; they simply need to know what this entails.

Participation in employment and training programs will likely make individuals more appealing to potential employers and help to increase their chances at gaining employment in the sector. Heather Bartlett, the Executive Director of *Daybreak Parent Child Centre*, which offers services to children and families in St. John’s, suggests finding an area of interest and attending as many relevant workshops as possible. “Get as much education as you can!” she says. The *Association for New Canadians (ANC)* is a non-profit, community-based agency which provides settlement and language programming for immigrants and refugees arriving in our province. Executive Director Bridget Foster indicates that the organization utilizes many sponsored employment programs such as the GRAD Swep Program, the Graduate Transitions to Employment Program, Service Canada programs, etc. “If there is a program we can hire under,” Foster says, “there’s a good chance we’ve utilized it.”

Students will only stand to improve their desirability and their connections by

taking advantage of the opportunities provided to them through such programs. Clarice LeGrow is the current Disaster Management Associate at the *Canadian Red Cross*. Not only did Clarice study sociology at MUN, she also participated in the Graduate Employment Program (GEP) and took advantage of the work experience opportunities that were presented to her. Clarice connected with the Red Cross through the GEP, and was later given a position at the organization because the Executive Director remembered her. LeGrow is an adamant supporter of these types of programs, saying that they provide invaluable experience for navigating the job market and “bring people out of their shell.” Current students may wish to get a head start at gaining experience by registering for the fourth-year Sociology Internship course here at Memorial (Soc. 4100), where their placement will present them with hands-on involvement and a feel for the non-profit world.

Helpful information about non-profits is also readily available. The *Community Sector Council* website, for example, contains an abundance of information regarding non-profit organizations, including training and employment opportunities. *Charity Village* is another excellent online resource about the non-profit sector. This database gives access to news, job postings, and services from non-profits across the country. Holly White, former co-ordinator of the ANC’s *Settlement Workers in the Schools Program*; and Colleen Wheatley, Program and Services Manager at *About Face* (a support group for people affected by facial differences), both praise this digital tool. Wheatley says that she personally used *Charity Village* and government websites to aid her in her job search. In addition, the provincial government now contains a policy office, the *Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat*, “that strives to enhance and support the contribution of the voluntary, non-profit sector to the well-being of all our communities.” Those interested can comb through the government’s website and find accurate and up-to-date information about the sector in our province.

Each of the non-profit representatives with whom I spoke suggested volunteer work as one of the best entryways into the non-profit sector. According to Heather Bartlett, “volunteering is a great way to get in the door, see what the organization does, and see if you like it.” Bartlett herself started out by volunteering with the *John Howard Society* and later undertook a part-time job there. She began with Daybreak after finding a job posting online that offered a project grant, and is now the Executive Director of the organization. Leslie MacLeod is the Executive Director at *Marguerite’s Place*, which provides services to women and advocates for women and women’s rights. She also began as a volunteer. When asked whether volunteer work would increase chances of gaining employ-

ment at a non-profit, MacLeod says “Absolutely. I’ve seen it. I’ve experienced it. It is definitely the way to go.” According to a 2004 report by the *Community Sector Council*, “volunteer involvement provides opportunity for individuals to gain skills and work experiences, build personal networks and foster a sense of empowerment and purpose.” Thus as Bartlett and MacLeod have advised, volunteering may be the perfect way into the industry for both current students and recent graduates. Representatives all agreed that non-profits were more likely to hire volunteers over non-volunteers. There is also the advantage that job openings are announced first to those within an organization before being revealed to the rest of the public.

Because non-profits are so diverse, however, representatives could not always identify an ideal university subject to study in order to be in a good position to work in the sector. Holly White, former SWIS co-ordinator, earned an undergraduate degree in German! With the exception of certain specialized areas, the Association for New Canadians often hires individuals with degrees in areas such as sociology, social work, political science, English and education. Moreover, Foster noted that the ANC fully supports Memorial, and that the majority of their staff are graduates. As a sociology student, I was pleased to learn that this is considered a valuable field for many non-profit positions. LeGrow told me that “I believe sociology provides a really good base and a variety of skills. I believe sociology students bring a lot to the table.”

Although formal education was considered important to many of the organizations, experience was also considered to be a significant component of a resume. Heather Bartlett said that education is placed above all else when it comes to granting employment positions at her organization. “However, when you have a combination of education and experience,” she said, “your chances are that much greater.” White told me the same: “If you don’t have the package, you won’t get the job. Being well rounded is important. It depends on the person, not the degree.”

Through these interviews, I have come to learn much about the “how” of gaining employment in the non-profit sector. But another crucial aspect that job-seekers should keep in mind is the “why” — that is, what it means to work for and contribute to organizations like those I have mentioned. No one made this clearer to me than a woman by the name of Bridget Foster.

For over 25 years Foster has been the Executive Director of the ANC and is currently a member of the Deputy Minister’s Advisory Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. For her work, she was named the recipient of the 2012 Paul Yuzik Award and was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Foster speaks passionately (and in her delightful British accent) about the power of not-for-profit organizations. In this type of work, “You can really see that you make a difference. Not many people can say that.” Throughout our conversation, I came to realize that she, like all my interviewees, has dedicated her career to a cause that matters, and is striving to improve the community. This, I have come to understand thanks to my interviewees, is the real attraction of jobs in this sector. It’s not the money, which rarely competes with that of private industry. It’s the mission, the chance to make something more out of your job, to work with a collectivity that is trying to make the world a better place.

Foster offered the following advice for entering this workforce of charity: “Have a very good resume. Have a good understanding of the organization, and be a pest! Be persistent. Be genuinely interested. You need to have passion. Having another language can also increase your chances. Volunteering will also help. You should have general knowledge, interest, and a feel for the province. Our population is aging. Soon you will be contributing to the economy.”

Novelty and Tradition in Rock Music

By Ryan Dinn

I began playing drums when I was twelve years old. I know this because I recently discovered a picture of me holding my first set of drum sticks just before leaving home to attend my sixth grade graduation ceremony. I don’t think there was any particular reason I chose the drums as my first instrument. To be honest, I wasn’t particularly interested in music at the time. But after learning all the basic techniques and rudiments I became passionate. The drums were my instruments, but I was equally interested in all of the other instruments that contribute to a song. After a few years I began to play with other people, first as a drummer and later as a bass and guitar player.

When Stephen Riggins asked me to write an article for *Sociology on the Rock*, I felt both nervous and excited to write about my experiences as a band member and then relate those experiences to some form of sociological writing. You might think that after about ten years of experience playing and writing music and being awarded an M.A. degree in sociology, the task shouldn’t be too difficult. However, I think that both academic and non-academic writers can often fall victim to the illusion of “expertosis,” a sort of presumptuous stance wherein they feel they *know* the Truth about a particular topic or phenomenon based on their own personal experiences.

I do not wish to fall victim to such an approach. I am not attempting to make any claim about the universality of the ideas presented here. I speak from my own experiences playing music in several bands in Newfoundland (Call the Ambulance, The Drunks Rule this Place, Frontier, and Two Oceans). Without digressing into tiresome (and often subjective) genre labelling, these have been “rock” bands in which I have played mostly drums. I hope to connect my impressions of these experiences with some academic writings in order to propose one possible understanding of the way creative art is produced collectively.

After playing drums in bands for a few years, I found that I often had ideas involving melody and not simply rhythm that I wanted to contribute to the music which a group was working on. I decided to take up the guitar. I wanted to learn the language of music so I could communicate my ideas to other musicians. I took lessons for about a month but found that I preferred to learn on my own. I think that teaching myself the instrument fostered a sense of curiosity about my music writing that would have been absent if I had been taught formally, and for a greater length of time. I never knew *why* certain chords went together or how any number of other expressions associated with music theory became evident in my writing. In a sense, every step in the learning process was a discovery free from disenchantment.

It took about three years of fiddling with the guitar before I began writing songs that I still consider “good” or at least “not terrible.” One evening a few years ago, I recorded one of these songs at a friend’s house. I was quite happy with the result and listened to the recording for a week or so, trying to perfect certain sections. While I am admittedly shy about sharing the music I write with others, I felt this particular song was good enough to show some friends in order to get outside opinions. I heard responses like “sounds good” and “it’s catchy,” positive albeit vague responses.

I suppose it isn’t surprising that the song was well received. As it turns out, this song, though thirty beats per minute faster, shares the same chord progression as the verse and bridge section of the 1995 song by the band Oasis, “Don’t Look Back In Anger,” a single that sold over 600,000 copies in the United Kingdom and was rated the 20th greatest song of all time by *Q Magazine* more than a decade after its release.

This sort of unintentional plagiarism, or inspiration, is fitting considering that Oasis’ chief songwriter, Noel Gallagher, has been both criticised and commended for his incorporation of past songs into his own music. Even if you listen casually to the guitar solo on the Oasis song “Supersonic” and the guitar lead on George Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord,” you can hear the similarities. Interestingly,

George Harrison was subjected to a lawsuit regarding the similarities between “My Sweet Lord” and Ronnie Mack’s “He’s so Fine,” the later popularized by the do-wop group The Chiffons.

Johnny Marr, the guitar player for the 1980’s English group The Smiths, provided one explanation for this phenomenon when discussing the similarities between The Smiths’ “Panic” and T Rex’s “Metal Guru.”

“I am such a fan, and The Smiths – me and Morrissey were, we thought like fans, and I think it was a big part of the group. You see in the case of ‘Panic’ ... we had the idea for the song and the title, and I was kinda blatantly saying I’m going to use ‘Metal Guru’ as a building block, as a homage, and almost daring people to point it out. You know, I think often as a songwriter, you know, you hear ideas and snatches of things and you go, oh man, I’m going [to] try and twist that riff around. For me it’s like a nod. It’s a cultural nod, really” (Pete Paphides, “A Closer Look at Johnny Marr on Vinyl Revival – Part Two”).

This sort of conscious and unconscious appropriation of past songs or melodies is inevitable within the limited conventions of popular music. Popular music, or any genre of music, can be seen to exist within a tradition; it must adhere to certain conventions to be accepted as representative of its genre, while simultaneously presenting something novel. Simon Bronner in *Creativity and Tradition in Folklore* states that “creativity and tradition are intertwined, and represent the complex process of humans expressing themselves to others in ways that carry value and meaning.” Creativity, then, can be seen as the ability inherent in all human beings to produce something novel within an established tradition that is valuable to the community in which it was produced.

I often feel that as a musician writing in the twenty-first century I am very fortunate to have such a fantastic amount of music to draw inspiration from when attempting to create a work, both individually and collaboratively. I agree with Morris Stein that a “creative product is not produced from nothing but is instead the reintegration of material or knowledge already existing” (Holsinger et al. *The Creative Encounter*). However, as a songwriter attempting to examine the way I produce music, it is difficult to explain how this existing knowledge and material become reintegrated.

To be in a band that intentionally produces “original” work, you must negotiate the various collective “visions” or “existing knowledge” each member has for that group. When a member produces a song, or song section, and presents it to the group, the other members are presented with a dilemma: “How can I produce something that works with this idea?” You must draw upon past aesthetic experiences to solve this problem. This might be as obvious as writing a part in

the vein of one's idol(s), or it could be more subtle, such as actively playing in a style thought to conflict with the original piece. The original vision of the musical phrase is interpreted, analyzed and then reconstructed in the creative contribution of each band member. These ideas are then collaboratively re-informed until a final product is negotiated. Essentially, "creativity takes the materials of observation, experience, and learning to forge something new and valuable" (Holsinger et al. *The Creative Encounter*).

Oftentimes musicians wish to write the b-sides to their favourite albums; however all the musicians in a group will have their own stack of records that influence their personal visions of these b-sides. Even if a band collectively identifies a particular musical influence, musicians often do not reproduce inspiration in the sort of obvious or heavy-handed fashion I have discussed in previous examples. Subtleties and sonic instances that might be insignificant among listeners can intensely resonate with one band member and become the source he or she draws from in contributing to a collaborative work. "The excellence of works of art and of other human endeavours is usually not due to creativity alone," says Paul Oskar Kristeller in an article in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, "but to a combination of originality and tradition."

In one of the best introductions to the sociology of music, *Popular Music in Theory*, Keith Negus questions the idea that rock music was ever "revolutionary." He highlights the debt of 1950s rock to rhythm and blues and country traditions. It is only in the twentieth century, according to Kristeller, that the concept of creativity moved beyond its strict association with the arts to be more broadly applied to any person who produces something that is original and novel. In the twenty-first century, this perception of novelty for both audience and artist has become increasingly valuable.

Creative works are littered with these "cultural nods," an idea that can be expanded through the work of the poet T.S. Eliot (in *The Norton Anthology of Literary Criticism*). "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone.... The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new."

These ideas become evident in music when we consider the conceptualization of various genres and relative classifications of musical styles. In popular discourse on rock music, writers often describe twentieth-century artists in terms that highlight the differences between genres. However, I've found that contem-

porary conventions are more likely to differentiate genres based on similarities rather than distinctions.

With access to new music no longer limited by an artist's popularity or the consumer's access to physical recordings, the potential for a "cultural nod" becomes endless. The Wikipedia webpage for "popular music genres" lists more than 100 genres, sub-genres, and sub-sub-genres in the rock category alone from "alternative rock" to "visual kei." We also have close to sixty years of rock n roll music at our disposal when looking for inspiration.

The abundance of taxonomies that now exist highlights the desire of many musicians and music enthusiasts to understand exactly what conventions exist which are specific to any one musical form while also trying to identify elements that reflect its novelty. While this "micro-genrefication" may appear to be excessive to a casual listener, it can be very practical for musicians. Examining musical products based on similarities as well as distinctions creates a greater awareness of the "existing material" from which we draw in the invention of a creative product. It allows musicians to better communicate artistic intentions to prospective collaborators, to better negotiate a shared vision of a musical composition. A conscious awareness of existing tradition can only benefit an artist or group of artists in their endeavour to produce a novel product. Novelty exists within tradition and true innovation is the ability to create a product valued for its relative position to the body of work in which it is produced.