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Unveiling the perspectives of folk rock music groupies : the experiences, motivations and perceptions of women following music bands : a project based upon an independent investigation

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Folk Rock Music Groupies:
The Experiences,
Motivations, and Perceptions
of Women Following Music
Bands

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the experiences, motivations, and perceptions of groupies

in folk rock music culture. Through qualitatively collected data, it explored the

phenomenological impacts of women following male folk rock musicians. It brought to

light women's perspectives on their roles as groupies, and what their family backgrounds

and earlier experiences in relationships looked like. It also explored how their

experiences with folk rock music affected or influenced their emotional states. Females

who self-identified as women in folk rock music culture ranging in ages from 18-35 were

recruited from the Northampton and Boston area in Massachusetts. Eight women in folk

rock music culture, ages 25-35, participated in this study. In face-to-face interviews they

were asked a series of questions focused on the following themes: Introductory Narrative,

Feminist Ideas/Theories, and Identity/Intimacy Experiences. Participants had multiple

subjective definitions of what it means to be a groupie. Many participants experienced a

sense of warmth and connectedness within the folk rock community, revealing elements

of spirituality evident in their devotion to folk rock bands.

UNVEILING THE PERSPECTIVES OF FOLK ROCK MUSIC GROUPIES: THE

EXPERIENCES, MOTIVATIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN FOLLOWING

MUSIC BANDS

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Folk rock is a music genre which combines vocal and instrumental components of folk and rock music. Folk music is the traditional and typically anonymous music that is an expression of the life of people in a community (Grove Music Online, 2009). Folk rock lyrics often strive for concepts of authenticity and some can be interpreted as protest songs (Bogdanov, Woodstra, Erlewine, 2002). This thesis will explore an undeveloped phenomenology in gender dynamics in folk rock music culture. Phenomenology is a school of thought that emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world (Anastas, 1999). My aim for this thesis is to study the phenomenological impacts of women following male folk rock musicians.

Historically, women following male rock bands were called "groupies," which evolved into a derogatory label for these women. While the Miriam-Webster dictionary moderately defines a groupie as a fan, especially a young woman, of a rock group who usually follows a group around on concert tours (Miriam-Webster, 2010), the term has turned into an implicitly disrespectful brand for women in music culture. Urban Dictionary, an online dictionary known for conveying common alternative meanings of words, expounded upon the Miriam-Webster definition of a groupie, adding that the young woman can sometimes be the band's/musician's muse and that she will do anything to be closer to the band, i.e: sleeping with the band or anyone that will get them closer to the band. It also describes a groupie as an overly exuberant fan, exhibiting traits such as

promiscuity, daring and irrational behavior, as well as, loss of self control when exposed to the object of their obsessions. It concludes that a groupie is a young woman who has a one way love with a band/musician (Urban Dictionary, 2010). The informational gap between the formal and informal definition of "groupie" calls for further investigation of the realities of women following male rock bands.

My interests in how music impacts young women in folk rock have developed out of close observation over several years. Prior to my enrollment in graduate school, I worked at a folk rock music venue and had similar personal experiences to many of the women who participated in this study. During this time, I embraced friendships, some of which turned into romantic relationships, with male folk rock band members. While my friendships flourished, I experienced a sense of isolation and emotional discontentment within my romantic relationships with the musicians.

At this point in my life, I was in my early twenties and had just graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in sociology. I worked as a server at a folk rock music venue, as a way to simultaneously enjoy live music and make a living, while I explored higher educational and professional options for myself. Although I experienced close friendships and relationships with some folk rock musicians, I rarely was an audience member at shows/concerts as I was usually working at them. Nonetheless, I coveted the times when I was able to attend folk rock music shows and festivals, as listening to music has always been, to some extent, a therapeutic outlet for me.

Since the majority of my experience in this part of the music world was spent as a server, the barriers of this role provided me with somewhat of a 'third space' in folk rock music culture (Slavin, & Kriegman, 1998). It allowed me to observe interactions

between musicians on stage and fans in the audience, yet left me wondering about the subjective experiences of other women in folk rock music culture, specifically groupies.

I identify as a participant observer in this study, having spent a significant amount of my life as a young woman in folk rock music culture. While I may not fit into a traditional role of a folk rock music fan or a groupie, I have been interested in the phenomenon for a long time. I would like to challenge the validity of the 'traditional' labels of women in this music culture. One positive aspect of having this researcher identity, is that I have an understanding of some of the language and attitudes within the local folk rock music culture. Another positive aspect is that I have an awareness of local bands and venues, which could allow participants to spend more time describing their perspectives with depth and clarity, without having to orient me to specific norms within their culture. On the other hand, my own perceived awareness of folk rock musicians may affect my objectivity in researching and studying women enduring similar life experiences. In holding my own experience of the content that participants share, it may shape the way we relate to each other. My hope is that a recognition of my similarities will support participants in feeling comfortable taking part in this study, for the purpose of research.

I guided my research on this topic by integrating feminist theory into the lens of the study process. I also wanted to explore the emotional impact of folk rock music on female groupies. My research questions are: What are the experiences, motivations, and perceptions of women who seek close connections with band members? What are the women's perspectives on their roles as groupies? What do their family background and

earlier experiences in relationships look like? How are their experiences with folk rock music affecting or influencing their emotional state?

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of young women who follow male folk-rock band members. It appears that groupies feel an intense sense of connectedness with the lyrics sung by the male musician. In hearing songs that are meant to universally speak to people, the female groupie may personally feel a closeness to the musician. In feeling this emotional closeness to the creator of the music, she may feel compelled to pursue the men whom she perceives as the creators of her intense and elated emotional state (Roberts, Dimsdale, East & Friedman, 1998). I wonder if the groupie is vulnerable to men through her personal interpretations of the meaning of the music. She may develop fantasies about the musicians and about herself in connection with musicians, and in turn she may seek closeness with the image she may have of the musician. Through a feminist perspective, this makes a female groupie vulnerable because she idealizes this image and feeling of closeness with it. She may form an identity relationship with the musician who may not even know who she is. In considering this perspective on female identity development, the groupie's desire for intimacy with male musicians may be driven by her desire to validate herself, through the male band member's reflection on her, in the relationship.

I hold that female groupies are a vulnerable population, who need to be studied and protected, according to social work values. This research will benefit groupies, women following men who have an elevated public image, and social workers working with groupies. The research of "groupie culture" could interest and benefit women coming from a range of cultural and racial backgrounds, curious music fans, women

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currently seeking closer connections with male band members, and the band members themselves. Individuals interested in feminist theories and perspectives will find this research useful as I employ ideas of feminist theorists in grounding the phenomenological aspects of this study.

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter I presents the problem, rationale, purpose, study questions, and definitions. Chapter II, the literature review, provides both theoretical writings and empirical research on the understanding of identity development, female identity development, and the emotional impact of music on women. Chapter III presents the methodology for this study and detailed descriptions of the research project including how the participants were recruited, the questions they were asked and how the data was analyzed. Chapter IV, the research findings, provides a general understanding of the participant demographics and organizes the collected data. Finally, Chapter V presents a discussion of the literature with the findings of this study in order to provide a translation of the data, the strengths and limitations of this study as well as considerations to make in future studies.

CHAPER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This qualitative study explores the the perspectives of young women following

male folk-rock bands. This chapter provides theoretical and feminist literature, as well as

empirical research in order to illustrate stages of identity development, the complexities

of phenomenological impacts of the subordination of women within female identity

development, and the emotional impact of music on women. This review of the literature

provides context for the study research questions: What are the experiences, motivations,

and perceptions of women who seek close connections with band members? How are

their experiences with folk rock music affecting or influencing their emotional state?

In exploring the phenomenological aspects of adolescent female identity

development, I will use theoretical frameworks of general identity development as

delineated by Erikson and Marica. I will move on to explicitly focus on female identity

development, employing theories set forth by Benjamin, Chodorow, Gilligan, and Young-

Eisendrath. Lastly, I will integrate this literature on female adolescent development, with

empirical evidence of the impact of music on development on young women.

Identity Development

The problem of adulthood is how to take care of those to whom one finds oneself
committed as one emerges from the identity period, and to whom one now owes
their identity.
-Erikson, 1968, p. 33

Erikson believed that healthy identity development during adolescence is a

precursor to intimacy in romantic relationships during emerging adulthood(Beyers,

Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). This belief supports his theoretical viewpoint on stages of identity development, focusing on the integrative function of relational identity for later mature intimacy. He proposed that having achieved a confident sense of identity provides the basis for mature forms of relational intimacy to develop. According to Erikson, the capacity to commit to a partner without "fear of ego-loss"(Erikson, 1968, p. 264) is a main task for young adults. Historically, life was more institutionalized and transitions from one stage to the next were more distinctly regulated by traditional norms and rules of society (Buchmann, 1989). Traditionally, children were socialized by learning from their parents, relationships with partners were governed by inherited rules that were unquestioned, and parents and relatives served as role models for upcoming stages of identity development. While these identity stages continue to be relevant developmental tasks for people in society today, the transitions no longer follow one specific traditional path from one stage to the next (Arnette, 2004). The growing need for identity exploration may disconnect young people from commitment in intimate, enduring partnerships (Beyers, Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). In cases of female groupies following male folk rock musicians, both the males and females may be exploring their separate identities, fostering a disconnect in terms of intimacy in the band member/groupie relationship.

Stage 5: Identity vs. Role Confusion

Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development suggests that there are eight stages of development. In order to progress from one stage to the next, a person must have acquired a successful resolution of the crisis inherent at that stage. In Stage 5, Erikson discussed the crisis of Identity versus Role Confusion. In this phase, adolescents

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try to figure out what is different, unique or distinctive about themselves. Positive outcomes of this stage are awareness of uniqueness of self, knowledge and integration of roles in society, feelings of continuity of the self over time, and loyalty. Negative outcomes reveal an inability to identify with appropriate roles in life (Beyers, Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). James Marcia, like Erikson, believes that in the identity exploration process, there is a spectrum of developmental states, ranging from Identity Synthesis to Identity Confusion. He believed that Identity Synthesis represents a reworking of childhood and coexisting identifications into a larger, self-determined set of self-identified ideals, whereas Identity Confusion represents an inability to develop a workable set of ideals on which to base an adult identity (Marcia,1993). Both Erikson and Marcia strongly believed that adolescents who are unable to find a suitable identity may have difficulty attaining long-lasting close relationships with romantic partners (Beyers, Seiffge-Krenke, 2010).

In *Childhood and Society*(1950), Erik Erikson conceptualized his belief that in Stage 5, the presence of self-selected identity evidence separates children from adolescents and adults. In support of this concept, James Marcia states, "the consolidation of identity marks the end of childhood" (Marcia, 1993, p. 3). Throughout adolescence, identity development forms as teenagers begin to question the ideas and beliefs that they held as children. This shift in self-perception creates internal space for adolescents to explore and form how they want to identify in the outside world. Erikson posits that physical, cognitive, and social changes of adolescence allow teenagers to develop the identity that will serve as a basis for their adult lives. During this stage, adolescents' description of self expands to include personality traits ("I'm outgoing") and

attitudes ("I don't like stuck-up people"). The emergence of abstract reasoning abilities

allows adolescents to think about the future and experiment with different identities.

Stage 6: Intimacy versus Isolation

Stage 6, the crisis of Intimacy versus Isolation is the next stage of development in

Erikson's theory. During this stage, the person's focus as an emerging adult is on

developing close, intimate relationships with others. Positive outcomes of this stage are

the development of close friendships and loving, sexual relationships. Negative

outcomes are reflected in loneliness, isolation, and fear of relationships (Beyers, Seiffge-

Krenke, 2010). Erikson hypothesized that these negative outcomes derived from an

earlier failure to develop a strong identity. Optimally, Erikson proposed that adolescents

enter adulthood with a mature desire and capacity for intimacy based on a solid sense of

self (Erikson, 1968). Beyers and Seiffge-Krenke confirmed that a relatively fixed order

of identity and intimacy is necessary in Erikson's identity development theory in a 10

year longitudinal study of adolescents in Germany (Beyers, Seiffge-Krenke, 2010).

Also, this study revealed that an unresolved crisis may result in a person's development

arrest. Thus, confirming Erikson's belief that adolescents who fail to find a suitable

identity may have difficulty forming and maintaining long-lasting, close, personal

relationships thereafter. This is part of what I examined in my exploratory research

regarding women and their roles as groupies in folk rock music culture.

Identity Development: Differences in males and females

social/psychological processes

There have been several studies conducted to test Erikson's theory of identity

development. In their study, assessing identity achievement status, Orlofsky, Marcia, and

Lesser (1973) found that that males in the identity achievement status (i.e., males who made commitments after a period of exploration) appeared to have the greatest capacity for engaging in intimate interpersonal relationships, whereas identity diffusion individuals (showing a lack of commitments coupled with little systemic exploration) were least intimate and most isolated. In a similar study conducted by Schiedel and Marcia (1985) findings revealed that this pattern held true particularly for males, showing a weak link between identity status and intimacy for females.

Mutual Recognition

In describing the process of "mutual recognition," Benjamin first approaches two traditionally conflicting psychologies with inclusivity: Freudian drive-based theory, which is intrapsychic, one-person psychology and Kleinian object-relations theory, which is a relational, intersubjective, two-person psychology. She then integrates these merged theories with post-modern feminist theory, bringing to light a complex gender identity development process which we go through, beginning in the pre-oedipal(oral) phase of development in drive theory. The issue with gender identity development, which Benjamin addresses, is that such Oedipal love may inhibit a true recognition, and respect for equality, of the other. In her book, "*Like Subjects, Love Objects*," Benjamin argues that Freudian drive theory unavoidably reproduces patriarchal gender relationships in American society, which are portrayed by domination and submission, more specifically reflected in the "cultural polarity of male rationality and female vulnerability"(Benjamin, 1995).

In her book, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination*, Benjamin (1988) worked with Winnicott's (1971) notion of the "use" of an

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object to illustrate how we develop relationships with the external world. Winnicott suggested that we are "destructive," or aggressive toward, our caregivers, and it is with their survival of this destruction, without retaliation, that we as children are able to develop a sense, or recognition, of human beings with autonomy outside of ourselves. Benjamin goes on to suggest that this process between caregiver, usually mother and infant, must be reciprocal for healthy object relations to develop.   Through this process of "mutual recognition," identity begins to develop (Benjamin, 1988).

Women's Identity Development

Theorists have suggested that the process of identity formation is different for males and females with relatedness being more important than autonomy for females (Gilligan, 1982). In her book, *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan presented a relational model of women's identity development. Her research on female development and morality suggests that women define themselves in relation to other people, including attachment figures, whereas men define themselves by autonomy and individual achievements, independent of relationships. She proposed that the importance of relatedness for women is partly due to socialization and different maternal experiences, which implicitly encourages female adolescents to maintain an emotional attachment to their mothers throughout adolescence as they grow into womanhood.

Feminist researchers focus on how women's sense of self is drawn from the reconstruction of women's roles and from the values that guide socially acceptable behavior for women (Roberts, 1981). This perspective on gender depicts the construction of gender as a systemic trait and is helpful in exploring power imbalances occurring

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between women and men. Nancy Chodorow wrote, "Girls emerge with a basis for "empathy" built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not. Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (or of thinking that one is so experiencing another's needs and feelings)" (Chodorow, 1978). In female identity formation, adolescence is a turning point as females encounter a separate dilemma from males in the way they view themselves in the world. Throughout infancy and childhood, females learn to identify with their mother's thoughts and feelings as they experience a gendered social and physical likeness. In relating to others with empathy, females developing identities are often intertwined with those whom they empathize. Once a female reaches adolescence, she has more awareness within her relationships, and her voice becomes less audible. The combination of awareness and empathy in the case of an adolescent female can be confusing and toxic as she strives to make sense of her identity in a world where she is used to considering others perspectives in decisions she makes for herself. (Gilligan, 1993)

A danger for adolescent females developing their identities while empathizing with others around them is that it may feel overwhelming to navigate the values of others, while still trying to establish values that fit with their own needs. "In early adolescence, girls learn that if they threaten to harm or endanger themselves or actually do so, people take notice. Girls then discover the communicative value of threatening or enacting harm, danger, or violence against themselves" (Gilligan & Machoian,2002). Adolescent girls may resort to threats of self-harm as a means to communicate negative feelings, as verbalizing negative feelings toward or about others means that others would experience unpleasant feelings. In empathizing with the feelings of others around them, adolescent

girls' identity formation remains complex, layered, and disconnected from their true

feelings and thoughts within themselves about themselves.

> Common prohibitions against girls' speaking what they feel and think- especially given the acuity of their perceptions- renders the relational world complex and difficult to read. Moral language can add another layer of confusion over their actions as girls learn to separate what they know from what good girls should know, what they do from what good girls should do, what they feel and think from what nice girls should feel and think (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p 91).

In navigating dual sources of approval and knowledge, young girls are faced with the

challenge of believing their initial thoughts and feelings are true as opposed to external

rules and regulations which they observe from their attunement to relationships around

them.

Polly Young-Eisendrath and Florence Weidenman explore the development of

prevalent gender roles and dynamics within American culture in their book, *Female

Authority: Empowering Women Through Psychotherapy(*1990). Young-Eisendrath and

Weidenman propose that "personal authority is the ability to validate one's own thoughts

and actions as good and true... at the level of gender identity, males are socialized to feel

and to behave authoritatively, while women form "identity relationships" with them in

order to validate their own personal authority. In such relationships- whether with father,

brother, husband, supervisor, son, or teacher- a woman maintains her self-esteem and

personal worth primarily through male reflections" (Young-Eisendrath, 1990, p 1). In

considering this perspective on gender role development, a female groupie's desire for

intimacy with male band members could be driven by her desire to validate herself,

through the male band member's reflection on her, in the relationship. This bifurcation in

male and female identity development calls for further research on the unique aspects of identity development as separated by gender.

Furthering Young-Eisendrath's theory of women desiring self-validation within the reflections of men, Jessica Benjamin posits that there is an intersubjective process which occurs between each person in the relationship. Benjamin suggests that "when we recognize someone outside of ourselves as an equal locus of subjectivity, we see her/him as a 'like [similar] subject.' When, as with a parent, we internalize her/him as an ego ideal, or someone whom we emulate, she/he is not only a 'like subject,' but also a 'love object,' via the process of identificatory love"(Benjamin, 1995). She goes on to suggest:

> The dangers of identification arise in adult life, Freud suggests, when we cannot live up to our ideal and so make the loved one the "substitute for some unattained ego ideal of our own." This love of the ideal can become so powerful, Freud points out, that it is stronger even than desire for sexual satisfaction. The "devotion" of the ego to the object becomes so compelling that the subject loses all conscience: In the blindness of love remorselessness is carried to the pitch of crime. The whole situation can be completely summarized in a formula: *The object has been put in the place of the ego ideal* (Benjamin, p144, 1988).

Benjamin(1988) suggested that women who have had early childhood disappointments in identifactory love with their caregivers, tend take on a role of passivity or subordination in their relationships. She also notes that this can be perceived as a societal norm, validating this role for many women idealizing others in intimate relationships. She writes, "They are drawn to ideal love as a second chance, an opportunity to attain, at long last, a father-daughter identification in which their own desire and subjectivity can finally be recognized and realized" (Benjamin, p116, 1988).

In applying this to the groupie/folk rock musician relationship, this theory suggests that while the woman may be seeking self-validation in her connection with the

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male musician, the musician, as an object may get transformed to her ego ideal. Thus leading the groupie to idealize the musician, which inhibits the growth of identity development of the groupie. Erikson suggested that a person cannot transition to the next stage until they reach a sense of achievement of the previous stage. The groupie may be in Stage 6, which is a crisis of Intimacy versus Isolation. She may have difficulty finding a suitable identity which may lead to a difficult transition to forming and maintaining long-lasting, close, personal relationships thereafter. How does 'ideal love' affects the identity development of a female groupie?

Music's Effect on Vulnerable Young Women

In the article, "Adolescent Emotional Response to Music and Its Relationship to Risk-Taking Behavior" (Roberts, Dimsdale, East, Friedman,& Lawrence, 1998), the authors report that their studies have consistently found correlations between music and emotion regardless of the subject's age or gender. Also, the authors discussed that music itself has been found to directly influence mood and affect. The emotional effects of music can be regulated by the presentation of the music and the individual's preconceived ideas about the music (Roberts et al., 1998).

In his article, Roberts discussed that adolescent males experience a broader range of emotions at a lower intensity, while females experience fewer emotions but at a greater intensity in their emotional response to music. (Roberts et al., 1998) It is interesting to note the differing experiences based on the individuals' gender in the study presented in this article. In experiencing a broader range of emotions, adolescent males are more prone to engage in at-risk behaviors such as substance use and fighting, while adolescent

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females are more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors such as substance abuse and unsafe sexual behavior.

Roberts suggests that females experience less of a range of emotions but more intensity in response to the music. This is pertinent to the findings in the article, "Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Suicidal Risk"(Lacourse, Claes, & Villeneuve, 2001), as the authors report logistic regressions which revealed that hard metal music preference and worshipping is not significantly related to suicidal risk when controlling for other risk factors. These findings were found for both boys and girls. Surprisingly, the use of music for vicarious release was inversely related to suicidal risk for girls (Lacourse et al., 2001). The contrasting emotions in response to the same type of music between adolescent boys and girls can be linked to the formation of social norms and gender roles of American youth.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter pointed out the following: the need to examine identity development research has been increasingly important in order to understand the complex differences in male and female identity development. As feminist theorists explore the subjective experiences of women, phenomenological theories on female identity development evolve. These feminist theorists pave to road to understanding a separate, unique and layered process which females experience throughout their cycle of identity development. In relating these theories to the subjective experience of groupies in folk rock music culture, this literature review

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provides a basis of the phenomenological aspects inherent in dominant male/subordinate female relationship dynamics analyzed in my theoretical thesis. This literature review also revealed a gap in academic research on the emotional impacts of music on women (and men) and on relational aspects of folk rock music culture. In the next section, Chapter III, I will present the methodology of the qualitative study I designed to investigate this gap through a qualitative study, interviewing women following male bands in folk rock music culture.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

My research questions are: What are the experiences, motivations, and perceptions of women who seek close connections with band members? What are the women's perspectives on their roles as groupies? What do their family backgrounds and earlier experiences in relationships look like? How are their experiences with folk rock music affecting or influencing their emotional state?

This study followed an exploratory design. I used qualitative findings drawn from interviews with women who follow music bands in folk rock music culture. I analyzed the findings drawn from interviews with women using a content analysis of themes. I learned about the subjective experiences of these women in an exploratory study, using feminist theories that focus on the subordination of women as a conceptual framework. In the interview, I included inquiries regarding how each participant defined the label "groupie" and how the participant felt in connection to it.

Sample

The initial identification of a potential participant was done through the snowball sampling method. Through social connections which I maintained at local music venues in Northampton MA and working at a folk-rock music venue in Cambridge MA, I made contact with women involved in folk-rock groupie culture. I recruited participants via word of mouth, asking friends for contact information of possible participants, and by asking participants to refer me to other women in this population who were interested in

sharing their perspectives with me. I contacted the potential participants, describing my

study via the first paragraph in the Informed Consent, and if they were interested I asked

the screening questions. I also contacted interested participants on social networking

websites, such as Facebook, by conducting a general search for "folk-rock groupies" in

the Boston and Northampton area, then sent a message with my flyer attached. I posted

the flyers in folk-rock venues in the Northampton and Cambridge area. Once I received

an email from an interested individual, I called or emailed (depending on the contact info

provided) asking a series of screening questions. I made every effort to achieve diversity,

although modern folk-rock is not known for its draw on people of color.

The inclusion criteria for this study are:
- Gender: Female
- Age Range: 18-35
- Race/Ethnicity: Any/All
- Affiliation of Participants: Any/All females who identifies as a woman who follows males in folk-rock music bands, or self-identifies as a folk-rock music groupie
- Geographic Location: Boston and Northampton area; female groupies affiliated with other groupies located in the Boston and Northampton area folk-rock music culture
- Participants general state of health; must be substance-free, at the time of interview; if she acknowledges major mental health issues, she must also state that she is in treatment or has other supports in her life; low risk of suicidality
- Must be fluent in English
- Must have access to email

The exclusion criteria for this study are:
- Gender: Male
- Age: under the age of 18; over the age of 35
- Affiliation of Participants: Males and females who do not follow males in folk-rock music bands, or self-identifies as a folk-rock music groupie
- Geographic Location: Female groupies who have no connection with the Boston and Northampton area folk-rock music culture
- Participants general state of health: under the influence of drugs or alcohol at time of interview; high risk of suicidality
- No email access

Ethics and Safeguards

The primary risk of this study was that the participants may have become distressed in discussing some of these issues. Some of the women shared experiences when they were vulnerable to folk rock musicians. As a graduate student conducting research, participants may have felt uneasy sharing personal information with me. In preparing to hold intense emotions in the interview, I made it clear to participants that they could stop the interview at any time if they felt emotionally distressed. In addition, if I observed that the participant was clearly distressed, I would turn off the tape recorder and check-in, asking how they felt and whether or not they wanted to continue the interview. I distributed a list of referral sources for follow-up mental health support to all participants. All identifying information of each participant will be held in confidence.

The personal benefits that the participant might have gained from being involved in this study would be that they were given the space to share and explore their unique experience in folk-rock music culture as a woman. Through the process of retelling their life experience, the participant had the opportunity to reconstruct and to re-experience it, both from another position and from another context. It has been suggested that the retelling in itself can be therapeutic (Seaton, 2008). These findings may give useful information about how other women feel about their experiences in similar contexts of their music fan subcultures. At their request, I will send a summary of the results of this study to participants. It is possible that the results of this study will generate further investigation into advocacy of women's rights.

I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews myself. I saved these transcriptions electronically, storing the data securely in a separate folder on my

computer, with password protection. It was not possible to guarantee anonymity in this study, as after the interview, I had face-to-face contact with the participants. I will maintain confidentiality as I will not share any identifiable information of the participants with anyone outside of administrative support within the study. My research advisor had access to the data after identifying information had been removed from data. I will prepare presentations and publications in such a way that the participants will not be identified, as I plan to present data about participants as a group. I also disguised participants' identities in the illustrative vignettes and quoted comments. I stored data in a secured and locked file cabinet within my home. All data and audio recordings will be kept secure for three years as required by Federal regulations and after that time, they will be destroyed or continue to be kept confidential for as long as I need them. When no longer needed, data will be destroyed.

Data Collection

Using the interview guide, I gathered qualitative data from eight individual in-person interviews. Once the interview was completed, I transcribed it from the audio-recording. I organized the questions into themes: Introductory Narrative, Feminist Ideas/Theories, and Identity/Intimacy Experiences.   Since I was researching the phenomenological experiences of an understudied group, the sample composition consisted of varied perspectives and accounts on folk rock groupies. For instance, only three out of eight participants identified themselves as groupies. I was able to develop a detailed portrayal of a range of perspectives and experiences of women who follow male folk rock musicians by actively seeking out and including participants who would

challenge my theoretical framework regarding female identity development and the emotional influence of music.

Data Analysis

I organized my data for analysis by transcribing the audio recordings of each participant interview, then by coding the transcriptions. I qualitatively coded the transcribed interviews by categorizing the data into four phenomenological themes: identity development, female identity development, emotional influence of music, and unexpected findings. Initially I used an 'open coding' method, by examining the data in minute detail of the transcribed interviews, while I developed some initial categories. Then I advanced to more 'selective coding' where I systematically coded the transcribed interviews with respect to the core concepts developed from the four themes. After each interview, I used 'memoing' which is a process for recording my thoughts and ideas regarding the interviews as a way to reflect on and track the evolution of my research throughout the study (Anastas, 1999). The findings of this study are explored in the following chapter, Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

I set out to explore female's perspectives on their experiences in folk rock music culture. Through an exploratory qualitative study, I conducted research with participants ranging in age from 25-33 years in which they were asked to discuss their perceptions of their female identity development, how folk rock music affects them emotionally, and their feelings of emotional closeness with male folk rock musicians. We also talked about their family backgrounds and experiences in relationships. I explored their perspectives on their roles as groupies. If they did not identify as a groupie, I explored their perspectives on their roles as women in folk-rock music culture, and asked about their thoughts on groupies.

Sample Demographics

Participants were asked to fill out a demographic information survey at the beginning of the interview. The survey asked six pieces of demographic information: age, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, occupation, family income growing up, and overall mood. Prior to the interview, each participant filled out a screening form, which asked information such as how they found out about the study, what piqued their interest in the study, and whether or not they considered themselves to be a "folk-rock groupie." Eight participants completed an in-person interview with me, ranging between 30-60 minutes, depending on the comfort level of the participant. Six of the women identified their race/ethnicity as white, one identified as American (specifying Japanese, Mexican, English, and French-Canadian) and one identified as European. The mean age was 27.9.

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the women identified as bisexual, while sixty-three percent (63%) of the women identified themselves sexually as straight.

<p align="center">*What is a "Groupie?"*</p>

All eight participants confirmed that the definition of "groupie" involved showing loyalty to the band. Three out of eight participants identified themselves as groupies of folk-rock bands that they follow. Two of these participants stated that they were groupies of two different specific bands, the other reported that she was more of a general groupie without claiming one specific band. One participant's description of her loyalty was attending the band's every show at a specific venue every week. She reported that physical or emotional intimacy is not required in order to be a groupie for the specific band that she followed. Another participant stated that she used to be a groupie. Her definition of a groupie coincided with the previous sentiments of showing loyalty by attending all of the band's show's in her town. The reason she no longer identified as a "groupie" was that she works too much and loves her job.

The other five participants were less comfortable with the label "groupie." Two participants denied self-identification as a "groupie." One of these participants stated:

> To be a groupie is a negative thing, and no one wants to associate themselves with that, like any type of music lover. No one proclaims "groupiedom." I think groupies are, you know, sometimes helpless women who find that that outlet is the only thing that's their saving grace: the only thing that they connect with. They don't connect with any other world, so that becomes a bad thing, like an obsession.

This same participant who denied groupie status, identified herself as a "band-aid" which she defined as:

> A modified version of a "groupie," where they help the band, nurture the band. They take care of the boys. They don't physically have sex with the band, they

just give them blow-jobs. It's kind of a reflection or attachment of emotions. But you know, ultimately it's all bullshit because they are just in love with the band.

After defining what a "band-aid" was, the participant felt as though she neither fit the description of a "groupie" nor a "band-aid." She did not want to be called a "band-aid," stating that it was "too played out." One participant stated that she "kind of, maybe" identified as a "groupie" but clarified her response by saying that she did not want to sleep with the band members. The definition of a "groupie" varied from one participant to the next, depending on whether or not they, themselves, identified as a groupie.

Identity Development

Five participants discussed a self-selective process that they went through in adolescence which separated them from their childhood identities. Throughout adolescence, their identity development formed as they began to question the ideas and beliefs about music that they held as children. This shift in their self-perception created internal space for them to explore and form how they want to identify, using music as a medium, in the outside world. Two participants reported that they began exploring different types of music on their own when they were in middle school, between the ages of twelve and thirteen years old. One participant remembered, "I would spend more time inside... I would spend a lot of time in my room, listening to music. I really had no reason to spend time hanging out outside." The other stated, "Different things started to perk my interest at that time. I started out listening to Jamin' 94.5, which is what my family always listened to. And don't get me wrong, I mean, I always loved hip-hop. But it was different when I started hearing different music like Dave Matthews." Both participants discussed feeling like they were different, and listening to music that was different separated their identities from their peers.

Three participants reported beginning their own exploration of music when the were in high school, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen years old. One participant joined the band and identified herself as a musician in high school. She shared, "I used to play in a band too, like the high school band. I played the clarinet. I could probably still play it now." She reported that she would love to play in a band now, and if a band member asked her to play, she would consider the opportunity to join. Though, she found the idea of her playing the clarinet in a band to be comical.

Female Identity Development

Four participants discussed conflicted feelings regarding their own identity development as women in society, which was transferable to they way the felt about their own identity as women in folk rock music culture. One participant initially spoke about the relationships between folk-rock musicians and groupies from an objective and distant stance, as an observer looking in. She later shared her personal beliefs regarding how she formed her identity, which was paradoxically consistent with her viewpoint on groupies. First, she observed:

> I think, to a certain extent, being a musician, everyone is pulling at you, and pulling in different directions. 'Cause someone could be interested in who you are, or because you are a musician, or because they are reading into your music and for some reason, they think that they are closer to you, because they understand your lyrics or whatever. And I'm sure that's the same for anyone who is rich or successful, or whatever... people always want a piece of you. [What they want from these people] I think may be some self-validation. Like maybe it makes them feel better about who they are. You know, they feel connected and sadly, yeah some people are just looking for self-validation and they need that, and that must suck.

Later, this participant disclosed her beliefs on her own identity development, switching between second person and first person narrative form:

When you are younger, you're exploring who you are and it is easier to bounce yourself off of other people. I think that the only way you can know yourself is by someone else. It's like you can't know hot by cold. You can't know yourself without knowing someone else... I know too many people (laughs). Yeah, I love talking to people and I can't really imagine having it any other way...You can kind of start to lose yourself because you are all over the place, and then it's like, "Who am I really?" It's like, sometimes you feel lost and you don't know what's going on and you don't really feel connected to people. It's easy to get lost in the crowd.

Another participant talked about her process of trying to find a balance in being herself, a woman who goes for what she wants, with forming relationships with men. She stated, "I'm just so forward... I'm a forward person. I'm not submissive in any way with men and it's really hard as a woman today because it scares them off. It's like they don't necessarily even want that or it's like an art that I have to find to be, like, not so overwhelming." Echoing this dilemma of feeling like she must balance her own true identity with an identity which men might want from her, a third participant shared:

I definitely think that my personality tends to be what I think other people want me to be. So when I was always hanging out with musicians or hanging out at shows, I felt like there was always this image that I was trying to be... like "sexy, mysterious, random, hippy girl." But I think as I've grown, I've allowed myself to sort of move past that a little bit. But I think I tend to still want to identity with that girl. Like I want to be her because I think that's someone who a musician would want to identify with. I think they have shaped who I want to project, but I don't think that's who I really am.

When asked how she truly saw herself, this participant stated, "I see myself as awkward, and grey-haired. [laughs] I think that I tend to be more self-conscious than I had hoped I would be." Ironically, this participant was a very warm, personable, blonde (no visible grey hairs), beautiful young woman. Also, she was articulate, highly educated, and in the midst of her first year of law school. Conflicting roles and perceptions of self were inherent in all of these women's descriptions of their processing of their own identities in not only folk rock culture, but in society as a whole.

Family Background

Three participants shared that high school was a difficult time for them, as their mothers suffered from serious health issues. One woman recalled:

> I was thinking about how in high school, and I'm not feeling this way so much anymore, but I used to always tell people that I felt like I was born in the wrong generation. I listened to Jimi Hendrix or Janis Joplin. So as I got older, I started to get into more music that I liked and it made me feel like I fit more into the music of my generation.

She later shared that when she was nineteen years old, her mother was diagnosed with a brain tumor and died two weeks later. Another participant reported that her mother's battle with depression affected the way she was able to experience her middle school and high school years. This participant reported experiencing depression herself, starting in adolescence. She shared:

> I had a tough growing up because I was battling depression. I always missed days of school. I was living in a house with a mother who was very depressed. There were times when I would, literally, be in the house for days and I would cry and sometimes, it was like, "Mom, don't we have any food?"

A third participant's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, went through chemotherapy and survived, while the participant was in high school. She reported that she went through somewhat of a rebellion at this time. She stopped attending classes, and eventually dropped out of high school. A couple years later, she received her GED and enrolled in college.

Making Connections

Seven participants affirmed that the reality of their personal connection with folk rock musicians materialized during their early twenties, between the ages of twenty and twenty-four. For one participant, this meant realizing a separation of her reality and her high school fantasy of the folk-rock musician. She remembered:

I just wanted to enjoy the show, more than being close to (the band) as possible. I used to want to get to the first row and touch his leg. I wanted to be picked out of the crowd and dance with him on stage. So then when I went to the concert when I was twenty-two, I just kind of had less ideas like that. It was a more realistic experience.

For the other six participants, this meant that it was during this time that they connected with folk rock musicians via personal conversations. Another woman shared that she had grown up going to bluegrass festivals with her parents. She reported that she started feeling more of a personal connection with folk rock musicians when one of her childhood friends brought her to a show and introduced her to the band members who were his friends. She remembered, "After he introduced me to them, I hung out with them all the time. We would get wasted and dance and have fun."

Recognition

Five participants felt that the emotional connection that they shared with a band member did not provide them with a satisfactory sense of recognition within the relationship. One participant laughed about her brief experience "hooking up" with a band member. She remembered, "It was a bad idea. He turned out to be an asshole. I don't know, he was just kind of into himself." Another participant elaborated:

I dated one of the bass players. He was brilliant. Occasionally we will talk, but honestly, I feel like that's more of a forced conversation... It's been a different dynamic. It's not like a "We're friends" dynamic. It's more of a "We're going to hang out because we like to party" type thing. It hasn't been like a full-on intimate, "I'm gong to share who I am, you are going to share who you are." It's more of a masked relationship... I always wanted more, I guess. I wanted to be a part of their lives and who they were, on and off stage, like, out of the limelight. But I also feel like I wasn't allowed into that world in a lot of respects.

Another participant shared a similarly conflicted viewpoint on her satisfaction with the recognition she received in her initial emotional connection with a folk-rock musician:

> At first, I was like, "Yeah, you are totally figurative and literal, and you are making me feel... *awesome*." I don't know, it was a combination of meeting these awesome people, feeling welcomed by them, having some beers, being in a place that I felt really comfortable in. It was like the perfect situation... and their playing, it was just something different and I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to and I didn't know how to do it. But I was like, it was always.. like it messed me up early on. I didn't know what to do, and I didn't think enough to be myself or how to be myself in this context of like, "You're awesome. Why aren't we friends, like, right now?"

After going for what she wanted, which was ultimately to date the musician, then not receiving recognition from him, this participant chose to remain in the band's community. She reflected on her process of overcoming this relational impasse and how her desired resolution had evolved over time:

> "I feel like it, I think it was some more stuff that I had in my head that I was, that like, it wasn't how it was... You know, I thought I knew him just by looking in his eyes and I did, to some point. But.. if you get to know someone through their words on-stage and that's the only sense of interaction with them at first, it gets a little skewed, and that's what I think he was trying to say to me... So I was like, "I'm just going to be patient and let them.. you know, they'll see what I'm about." And they did, you know, even [desired band member]. He and I are on this really great... on good terms, where it's like more on terms of respect and it's nice to see each other and that's all I ever really wanted. But I couldn't... It was just miscommunication and bullshit and situations where we couldn't talk. You know, all I ever wanted was to just sit down and talk. But we never have, and that's fine. I don't need it now, like the time has passed and that's not my resolution. My resolution is to be alright... I know what happened on my end and that's enough for me.

In this quote, the participant reflected on how her desired resolution with her relationship with the band member had changed over time, and she eventually became satisfied with having her own separate resolution. Though when she spoke with me about never having the opportunity to talk with him about her feelings, her affect revealed anger. In the following chapter, Chapter V, I will discuss this finding with more depth.

Substance Use Fostering Band/Fan Connections

Seven out of eight participants discussed substance use as a part of their experience in the folk rock music world. These participants verified that the initial bonding happened either through sharing marijuana, drinking alcohol, or both. Six participants talked about smoking marijuana with band members. Two participants recalled smoking pot with band members outside of the venue after shows. One participant shared, with slight reservation, her frequent cocaine use with band members after shows. Reflecting on these memories, this participant reported that she was feeling depressed in her personal life. She felt that her increased drug use was correlated with her depression. In describing the context of her conversations while under the influence of cocaine with one specific band member, she stated:

> We talked about our families a lot. We had really long conversations about our families. We looked up music on Youtube. We talked about music. We would just have really deep conversations. I don't know, it depends how high were.

Another participant reminisced, "I remember one of the guys said to the other, 'Did you know these girls came to see *us* play?' Then they invited us to go smoke in their van outside... and we were so excited." One participant stated, "During set breaks, we would go around back and get a little high. It obviously brings people together and that's when I started getting close to the actual band members."

Echoing these responses, another participant stated, "the big thing was waiting after shows, hanging out a little while, smoking a joint, waiting for them to pack up, just kind of being in the scene like that." One participant discussed smoking pot with the band, though when asked if she used drugs, she said "no," denying marijuana's status as a drug. Lastly, one participant chose not to discuss substance use with researcher.

Unexpected Findings-Bisexuality

The demographic finding that three out of eight participants identified as bisexual in the written Demographic Survey section of the interview was an unexpected finding. I will further discuss this in the following chapter.

Unexpected Findings-Worldview

Six out of eight participants confirmed that their involvement with folk rock musicians has influenced their worldview. Two participants stated that the band's mission of promoting political awareness had prompted them to become more aware of these issues too. One woman described:

> Some of the issues that they addressed, like world poverty... They have a humanitarian mission. So I became more aware or more interested in these issues because of them. It helped me grow more of a worldview. I would look into ways that I could help. Just the fact that they were spending so much time trying to help, I thought that was really cool. They would buy donations and stuff. Like, they were involved in a lot of charity organizations.

Four women shared that witnessing the way folk-rock musicians presenting themselves on-stage inspired them to live their lives more like the musicians. One participant stated, "Musicians have this powerful capability of letting go of their ego when the are playing and just sort of doing music. To me, that shows that they are able to transcend this typical reality of life." A second participant echoed this sentiment, "I think overall, it makes me appreciate the beauty in the world. I know, gag, but seriously, like…feel things more simply. Because the music transcends the daily bullshit." Another participant, in reflecting on nature of her friendship with one folk-rock musician stated, "He has taught me a lot. He encourages me to do things that I am afraid of doing." In elaborating on her friendship with this musician, this participant shared that he was thirty-five years older than her, and that she felt as though he provided her with valuable

guidance in life. When asked if she was ever sexually attracted to him, she laughed, and

stated that she had never once thought of him in that way. She maintained that their

relationship was truly a friendship, one which she hopes will last a lifetime. Throughout

her interview, this participant frequently made reference to him, and his opinion. At one

point she stated, "I am definitely emotionally close with [band member]. I mean, he

knows more about me than I know about me."

Unexpected Findings- Sense of Community

Five out of eight participants commented on the draw of the community aspect of

the folk rock scene for them. "It's a community. We also call it "Church," like it's our

church. I'm not really a religious person. I was raised Unitarian, but I don't really go to

church now." She also recalled a conversation with the band leader, when he explained,

"Yeah, this is like Church. You know, people come here to get away from the craziness

of the world and just be here for a while." This participant later shared with pride and

delight that she was able to persuade the band leader to play at her wedding. Another

participant reveled in the community that she discovered with her favorite band:

> With this community, I've noticed that there is a little more, a little bit of hippie,
> like free-loving, liberal, like everyone is really liberal, open-minded, earth-
> conscious, love, feelings... You know with folk rock, I feel like that's what it's
> about. Whether it's a love song or about it, the band is very aware and that's the
> influence of the fans. They are all politically literate people.

One participant talked about how she appreciated the diversity within the folk-rock

community, stating that she enjoyed meeting "all kinds" at folk-rock festivals.

Concurrent with the other four participants, another woman stated, "In the folk-rock

scene, it's like a tight knit community and everyone is chill and a lot nicer. People are

older too, so they are more mature in some ways." In this statement, the participant displayed her appreciation for diversity of age and open-mindedness.

Summary of Findings

Six participants identified their race/ethnicity as white, one identified as American-specifying Japanese, Mexican, English, French-Canadian, and one identified as European. The mean age was 27.9. Three of the women identified as bisexual, while five of the women identified themselves sexually as straight. Overall, the findings reflect a range of variations in the definition of a "groupie." All variations, however, involved a woman showing some form of loyalty to the band. Three participants self-identified as a groupie. One participant discussed the term "band-aid" as an alternative identity for women following band members. Her definition of a band-aid included a woman who cares for the "boys" in the band, nurtures them, and gives male band members oral sex, as a reflection of her love for the band. The majority(5 out of 8) of the participants discussed beginning their independent search for alternative music (separate from their parents and/or peers) during adolescence. There were three participants who remembered high school as a difficult time for them, as their mothers suffered from serious health issues. Almost all (7 out of 8) of the participants discussed that the beginning of their personal connections with folk rock musicians occurred during their early twenties, between the ages of twenty and twenty-four. In exploring the theme of female identity development, the majority (5 out of 8) of the participants felt that the emotional connection that they shared with a band member did not provide them with a satisfactory sense of recognition within the relationship. Nearly all of the participants (7 out of 8) discussed substance use as a part of their experience in the folk rock music world. Lastly,

there were three unexpected themes in the findings of this study: Bisexuality, Worldview, and Sense of Community. The majority (6 out of 8) of the participants stated that their worldview had been affected in some way via witnessing the musicians onstage or via personal connections with musicians. In discussing the sense of community found within folk rock music culture, many participants experienced a sense of warmth and connectedness with others (fans and band members alike) in this music culture, and also revealing elements of spirituality evident in their devotion to folk rock bands. These research findings will be further explored and interpreted using the literature in the following discussion chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This qualitative study explored the phenomenological impacts of women

following male folk rock musicians. The literature on identity development has shown

that our resolutions of one stage of identity development influences how we move onto

the next (Erikson, 1968). Specific to female identity development, the literature has

shown that females integrate a sense of empathy for others in the world around them as

they develop their identity (Chodorow, 1978). The emotional impact of music can be

more intense for a female, depending on the stage of identity development she may be at

and also how she may relate empathically to the musician playing the music. Looking at

the literature on identity development, female identity development, and the emotional

impact of music on women, this chapter will discuss the findings of this research study

with the hopes of answering these questions: What are the experiences, motivations, and

perceptions of women who seek close connections with band members? What are the

women's perspectives on their roles as groupies? What do their family background and

earlier experiences in relationships look like? How are their experiences with folk rock

music affecting or influencing their emotional state?

Unraveling Truths about Groupies

In exploring the informational gap between the formal and informal definition of

"groupie," the findings similarly reflected ambiguity about the female's subjectivity in

her role as a groupie. The formal definition of "groupie" implies loyalty for rock groups,

especially from a young woman, which was unanimously congruent with the participant's definitions. Many of the participant's described derogatory sexual acts in their elaborations of the definition of groupie. Interestingly enough, none of the participant's who described themselves as groupies fit the derogatory descriptions of a groupie. As one participant identified herself as a "band-aid" but after describing the negative aspects of that identity, felt that she did not fit into that identity, I wonder who defines whose identity for women following male folk rock bands? It seems as though the women, themselves, are conflicted in defining their own identity as female folk rock music fans. It also seemed that the closer the participants were to the band, the less satisfaction they felt with their pre-defined roles in this culture.

Themes in Identity Development

The findings under the identity development theme were consistent with Eriksonian theory, where the way one moves through one stage of identity development influences how one moves onto the next. Erikson (1968) introduced a self-selected identity process that occurs during Stage 5, the crisis of Identity vs. Role Confusion. This usually takes place in adolescence, when the person begins to challenge their childhood beliefs and roles in society. Adolescents begin to look inward, wondering what makes them unique and different from their family and peers. Five participants discussed what this process of self-selected identity was like for them. They talked about processes that they went through in their adolescence which separated them from their childhood identities. One woman explicitly stated that she began to pursue interests in her "internal" life. In stating that she "did not have any reason to spend time hanging out outside," this participant described a transition in her identity, moving from Stage 4 to

Stage 5 in Eriksonian identity development theory. She went on to state that while she was spending more time inside, she was exploring different kinds of music that were unfamiliar to her peers.

Complexities in Female Identity Development

Evident in the conflicted descriptions of how many of the women have come to understand their own identity, these participants brought to light an identity struggle which Gilligan (1982) discussed that is particularly relevant to females. Gilligan (1982) found in her research on female development and morality that women think relationally in their definitions of themselves. In her statement, "You can't know yourself without knowing someone else," this participant's viewpoint was congruent Gilligan's findings. This also suggests that the psychosocial crisis occurring during the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage of Identity Development (Erikson, 1968) contains more phenomenological complexities for females than the linear developmental stages presented by Erikson. At this stage, not only are females immersed in a crisis of identity search, but they are empathizing with the crises of others around them. The participant further stated that in knowing too many people "you can start to lose yourself, because you are all over the place" which left her confused, questioning her own identity, "Who am I really?" This crisis exemplifies the complexities women face in empathically defining their own identity as they connect with others in society.

Another participant illustrated this struggle when asked to define what her true identity was, as her morose self-definition appeared to lack consideration for herself or even her own interests. Jessica Benjamin described this phenomenon when she stated, "In some cases, a woman's search for her own desire may take the form of extreme self-

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abegnation. But in the more common form of masochism-adult ideal love- a woman

loses herself in the identification with the powerful other who embodies the missing

desire and agency" (Benjamin, p114, 1988). Through identifying with the "powerful"

musician, this participant appeared to have hidden from herself her noticeable identity as

a smart, beautiful and powerful woman in law school.   This led me to wonder about the

implications of phenomenological dangers women face in integrating empathy into our

identity formation process.

It was interesting to find that three participants identified themselves as bisexual

in the demographics survey. The quote discussed in the previous paragraph was from one

of these women. I wonder if her bisexual identity is correlated with her feelings of

confusion around her overall identity. I would be curious to find out more about how the

ambiguity in this sexual identity relates to the participants' experiences and possible

doubt in their ability to differentiate their own sexual desires from the desires of others in

their personal relationships.

Imbalances in Mutual Recognition

The findings relating to the intersubjective dynamics within the groupie/musician

relationship confirmed Benjamin's theory of mutual recognition.   Benjamin quoted

Simone de Beauvoir who stated, "When a woman gives herself completely to her idol,

she hopes that he will give her at once possession of herself and of the universe he

represents".   This highlighted the root of intimacy issues which groupies faced in their

quest for emotional closeness with musicians.   Benjamin went on to suggest:

> The belief that the man will provide access to a world that is otherwise closed to
> her is one of the great motives in ideal love. It is not difficult for women to give
> up the narcissism of the absolute self, but to find another path to the world, they
> often look for a man whose will they imagine to be untrammeled. (p 116-7)

It was interesting that one woman's definition of a groupie included describing how groupies "do not connect with any other world, which becomes a bad thing, like an obsession," yet the feelings she conveyed in discussing her dissatisfaction in her emotional connection revealed her similar desire to only connect with the folk rock musician's world. For instance, it may be a society norm to accept and forgive someone for times when they have treated another with disrespect, yet the musician's silence in his dominant role left this female fan yearning for mutual recognition from him. It is important to note that this participant did not want to be identified as a woman on a lower status than that of the musicians themselves, and prided herself in never having had a sexual relationship with a band member. This unexpressed relational dynamic occurring within her desired musician unveiled phenomenological aspects of her subordinate role in the relationship. I wonder if this represents a cultural norm in folk rock music cultures, for female fans to accept their lower status roles, while continuing to remain loyal, regardless of their subjective positions.

Idealization of Musicians Affects Vulnerable Young Women

I maintain that music is erotic. The musician's role is, in a sense, to seduce the audience, and my findings validated that this seduction contributes to the idealization of musician of the groupie. The findings revealed that the emotional effects of music were woven into all of the themes discussed within each interview. Witnessing musicians express emotion on-stage through music provided these women with feelings of connectedness to the music, to fellow fans, and in some cases to the musicians. As one participant shared emotional hardships that she experienced throughout her childhood, growing up surrounded in depression, she, admirably, followed her desire to build her

own life in a world full of life and positive music. The warmth and liveliness that many participants discussing feeling within the culture of folk rock music appeared to have been a nurturing emotional element which some participants lacked in their family life. I wonder if, in some instances, the women were vulnerable as their emotional connection to the music turned into emotional attachments to musicians, idealizing their on-stage presence, hoping for the musician to fill a nurturing role which they longed for in their personal lives.

A Church-like Community with Spiritual Elements

With regard to the sense of community that participants discussed within folk rock music culture, it was intriguing to find that the balance of respect and recognition within the fan/band leader dynamic paralleled that of a congregation member/church leader relationship. Implicit in the honor which one women discussed feeling in having her beloved band leader play at her wedding revealed her devotion and respect for this particular musician. Unconventionally, it mirrored the way church members may feel when they are married to their partner by a beloved church-leader.   In continuing to reflect on this theme, it appears as though some of the women look to the band leaders for inspiration and wisdom in life.   It seems as though some of the participants experience an element of spirituality in their involvement in folk rock music culture. I would be curious to explore in more depth how women perceive their own possible spiritual processing and growth in this music culture.

Substance Use and Abuse

Considering the openly accepted use of marijuana discussed throughout the interviews, it appears as though marijuana is not perceived as a drug, and pot-smoking is

not stigmatized within folk rock music culture. Many of the participants spoke about smoking pot with band members as a bonding experience, bridging the relational gap between fan and musician. Most of the attitudes around this form of substance use were positive, possibly indicating that the women who used marijuana felt that it is an acceptable way to connect with others this culture. However, this embracing attitude did not appear to be the same for all drug use. For instance, one participant discussed her cocaine use with reservation and perceived guilt. Considering the emotional difficulties she faced in her family life, I wonder if using substances and connecting with band members was a coping mechanism which provided her with mental distance from her uncomfortable, depressed emotions. It was interesting that the way she related to the musicians seemed to be on somewhat of an equal level, in that they were all using cocaine to escape some sort of reality they did not want to face. It would be interesting to further investigate this process of using drugs as an escape for both groupies and musicians alike.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The findings on groupies impact clinical practice specifically with women, as phenomenological aspects of women following men are analyzed through feminist theories, via the experiences of the women who participated in the study. This study addressed core aspects of women's issues, bringing to light women's diverse realities and how different they can be from pre-defined societal labels of identity. Social workers can use these findings to enhance practice with women processing issues in identity development and experiencing intimacy issues in their relationships with men. This study provides examples and insight on intersubjective dynamics occurring between men

in positions of higher social status and women of lower social status who follow them. While the finding are most relevant to clinicians working with groupies and women following male folk rock bands, this study is also generally relevant for women processing authority imbalances within relationships. Through this study, social workers, especially male social workers, might learn more about complexities in the intersubjective dynamics within their practice with female clients. Clinical implications of this awareness might include the clinician facilitating discussions on psycho-education for young women on developing identity, modeling and providing examples of relationships of mutual recognition, and creating a place to talk about their frustrations in being seen as valuable, desirable, and powerful.

Limitations

Sources of potential researcher bias may include my initial expectations of the study results, which were formed during the review of literature process as my ideas regarding female motivations and perceptions evolved as I studied phenomenological feminist theories on female identity development. This personal evolution of thought through a distinctively feminist lens may have influenced my interpretations in data analysis. Having previously worked at a folk rock music venue and enduring similar personal experiences to many of the women who participated in this study may have contributed to the depth of my understanding of the content of our interviews. On the other hand, it may have affected my objectivity throughout the interview process. Having my own reflective perception of the content that participants shared in their interviews may have influenced the way we related to each other. It also may have colored the way I reviewed the data. The sample contains bias, as the majority of the

participants were white, and does not reflect the experiences of person's of color. If I had more time to conduct this study, I would have liked to broaden the sample to groupies from many more genres of music. Had I been able to do that, I believe the sample would have reflected a more diverse range of women from multiple races/ethnicities.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on the subjective experiences of male folk rock musicians would be an significant counterpart to my exploration of women's subjective experiences in the folk rock music world. Also furthering female's perspectives in this culture, it would be interesting to hear about the experiences of female folk rock musicians. Future research on the topic of groupies might include: (a.) groupies in treatment; what is the likelihood of them seeking treatment and how do they perceive service providers? (b.) children of groupies; How do the lives of children who have grown up within folk rock music culture compare to children of mainstream society? and (c.) substance abuse and recovery among groupies.

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Appendix A

SMITH COLLEGE
School for
Social Work

Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950
F (413) 585-7994

January 29, 2010

Paula Passanisi

Dear Paula,

Your revised materials have been reviewed. You have done a fine job with their amendment and we are glad to now give your project our final approval.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

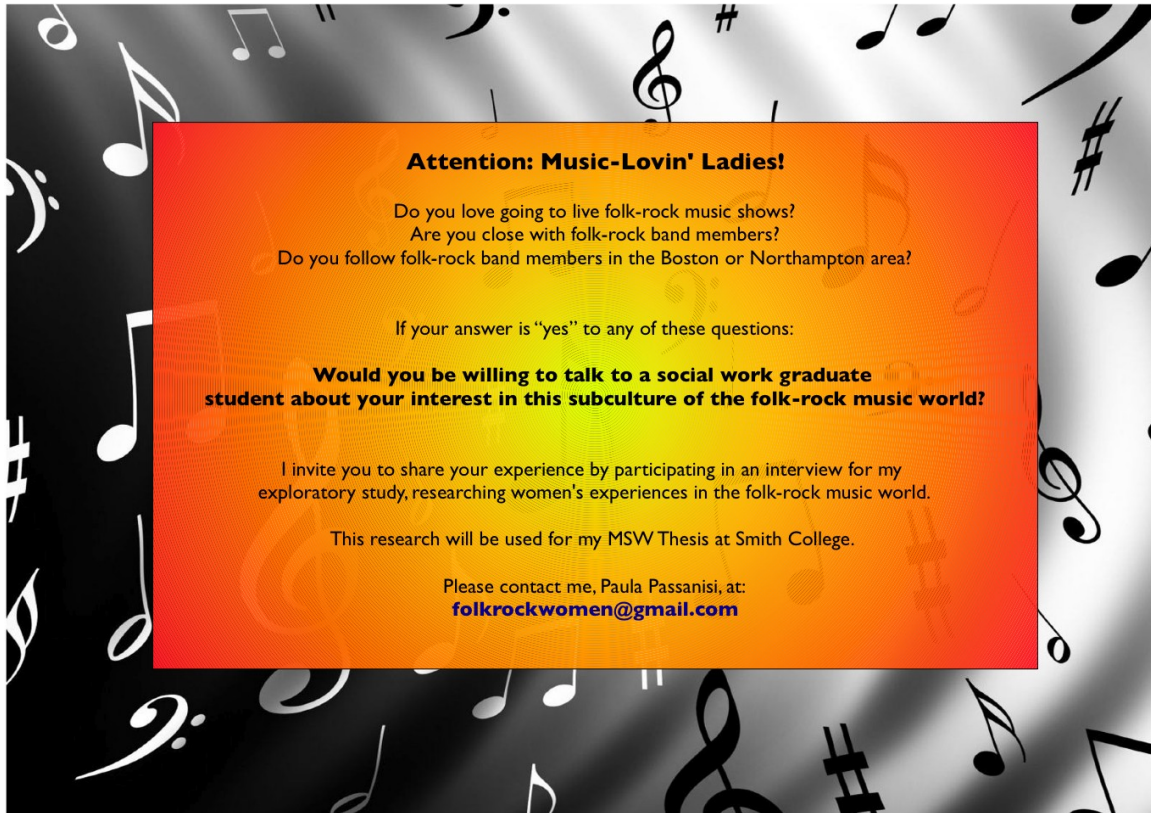Good luck with your study. It should be very interesting.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Lee Whitman-Raymond, Research Advisor

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant:

My name is Paula Passanisi and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. As part of my Masters in Social Work, I am required to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to have my study provide a space for women to talk about their interests in exploring their involvement and experiences in the folk-rock music world. I hope to gain insight into women's reasons and personal meanings that contribute to the draw to this particular lifestyle, as I want to support and bring to light female perspectives in folk-rock music. This master's thesis will be used to fulfill graduation requirements. I will use the results of this thesis for presentations. There is a possibility that it will be submitted for publication.

I am asking that you participate in my study based on the fact that you meet the following criteria; you are a female between the age range of 18-27, follow one or multiple male folk-rock music bands , and that you live or have lived in the Boston or Northampton area. To be a participant in this study, I will meet with you for one interview, inviting you to share more information about your experiences in this type of music culture. I plan to collect demographic data, which will ask: your age, your race, your ethnicity, your sexual identification, your occupation, and the estimated income of the household that your grew up in. You must be free from drug use at the time of the interview. You can choose not to answer any question that I ask you. The interviews will take place in various places, depending on your choice and comfort. Participation in the interview will take 50 minutes of your time, plus travel time if you choose to meet with me in an environment out of your home. I will gather and process the data by audio recording the interview, and transcribe the data myself.

All of your identifying information will be held in confidence. The questions asked in the interview may prompt you to share personal information, which you may not have shared with others. It is possible that some of the questions might cause you emotional distress. If you wish to stop the interview at any time, you may do so. You can also decline to answer any question at any time. You have the right to withdraw and should choose to withdraw, all materials relating to you would be immediately destroyed. The date after which you can no longer withdraw is April 30, 2010. I will distribute a list of referral sources for follow-up mental health support to all participants.

A benefit of participating in this study would be that you would be given the space to share and explore your unique experience in music culture as a woman for the purpose of research. At your request (by contacting me via the email address provided), I will send a summary of the results of this study. These findings may give useful information in terms of how other women feel about their experiences in similar contexts of their music fan subcultures. It is possible that the results of this study will generate further investigation into advocacy of women's rights.

I will transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews myself. It is not possible to guarantee anonymity in this study, as after the interview, I will have had face-to-face contact with the participant. I will maintain confidentiality as I will not share any identifiable information of yours with anyone outside of administrative support within the study. My research advisor will have access to the data after identifying information has been removed from data. I will prepare presentations and publications in such a way that you will not be identified, as I plan to present data about participants as a group. I also plan to disguise illustrative vignettes and quoted comments. I plan to store data in a secured and locked file cabinet in my office, within my home. All data and tapes will be kept secure for three years as required by Federal regulations and after that time, they will be destroyed or continue to be kept secret for as long as I need them. When no longer needed, data will be destroyed.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You can contact me via the email address provided in this Consent Form. You can also contact Ann Hartman, D.S.W, Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee at 413-585-7974.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

I have included two copies of this form. Please keep one copy for your records. Thank you for your participation.

Participant Signature _____ Researcher Signature
        Date_____Date_____

If you have any questions please contact:

Paula J. Passanisi
ppassani@smith.edu

Appendix D

Demographic Information

What is your age?

_____

How do you racially/ethnically identify?

_____

How do you identify sexually?

_____

What is your occupation?

_____

Can you estimate the yearly household income of your family of origin?

_____Less than $25,000
_____$25,000-$50,000
_____$50,000-$75,000
_____$75,000-$100,000
_____$Above $100,000

Using the scaled below, how would you rate your overall mood or sense of well
being?

1_____2_____3_____4_____5
  Excellent   Pretty good   Ok   Not so good   Pretty bad

Appendix E

Interview Guide

I. Introductory Narrative:
1. Tell me about your earliest memories of being introduced to folk rock. What drew you in?

2. Who was the first folk rock musician you heard? Can you talk about the significance this music had for you?

3. Who was the first folk rock musician you saw in live performance? Can you describe that experience?

4. Can you talk more about your experience in the folk rock music world?

5. What was your life like before you started following folk rock?
    (a) Your family life?
    (b) Your social life?

II. Feminist Ideas/Family Dynamics:
6. With whom have you formed relationships with?
        (c.) Within relationships, can you describe what your role looks like?
                i.   Does your role change in your relationships with men?
                ii.   With women?

7. What were your relationships like with members of your family?
                (c)   Mother?
                (d)   Father?
                (e)   Siblings?

III. Identity/Intimacy Issues:
8. How have you maintained relationships with other folk rock fans, and with folk rock musicians?

9. Have there been male folk rock musicians with whom you have experienced an
      emotional closeness with?
      (a.)Was the feeling mutual?
            i.   Did either of you pursue your feelings?
            ii.   How did it pan out?
                 A. What issues, if any, did you come across in your relationship?

10. In feeling a close emotional connection with male folk rock musicians, has this
influenced or affected your world view?
      (a.) Could you talk more about how being involved in a relationship with a folk
      rock musician affects the way you perceive your own identity?
            iii.   In relation to other fans?
            iv.   In relation to other people in your life?
   (b.) Do you feel like you are who you are because of folk rock musicians you
      know?

11. Would you like to share more about your experience as a woman in the folk rock
music world?

Appendix F

Referral List

Boston Area:
Women's Counseling & Resource Center
46 Pleasant St.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 492-8568

Women's Health Alliance
1493 Cambridge St.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 665-2800
www.challiance.org

Women's Mental Health Collective
61 Roseland St.
Somerville, MA 02143-3524
(617) 354-627
http://www.wmhc.org/

Northampton Area:
Every Woman's Center
221 Stockbridge Rd.
Amherst, MA 01003-9315
(413) 545-0883
http://www.umass.edu/ewc/

Outpatient Behavioral Health
Cooley Dickinson Hospital
10 Main St. 3rd Floor
Florence, MA 01062
(413) 856-8550

Service Net Mental Health Center
50 Pleasant St. Northampton, MA
01060-3909
(413) 584-6855

Tapestry Health
16 Center St # 415
Northampton, MA 01060-3095
(413) 586-2539
www.tapestryhealth.org