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Fan Commitment and its Transformation into Communitas Through the Process of Proxemic Exchange

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FAN COMMITMENT AND ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO COMMUNITAS
THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PROXEMIC EXCHANGE

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Elsa Aguirre, Dr. Luz Candelaria and Teresa Aguirre who have supported me in all my academic efforts.

FAN COMMITMENT AND ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO COMMUNITAS

THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PROXEMIC EXCHANGE

by

ARTHUR ALEXANDER AGUIRRE, B.A.

THESIS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The understanding of fan commitment and the relationship between fans and artists, as well as the relationship among fans themselves, have provided a keen area of study in the fields of popular culture and communication. From the scholars who have studied involvement and fan attraction in sports (Bee & Havitz, 2010) to those who have studied the embodied experience of music (DeChaine, 2002), it is evident that the commitment of an individual to their favorite artist or athlete has an indelible effect on their experience at a live performance. However, what is crucial to understand is what factors are at work during a live performance—what sort of relationship is being created or recreated. Although Duffet (2009) has explored the interaction between certain fans and an artist in his study on heckling during a live performance, there remains a great void in the examination of the development of fan commitment during a live performance. Moreover, it is important to understand how fan commitment and fan interaction at a live performance are altered over the course of an artist's career.

Through a fundamental understanding of fan commitment development, another facet of communication within the field of popular music studies can be established, further developing both fields. In their work on narrative music and visuals in film, Wingstedt, Brandstrom and Berg (2010) address the communicative ability of music, specifically diegetic music[1], and how it facilitates a flow of meaning in a film or television show. Outside of the narrative music utilized in this form of media, there still remains a communicative function of any and all music, evident both in its "lyricality" and sound. However, there is clearly a communicative function that transcends merely from the artist-listener exchange to a function that facilitates a participative behavior from the fan. It is this specific function that is the focal point and justification for this study. It is crucial to understand the communicative factors that drive fan commitment and create a community of fans rather than a group of individuals.

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[1] Diegetic music is music typically utilized to "contribute aural atmosphere or realism to a setting or situation in the story…[and] contributes to the understanding of the situation, just as other diegetic features such as dialogue, ambient or synchronized sound effects, physical setting, clothes, hairstyles etc, will" (Wingstedt, Brandstrom & Berg, p. 13).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize the changes and progressions that occur among the fan base of a particular artist and the role communication plays in these changes and progressions.

This study will further explore fan commitment by examining the evolution of fan interaction and fandom during live performances. It will expand current research by exploring how fan interaction evolves when a particular artist gains popularity while simultaneously maturing in regards to their musicianship and overall sound. The primary goal of the study is to analyze the following process: when a fan of a particular artist attends a live performance by that artist, they engage in a fluid proxemic exchange not only between themselves and the artist but also between themselves and the fans around them, which in turn facilitates the transformation of fan commitment into the creation of *spontaneous communitas*. Furthermore, this study will examine the evolution of this process over the course of an artist's career.

1.1 CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATION AND POPULAR CULTURE

There is an indelible connection between music and communication. From the communicative aspects of Tin Pan Alley to the current communication that occurs between musicians and their fans through social media networks like Facebook and Twitter, music is characterized by its communicative nature. Though much work on music focuses on the lyrics and what messages they convey, there is a broader discursive nature to music. While the United States was engaged in World War II, composers working in Tin Pan Alley were creating songs for other artists to use as their own. However, the lyrics that were written were not the only communicative aspects involved. Having another individual or group write a song for someone else to perform entails a variety of issues. The primary issue involved was and still is the authenticity of the performer and what was/is communicated to the audience consuming the music. This discussion continues today with the current trends of music where artists like Kelly Clarkson and Carrie Underwood win a singing competition and have songs written for them to perform while musicians like Marcus Mumford of Mumford & Songs and the Followill brothers from Kings of

Leon work hard writing their own material. Though both performers are talented and admired in their respective genres, their legitimacy and authenticity are questioned outside of the confines of their respective music circles. Another discursive facet to music is the communication and interaction between the artist/performer and the audience. The days of Tin Pan Alley were characterized by artists and bands who were too famous for continual exposure to fans. Today artists, bands and celebrities utilize various technologies and social media to maintain a connection with his or her audience. Thus, there is a clear communicative aspect to music outside of lyrics and stories that warrants further investigation.

Pedelty and Thompson (2009) argue that even in the wake of a traumatic event like September 11, 2001, popular music continues to be a medium used to convey a wide-array of emotion. Although they focused on the lyrical content of the musical compositions and how they conveyed emotion, the music itself can transmit emotions as well. Juslin and Laukka (2003) found that music, depending on its tone, volume and various other factors, can express emotion just as successfully as the common words and phrases we utilize each day. It is this emotive feature of music that provides an appeal for individuals not only in its consumption, but also its production. An artist can use music to construct a clear understanding of their emotions as well as their identities. In popular culture, there is a clear utilization of music to create, re-create and convey a sense of identity. Kun (2005) reinforces this notion in the following:

> When you hear it, music makes you immediately conscious of your identity precisely because something outside of you is entering your body—alien sounds emitted from strangers you sometimes cannot see that enter, via vibration and frequency, the very bones and tissues of your being. All musical listening is a form of confrontation, of encounter, of the meeting of worlds and meanings, when identity is made self-aware and is, therefore, menaced through its own interrogation. (p. 13)

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It is this inherent communicative nature of music that combines the physical, mental and emotional, and creates a medium through which identity and message can be conveyed. Furthermore, it is this communicating of identity that initially creates the idea of fan and fandom.

The characteristics of a fan have continued to be defined and re-defined in the fields of communication and popular music studies. In her work on fandom, Lewis (1992) addresses the negative connotation that was prescribed to the term "fan" and explored "fandom as a normal, everyday cultural or social phenomenon" (p. 12). The notion of fandom has become an overwhelming area of interest for scholars. Milhelich and Papineau (2005) define the typical patterns of fandom by analyzing "Parrotheads" and their display of devotion to Jimmy Buffet through their "memorization of lyrics, fervent concert attendance and participation with preconcert and postconcert rituals and traditions, steady discourse outside the concerts, the use of religious discourse to make sense of their fandom, and the use of music to make meaning and sense of daily life, thereby utilizing their fandom in pursuits of meaning and identity" (p. 176). This definition of fandom creates a more generally accepted perspective about fandom and individuals who characterize themselves as fans. It shifts the focus from the group of fans on the extremely negative side of the spectrum to those on the positive side. This component of fandom facilitates the understanding of fan commitment and behavior in relation to not only the singular fan, but the interaction of many fans. In his work on popular music culture, Shuker (2008) emphasizes this idea of fans yearning to function within a larger group of loyal devotees.

The fan community, their behaviors, identities and dependence on a wide variety of communication media are integral parts of music as well as popular culture. However, a fundamental understanding of culture is necessary to understand the implications of this study. In his work on cultural studies and communication, Grossberg (1993) explained that cultural studies "attempts to understand and intervene into the relations of culture and power" and is "committed to the fact that reality is continually being made through human action" (p. 89-90). His previous work on fandom (1992)

provides a framework specifically for popular culture. He argued the popularity of a particular text or artifact rests not on the text or artifact but rather on the audience. The classification of "high culture" or "low culture" is entirely dependent on the audience that consumes it. Even more, it is the characteristics and demographics of the audience that determines the characteristics and definition of popular culture. This reliance on the audience to frame the cultural economy of popular culture reifies the need for an understanding of the behavior of both fans and fandom. However, because of the broad scope of popular culture/music, it is crucial to focus on one specific genre in order to understand the audience behavior exhibited within that genre and compare it to the behavior typical to mainstream music. Because of its unstructured nature, independent, or "indie" music provides a suitable genre for study. Thus, by understanding the basic tenets of fan and fandom within indie music, a better understanding of fandom within mainstream music can be reached. Furthermore, This understanding of fan behavior will provide justification for future research.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS
RQ 1: What are the current characteristics of fandom in contemporary indie music?

RQ 2: How are fan commitment, proxemics and the creation of communitas socialized and situated communicatively?

1.3 METHODOLOGY
To answer the research questions posed by this study requires a two-fold method. I will first attend a live performance by two bands (Four Year Strong and Chicago) and utilize an ethnographic study on the behavior of fans, audience members and the artists themselves. The purpose of selecting Four Year Strong rests on a number of factors: (1) access to artists who have more notoriety becomes difficult, and this band has yet to attain a celebrity status that would greatly complicate the ethnography or interview process; (2) despite their lack of mainstream popularity, they have maintained a reasonable amount of success within their respective genre; (3) the band has garnered a majority of their popularity

based on their debut album and have been closely scrutinized since recently signing with a major music label. In order to provide a balanced research analysis, it is imperative to select a band/venue that contrasts greatly with Four Year Strong and the venue. Thus, the band Chicago was chosen for the following reasons: (1) their career has lasted substantially longer than that of Four Year Strong; (2) they are significantly known and on a worldwide scale; (3) the typical fan demographic differs completely; and (4) the venue differs in both size and seating arrangement.

During this ethnography I will look at the differences and similarities that occur within the audience with each band as well as in each city. I will pay specific attention to the fan-to-fan interaction, fan-to-artist interaction, crowd behavior and artist behavior. Utilizing my field notes from each performance, I will examine the current trends of fan interaction and fandom within the indie music scene and explore the differences and similarities among fans outside the indie music scene. In regards to the fan-to-artist relationship, I will discuss the interdependency between artist behavior and fan behavior. This comprises the first portion of my study.

In addition to this ethnography, I will interview one of the primary songwriters in Four Year Strong to discuss the various aspects of their live performance such as audience behavior and fandom. I will specifically center my interview on fan commitment, fandom, fan behavior, proxemics, and the creation of communitas. Furthermore, I will inquire about any changes that have occurred throughout the band's career and in light of their increased popularity. This perspective from the artist will provide context and facilitate an understanding of the transformation of fan behavior from the initial stages of a bands formation to their current state.

1.4 FOUR YEAR STRONG

Four Year Strong have taken the basic foundations of pop punk music and reinvented a genre that has been oversaturated by music companies searching for the next Green Day. "Taking influence from the likes of Lifetime, Gorilla Biscuits, and New Found Glory, Four Year Strong built an aggressive

and melody-riddled combination of hardcore, emo-pop and pop-punk upon their formation in Worcester, MA" (Apar, n.d.). The band consists of vocalists/guitarists Dan O'Connor and Alan Day, bassist Joe Weiss, drummer Jake Massucco and synth player Josh Lyford. The band began when the members were in high school, and they were able to self-release two EPs before signing with I Surrender Records (Apar, n.d.). They released their first full-length album, *Rise or Die Trying*, which was a "brash, totally unexpected game-changer for the modern pop-punk genre" (Manley, 2010, p. 76). After some extensive touring, the band released an album of 90's cover songs entitled *Explains It All* and also signed with Decaydence Records. With their continued success within the indie scene, the band was able to sign to a major label, Universal, while still maintaining a deal with Decaydence (Remus, 2010). With their newfound corporate support, the band released their latest album, *Enemy of the World*, adding even more aggression and brashness to their already intense sound. Recently, the band parted ways with Lyford and has begun work on their third album. Their lyrics touch upon topics that vary from relationships, to death, to the criticism they have received as a band.

1.5 CHICAGO

Chicago was the brainchild of Walter Parazaider, but before the band was created, Parazaider, Terry Kath, Danny Seraphine and Lee Loughnane, were initially in a jazz band named the Missing Links in the Chicago area in the late 1940s. However, after some time, Parazaider had the idea of creating a rock and roll band with a horn section, which required the trombone playing skills of James Pankrow. The band still needed a keyboardist and a bassist, thus facilitating the skills of piano player Robert Lamm who was then going by the pseudonym "Bobby Charles." There was also one key individual who was not a member of the band but played an influential role in the bands career, Parazaider's DePaul University colleague and friend Jimmy Guercio. Guercio eventually became a producer at CBS records and had encouraged the band to keep writing and remain patient. Eventually the band, which at this time

went by the name The Big Thing, played shows with the band The Exception and caught the attention of singer Peter Cetera, who later joined the band after touring together (A Chicago story, n.d.).

After some time, the band changed their name to the Chicago Transit Authority, "in honor of the bus line [Guercio] used to ride to school" (A Chicago story, n.d.). After some complications Guercio had with CBS records, the band was able to record their first album, a double LP self-titled album. Eventually, the band shortened their name to just Chicago and began touring the country and releasing a number of albums. Over the course of their career, Chicago endured some hardships including a split with Guercio and the death of guitarist/singer Terry Kath. The band eventually replaced Kath with Donnie Dacus, but Dacus later left the band and was replaced temporarily with Bill Champlin. The band release more music, but eventually had yet another obstacle to overcome, the solo career of Peter Cetera. Once Cetera left the band to pursue his own musical goals, they asked Jason Scheff to take over lead vocals. The band continued to tour extensively with bands like the Beach Boys, and recorded and released more music. The band continued to struggle with member changes including Tris Imboden replacing Danny Seraphine on drums and the audition and acquiring of Keith Howland on guitar. The band maintained their popularity, touring the world and releasing various albums including *Chicago XXX* and the previously unreleased album *Stone of Sisyphus*. Eventually Champlin left the band in 2009, and was replaced with Grammy-nominated keyboardist Lou Pardini who continues to tour with the band today. Chicago's "dream turned into record sales topping the 100,000,000 mark, including 21 Top 10 singles, 5 consecutive Number One albums, 11 Number One singles and 5 Gold singles. An incredible 25 of their 32 albums have been certified platinum, and the band has a total of 47 gold and platinum awards" (A Chicago story, n.d.).

1.6 IDENTIFYING THE TENETS OF FAN COMMITMENT, PROXEMICS AND COMMUNITAS

Throughout the fields of popular culture and communication, there are many interpretations for the various terms and concepts pertinent to this study. However, to suffice its purpose, it is critical to

provide an operational definition for the terms that will be utilized—fan commitment, proxemic exchange and communitas. Fan commitment will be defined as the admiration of and loyalty to an artist(s), exceeding the simplistic appreciation of their music and extending to an overwhelming connection by the fan to the artist(s) through music, lyrics, live performance and overall persona of the artist(s). The notion of a proxemic exchange derives from Hall's (1982) theory of proxemics. In his work, Hall defines proxemics as "the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture" (p. 1). Much of his work centers on how comfortable or uncomfortable individuals become in relation to the amount of space or lack of space they have with another individual. He even goes as far to address the various intimate, personal, social and public distances typically encountered based on specific measurements (inches, feet, etc.). The majority of these distances are determined by the context of the relationship and whether an individual is intimately involved with someone or if they happen to work in the same building. With regard to live performance and fan commitment, a newfound understanding of space is created when the typical constructs of space and comfort are dramatically changed. For this study, the spaces that are explored are the physical space of the artist and fans as well as the aural space of the venue. Thus the proxemic exchange is defined as the exchange of physical and/or aural space between the artist and the fan or among the fans themselves. Finally, communitas is the third term that will be defined. Turner (1982) explains communitas as "the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc. from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate groups…or of affiliation with some pervasive social category" (p. 44). Furthermore he explains the three different forms of communitas— spontaneous, ideological and normative. This study focuses on spontaneous communitas, defined as the creation of one concise entity, or event from the actions, behavior and communication among many individuals in one location.

1.7 GUIDELINE FOR THE STUDY

This study will strive to redefine the characteristics of fan behavior and fandom in the realm of live performance and analyze another area of popular culture and communication for future scholars to explore. The process through which spontaneous communitas is created will be analyzed and utilized to further understand the viewpoint of both the fan and the artist(s). To facilitate the answering of the previously stated research questions, this thesis will consist of the following:

Chapter two is comprised of a detailed literature review of all concepts and terminology guiding this study. Past and current research that has explored the tenets of popular and indie music culture, fandom, proxemics, communitas, and many other concepts will be incorporated and analyzed to create a framework for the study. This section will provide an understanding of the need for this study and its place in both popular culture and communication.

Chapter three provides a detailed explanation of the methods and procedures that will be used by the researcher to answer the research questions. Instrumentation, data collection and data processing and analysis will all be discussed and justified for their use in this study. Finally, the limitations of the methodology will be addressed and discussed.

Chapter four explores the findings of the study. It is in this chapter that the interviews and ethnographies are discussed and analyzed to provide an answer to the postulated research questions. Furthermore, the researcher's interpretation of the findings is also discussed and included within this chapter.

Chapter five consists of a summary of the study and a conclusion. The key concepts of each chapter will be addressed in the summary, and a critical discussion of the analysis and findings will guide the structure of the conclusion. Finally, recommendations for future studies are discussed, outlined through the findings and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In following the chapter, I examine the various avenues and diverse categories that are intertwined between the fields of communication and popular music. In my course of research, I have found a defined track of study in the field of musicology that focuses on audience and fan participation. Moreover I have discovered work in the field of communication that focuses on the communicative aspects of music. However, there seems to be a lack of research that centers on the communication occurring within the audience at a live performance that maintains a dual focus within the fields of communication and popular music. Thus, in the following chapter, I outline previous research on popular and indie music, fan commitment, proxemics and communitas to justify the need for a study on audience participation and engagement within the field of communication.

2.1 POPULAR MUSIC/INDIE MUSIC (STUDIES)

Music has played an indelible role on popular culture, the consumption of popular culture and the discussions regarding its place within the context of daily life, facilitating the creation of a specific locus of study that centers on the intersection of music and communication. The understanding of popular music, as well as its many sub-genres, has provided numerous areas for scholars to research (Ali, 2002; Brooks, 2010; Ellison, 2001; Farrugia & Gobatto, 2010; Frith 1998; Grossberg, 1992; Klosterman, 2004; Kun, 2005; Lipsitz, 2007). In addressing the dichotomy of popular music studies, Shuker (2008) describes the field of popular musicology as "primarily an aesthetic discourse, focused on the music, [that] includes reference to the interaction of social factors; conversely, sociologically grounded studies, while emphasizing production and consumption, situate these processes in relation to the nature and authorship of specific musical texts and genres" (p. 2). Grossberg (1993) identifies cultural studies as "an attempt to map out the particular relations, the context, within which both the identity and the effect of any particular practice are determined" (p. 90). Though popular music studies provides a depth of research possibilities, its plethora of research material can also be problematic. Thus,

for the purposes of this study, it is crucial to further analyze one specific genre within popular music. In my research, I analyzed work that focused on the representation of Jewishness through parodies of popular American music (Kun, 2005), African-Americans and hip-hop (Stephens, 1991) and Latina/o identity and rock music (Avant-Mier, 2010; Pineda, 2009), along with scholarship on many other genres of music. However, there seems to be a void in the understanding of what is considered indie music.

The indie music genre has often been difficult to define due to the variances in the bands associated with this music scene; thus it is necessary to determine what characteristic(s) of an artist or band identifies them as indie. Novara and Henry (2009) define the characteristics of indie rock as "the careful balancing of pop accessibility with noise, playfulness in manipulating pop music formulae, sensitive lyrics masked by tonal abrasiveness and ironic posturing, a concern with 'authenticity,' and the cultivation of a 'regular guy' (or girl) image" (p. 816). In her work on the birth and re-birth of indie culture, Oakes (2009) defines indie art as anything that is independently created by the artist. However, Fonarow (2006) provides a thorough understanding of indie music/culture in the following definition, which will be utilized in this study:

> Indie music has been considered by insiders to be: (1) a type of musical production affiliated with small independent record labels with a distinctive mode of independent distribution; (2) a genre of music that has a particular sound and stylistic conventions; (3) music that communicates a particular ethos; (4) a category of critical assessment; and (5) music that can be contrasted with other genres, such as mainstream pop, dance, blues, country, or classical. The indie community's arguments over membership deal with the nature of the ownership of musical recordings and their mode of distribution to the larger public, the nature of musical production practices and their relationship to musical forms, and the relationship between audience members and the music. I consider indie to be precisely this discourse, and the activities that produce and are produced by this discourse, as well as the artistic productions and community members who

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participate in and contribute to this discourse. (p. 26)

These various facets of indie music/culture will facilitate the understanding of fan commitment within the genre and the distinguishing features of indie music.

2.2 FAN COMMITMENT/FANDOM

Central to the crux of the intersection of music and communication is the role of the audience, or fans, and their communicative behavior and interaction. "The relationship between the audience and popular texts is an active and productive one…People are constantly struggling, not merely to figure out what a text means, but to make it mean something that connects to their own lives, experiences, needs and desires" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 52). It is this personal aesthetic appeal that shapes the intensity of the fan and creates the embodied experience of live performance. However, it is imperative to differentiate between having a fondness for a musician (or even just a song) and being a fan. There is an intrinsic nature to the fan to seek out an artifact solely for personal gratification and pleasure. Lewis (1992) acknowledges this innate characteristic of a fan, arguing, "perhaps only a fan can appreciate the depth of feeling, the gratifications, the importance for coping with everyday life that fandom represents" (p. 1). In addition to an understanding of the fan, it is crucial to understand fandom and its relationship with the notion of and behaviors associated with fans. Fiske (1992) identifies some of the characteristics of fandom in the following:

[Fandom] selects from the repertoire of mass-produced and mass-distributed entertainment certain performers, narratives or genres and takes them into the culture of a self-selected fraction of the people. They are then reworked into an intensely pleasurable, intensely signifying popular culture that is both similar to, yet significantly different from, the culture of more 'normal' popular audiences. (p. 30)

Thus, one characteristic of a fan is the ability to distinguish between authentic and mass-produced text/media. Brower (1992) addresses the function of a fan as a cultural "tastemaker" in her work on

television programming and Viewers for Quality, a group of "mature, middle-class, well-educated women and men" who "engage in aesthetic criticism (defining and discriminating 'quality television') and social activism (advocating for the continuance of 'quality television' on the three major commercial networks) (p. 154). As tastemakers, fans must invest some fraction of themselves into whatever article or text they are evaluating. By investing themselves, their behavior and participation as fans begin to create and re-create their identity as individuals. Grossberg (1997) explains, "fans make an affective investment in the objects of their taste and they construct, from those tastes, a consistent but necessarily temporary affective identity. Their preferences are determined by structures of relevance and effectivity; fans are concerned with how particular practices enter into and effect changes within their everyday lives" (p. 247). With this understanding of fans and their role in fandom, it is also helpful to address the role of the aficionado and its function within fandom and fan commitment.

Aficionados, though characterized by a similar brazen commitment to the consumption of popular culture as a fan, focus on a different aspect of popular culture. Shuker (2008) explains, "aficionados' intense interests is usually at more of an intellectual level and focused on the music per se rather than the persona of the performer(s). Aficionados prefer to describe themselves as 'into' particular performers and genres, and often display impressive knowledge of these" (p. 183). Thus, there is a clear distinction between fan and aficionado. Jenson (1992) reifies this difference in the following:

> Apparently, the real dividing line between aficionado and fan involves issues of status and class, as they inform vernacular cultural and social theory. Furthermore, the Joyce scholar and the Barry Manilow fan, the antique collector and the beer can collector, the opera buff and the Heavy Metal fan are differentiated not only on the basis of the status of their desired object, but also on the supposed nature of their attachment. The obsession of a fan is deemed emotional (low class, uneducated), and therefore dangerous, while the obsession of the aficionado is rational (high class, educated) and therefore benign, even worthy. (p. 21)

Despite their differences, there are some primary characteristics that connect fans and aficionados (1) their commitment, (2) their willingness to allow their commitment to shape their identity and (3) their participation within the fan/music community. Both fans and aficionados are committed to their interests and want to participate alongside individuals who also maintain a similar identity. Shuker (2008) reinforces this idea saying, "Most fans see themselves as part of a wider community, even if their own fan practices are 'private,' individual activities undertaken alone" (p. 184). It their interaction with one another as well as their interaction with the performer(s) that is crucial in understanding the communicative elements involved. Even more, it is this interaction that defines the very nature of their fandom. In their work on fandom and sports, Reysen and Branscombe (2010) explain that, "The difference between fanship and fandom revolves around whether the fan defines the self in terms of personal attributes (e.g., I like the Green Bay Packers) or in terms of membership in a social category or group (e.g., I am a Cheesehead)" (p. 190). Though some scholars have examined the dual involvement of the self and group at a live performance (DeChaine, 2002) and even the participation in the mosh pit and moshing (Simon, 1997; Tsitsos, 1999), there is a lack of analysis of physical and aural space exchanged among fans and between fans and the performer(s) during a live performance.

2.3 PROXEMICS

Hall's (1982) notion of proxemics centers on the role of space in every day activity, specifically in relationships. Research has investigated various aspects of space from the proxemics of incarcerated offenders (Wormith, 1984) to that of individuals walking in groups (Costa, 2010). Through his work on space, Hall identified four different distances utilized by human beings on a daily basis—intimate, personal, social and public—each with its own subset of "far" and "close" distances. The intimate distance is typically reserved for individuals who are extremely close (i.e. relatives, significant others, best friends, etc.) and relationships that are well established. The close phase of this distance is characterized by intimate activities within close relationships, "the distance of love-making and

wrestling, comforting and protecting" (p. 117). The far phase, measured by Hall as anywhere between six and eighteen inches, is still reserved for those with close ties but centers on intimate conversations. Hall later described the close and far phases for each distance, detailing the physical qualities of the individual in relation to the proximity. In addition to the use of space and distance, Hall acknowledged there were more factors involved.

Crucial to the theory of proxemics is a fundamental understanding of the role of nonverbal communication (Sielski, 1979). In his work on leadership, Fatt (1999) also reiterates the categories and role of nonverbal communication stating, "Nonverbal factors fit into five categories: eye contact, gesticulations, paralanguage, posture and overall facial expression. Environmental factors such as seating arrangement and setting also have a great effect on leadership and credibility" (p. 37). Thus, one central factor that influences the role of space is context because "how people are feeling toward each other at the time is a decisive factor in the distance used" (Hall, 1982, p. 114). The relationships we share with those around us, the environment and the situation surrounding our encounters with others dramatically alter our sense of space. Tesch (1979) states, "It was assumed that the regulatory or communicative aspects of human proxemic behavior are revealed in what one person attributes to another person as a function of the latter's use of relational space" (p. 45). Thus, the environment and context, as well as the nature of those around us, have a tremendous affect on our use of space and distance. Furthermore, our own ideologies, behavior and personality traits affect our use of space on a daily basis. However, for the purposes of this study, it is important to understand the place of proxemics in music and live performance.

Throughout his work, Hall (1982) described the properties of visual, olfactory and auditory space but merely addressed the distance in which human beings can continue communicating without disruption and failed to address the ability to exchange auditory space with another individual or group. This void in his research creates yet another facet of proxemics that needs further investigation.

DeChaine (2002) acknowledges this ability to exchange space, specifically through work on the embodied nature of music at a live concert stating, "I kept sensing in that space an odd kind of solidarity, a oneness with the audience, as though together we had found a way to clear a space for ourselves in the music" (p. 92). Lincoln (2005) reifies this intersection of music and space in her work on the bedrooms of teenagers and music. "Music has the power to transform a space, to fill it, to give it a complexity of meanings, to give it a feeling and an atmosphere" (p. 399). Later, she addresses the role of the individual in this creation of space through music arguing that, "The listener has the power of choice to transform space through a variety of different types of music, depending on the mood, atmosphere or emotional ethos they wish to create (p. 405). It is this ability for music to be created and exchanged that will be the focal point for this study. However, the aural and physical proxemic exchanges are the media through which fan commitment can be transformed.

2.4 COMMUNITAS

In his work on ritual, religion and liminal phenomena, Turner (1974) utilized his efforts with the Ndembu people to establish the notion of communitas, which he characterized as "spontaneous, immediate, concrete—it is not shaped by norms, it is not institutionalized, it is not abstract. Communitas differs from the camaraderie found often in everyday life, which though informal and egalitarian, still falls within the general domain of structure, which may include interaction rituals" (p. 274). Olaveson (2001) defines communitas as "a state of equality, comradeship, and common humanity, outside of normal social distinctions, roles, and hierarchies" (p. 93). These ambiguous definitions of communitas have created somewhat of a disdain for its utilization in scholarly work. Turner (2008) explains that communitas "is a very simple thing but an enormously important part of social life. It does not often find its way into the social sciences because scholars 'do not know what to do with it'" (p. 36). However, what is crucial to the understanding of communitas, and for this study, is that despite its spontaneity, there is still a ritualistic nature that bonds people together. In his earlier work, Turner (1969) reiterates

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this, arguing that those who experience communitas are seeking "a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared" (p. 138). Turner (1982) identified three different forms of communitas—spontaneous, normative and ideological—that he defined in his later work. Spontaneous communitas centers on a single moment when individuals of all ranks, wealth and status come together in one synchronized form. "Individuals who interact with one another in the mode of spontaneous communitas become totally absorbed into a single synchronized, fluid event" (p. 48). Starkloff (1997) defines spontaneous communitas as "the state of becoming that occurs in a marginalized and anti-structure group" (p. 650). "Ideological communitas is a set of theoretical concepts which attempt to describe the interactions of spontaneous communitas" and normative communitas is defined as "a subculture or group which attempts to foster and maintain relationships or spontaneous communitas on a more or less permanent basis" (Turner, 1982, p. 48-49). Each form of communitas centers on anti-structure and the formation of one by the participation of many. Though Turner's work with structure and anti-structure lays the foundation for communitas, there is another concept that is useful for this study.

Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow must be addressed when describing Turner's idea of communitas. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines flow as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4). Starkloff (1997) describes flow as "an experience of total involvement to the extent that time passes unnoticed and a sense of wholeness surrounds the participants" (p. 657). In his comparison of flow and communitas, Turner (1982) identified that both are autotelic, in that neither require outside goals, and that each involves the loss of the ego. Despite their similarities, Turner still acknowledges some key characteristics that separate these two concepts. The primary differences are that flow (a) still requires some sense of structure and (b) is predominantly focused on the individual. "'Flow' is experienced within an individual, whereas communitas at its

inception is evidently between or among individuals—it is what all of us believe we share and its

outputs emerge from dialogue, using both words and non-verbal means of communication, such as

understanding smiles, jerks of the head, and son, between us" (p. 58). The crucial aspect of Turner's

thoughts on flow in regards to communitas is that he believed that flow, despite its differences, could be

transformed or "liquefied" into communitas, whereby individuals, participating in an activity,

spontaneously become one with one another through their unabashed participation. It is this creation of

communitas from flow that is often illustrated through various facets of music.

The interaction of individuals at a live musical performance facilitates the creation of

communitas and creates a need for analysis. In her work on British indie rock, Fonarow (2006) reiterates

the ritualistic nature of music. "Musical performances are ritual events—they invert, obviate, and

reinforce our cultural values" (p. 242). It is this ritualistic nature of music that facilitates the creation of

communitas. DeChaine (2002) reinforces the role of communitas in his work on the embodied

experience of music. "Barriers are lifted and defenses are lowered in communitas…This was my feeling

with the person next to me at the Joe Jackson concert: our 'mutual understanding' seemed to unite us

across our differences, whatever they may have been to enjoin us in affective pleasure" (p. 93). At a

later concert, he continues to identify this creation of communitas in the following:

> The incredible sensation of camaraderie that I experienced with those venturing into and out of
>
> the pit, the freedom from the tyranny of difference (age, gender, ethnicity, moshing ability), the
>
> palpable invitation to transformation I received in that space—all of these things underscore the
>
> sense of 'mutual understanding' emphasized by Turner in his depictions of spontaneous
>
> communitas. (p. 94)

The abandonment of social ranks and hierarchy described by DeChaine echoes that expressed by Turner

in his description of communitas. Lincoln (2005) reifies this nature of music, specifically for youth,

stating, "music maintains a role in the unification of like-minded young people and has the power to

transcend traditional social categorizations such as ethnicity, gender or social class" (p. 405). It is this inherent nature of music to facilitate the creation of communitas that justifies a thorough analysis of how fan commitment and proxemics interact to form communitas.

There is an interesting interplay between popular music studies, fan commitment, proxemics and communitas that requires a thorough analytical discussion. However, it is crucial to utilize a suitable method(s) to properly analyze the previously discussed concepts. In the following chapter, I discuss what I consider the best methods in which to study the various components discussed throughout the literature review.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Given the scope of the study and my research interests, it is necessary to utilize a specific method(s) to ascertain what communicative behaviors are at play with the amalgamation of fan commitment, proxemics and communitas. In this chapter, I first discuss the participants involved in the study and the procedural methods utilized to gather all the necessary data. I then provide justification for the use of each method, explain some limitations and define the scope of the study.

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The sole non-academic participant was Daniel O'Connor, 26-years-old, guitarist, vocalist and one of the founding members of the band Four Year Strong. However, the primary participant for this study was the researcher acting as a participating observer at two live performances. This included not only drafting field notes with thick description, but also engaging in the majority of the social behavior and interactions of fans present at both performances. The fundamental reasoning for utilizing myself as the primary participant rested heavily on the focus of the study. Indie music is the genre utilized to examine the relationship between fan commitment, proxemics and communitas. As a 25-year-old graduate student who has been heavily involved in the local indie scene in El Paso, Texas, both through the attendance of and performing at local shows, I provide a relevant perspective to compare and contrast the indie music scenes and indie fandom in two different locations. Even more, the predominately Hispanic population of El Paso, Texas provides further avenues of analysis in regards to the ethnic and racial differences between El Paso and Mesa, Arizona.

3.2 PROCEDURES

3.2.1 NARRATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY

Because of the subjective nature of this study, a qualitative examination was necessary for a subjective analysis. In order to attain a full experience and understanding of the culture of fandom and fans at a live performance, specifically in indie music, this study undertakes an ethnographic analysis, in

conjunction with an interview (RQ1). I attended a headlining show by Four Year Strong at the Nile Theater in Mesa, Arizona. In addition to observing the audience during the performance, I also participated in some of the rituals and activities occurring throughout the performance. The selection of Four Year Strong was based on their status and longevity within the indie music scene. Furthermore, my previous work on proxemics, fan commitment and communitas was based on an observation on the band as an opening act with a limited set time. Thus, this observation provided insight into the full dynamics of the band during a headlining show.

To gain a thorough understanding of the key characteristics of participation and commitment of indie fans, it was necessary to observe another live performance that differed from the first show on a variety of levels. To achieve this goal, I observed a performance by the band Chicago at the Plaza Theater in El Paso, Texas. The band was chosen for a number of factors including their variance in sound, popularity and worldwide success. By comparing a band of this magnitude, a better understanding of the differences in terms of fandom, fan commitment, proxemics and communitas was reached. In addition to the difference in bands, the venues also needed to be different. While the Nile Theater in Mesa, Arizona was made for the audience to stand and move around, the Plaza Theater in El Paso, Texas has seating-room only and does not allow for much movement when seated.

To successfully answer RQ1 and RQ2, there were particular aspects of the live performance that required particular attention to provide a thorough audience analysis. Gibson (2000) reifies the goal of audience analysis arguing, "It is through the collection of audience interpretations, the sorting out of their semiotic structures, and the investigation of their connection to other social practices that critical audience researchers can rebuild the context of articulations into which instances of media consumption are inserted" (p. 269). Thus, it was necessary to observe these performances from a number of perspectives. First, it was imperative to observe the behavior of the fans as individuals and as an audience before, during and after the performance to illustrate typical behavior of indie music fans and

characterize fandom at a live performance. Second, it was crucial to examine the interaction of the audience with one another, verbally and nonverbally, to observe the physical, aural and communicative exchanges involved. Similarly, it was necessary to study the same interactions, verbal and nonverbal, between the audience and the performer. Finally, it was necessary to observe these aspects of a live performance as a participant, engaging in all verbal and nonverbal activities, to gain an understanding of the embodied experience of fans in the audience.

Conquergood (1991) explains ethnography "requires getting one's body immersed in the field for a period of time sufficient to enable one to participate inside that culture. Ethnography is an embodied practice; it is an intensely sensuous way of knowing" (p. 180). When utilizing ethnography, the researcher not only observes the native people, behaviors and environment, but becomes a pertinent facet to the study through his or her own participant-observation. In his explanation of ethnography, Clifford (1988) argues that, "participant-observation obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as an intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation" (p. 24). Though ethnography can be beneficial in a variety of fields, many scholars have justified its use when analyzing music (Barret, 2009; Gracyk, 1997; Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Korczynski, 2007), and thus rationalize its place in this study. Both ethnographic experiences provided a microcosm for the interactions at play during a live performance. However, because of the nature of live performance and the cultural aspects of music, particularly with indie music, a specific type of ethnography was adopted—the observation of participation, or a narrative ethnography. Tedlock (1991) explains the difference between a participant observation and observation of participation in the following:

The shift from one methodology to the other entails a representational transformation in which, instead of a choice between writing an ethnographic memoir centering on the Self or a standard monograph centering on the Other, both the Self and Other are presented together within a single

narrative ethnography, focused on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue. (p.

69).

Thus, a narrative ethnography provides the perspective of not only the fans being observed but that of the observer as well. Murphy (1999) reinforces the utilization of narrative ethnography in his work on the use of ethnography in media culture studies:

> Rather than controlling, suspending, or bracketing experience from the ethnographic description, the ethnographer recalls the pleasures, difficulties, frustrations, and contradictions that were central to the field experience—an approach radically different from traditional ethnography's surveillance techniques that called for a repression of the embodied experience. In short, the ethnographer becomes him- or herself a reflective, heuristic device. (p. 217)

Because I am a full participant within the indie music scene, and due to the environment of the venue, my perspective as a researcher was relevant in understanding the various interactions occurring during a live performance. DeChaine's (2002) work with live performance provides a suitable framework for the use of narrative ethnography within this study. In his work, DeChaine utilized an autoethnographic approach to analyze the embodied experience of music at a live performance by R.E.M. He balanced the analysis of his observations regarding the audience with his own voice as a participating observer. Therefore, throughout my analysis, I will also incorporate my field notes as both support for and examples of central arguments and claims made. However, the narrative ethnography was not the sole research tool utilized for this study. Williams' (2001) work on youth and popular music and Moore's (2007) work on punk and cultural production illustrate the benefit of utilizing more than ethnographic field notes to conduct a study of this nature with sufficient efficacy. In addition to my observations through participation, I also conducted an interview with one member of Four Year Strong.

3.2.2 INTERVIEW

My observation of Four Year Strong's show in Mesa, Arizona facilitated the utilization of an interview for this study. Though it was imperative to observe the band and audience to satisfy the research questions, there was also a need to understand the perspective of the performer and their involvement with fandom, fan commitment, proxemics and communitas. Following the methodological framework set by Acosta-Alzuru (2003) and her work on the *telenovelas*, I interviewed O'Connor outside of the Nile Theater in Mesa, Arizona before the band's headlining show. The interview lasted approximately 29 minutes and was only conducted with O'Connor due to time constraints with the other members. It was captured on digital video and was later transcribed. In addition to the interview, extensive notes were taken with regard to the themes and concepts brought about through the questions and answers. Following Acosta-Alzuru's fourth and fifth steps in her interview process, I summarized what the respondent said and what I thought it meant and concluded by relating the common themes and concepts with the framework of the study. In order to effectively and sufficiently answer RQ1 and RQ2, the focus of the interview was on fan commitment and interaction, specifically its progression and evolution from the beginning of the band's career to its current state. Furthermore, it was necessary to concentrate on the behavior of fans during a live performance.

The following eight (8) questions were posed to O'Connor:

(1) Have you ever noticed what kind of audience reactions you get, when they are not familiar with your band?

(2) Have you ever thought about what fed the commitment to your band by fans when you were first starting out?

(3) How do you try to interact with fans before, during, or after a show?

(4) Are there any actions or behaviors by fans that you see or experience at every show?

(5) Have you ever thought about or noticed any differences between fans from different places. For example, are there any differences and/or similarities between U.S. audiences and audiences abroad?

(6) How has fan reaction/commitment changed over the course of your career, from your shows supporting your first EP, to your first full-length, second full-length and now working on your third?

(7) There seems to be some backlash when bands move from an indie label to a major label because of a fear the band will "sell out?" Have you noticed any change in your fans when they find out you just signed to a major label (Universal Motown)?

(8) What is your favorite aspect of the live show?

Much like the field notes from the narrative ethnography, O'Connor's discussion of fan commitment, interaction and behavior will be utilized and incorporated throughout the analysis to provide context to the perspective of the artist/performer with regard to fandom, fan commitment and the exchange and interaction of fans and performer at a live performance.

The congruent use of narrative ethnography with the qualitative tool of the interview will provide a multifaceted analysis of fandom and the interaction of fan commitment, proxemics and communitas within indie music. By utilizing these qualitative methods together, I will construct the characteristics of fandom within the indie music scene (RQ1) and outline the production of communitas through the relationship of fan commitment and proxemics (RQ2). Because of the variance in bands within and definitions of indie music, the focus for this study is not to define the indie music genre but to describe, analyze and explain fandom and fan behavior within the indie music scene. However, there are some limitations due to the methods used. First, there is a lack of variety with the use of only one band from the indie music scene. The indie music scene is so diverse and amorphous, that the focus of the study

would have been too broad to incorporate each and every sub-genre within the umbrella genre of indie music. Another limitation is the lack of interviews with fans within the indie music scene, specifically at the live performance. However, interviewing the audience prior to the show, as was done with the performer, could have altered their behavior before, during or after the show. Thus, it was necessary to observe the audience without the use of interviews to observe genuine participation at the performance.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

4.1 FINDINGS

4.1.1 FANDOM IN INDIE MUSIC

The characterization of fandom within the indie music scene is dependent on a variety of factors and creates a multifaceted definition of a "fan" of indie music. One central aspect of being a fan of indie music is an appreciation of the music, rather than an obsession with the artist/band. While fandom in other genres is characterized by an obsessive knowledge of each member of a band and their intricacies, indie music fans preoccupy themselves with the music and performance of a band.

> *I'm walking up to the venue, tired and not sure how to get to the venue, and I pass by a pizza shop a couple storefronts from where the venue seems to be. As I'm walking by, I see three members of Four Year Strong inside with their entourage sitting down for dinner. However, despite the fact that there are fans outside waiting to get into the venue, not one of them surrounds the band or seems phased by their proximity whatsoever.*

> *After the show, fans wait outside for the band to walk to their tour bus, but when the band arrives, they aren't swarmed by a flock of Sharpie pens and cameras. Rather, the fans thank the band for coming, have short conversations about the tour or just give a smile, say, "Awesome show!" and walk away.*

In both cases, fans did not preoccupy themselves with meeting the band or getting autographs or pictures taken. Rather, they were there for the band's music and performance. At the Chicago concert, there was no way in observing the interaction of the fan and performer because the band was not available before or after the set. This rests on the fact that Chicago is much more popular than Four Year Strong and would have to deal with many fans on a constant basis. This variance illustrates the differences from mainstream music to indie music. However, while face-to-face interactions are not crucial to the fan experience in the indie music scene, social networking has provided a way for fans to maintain a connection atypical to that of fan and performers of other genres. This online connection through social media websites like Facebook and Twitter has become a characterizing factor of fandom for indie music. O'Connor reiterates this point in the following:

You know back when I was a kid, when you liked a band, the band seemed untouchable. Do you know what I mean? You would know every member of the band, all the different things about them…Like with me, it was like, "Oh what kind of guitar this guy plays? What kind of amp he uses?" Because I was a guitar player that was the kind of things I was into and I would know it and everything about it. And now, because every person is so easily accessible, like for instance, I have a twitter, if a fan wants to ask me a question, he could ask me a question and chances are pretty high I'm going to write him back and answer his question you know? So there's a lot more of a…I guess the line is a lot shorter, you know, between us. (personal communication, April 6, 2011)

This connection with a performer simultaneously separates and connects the fan. It separates the need for a fan to seek a one-on-one physical interaction with a band member at a live performance, but connects the fan with the daily routine of a band or artist, like with the use of Twitter. Théberge (2005) further explains this function of online connectivity through his work on popular music and online fan clubs in the following:

> It offers [fans] the opportunity to perform their identities and relationships in an ongoing fashion, and what this performance may lack by way of intensity, it makes up for in the very quotidian regularity of its rhythms. In this way, a new set of relations may emerge that could help fans learn something about not only the stars that are the object of their desire, but also about themselves. (p. 500).

However, it is the voluntary use of social media by both the fan and performer that fuels this relationship. In addition to this social media driven interaction, there are other characteristics of fandom in indie music.

Another aspect of fandom within the indie music scene is the style or garb associated with the music. Much like with other genres of music, many of the fans wear similar styles and fashions. However, there was one clear distinction at the Four Year Strong show—a lack of fans wearing Four Year Strong t-shirts. At the Chicago show, the majority of the audience was wearing clothing resembling "Sunday's best," but those who wore t-shirts, were typically wearing Chicago t-shirts, both

old and new. This showcase of Chicago apparel provided a certain authenticity as a fan by displaying the history and/or loyalty that fan has had with the band. Fans showed support for and their commitment to the band by wearing their memorabilia, but at the Four Year Strong performance, only a few fans adorned any Four Year Strong clothing. However, many fans wore t-shirts with the name of a different band, which reiterates the previous point that fans focus less on the band themselves and more on the music and performance. Finally, there is one more defining characteristic of a "fan" within the indie scene.

Attending and participating at live performances is a characteristic of a fan within most genres, but particularly within indie music. However, what differentiates indie fandom with that of other genres is both the motivation and level of participation. As previously mentioned, the driving force behind the majority of fans is a commitment to and appreciation of the music, not necessarily the band themselves. Obviously the band/artist/performer is the creator of the music, which has some influence on the attendance of the fan, but the separation of the two is most evident during the live performance. Though the majority of the audience was there for the headlining show, most participated in all aspects of the live performance (i.e. moshing, stage diving and crowd surfing) during both opening acts. Only a small number of crowd members seemed to know the band and/or their music, yet a large portion of the audience participated in these ritualistic activities with complete abandon. Furthermore, it is often the participation with lesser-known acts that drives the discovery of new bands/artists. O'Connor explained his own experience with audiences who were not fans or had even heard of Four Year Strong.

> *You have this new ability to get these kids to see you in a different light than anyone has ever seen you before. It's a really exciting time because again you cater your set to them and you work on these things. Because, as yesterday was, if we were right, kids who had never heard your band before were jumping up and down, having fun, just like kids who did know your band. And because of that, those kids are going to leave that show being like, "Fuck, that band was fun. I'm going to go home and check them out." Then the next time you come around, they remember that show and they come out to see your band again. (personal communication, April 6, 2011)*

Though the participation was evident through their limited involvement with the opening acts, it was the participation during Four Year Strong's set that thoroughly illustrated the crowd's commitment. Because a considerable number of participants attending the concert were there to see Four Year Strong's set, they was far greater participation and with much more enthusiasm. Thus, activities like moshing, crowd surfing and stage diving are even more taxing, requiring a certain level of commitment to both the band and the music.

> *The lights go out and the crowd starts screaming. Those few in the front who have persevered through three openers are finally getting what they've been waiting for.*

> *Thirty minutes into the set, I'm exhausted from jumping up and down, getting kicked in the head and trying to keep my balance. I hear audience members, tired, beaten, sweaty and hot, say, "It's so fucking hot in here. I think I'm gonna pass out" and "Dude, my voice is all raspy from yelling, and someone keeps elbowing me in the side." Yet for some reason, neither of the two fans left their spot, and neither stopped participating. Neither did I.*

This unwavering participation illustrates the commitment to the music—physically and emotionally. These characteristics of indie fandom, although similar to some genres in the modes of participation, have a clear distinguishing characteristic—the appreciation of music superseding the obsession of a performer.

4.1.2 FAN COMMITMENT

Though some aspects of fan commitment were addressed in the characterization of indie fandom, there is a distinct function of fan commitment in the overall processes involved in a live performance of any genre. The fundamental role of fan commitment is motivating fans to attend the concert. There is a clear distinction between appreciating a particular genre, artist, album or even a song and being a fan of one or all of these things. It takes a committed fan to transcend from merely enjoying a song or illegally downloading a band's album to purchasing a ticket to and attending a concert. Thus, the actual

attendance of the audience speaks to their commitment as fans to both the artist and the music; it becomes a sacrifice of time, money and self. "Where an audience member's main interest is in 'the music itself,' particular genres or performers can foster great loyalty and a high level of knowledge" (Pitts, 2004, p. 145). If an individual chooses to attend a performance, they not only signify their loyalty to the artist, but also justify their fan commitment as part of their identity. This identity as a fan involves not just participation, but authentic participation. This was illustrated best with the audience's enthusiasm and emotion when singing and shouting the lyrics with the band.

> *The audience members in the front shout the lyrics as the band plays and throw their hands in the air with excitement. Almost everyone in the front knows these lyrics like gospel.*

Each audience member at both shows seemed to know nearly every lyric, and in addition to this knowledge of the band's catalog of music, there was an eagerness to sing and shout these lyrics to both the band and to the surrounding audience members.

> *If I could sing words to a song and then they sing back the words to me all together, there's something very unifying about that. (O'Connor, personal communication, April 6, 2011)*

However, the participation towards the front of the stage was only possible because of another aspect of fan commitment, the willingness to arrive early and watch all opening acts in hopes of maintaining a close proximity to the stage, the band and the other fans eager for the show to commence. For the Four Year Strong show, all ticket prices were the same, so the commitment for arriving early was of the utmost important for those fans insistent on being close to the front. However, at the Chicago concert, tickets prices varied, so the more committed fans either had to be vigilant in regards to the date and time the tickets went on sale or be willing to be a member of the band's fan club to have access to pre-sale tickets. In either case, there is a distinct amount of commitment involved to not only attend a concert, but to enjoy it under the desired circumstances.

> *When we do headliner shows, we like to do like what we did today, a meet-and-greet with a certain amount of fans, whoever buys tickets first, or contests or something. We like to do that because it gives*

kids a chance to meet us, and usually it's more diehard fans because they're willing to either do the
contest or show up early or you know all this other stuff. And I think that's important to reward those fans
who go that extra mile. You know because of them, we wouldn't be anything. It's mutual. They want to
meet us, and we want to meet them. (O'Connor, personal communication, April 6, 2011)

Moreover, it is the level of commitment that will dictate the amount of interaction an individual or group will engage in during the live performance. Because committed fans are willing to participate and interact with vigor and enthusiasm, the utilization of space, proxemics, becomes a prevalent issue.

4.1.3 PROXEMICS

There were two primary modes of proxemic exchanges occurring throughout both shows—physical and aural. With regard to the physical proxemic activity within the audience, it was clear that space, or the lack thereof, was an integral part of both performances. With the Chicago concert, the theater seats were immovable and did not allow for much space in between audience members, so nearly every attendee was forced to sit between six to eight inches away from his or her neighbor throughout the entire two-hour performance. At the Four Year Strong concert, there was no sitting section, so audience members were allowed to move as close as possible, which facilitated an environment where audience members were surrounded by one another. Even more, once the band began playing, any space between audience members disappeared as fans were pushed into each other by the force and energy of the whole group.

As moshing, stage diving, crowd surfing and bouncing up and down became more prevalent throughout the Four Year Strong show, audience members exchanged their physical space with one another. Fans in the audience would bump into each other, lift and hold up audience members over their heads or catch leaping fans as they reached the crowd. Each activity required an invasion of space, specifically close, intimate space. Even more, the band encouraged this type of participation from the audience.

The band urges the crowd to maintain their energy, saying, "I want to see this place moving--from side to side and from the back to the fucking front," and later in the show, "I want this whole fucking thing bouncing."

Furthermore, the proximity to the front of the stage became an integral goal for many audience members at both shows. With Four Year Strong, as one member would leave his or her place in the audience, two or three other audience members would move in unison to take up the space left open. Similarly, at the Chicago concert, as some audience members left their seats early, other members from the back would move forward and take up the vacant seat(s). After each show, there were still some physical proxemics involved. At Chicago, audience members were still confined to a small space as they were attempting to walk towards the exits. However, once outside the venue, audience members who had just shared a close, intimate space, walked away without any hesitation.

It's odd that even though I was sitting for two hours, leg-to-leg with my neighbor, who expressed his love of Chicago and the nostalgic nature of the music, neither one of us even said "goodbye" or "take care" once the show was over.

At the Four Year Strong show, audience members had more space available immediately after the show to separate from each other, which the majority did. However, what was different was the camaraderie that was created through the exchange of physical space. Some audience members, after the physical, somewhat intimate interaction involved throughout the show, shared a moment of elation with fellow fans who they had never met before.

As the crowd separates, I see some "high fives" and even a couple hugs. What's interesting is that these forms of affection are not only being shared by friends but by audience members who just met. It seems that a connection was made in that short 45 minutes filled with loud music and physical exhaustion.

Though there was a clear physical proxemic exchange evident at both events, this was not the only proxemic exchange observed.

Although the audience members shared close, intimate space with one another, they also shared an aural space with the band. At both events, there was a continual exchange of aural space as the bands played through their set lists. In both instances, the crowd stood up and yelled loudly as each band played their first musical notes. Thus, as the band got louder, the audience got louder, each taking up an equal amount of aural space in the venue. However, this was only one of two similarities with the shows in regards to aural proxemics. The other similarity, much like with most concerts, was that when each band finished playing a song, the audience would erupt in applause and cheering. Though these events often occur at most concerts, there were some definite differences between the two shows, yet both shows illustrate the aural proxemic exchanges occurring. During the Chicago set, audience members were often quiet, save for some claps, due to the mellow, melodic nature of the music. When the band's volume and intensity waned, the audience's volume and intensity would follow suit.

> *As the band plays through their set, I hardly hear any noise coming from the audience, except for a few individuals behind me whispering to each other. In fact the entire audience looks to be completely still aside from a few fans nodding their heads or clapping their hands.*

Although some audience members were singing along with the lyrics, most just sat and enjoyed the band's performance. The Four Year Strong performance and aural exchange with the audience was not as serene. From the audience's initial yelling and screaming with the first guitar chord, to their chants for an encore, the audience and band challenged one another for the aural space in the venue, creating a constant give-and-take. As the band raced through their set, audience members did not just sing the lyrics but shouted them as loudly as they could. Later on in the set, the band encouraged the audience to continue singing and screaming.

> *Both guitarists/vocalists look into the crowd as they sing, encouraging the audience to sing along, at first with their behavior (thrashing their hands in the air) and then vocally saying, "If you know this song, I want you helping me out from the beginning to the end."*

Throughout both events, this exchange of both physical and aural space facilitated the creation of a music community, even for just a short amount of time.

4.1.4 SPONTANEOUS COMMUNITAS

In observing both performances, there was a sense of community that was established by the mere presence of each individual, but even more, there was a creation of communitas—the formation of one entity or event through full participation and an abandonment of self-identity. In both instances, as more individuals began arriving, there was no longer a group of individual fans, but rather one large audience. Throughout both observations, it became clear that once the music began, the crowd moved and reacted as one. O'Connor addressed the creation of this one entity from the beginning of the show.

> *My favorite part of the set, is probably headlining a show, and the lights go out and our intro starts, and kids just start screaming. And we get to come out and the first note that we play, and everybody just erupts into this thing. That's the best part of my day, every single day. It's the best part. (personal communication, April 6, 2011)*

This "thing" that O'Connor alludes to is no longer the room of individuals, but the audience as a whole. During the Chicago performance, this was best illustrated by the posture/position of the audience. When part of the audience stood up, the entire audience stood up, and when part of the audience sat down, the entire audience would sit down.

> *The front row seems to be a major influence on the reaction of the audience. When they sit down or stand up, the entire audience follows suit. Everybody wants to be a part of this big group.*

Although the reactions from the audience were never loud or exaggerated, they were nonetheless done in unison. The clapping, in particular, was often initiated by the band and done by nearly every member of the audience. Though there were a few loud outbursts from audience members, the majority of the audience behaved and reacted as one. However, the creation of spontaneous communitas was most evident at the Four Year Strong show. The best example of this, as explained by both Simon (1997) and Tsitsos (1999), is the mosh pit, or moshing. The mosh pit is a microcosm for the creation of

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communitas, specifically because once it begins, you no longer refer to the group as an audience, but as the mosh pit or simply, "the pit." Furthermore, there is no official start and/or stop time, and there is no single individual dictating which direction the circle will run. Thus, its inception and completion is completely dependent on the synergetic exchange within the audience, fueled by the energy of the band/music. In addition to this form of dancing, crowd surfing and stage diving also provide a visual representation of the spontaneous communitas created during the live show. O'Connor reinforced this creation of one entity working together during these participatory activities.

> *It makes the whole room…it just seems like a giant family reunion. Like whenever we come do a show, especially like when we play our home show, we do a home show around the holidays every year and whenever we do that, there's just something special about that show. Because I'll look out in the crowd, and I'll see kids that saw some of our bands first shows like ten years ago, and then I'll see kids that I know are just new fans. You know they're just all together. If somebody falls down, everybody picks them up; if somebody's crowd surfing, everyone's holding them up. It's really cool to see everybody working together to have a good time. It's really cool. (personal communication, April 6, 2011)*

Finally, in both performances, there was a clear ignorance to the status and wealth of neighboring fans. However, this ignorance was manifested in differently at each show. Although at the Chicago concert many of the audience members were dressed in their "Sunday's best," during the performance, status, wealth and rank played no part in the participatory behavior of each member.

> *Before the show begins, the guy next to me begins asking me if I'm familiar with the band, since I'm much younger than he is. He informs me that this was one of his favorite bands growing up and that they put on a great show. Later in the discussion I come to find out he is part owner of a successful local business…*

> *As the band begins playing some of their more notable songs, I'm standing and clapping with the beat of the music. The local business man next to me says, "They're great right" and then gives me a high five.*

This one exchange is an example of the complete disregard for socioeconomic circumstances. A successful businessman, who most likely purchased the tickets for himself and his wife, is participating as part of a greater entity, sitting next to a graduate student who was offered a free ticket to the show. With the Four Year Strong show, each individual was dressed similarly; demonstrating a status quo

within indie music that embraces the urban indie style of white, middle class youth. The intriguing aspect of this observation is that the audience was predominately Caucasian, yet the Latinos and African Americans who were present were wearing clothing similar to their white peers. Despite the predominant influence of white, middle class values and styles; it did not seem to be the focus for the audience. Although race seems to be a factor within this creation of communitas in the indie music scene, cultural variation seems to affect certain behaviors within the audience but not communitas. O'Connor addressed the fact that this physical creation of communitas is created at nearly every performance.

> *The U.K. is fantastic. Those kids go insane all the time. Whether it be moshing or crowd surfing or just singing along with everything they have, anytime we play a show in the U.K., we know it's just going to be off the wall. Those kids are great. Japan is insane, because when we're playing a song, they're going insane, ape-shit crazy, you know what I mean? But then when you're done with the song and you stop, they're dead silent; nobody moves because they just want to listen to what you have to say because there's a language barrier, and they want to try to understand what you're saying. So they'll all clap, and then you can hear a pin drop. (personal communication, April 6, 2011)*

This complete abandonment of self for the enjoyment of the activity and the creation of one singular entity is a clear example of Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, where an individual fully participates in an activity for the sole goal of participating and enjoying it, transforming into Turner's notion of spontaneous communitas.

4.2 DISCUSSION

The ambiguous nature of indie music hinders the ability to create a singular, distinctive definition. However, characterizing fandom within indie music is less problematic. Regardless of the subgenre that a fan associates with within indie music, there is a particular set of behaviors and activities to which they generally subscribe. Evident through the observations at the Four Year Strong show, and in contrast with the Chicago concert, an appreciation for the music itself rather than an obsession with the band members and/or artist is a defining aspect of indie fandom. This appreciation of music itself,

although somewhat simple, provides an open form of self-identification that pervades the indie music scene. As a participant-observer in this study, and through my own experiences within the indie music scene in El Paso, not only does this appreciation/commitment to the music influence the bands that are consumed, but it also dictates what movies should be watched, what television shows should be viewed and what clothing should be worn. This appreciation/commitment facilitates the construction of an urban indie culture that pervades across a multitude of media. This creates a need for authenticity within the indie music scene to prove your loyalty as a fan. However, based on the clothing observed at the Four Year Strong show, this loyalty is not directed at the band, but rather fans and peers around you. By attending a concert or show, some of the authenticity and commitment is demonstrated, but the participation of the audience members during the concert demonstrates a visual and aural form of commitment. Audience members, by moshing, crowd surfing, stage diving, bouncing up and down and shouting the lyrics, are able to justify their place as a fan within indie music. Thus, there is a unique objective with regard to fandom within the indie scene to create a community of individuals who focus on the creation and appreciation of music. Furthermore, there is a focus on the authenticity of the fan amongst his or her peers produced by subscribing to certain cultural cues of the genre. This intrinsic nature of fandom within indie music provides a model for the role of fan commitment in the creation of communitas.

Fan commitment within any genre of music requires a level of dedication and participation that exceeds the typical expectations for average consumers of music. As previously discussed, there is a clear distinction between having an appreciation for an artist or song and classifying oneself as a fan. One indicator of fan commitment is attendance at a live performance. There are a number of factors that are affected in the decision to transcend from the realm of the active listener to the active, participating fan. The inexpensive, leisurely act of purchasing music online or utilizing YouTube to view a live video is replaced by the often costly, time-consuming act of purchasing a concert ticket and scheduling time to

attend the concert. Thus, save for the small group of individuals casually attending a concert or who are just curious about music, the majority of those in attendance are driven by their commitment as a fan. In both observations it was clear that the preponderance of the crowd were fans of either Chicago or Four Year Strong. This distinction is crucial in understanding the participatory behavior of both audiences. Because of their commitment as fans, audience members were more likely to fully engage in all activities typically associated with the live performance of each band. For Chicago, this was simply sitting, standing and clapping along, and for Four Year Strong, this entailed moshing, jumping up and down, crowd surfing and/or stage diving. And in both instances, the authenticity of the fan became a factor, in that audience members were establishing themselves as fans through their knowledge of the bands' lyrics and music. This authenticity is crucial in defining the nature and level of commitment. A certain amount of commitment is required to attend a live performance, but even more is necessary to fully participate and substantiate your authenticity. It was this authenticity as a fan, working in congruence with the energy of the band/music, which allowed fans to engage with each other and with the bands.

Proxemics, though typically defined by the amount of space being utilized by a particular individual in an intimate, casual, business or public situation, clearly plays a role during a live performance. Because the commitment of each fan has driven their attendance and participation, each fan is willing to engage in a fluid proxemic exchange with the audience members around them and with the band. With regard to the audience members, space, both physical and aural, becomes dependent on the context. In both observations, fans were forced to remain in at close distance with their neighbors, and during the Four Year Strong show, fans were willing to remain in constant physical contact with the people around them. However, it is at this juncture that proxemics becomes dependent on the genre of music. Though the characteristics and norms of live performance in other genres of music may not adhere to the same reactionary responses to close distances, the nature of indie music facilitates the

involvement and often necessity for intimate distance. This close proximity, characterized by Hall (1982) as a distance reserved for loved ones, speaks volumes about the intimate nature of certain genres of music and live performances. These intimate activities Hall refers to are typically associated with lovers or close relatives/friends. In this situation, fans are willing to put themselves in a similar, intimate circumstance for the love and commitment of a particular kind of music and to achieve the greatest musical experience. Thus, there is a clear willingness within each fan to fully participate and engage with one another to provide evidence of their authenticity as a fan, but more importantly for the pure enjoyment of the experience. There were two primary proxemic areas utilized during a live performance—physical space and aural space. The most demanding proxemic exchange, which illustrates the extent of each fan's commitment, is the physical exchange of space. In both observations, audience members had to make some sort of physical sacrifice to fully participate with the individuals around them. With the Chicago concert, audience members were standing, sitting and clapping with one another, participating in every physical activity with their peers. At the Four Year Strong show, the physical demands of the proxemic exchange were more exaggerated and much more visible. O'Connor also alluded to the visual aspect of this exchange.

> *A lot of people they like the crowd singing really loud, and that's what gets them pumped up. But we visually see the crowd moving, you know what I mean—like running back and forth, bouncing around, jumping up in the air—just doing all this stuff. That's what we love—just the visual of the crowd moving. And when they all come together, like when we jump up and down at the same time, it just looks like a sea of people. (personal communication, April 6, 2011)*

The physical interaction and proxemic exchange occurring within the audience would not be as visible without the driving force of the aural exchange feeding the emotional involvement of the fans. Throughout each observation, it was clear that the aural space of both venues was being occupied back and forth between the band and the audience. Although Hall's notion of proxemics did not refer to this function of auditory space, clearly, much like any space, it allows for fluid movement. Kun (2005)

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reinforces this point, explaining "the production of space is likewise contingent upon the production of cultural texts. By listening for music's audiotopias, we are able to hear these spaces that music itself makes possible, the spaces that music maps, evokes and imagines" (p. 188). Thus, the volume and intensity of the band/performer continually interacts with that of the audience. In some cases, like with the Chicago performance, there is an equal exchange where the band occupies the majority of the space while the audience remains relatively silent and vice versa. However, in other instances, like with the Four Year Strong performance, there is a continual clash of sonic space that often results in a reciprocal relationship between the audience and band. The combination of physical and aural proxemic exchanges facilitates an emotional involvement further motivating the individual to participate within the constructs of the live performance with complete abandon. However, the synergistic relationship between these proxemic exchanges and fan commitment is bound to yield an end result—spontaneous communitas.

In the same way that the ritualistic behavior involved with faith and religion provided Turner with an environment to witness spontaneous communitas, the constructs of a live performance provided a similar environment. During both observations, the audience was participating in all common activities and behaviors associated with concerts in each of the respective genres of music. At the Chicago concert, it seemed typical for the audience to remain relatively passive except for in the few instances when the band would encourage loud outbursts. However, at the Four Year Strong show, there was a clear understanding by the audience of all the exaggerative behaviors and actions that encompass audience participation. The first example from both observations of audience members becoming one fluid being is when those individuals closest to the front of the stage collectively begin to yell and scream and eventually start singing along with the band. Singing in unison, despite their talents or abilities or lack thereof, creates the same characteristics of a choir singing a song. Each person, separate and autonomous, finds unity amongst each other through their collective knowledge of the lyrics. The Four Year Strong performance provided further evidence of individuals becoming one, specifically

through the creation of the moshpit. This formation of one large organism or event from the energy and movement of many individuals provides a visual definition of spontaneous communitas. There are no formal rules or guidelines restricting its inception, and the many parts maintain the jurisdiction of its beginning and end. Once the event is over, each individual regains his or her autonomy and returns to their state of individuality. In observing both performances, it was evident that the expression and level of communitas was dictated by each genre of music and the customary proxemic exchange characterized by that genre of music. Therefore, particular music genres (i.e. indie, punk, hardcore) heighten the level of communitas through the proxemics and physical intimacy associated with the genre, while other genres (i.e. jazz, singer-songwriter, blues) require a lower level of proxemic activity and intimate distance, diminishing the intensity of the visible forms of communitas. However, the critical observation in both instances is that through their full participation, audience members disregarded the identity of one another as well as themselves individually and focused wholeheartedly on their actions within the group. This abandonment of self-identity for the enjoyment of the activity facilitates this creation of spontaneous communitas. Regardless of what circumstances each audience member entered with, for the short amount of time spent within the confines of the venue and the limited time of the performance, all identities and circumstance became equal, or rather, individualistic identities became secondary. The logistical arrangement of each venue, in congruence with the relationship between the band, music and the fans, facilitated the behavior of the audience that became spontaneous communitas.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

In the first chapter of the study, I presented the theoretical framework that guided my research and briefly explained each facet involved. I also explained my methodology and gave a brief history of each band that was observed and/or interviewed. In addition to the history of the bands, I also provided justification for the use of each band and their relevance for this study. Finally, to conclude the chapter, I presented a short overview of each of the subsequent chapters. The second chapter outlined the scholarly research and work that were pertinent to the study, both in terms of the historical background of each concept as well as the current work that has been completed. I first provided an explanation of popular music and indie music studies, complete with an operational definition that guided the rest of the study. From there, I presented the work in academia that framed the concept and definition of fan commitment. I explained Hall's theory of proxemics and its functionality within the study and followed that with a similar approach to Turner's notion of spontaneous communitas. The third chapter detailed the participants involved in the study, the procedures that were utilized and the justification for their use. Finally, I explained the specific goals of both methods (narrative ethnography and the interview) as well as their limitations and outlined the overall goal of the study. The fourth chapter was utilized for a thorough description of all findings in relation to indie music fandom, fan commitment, proxemics and communitas. This was followed by an analysis of all components in relation to the interview and observations made by the researcher and a discussion of the findings. With all the previously mentioned components of the research in place, it is imperative to discuss the conclusions that have resulted from this study.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The frequency with which music is discussed within the fields of popular music studies and cultural studies overwhelms its exploration in the field of communication. Even more, when discussed

or analyzed within communication, there is a continual focus on the lyrics of particular songs or the stories told by particular albums rather than the communication facilitated by the music itself. Consumers of music, specifically the audience, or fans, provide an area of study that encompasses a plethora of discursive reactions and behaviors, and it is these discursive reactions and behaviors that created the framework for this study. By first looking at a specific genre, indie music, it was easy to see the various communication concepts involved with the music industry as a whole. The genre itself provided a microcosm for the myriad ways audiences and bands communicate with one another without a necessary focus on the lyrics. However, though this study provided a suitable framework for certain aspects of indie music, it is by no means a flawless genre and/or scene. Members of the scene who subscribe to the urban indie style that is characterized by a predominately white, male fan base are either unaware or ignore the socioeconomic and racial implications of their tastes and styles. However, the focus on indie music was beneficial in illustrating the difference between indie fandom and overall fandom in music, demonstrating a clear emotional connection between the music and the fan as an individual. This individual emotional involvement and connection is necessary for any further participation, physical or verbal. Thus, under the circumstances of a live performance, the communicative aspects of music that have encapsulated the individual also motivate the individual, or fan, to attend a live performance. This study utilized this connection between fan commitment and participation to analyze the communicative activity involved at a live performance. This intersection of commitment and participation provided a suitable focus for this study—the exchange of space and the resulting spontaneous communitas. By adapting Hall's notion of proxemics to the modern constructs of fan participation during a concert or show, a more contemporary understanding of the role and utilization of non-verbal communication at a live performance was developed. This exchange of physical and aural space can be adapted to a plethora of circumstances and surroundings. While the fluid proxemic exchange that the audience implicitly participates in is crucial throughout this process, it is

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merely the medium that facilitates the transcending of fan commitment into spontaneous communitas. Turner's notion of communitas and its place within the constructs of a live performance can also be utilized in many situations. Though Turner used his concept of spontaneous communitas in the realm of religion and ritual, this study provided an insight into the creation of spontaneous communitas through the ritualistic nature of music and the chaotic nature of the live performance. In applying the various constructs of this study to both performances, it is evident that these characteristics and occurrences will transpire when a large number of fans attend a live performance of one of their favored artist. However, what is important to note is the role of the music itself throughout this process. Some genres of music, with regard to live performance, maintain a level of proximity that is intimate, while others do not. It is this proxemic intimacy that dictates the level of communitas expressed throughout the live performance. Although communitas will still be evident throughout each performance, its intensity is dependent on the proxemic intimacy of the audience. However, regardless of the level of intimate distance involved, fans of a particular genre of music will continue to invest themselves into the performance of their respective band and yield a return on their investment—the creation of communitas. Without any prodding or guidance, each individual engaged in the exchange of aural and physical space with the artist and fellow fans, slowly transforming their singular identity as a committed fan into a synergistic amalgamation. It is this synergistic amalgamation, along with the process of its creation, which provides a locus of study for future communication research. It is imperative for communication scholars to continue to move away from the verbal and written aspects of music and focus their efforts to the discursive elements that result from the connection between the music and the individual. Though this study was able to examine a number of factors involving fan commitment, proxemics and communitas, there were also some limitations.

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first limitation of the study is my own bias in regards to the indie scene. Though I have a particular interest in the genre and am myself a fan, that was not the chief motivator for utilizing it for this study. However, further studies would benefit from conducting a narrative ethnography at two or more live performances, particularly with musical genres where a bias is not present. Another limitation to the study was the lack of variety with regard to the number of performances observed, both in terms of overall performances as well as performances by bands in each genre. Future studies would benefit from applying the methodologies utilized in this study to not only other indie bands but also bands and artists in other genres. This would provide further insight to the discursive interactions and behaviors at play during a live performance. Future scholars might also benefit from applying these methodologies in analyzing the communicative aspects and fan interactions at other performance-centered activities like plays and sporting events. Much like with music, scholars often ignore the communicative behavior and interaction of the audience; thus examining some of these aspects in other events would provide further understanding of the intersection of audience and communication. Another limitation of the study is the lack of interviews with audience members. Future studies could conduct focus groups and/or interviews with fans and audience members, posing questions that focus on the same themes (fan commitment, fan interaction and fan behavior) as the questions posed to O'Conner. Providing the perspective of the audience would facilitate a comparative study between the viewpoint of the fan and the artist or band. In addition to understanding what is being communicated among fans, this would also illustrate what the discursive interaction itself communicates to both the fans and the performer. Another facet of live performance and fan commitment/participation that could be examined in future studies is the role of gender. Though this study does not address this issue, it would be valuable to understand the ways in which men/boys participate differently from women/girls during a live performance. Even more, understanding how participation is perceived differently by both genders would provide insight to the verbal and nonverbal cues at play during a live performance and what these cues imply to each gender.

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Similarly, gender should also be examined form the viewpoint of the artist/band. Both observations were of bands comprised of all male members; thus by looking at either mixed member bands or all female bands, a better understand of their experience would be ascertained.

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