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## Music Subcultures Online: The Indie Folk Scene and How Facebook Influences Participation

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MUSIC SUBCULTURES ONLINE: THE INDIE FOLK SCENE AND HOW  
FACEBOOK INFLUENCES PARTICIPATION

BY

KATHARINE MCGWIN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The following study attempts to identify an independent music subculture within the Providence, Rhode Island scene. Specifically this study will seek to identify such a subculture related to the indie folk genre of music, as this is a popular genre within this area of interest. In order to identify this subculture, a series of interviews were conducted with indie folk musicians from the Providence area. These interviews sought to identify this subculture based on the four basic characteristics of subcultures as identified by Hodkinson, which include identification, commitment, consistent distinctiveness, and autonomy (as cited in Mattar, 2003). The results of these interviews did, in fact, demonstrate that such a scene exists based on these characteristics.

The second portion of this study sought to identify how the social-networking site, Facebook, might play a role within the identified indie folk subculture. In order to examine this, a survey was conducted with individuals who responded to targeted Facebook posts from individuals in Rhode Island. The results of these surveys demonstrates that Facebook does play a role in the indie folk community, specifically through the posting and sharing of media, the creation and sharing of events, and interaction through and on fan, band, and group pages.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Subcultures have been an area of interest for many researchers seeking to understand how they exist and how they operate. Over time their conceptualization has altered and has come to understand a myriad of different communities in various contexts. The following study will focus specifically on their conceptualization as it relates to music followings.

Hebdige was one of the first to apply subculture to music communities, and focused his approach on understanding culture as a way of life that encompassed various social activities, meanings, values, beliefs, institutions, and commodities. He explained that culture was a product of specific “cultural configurations” such as gender, ethnicity, and age, with class being the most significant mediating factor that determined an individual’s cultural activities (as cited in Negus, 1996). He identified that subculture acted as solution to a problem or contradiction in the dominant culture, and served as a way for its members to resist through ritual and style (McArthur, 2009; as cited in Negus, 1996).

This particular study will utilize Hebdige’s (1979) conceptualization of subculture and how it is expressed through style. It is through this study that one may come to better understand how these communities identify themselves. As no prior measure has existed, this study may help to develop a proper system of identification to measure these communities’ existence.

This study will also serve to identify how Facebook may play a role in the existence of such communities. According to Kruse (2010) no innovation has had a greater impact upon the way in which subcultures operate than the Internet; what was once locally-based, can now transcend geographical boundaries. This study hopefully serves to better understand how this innovation has opened up these boundaries to allow individuals to communicate. The information gathered from this study will hopefully help to open up further understanding of how the Internet impacts subcultural participation, and could possibly have practical use for artists, record labels, and radio stations, as it may help them to optimize how they connect with fans, as well as how they promote music and events.

In the next section of this study, previous literature on music subcultures will be discussed, with particular attention to independent music subcultures, as well as previous work on how the Internet has impacted subcultures. Finally, a study will be discussed which attempts to accurately measure the existence of an indie folk subculture as it exists in the Providence, Rhode Island music scene, as well as identifying how Facebook may play a role within this community.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Subcultural Theory and Music Subcultures*

The conceptualization of subculture has had a rather transformative past; scholars at the University of Chicago originally utilized it in the 1920s as a way to understand marginalized social groups and deviancy (Dedman, 2011). It was in the 1970s that the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University developed a perspective that focused on subculture in such a way that they were seen as alternative to the dominant cultures in society. In the CCCS perspective, youth groups centered on popular music are seen as a high point in this conceptualization (Dedman, 2011).

Hebdige, under a similar CCCS perspective of subcultures, was one of the first to apply this term to music subcultures (as cited in Williams, 2011). As mentioned previously, Hebdige's approach treats subcultures as solution to a problem or contradiction in the dominant culture, and serves as a way for its members to resist, which they do through ritual and style (McArthur, 2009; as cited in Negus, 1996). In this approach, style is the primary basis for culture, in which objects and cultural practices can be viewed in the way members speak, behave, and dress (Brake, 1980; Williams, 2003).

In general, Hodkinson identifies four primary characteristics of subcultures. The first, identity, is defined by Marcia (1980) as "an existential position, to an inner

organization of needs, abilities, and self-perceptions as well as to a sociopolitical stance,” in which individuals are actually more likely to perceive or define themselves as a member to minority groups (Ellemers, Kortekaa, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Mattar, 2003). These groups allow members a greater ability to retain their individuality in which members place themselves within the category of a particular community (Ellemers, Kortekaa, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; as cited in Mattar, 2003). With regard to music subcultures, these categories could include the punks, goths, glam rockers, the Rastafarians, the teddy boys, or the mods (Hebdige, 1979).

However, it also goes beyond this; in a study by Andes, individuals identify their membership within a group, but in most cases they will explain their membership as a system in which they are a part. According to her research on the punk subculture, “being a member of the punk community is no longer their most important concern. They begin to define punk as a system of values and beliefs, and thus become concerned with expressing an ideological commitment to the subculture” (as cited in Williams, 2011).

The second characteristic of subcultures Hodkinson identifies is commitment, in which members symbolically commit themselves to particular styles and ideologies through actual practice or in the adherence to markers of distinction. In a study by Fox, the presence of distinctions lie between the “real” members and the “pretend,” where members’ authenticity was valued based on their commitment to the ideology, lifestyle, taste, and appearance as it relates to the subculture (as cited in Driver, 2011). These commitments can include visible evidence, such as the subcultural items (e.g. adopting certain clothing styles), participation in events associated with that subculture

(e.g. concerts and shows), or invisible evidence in which members affectively adhere to the beliefs, values and ideologies of the subculture to which they belong (Allen & Meyer, 1991; Mattar, 2003).

The third characteristic of subcultures, consistent distinctiveness, comes to represent the differentiation between subcultures. While the subcultures may overlap in some ways, the community should be seen as inherently distinguishable from others (Mattar, 2003). For Hebdige (1979), each article of clothing, each mannerism, holds significant meaning for the group to which an individual belongs. As he explains, goods can function as a sort of exclusionary device, in which one can determine who is the “true” member and the “poseur,” or the “authentic” and the “inauthentic” (Haenfler, 2010; Muggleton, 2000; as cited in Williams, 2003). According to Brake (1980), these markers are not foreign, but instead are existing elements that have been modified to mean something new to create the group identity and promote recognition amongst a subculture’s members.

Autonomy is the last of the four subcultural characteristics and comes to mean that subcultures work to govern themselves ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)). Autonomy within a subculture is represented by the production of work (i.e. albums, music, etc.) and the organization of events and materials directly made by members of the community (Mattar, 2003). In many ways members see their work as the only work in which members will accept as being a part of the subcultural experience because it is the most “authentic” (Frith, 1981).

In the next section of this paper, I will discuss once specific music subculture, the independent music community, as this study will seek to identify an indie folk subculture that falls under the independent music genre.

### *Independent Music and Indie Folk*

Independent, or “indie,” music is different from other genres of music in that it is relatively independent from major music labels (Henry & Novara, 2009). According to Kruse (2010), “indie” music scenes or subcultures sprang up as a result of local independent rock and pop scenes. Indie bands have been closely linked with specific geographic and physical spaces, in which subcultural identities might be formed, maintained, and changed by their locality, the social networks of members, local history, and an opposition to other localities (Kruse, 1993). These locations were often outside of the major media centers of New York and Los Angeles, and some of the earliest and most famous of these local scenes became Athens, Georgia in the late 1970s through the mid-1980s, and later Seattle, Washington (Kruse, 1993).

While the independent music community often goes rather “under the radar” in most research, Mall (2006) conducted a groundbreaking study in which he examined the various cultural values of the independent music community. Within the study, he found four specific values that characterize indie subcultures (Mall, 2006). These include (1) connoisseurship, or what Straw defines as the finding of old albums and learning about the genealogy of bands related to the subculture; (2) a do-it-yourself (DIY) aesthetic, which stresses the importance of being separate from the mainstream; (3) social networks, in which these networks serve to authenticate the musicians and

non-musicians whom comprise the community; and (4) active participation of non-musicians, in which the individuals within the community, who are not producing music, are actively participating within the scene by talking about the bands they listen to and the shows they are going to (Mall, 2006). In fact, in some subcultures, there is an active participation from all, in what Yabsley (2007) calls “creative consumerism,” where members can be both consumers and producers at the same time.

Mall’s (2006) study characterized the general nature of independent subcultures. However, despite their similarities, each sub-genre and subculture has its own nuances. For this particular study, I will be focusing on a specific sub-genre: that of indie folk. It can be understood that indie folk is closely tied to indie rock, in that it possesses much of the same pop accessibility and sensitive lyrics as indie rock. One can also conceptualize indie folk as possessing a “regular guy/girl” image, with a greater folk rock “edge” to it. Indie folk can be said to echo the folk revival, which brought about “folk rock”: a mix of folk and British invasion sounds. The sound could either be acoustic, electric, or a combination of both, and is often inspired by the work of Bob Dylan, Woodie Guthrie, and Pete Seeger (Morrison, 2001).

### *Indie Folk in Rhode Island*

Particularly Rhode Island was chosen for this study as it has had a rather connected past with folk and indie folk. One of the greatest folk festivals, the Newport Folk Festival, has been a tradition since 1959. Begun by George Wein, and backed by a board which includes Pete Seeger, the Newport Folk Festival is one which has introduced major artists onto the scene, such as Joan Baez, Kris Kristofferson, and

Bob Dylan, as well as marking amazing moments in music history, such as the day Dylan went electric (Newport Festivals Foundation, Inc., n.d.).

Being a member of this scene myself, I have attended the Newport Folk Festival and other shows in the area. I have also built personal relationships with many of the members and artists within this scene. Working as a radio disc jockey and working with many of the local artists and fans in the area, I have observed much of the style and rituals of the scene. Believing that Rhode Island is a reaction to a larger subculture taking place, I chose to examine the Rhode Island scene as an area of interest.

Being a member of the scene, I have observed several qualities that may appear and be relevant to the research that is done in this study. The following include some of these major observances:

*Connection between musicians.* Upon observance of this scene prior to investigation, it was noted that there was a connectedness amongst artists within the area. Many individuals within the indie folk scene are very connected with one another, putting on events together, and working together on music and recording of their albums. It is also observed that these individuals often help to cross-promote, in which they will assist one another in the marketing of their music, events, or other endeavors. This is common amongst all musicians in the area, and not just specific to the indie folk musicians. However, I believe that it has a direct impact upon the way in which the indie folk scene operates, and I believe that this is a direct result of the size of the state and the number of venues that allow for live music events.



*Instrumentation and style of music.* Individuals within this scene often play instruments that include banjos, harmonicas, fiddles or violins, and acoustic guitars. Unlike in other music genres, where these instruments appear rather infrequently, these are often many of the main instruments used by the musicians throughout an album or live set.

In recordings or during live events, it is clear that many artists enjoy a more “natural” style of play and recording, in that there appears to be little done to enhance or alter the sound. The music itself reflects this, and often echoes a country or Western “twang” to the singing of the lyrics. Lyrical content will also speak of times in which an individual was “downtrodden” or “down on their luck.”

*Clothing and personal style.* Personal style is often very evident when it comes to differentiating members of the indie folk community, particularly in Rhode Island. Often it is very common to see a country or Western style to the dress and is “intentionally disheveled.” Men often wear embroidered shirts, inspired by a style of cowboy or Western style of dress. Others wear plaid button-up shirts, and jeans usually accompany each, along with either a pointed dress shoe or “cowboy” style boots. Men also often have prominent facial hair, with either a roughly shaved face or beard. Women often wear their hair either in braids or with loose waves that is often messy, and usually wear flowing dresses (short or long) in some sort of flowered print. Again, often this attire is accompanied with boots or even some sort of loafer or saddle shoe.

*Preference for the “vintage” and “classic.”* Lastly, members of the indie folk community in Rhode Island appear to have a preference for the “vintage” and

“classic.” Many of these individuals enjoy listening to vinyl recordings of some of their favorite artists, such as Bob Dylan, Woodie Guthrie and Pete Seeger. Many individuals in this scene also enjoy perusing stores that sell used goods. This could be used record stores, thrift shops, and antique shops. This is a way in which they obtain “vintage” and “classic” style.

In conclusion, based on the understanding of how subcultures work and the assumption that an indie folk scene may be present in Rhode Island, I utilized Hodkinsons’s four characteristics to develop the following research questions:

*RQ1: Do members identify themselves as belonging to an indie folk subculture?*

*RQ2: Do members commit themselves to consumption of and participation in an indie folk subculture?*

*RQ3: Is there a perceived consistent distinctiveness of an indie folk subculture?*

*RQ4: Do members work autonomously to produce and organize events and materials related to an indie folk subculture to which they belong?*

#### *Music Subcultures Online and the Emergence of Facebook*

While this study will seek to identify a specific indie folk subculture, it will also seek to identify how the Internet, with specific attention to Facebook, has an impact on subcultural participation. According to Kruse (2010), before the Internet, understanding music subcultures was difficult to understand in isolation, it is now even more difficult to understanding a specific scene simply by location in isolation because the Internet has allowed for members of subcultures to connect across scenes and disseminate music more easily than ever before (Kruse, 2010).

In many ways, one can see that the Internet promotes social identity, or what is referred to by Hewitt as an identifier that places individuals into a social category that differs from others (as cited in Williams, 2006). This can be seen in the expressed similarity and difference members possess between their peers and the mainstream (Williams, 2006). For members of a subculture, a social identity is one that they will often make meaningful efforts to associate and familiarize themselves with the symbols, values, and behaviors of that subculture, which gives them a sense of what Thornton calls “subcultural capital.” This is a type of authenticity and status that members receive, and can be seen in the ways in which a subculture presents itself (as cited Green & Jones, 2006).

According to Copes and Williams (2005), members in online communities actually debated authenticity, in which they claimed that those who adhered to the core values of the subculture were the most authentic. Online, a member of a subculture might do this by expressing their allegiance to a subculture’s ethos, values and norms. By doing this, they are building in-group cohesion, building subcultural boundaries, and solidifying their membership within a subculture (Williams, 2006).

Atkinson and Wilson’s (2005) study on the rave and straightedge subcultures and the Internet displays how subcultural capital may be obtained. The researchers found that in the rave culture in Toronto, Canada, members promote participation through chat rooms. In this case, members will discuss a myriad of topics including music, events, and clothing styles and their meanings, which reinforce cultural practices, debunk misconceptions, and disseminate information on events and bands (Atkinson & Wilson, 2005).

In a study by Murthy (2010), in which they observed the online presence of the Muslim punk music scene of “Taqwacore,” it was found that Facebook is actually more influential in subcultural participation than other social networking sites like MySpace and Twitter. Through virtual interviews, and the observance of Taqwacore-related Facebook and MySpace pages, discussion groups, and blogs, Murthy (2010) found that, “Facebook has been instrumental,” in that the site allows for Muslim youth to openly express themselves within their subculture, when their membership might be considered “blasphemous” elsewhere.

According to Kruse (2010), social networking sites, in particular, have a clear impact on helping individuals make greater connections and ties to their communities. In a study by Baym (2007), she identifies how social networking sites are often the choice to share a public identity, or social identity. In her study on the Swedish indie fandom, or what she describes as a “collective of people organized socially around their shared appreciation of a pop culture object or objects,” she explains that most music fans will use social networking sites to share music, news, perspectives, and demonstrate their public identities, or social identities, as members of the fandom (Baym, 2007).

This particular study is perhaps one of the most enlightening, as it points that Facebook, as opposed to other social networking sites, is perhaps the most instrumental for members of subcultures to participate in the scene. It is for this reason that Facebook has been chosen as the medium of interest for this particular study. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

*RQ5: How does Facebook play a role in participation within the indie folk subculture?*

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Interview*

For this portion of the study, interviews were conducted with participants in order to answer the first four research questions. It was determined that this would be the best means by which to understand this subculture, in that it would help to provide insight as to how the subculture operates and what members believe about the community.

*Participants.* For this particular study, individuals in indie folk bands from the state of Rhode Island were chosen to participate. This is because this site is the most known to the researcher, and will serve as a focus group for a community that may be occurring on a larger nationwide scale. These individuals were chosen from a group of musicians known to me through personal connections I have made and also their perceived connection with the music scene. Musicians were chosen for this particularly study because I believed by the researcher that they have the greatest insight as to the inner workings of the indie folk scene, as “thought leaders” for the community.

For this portion of the study, 12 musicians in indie folk bands from Rhode Island were recruited to participate. From those interviewed, only 1 (8.3%) was female, and the remaining 11 (91.7%) were male. The ages of these individuals

ranged from 23 to 36 years of age (one did not report), with a mean age of 28.45 ( $SD = 4.13$ ).

*Procedure and Measures.* A series of approximately 15-minute phone interviews were conducted in between late January and mid-March of 2013, and were recorded with permission from participants for later analysis. Each participant was provided the interview guides ahead of time, which most were able to utilize during the interview. After each question, participants were asked to explain their responses.

Within the interview guide, community, scene and subculture were used synonymously. However, I do understand that these terms are different. The purpose of this entanglement was to simplify this conceptualization for the participants. It was fairly clear, however, in the examination of their responses whether they were discussing the local Providence scene or community of indie folk, or were discussing the major subculture or community at large.

Questions for this interview were restructured from other studies and developed to specifically determine if an indie folk scene in Rhode Island existed, based on the four major characteristics of subcultures as identified by Hodkinson: Identification, commitment, consistent distinctiveness, and autonomy (as cited in Mattar, 2003). The following identifies where these measures came from or how they were developed based on the conceptualization of these four characteristics.

*Identification.* Participants were asked questions related to an indie folk subculture to which they felt they belonged. Questions were adapted from the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), a twenty-item questionnaire that is typically used to determine ethnic identity across groups. As Phinney explains, this

measure has demonstrated adequate reliability and validity in studying ethnic identity across ethnic groups (as cited in Campbell, Fillingim, Herrera, Rahim-Williams, & Riley, 2007). These questions include those such as, “I have spent time trying to find out more about the indie folk community, such as its history, traditions, and customs” and “I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of the indie folk community,” in which participants answered on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Commitment.* Participants were also asked questions related to their emotional obligation to the group, and about their consumption of music and their attendance at events related to this subculture.

Due to the relative similarity in the conceptualization of organizational commitment and subcultural commitment, questions were adapted from Anderson and Williams’s (1991) study on commitment in organizations. Utilizing previously developed measures, Anderson and Williams (1991) formed an overall organizational commitment scale in which they measured internalization and identification within an organization. These questions include “If the values of this community were different, would you still be attached to this community,” and “Do you prefer the values of the indie folk community over those of others”.

Statements from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) were also adapted to this study and were utilized in this interview (Angle & Perry, 1981). The OCQ has proved very effective in measuring commitment in organizations and possessing good psychometric properties (Angle & Perry, 1981). Therefore, for this particular study, participants were asked to rate their agreement with these statements



based on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Statements taken from the OCQ include “I talk up this community to my friends as a great community to be a part of,” and “I am proud to tell others that I am part of this community.”

*Consistent Distinctiveness.* Participants were asked about their perceptions of the differences of the indie folk subculture from other communities, and if this distinctiveness is consistent. Gardikiotis’s (2008) questions of perceived group distinctiveness were used, in which participants for this study were asked how distinctive they feel the indie folk community is from other communities on a Likert scale from 1 (*not distinctive at all*) to 5 (*very distinctive*).

*Autonomy.* Participants were also asked questions related to their belief of the autonomous nature of the subculture. Questions on this topic include “Do members of the indie folk community work to create their own music,” and “Do members of the indie folk community work to record their own music?”

*Data Analysis.* The interview utilized a blend of open- and close-ended questions. For some of these questions, reported percentages of participants were utilized to understand responses. For Likert scale items that were included with this interview, SPSS software was utilized to run a factor analysis and to identify the descriptive statistics of the information. Some of the negatively-phrased questions were reverse coded to unify responses. However, for most of the interview, general themes will be developed based on the responses individuals gave to each question with regards to the four main characteristics of subcultures as identified by Hodkinson (as cited in Mattar, 2003).

## Survey

For this survey, the researcher sought to identify how Facebook might increase participation, specifically in the indie folk subculture based on the fifth research question for this study.

*Participants.* 96 individuals were recruited for this study, 53 (55.8%) of which were male, and 42 (44.2%) were female. The mean age was 34.38, and the standard deviation was 14.86. Of those surveyed and reporting, three (3.2%) were Hispanic/Latino, two (2.1%) were Asian, 86 (90.5%) were White, and four (4.2%) were two or more races.

*Procedure and Measures.* Participants were recruited through Facebook postings by individuals within the Rhode Island area between late January and mid-March of 2013. After giving informed consent and providing their demographic information (Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), participants took an online survey through the online survey service, Survey Monkey. Participants, upon completion of the survey, were offered a chance to enter into a contest to win a pair of tickets to a concert by an indie folk artist from Rhode Island, along with a signed copy of that artist's album.

Within the survey, community, scene and subculture were again used synonymously to simplify the terminology for participants. However, further examination of participant responses attempted to clarify the distinction of the terms, and whether participants were discussing the local Providence scene or community of indie folk, or the major subculture or community at large.

Some of the questions for this survey were gleaned from other sources, and others were specifically developed for this study. Below is an outline of how these questions came about.

*Subcultural Identification and Participation.* Participants were asked general questions related first to their identification of an indie folk subculture and their identification with that subculture.

Questions regarding subcultural participation were gleaned from Barrett and Pollack's (2005) study because the questions asked their participants to explain their participation in a gay subculture. Statements like this will include "I feel that participating in the indie folk community is a positive thing to do," and "I feel a bond with the other members of the community." Participants were asked to rate their agreement with these statements on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Facebook Use.* The second portion of the survey served to analyze participant Facebook use, where participants were asked to rate their agreement with given statements such as "I openly share my music interests on Facebook" and "I follow many of my favorite artists or bands on Facebook," and were asked to rate their agreement on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*)

Statements and questions for this portion of the survey were gleaned from Ellison, Lampe and Steinfield's (2007) study, and include their measure of Facebook intensity. This measure proved fairly fruitful and therefore some of these measures were adapted for this study to determine participant Facebook usage. Statements taken from the study include "About how many total Facebook friends do you have," and "I

am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook" (Ellison, Lampe, & Steinfield, 2007).

These statements asked participants to rate their agreement with the given statements on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Lastly, open-ended questions were developed to identify how members explain how Facebook plays a role in the subcultural activities such as event promotions, connection between members, and promotion of artists. Participants were also asked about their perceived limitations of Facebook. Questions of this nature included "How do fans within the indie folk subculture use Facebook to promote events related to the community," "How do indie folk artists use Facebook to promote their events," "Is Facebook the main means by which members of the indie folk subculture might connect with other members of the community," and "Do you see any limitations to using Facebook to connect with the indie folk community?"

*Data Analysis.* A correlation analysis was conducted in SPSS to analyze the relationship between general Facebook use and subcultural participation based on Likert scale items. Other items were simply analyzed based on mean and standard deviation. Open-ended questions were analyzed based on general themes that seen amongst participant responses.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### *Interviews*

In order to answer the first four research questions, interviews were conducted in which participants were asked several questions related to their identification, their commitment, and their perceptions of the consistent distinctiveness and autonomy of the subculture.

*Identification.* The first question participants were asked was whether participants believed that a community of indie folk artists and fans existed. Every participant affirmed the existence of a subculture with their primary reasoning centered on the genre and the idea of people working together. Specifically, some participants explained this identification utilizing Deer Tick, Low Anthem, and Joe Fletcher. These three bands appeared to resonate with some of the participants as artists that were representative the Rhode Island indie folk scene, perhaps because they are the most well-known acts from Providence, having played on a national scale, and even having their music on the soundtrack for commercial films.

An example of this can be seen in the way in which one participant explained their perspective of the Rhode Island scene within the indie folk subculture saying,

“ . . . it’s very clique-y. I mean it’s there’s a there’s a specific group of bands that are often like promoting each other and like when one does well, all of them do well . . . um . . . and you know especially as you had mentioned Deer Tick and the Low Anthem, anyone that works with them or is somehow, you know, affiliated with them, whether they are friends, family or they recorded one of them, it seems to that any band

that is part of that flourishes and they kinda like self-promote, and you know when you go to see a show, um all of those same bands will be on the bill.”

For many of the participants, these groups tended to be a point of reference for identifying the particular community of interest and what that group was like.

Deer Tick, the Low Anthem, and Joe Fletcher were also instrumental in how some participants understood their own membership in the community. The same participant, when asked about his membership in the community, explained

“I wish there was a middle option. Um . . . there are there are I am definitely not a member of the [group] that we just talked about, like the the wildly successful Deer Tick, Low Anthem, Joe Fletcher crowd um . . . but there is definitely like a up-and-coming, kind of like a freshman group of that. Um . . . slightly younger group of people um and bands that are, in their own right, a small sub-community of that, which do the same thing: self-promote and help each other out, all playing the folk singer-songwriter genre.”

Most respondents identified that they considered themselves members of this type of subculture. This identification came with some acknowledgement of the genre in which they felt their music fell under, as well as subcultural activities they identified in which they identified their participation.

Lastly, respondents were also asked to share their agreement with a series of Likert scale items that were read off to them. Individual scores to these items ranged from 2.73 to 3.87. Some of those rating lower did not identify with the community, while those rating higher did based on the genre of music they played, their influences, and their activity within the community. Those rating higher also had discussed the existence of the community or their membership based on the Low Anthem, Deer Tick, or Joe Fletcher.

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted with the items from this portion of the interview, in which there was a five-factor solution. However, due to the reliability of the five factors, it was determined that only three (factors one, three and four) of those would be viable for further analysis. The first factor had a Cronbach's alpha of .81, the third of .75, and the fourth of .74. The first factor accounted for 32.02% of the variance, with an Eigenvalue of 4.80. The third factor accounted for 13.72% of variance, with an Eigenvalue of 2.06. The fourth factor accounted for 9.91% of variance, and had an Eigenvalue of 1.49 [see table 1].

For the first factor, of the original 15 items, six items were kept based on factor loadings, with factor loadings ranging from .63 to .80. This group of items are those related to community attachment, and include "I have spent time trying to find out more about the indie folk community, such as its history, traditions and customs," "I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my membership in the indie folk community," "I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of the indie folk community," "I have a strong sense of belonging to the indie folk community," "I feel a strong attachment toward the indie folk community," and "I feel good about my membership in the indie folk community."

The third factor included two out of the original 15 items. These items are related to subcultural materials, and include "I have a lot of pride in the indie folk community and its accomplishments," as well as "I participate in cultural practices of the indie folk community, such as music and events." The factor loadings were .89 and .82, respectively.

The fourth factor also included two out of the original 15 items. These items are related to interaction with community members, and include “I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of the indie folk community,” and “I do not spend much time with people from music communities other than my own.” Factor loadings were .81 and .78, respectively.

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Identity</b>		
Community attachment	3.04	0.64
Subcultural materials	4.17	0.49
Interaction with community members	2.67	0.83

Table 1.

Therefore, based on high level of participants identifying, the first research can be answered, in that individuals do identify themselves as belonging to an indie folk subculture.

*Commitment.* In order to answer the second research question related to commitment, participants were asked a series of questions related to the values and their participation in the indie folk subculture.

The first question participants were asked was if they preferred the values of the indie folk community to those of other music communities. Of those interviewed, 5 out of 12 responded that they did, in which some expressed a connection with others as the main value they preferred.

Another participant identified that the presentation of the music was the most important value for the community, in which they said,

“ . . . I guess I would put most of the emphasis on songwriting. I think lyrics are really important and you know it’s important with bands like



ours to be sound checked well and not have vocals kind of bleed into the background when we're playing live, which you know growing up vocals were always so secondary to making sure you know the guitars were coming through crystally and stuff like that but with this there's so much I think craft put into just to making the music that you want to make sure it all comes through and particularly the lyrics and the nuances of the music."

Of those who did not prefer the values of the indie folk subculture (6 out of the 12), some identified that that subcultures between genres were fairly similar, and so in some ways it was "universal," one participant noted. Another participant saw the community as a work-related environment, in which they viewed their band as a form of work for them because they were "trying to make it big." This individual identified that they felt more like a member, rather than an owner or "thought leader" within this community, and perhaps preferred other subcultures in which they were more able to relax.

Another participant explored a similar notion; a revered image of the typical indie folk member, which they did not value themselves.

"Like there is a stereotypical image that is associated with like the true folk artists, and there's just somebody with a scotch in one hand and a cigarette in the other and like really kind of lounging through life, just reflecting on things in a very existential way and I'm not any of those things; I'm straightedge . . . there's an image of just like kind of like drug-induced . . . waking up very late and staying out very late every night kind of image in the in the folk scene."

In their description, the individual identifies themselves by their "straightedge" lifestyle. In this way, they may be demonstrating preference for the values of these communities over those of the indie folk subculture.

The second question participants were asked regarding commitment was about their belief if what the indie folk community stood for was important to them. Of

those interviewed, 6 identified they did, in which some explained that they believed that a supportive climate and the traditional style of indie folk music were important to them.

One participant expressed this traditional style and their support by explaining,

“ . . . I’m just supportive of anything music or the arts and I think especially like, you know, um a lot of popular music on the radio these days is really like synthesized and auto auto-tuned vocals and it’s very very overly produced and so it’s kind of neat to see like popular bands like bands like you mentioned like Low Anthem, Deer Tick, Joe Fletcher like getting popular just kind of playing very traditional instruments with not you know, its um kind of you know its um like a old school in a way kind of traditional stuff and not um . . . um having it you know having it be recognized national is really cool . . . ”

In this way, participants have expressed the importance of the tradition of the musical style as an important aspect to the indie folk subculture.

Of those who did not believe what the community stood for was important to them (5 out of 12), many explained that they were simply unsure as to what the community stood for. Even one respondent who had first identified their confusion with this, saying, “ . . . we stand for whatever we stand for and whatever everybody else stands for is what they stand for so, um . . . I I guess? If you look at it generally speaking, like what the whole community stands for? I guess I would say um yeah, I believe what they stand for.”

The third question participants were asked regarding commitment was related to their sense of “ownership” for the community outside of being a member. Of those surveyed, 10 out of 12 believed that they were just members within the community. As one participant explained “ . . . I feel like protective and you know over you know my band and our music that we’ve made but um as far as the community in general I

feel like it's kinda like I feel I'm a part of it and I'm there but I don't feel . . . like I don't really feel ownership, like it's my responsibility to keep things going or anything . . .”

Another participant spoke to this, and referenced again a sort of “fledgling” nature to the bands outside of the larger musical acts.

“I mean if we're talking about like the Americana community in Providence and and Rhode Island then I think like if anybody is gonna kinda own that and be like the kings of it that would have to be like a band like Deer Tick, I think. We're like we're fledgling members at best and you know hopefully that will change over time but right now it's it's just you know a bunch of guys in a band and then there's a bunch of guys in other bands and a lot of us are buddies . . .”

In this sentiment, it appears that participants feel that they are more of the “up-and-comers” of a group of larger artists who “own” the community.

Next, participants were asked a series of questions related to their consumption of music from indie folk artists. A majority of individuals identified listening to and attending concerts by artists who belong to the indie folk subculture, as well as purchasing or downloading music from those artists.

Lastly, respondents were also asked to share their agreement with a series of Likert scale items that were read off to them. Individual participant responses for this section ranged from 2.33 to 3.83. One individual who rated lower overall in this set of statements had previously did not with the subculture. Both respondents who received lower scores identified that they did not feel a sense of ownership of the scene, one of which explained that they simply saw themselves as a member where others were acting to bring the community together. The individual rating the highest also did not

previously identify as an “owner” of the scene, but did display a consumption of the music, and believed in what the community stood for.

A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was also conducted with the items from this portion of the interview, in which there was a four-factor solution. However, due to the reliability and number of items included in the four factors, it was determined that two of those would be viable for further analysis. For the first factor, factor loadings of these items ranged from .86 to .91. This factor accounted for 35.02% of the variance and had an Eigenvalue of 4.20. The Cronbach’s alpha was .89 [see table 2]. The items that were included in this factor include three out of the original 12, and most closely represent the value of the subculture. These items were “There’s not a lot to be gained by sticking with this community indefinitely,” “Often, I find it difficult to agree with this community’s values on important matters relating to its members,” and “For me, this is the best of all communities for which to belong.”

For the second factor, the total variance accounted for was 17.90% and had an Eigenvalue of 2.15. Cronbach’s alpha was .71. Items loading onto this factor included two items, and were those related to care for the community. These include “I am proud to tell others that I am part of this community,” and “I really care about the fate of this community.” Factor loadings were .82 and .89, respectively.

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Commitment</b>		
Value of subculture	3.14	0.72
Care for community	3.72	0.62

Table 2

Upon evaluation of the data collected from interviews with participants, it can be concluded that members do commit themselves to consumption of and participation in an indie folk subculture.

*Consistent Distinctiveness.* To answer the third research question, participants were asked a series of open-ended questions related to their belief of the distinctive nature of the indie folk subculture.

The first question asked participants if they believed that the indie folk subculture was distinct from other subcultures. Of those interviewed, 6 out of 12 perceived that it was, explaining that they believed that there were defining features to the indie folk subculture. One participant describes this distinctiveness based on their experiences in other subcultures, in which they identify the defining features of the community.

“Everything about it has its own like defining features all the way down to the type of amps that you see. Um . . . I played like progressive, kind of like experimental rock on the vein of [unintelligible] and the Deerhunter and stuff for many years in bands and then like you move into the folk genre and nobody plays out of the car amps that have taps and head. It’s always combo amps. Never two pieces. Um . . . the older and more ripped and like smaller the amps are, the more like authentically folk you look. And the damaged guitars and like very minimalist drum kit. There’s a whole thing. And then the way you dress, the lyrical content, it’s it’s very . . . it has its own very distinct look to it . . .”

This demonstrates exactly the kind of DIY aesthetic that is most common amongst independent music subcultures, in that it is very minimalistic, ripped, and almost thrown together.

Another defining feature for some participants was the blend that makes up the community, in which one participant identified that “. . . it combines so many different

styles.” However, of those who identified that it was not distinct (4 out of 12), identified that this was what made it difficult to distinguish from other subcultures. One participant noted, “There’s so much crossover. I mean particularly like we’ve we’ve played shows you know with metal bands and you know have a few beers with the guys afterwards and . . . our bassist is equally a Bob Dylan fan and a fan of like black metal so no I don’t think they’re that distinct.”

Second, participants were asked to rate the distinctiveness of the indie folk subculture on a scale of 1 to 5, in which 5 represented the very distinctive, 3 was neutral, and 1 was not distinctive at all. The responses to this question had a mean of 3.67 ( $SD = 0.49$ ) [see table 1]. It can then be inferred that respondents tended towards the more distinctive nature of the subculture.

Lastly, participants were asked to explain if they believed the indie folk subculture was consistently distinctive from other subcultures. Of those interviewed, 7 out of the 12 perceived that it was consistently distinct, explaining again that there were defining features to the subculture. However, one participant also notes there is a connectedness between members, displayed in “people interaction . . . [how they] communicate and have respect for one another.”

However, not all agreed; of those interviewed, 5 explained that they thought that it was not consistently distinct because of overlapping nature of the community with other communities. As one participant explains, “. . . often you’ll hear bands doing thing so close to being called classical rock that it’s almost impossible to make a distinction . . . you definitely see some recycling of classic rock coming out in some folk bands.”

Overall, a majority of participants identified that the subculture is consistently distinct from other subcultures, which then answers the third research question for this study.

*Autonomy.* For the last portion of the interview, participants were asked a series of questions related to the autonomous nature of the indie folk subculture. Participants were asked questions related to the composition, production, and marketing of music, along with the coordination of subcultural events.

First, participants were asked if members of the community composed all or almost all of their own music. All of the participants identified that members composed at least almost all of their own music, however it was noted that covers of other artists' songs are regularly played. As one participant explains, “. . . I mean there's still plenty of covers being tossed around and especially with music like this, there's such an admiration for like Hank Williams and Woodie Guthrie and Townes Van Zandt and stuff so there's definitely a lot of cover playing . . .” Another participant explains that these covers can even appear on an indie folk artists' album, in which they said, “. . . especially the Low Anthem, I mean they put out real full-length albums that have cover songs on them, so yeah. It's a lot of original music but not all.”

Secondly, participants were asked if members recorded their own music and produced their own music, either by themselves or through their own personal funds. All of the participants responded that they did, in which they identified that many individuals will often record and do basic production themselves and then pay to have it mastered by another person. However, this production (whether mixing or

mastering) is generally done by other artists in bands who can help them or may even be done by charging lower rates to utilize studio space. It is also a common practice for the artists to pay through personal funds that that they raise from shows or through holding online fundraisers.

In-line with independent music subcultures, the indie folk tradition of recording, as explained by the participants, is somewhat of a stylistic choice. As one participant explained,

“ . . . well there’s a whole tradition that everyone in music that everyone is recording themselves but more folk musicians record themselves more than others because it’s more acceptable to have sort of lo-fi, old school sounding recording in folk music than there is other genres so like it’s more . . . it’s almost desirable to have that like grunge, um living-room recorded sound in folk.”

This reflects the DIY aesthetic often associated with independent music subcultures, as there is somewhat of a preference for this style of recording.

Next, participants were asked if members of the indie folk community marketed their own music. Most of the participants identified that members work to market their own music, however, it was explained as a sort of “grassroots,” or a “DIY” way of doing things. This was because it is based upon word of mouth and getting the word out through flyers. One participant noted the difference from other genres of music, in which they explained,

“Um . . . back into the pop, like the um rock, and like the progressive rock genres: Way more promotion self-promotion like way more flashy, a lot of Facebook banners they’ll have . . . um just running online campaigns, advertising. They put a lot of hype before something comes out. A lot of hype before shows, and folk bands like again, minimalist. Minimalist is everything and they’re just like we’re playing a show. Come see it or don’t. A hand-written flyer, you know, it’s very . . . they do that for [unintelligible] you see way way smaller promotion, and therefore way smaller numbers of Facebook fans and



Twitter followers than in other genres because they don't do a lot of self-promotion.”

However, it appears that amongst responses, Facebook does play an integral role in promotion. As one participant notes their experience, “I mean we have a big Facebook presence that has been really cool. I think that's the coolest thing about something like Facebook is that it's pretty much just a medium for self-marketing and we're kind of figuring that out as we go but it's been helpful.”

Lastly, participants were asked two questions regarding the coordination and production of events by and for indie folk artists. All of the participants identified that members of the indie folk subculture do organize events for artists. Many of the participants identified that it is often other bands that will coordinate shows by getting bands they know on a show bill. Sometimes this may vary in that it is a fan within the subculture, or an event promoter or show booker who may have the band on their “radar,” as one participant termed it. However, as another participant noted, many of the shows are at bars, and are smaller in nature.

In conclusion, the fourth research question can be answered in that members of the indie folk subculture produce and organize events and materials related to the community. This is because participants identified that members create their own music, produce their own music (or pay for it themselves), market their own music, and coordinate events.

### Survey

In order to answer the fifth research question, it was first required that individuals identified with this subculture. Of those surveyed, a majority of 86 (96.6%) identified that they believed a community existed for indie folk artists and

fans, and 57 (64%) identified that they identified themselves as members of that community. Among these participants, 68 (76.4%) also identified themselves with other members of the community.

When asked how strongly they identify with this community, 89 (93.7%) reported, in which 7 (7.4%) did not identify with this community at all, 26 (27.4%) only identified with this community somewhat, and 25 (26.3%) were neutral. However, 21 (22.1%) identified with the community, and 10 (10.5%) strongly identified with this community. The mean of this group was 3.01 ( $SD = 1.14$ ).

Secondly, participants were then asked questions related to their participation within the indie folk subculture that they had identified. Two separate principle component factor analyses with varimax rotation were run within this subsection of the survey, in which items 1 through 5 and items 7 through 11 were analyzed separately (see guide). Those items in the first analysis included, “I feel that participating in the indie folk community is a positive thing to do,” “I feel a bond with other members of the community,” and “I feel the problems of the community are mine as well.” These items related specifically to the connection with the subculture. In this factor analysis, there was a one-factor solution, in which the factor accounted for 65.44% of the variance, and had an Eigenvalue of 3.27. The factor loadings ranged from .67 to .90. The Cronbach’s alpha for this factor is .86.

The sixth item was calculated separately and asked, “Most of the artists I listen to would be considered indie folk artists. The mean of these responses was 3.16, with standard deviation 1.16.

The second group of items included those such as “I learn of events of indie folk artists all the time,” “I often attend events of indie folk artists,” and “I often seek out information on indie folk artists,” and were considered to be activities in the indie folk community. The factor analysis determined that there was also a one-factor solution for this group, accounting for 70.46% of the variance, and with an Eigenvalue of 3.52. Factor loadings ranged from .78 to .88, and the scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .89.

Next, participants were asked a series of open-ended questions related to their Facebook use. This was used to determine if participants had a Facebook and how frequently they used the site. This would also help to identify general Facebook use and activity. Within this section, respondents were asked if they had a Facebook account, an approximation of how many Facebook friends they had, how many times per week (on average) they visited the site, and how much time they spent using the site (on average) when they visited. Of those surveyed, 54 (56.8%) reported that they had a Facebook account, with a mean of Facebook friends at 765.31 ( $SD = 1,748.32$ ). The mean number of times participants logged onto Facebook per week on average was 814.72 ( $SD = 5729.50$ ). Respondents also reported a mean of 45.14 minutes using Facebook ( $SD = 73.68$ ) [see table 2].

Thirdly, respondents were asked a series of questions that directly related to Facebook use in general. These items were Likert scale items, which were used in order to determine a possible correlation between subcultural participation items and Facebook use. Again, these items were broken into two groupings, in which the first grouping focused on general Facebook use. A principle component factor analysis

with varimax rotation was conducted, which produced a two-factor result. The first factor accounted for 53.67% of the variance, and had an Eigenvalue of 3.22. The items in this factor were those related to the connectedness with the Facebook community and included “I am proud to tell people I’m on Facebook,” “I feel out of touch when I haven’t logged onto Facebook in a while,” “I feel I am part of the Facebook community,” and “I would be sorry if Facebook shut down.” Factor loadings ranged from .68 to .80, and the Cronbach’s alpha of this factor was .80.

The second factor accounted for 17.27% of the variance and had an Eigenvalue of 1.04. The items loading onto this factor were both .92 and included “Facebook is part of my everyday activity” and “Facebook is part of my daily routine.” These items are considered to be routine of Facebook use. The Cronbach’s alpha of this factor is .87.

The second grouping of questions based primarily on Facebook use as it related to music and included those items. Again, a principle component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted, in which a one-factor solution was determined. This factor accounts for 67.95% of the variance, and has an Eigenvalue of 5.44. Factor loadings range from .65 to .92. These items include “I openly share my musical tastes (i.e. preferred genres) on Facebook,” “I follow many of my favorite artists or bands on Facebook,” “I ‘Like’ many of my favorite musical artists or bands on Facebook,” “Facebook helps me to learn of events all the time,” “I receive invitations to events on Facebook all of the time,” “I often attend the events I hear about on Facebook,” “I often hear about information on musical artists or bands

through Facebook,” and “I often seek out information on musical artists or bands through Facebook.” This factor has a Cronbach’s alpha of .93.

Lastly, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted, in which a significant positive correlation was found between those items relating to the connection with an indie folk community and those items connected with the community of Facebook, where  $r = .43$ , and  $p < .05$ .

A Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted between activity in the community and connectedness with the community on Facebook, which showed a positive correlation at  $r = .54$ , and  $p < .05$ . A positive correlation was also found between activity in the community and Facebook use as it relates to music ( $r = .69$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Lastly, there was a positive correlation between the connection with the subculture and Facebook use as it relates to music ( $r = .46$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, there were no significant correlations between connection with the subculture and routine of Facebook use ( $r = .01$ ,  $p > .05$ ), or between activity in the community and routine of Facebook use ( $r = .20$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

A Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted with connection with the subculture and times logging into Facebook, in which there was no correlation ( $r = -.05$ ,  $p > .05$ ). No correlation was demonstrated between connectedness with the subculture and average time spend on Facebook ( $r = .06$ ,  $p > .05$ ), between activity in the subculture and times logging into Facebook ( $r = -.15$ ,  $p > .05$ ), or between activity in the subculture and time spent on Facebook ( $r = .20$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

Overall, there were four positive correlations in this survey: one between those items relating to the connection with an indie folk community and those items

connected with the community of Facebook, one between activity in the community and connectedness with the community on Facebook, and another between activity in the community and Facebook use as it relates to music. Overall, this then demonstrates that Facebook can have an impact on the connectedness and participation in the indie folk community.

Participants were also asked a series of open-ended questions at the end of the survey, which were meant to better identify how members of the indie folk subculture might utilize Facebook to do this. The following are the major themes found within the participant responses to questions related to how individuals within the community connect with and promote the community through Facebook.

*Posting and sharing of media.* Facebook enables community members to post and share videos, photos, music, articles, posters, and other media with other members of the subculture. Participants also mentioned that Facebook offers integration and sharing of material from other sites like Instagram, Bandcamp, SongKick, and YouTube, which enable members to share media like photos, music and videos to other members of the subculture.

*Creating and sharing of events.* Facebook enables its users to create event pages, in which users can post up information about a specific event and invite people they know to attend.

*Interacting through and on fan, band and group pages.* Facebook offers a central place in which bands can post about their activities, fans can interact with bands, and fans can interact with other members of the community. The participants for the survey identified these pages as another way for people to connect with one

another. This is perhaps because it allows people to share their interests and interact with other members of the community.

For participants, Facebook was at least one of the main ways in which members of the indie folk community connect with one another and promote the community. Other ways in which they identified this connection was made were through word of mouth, going to events, promoting in local papers, using other social networking sites, and connecting with people by phone or email. However, most of the participants did identify Facebook as a supportive tool for the community. This is mainly due to the convenience that Facebook brings, as they identified it to be easy, fast, cheap, accessible to most people, and helpful in keeping people connected.

Participants also identified limitations to Facebook in terms of its use in the indie folk subculture. These limitations include its impersonal nature, and an increase in commerciality of the site. Participants also identified a lack of understanding of the site by some of its users, the overabundance of information that the site contains, and the site's inability to show everything that everyone posts. Lastly, participants also recognized that Facebook is not always "the be all, end all" (as one participant termed it) in that it is not the only way for members to connect, and that not everyone of Facebook may have an interest in connecting with bands.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

As explained previously, there are four main characteristics of subcultures as defined by Hodkinson, which are (1) identity, (2) commitment, (3) consistent distinctiveness, and (4) autonomy (as cited in Mattar, 2003). Based on these four characteristics, four separate research questions were developed to determine whether an indie folk subculture existed.

Also in the review of literature, it was explained that social networking sites are often a choice to share in a social identity, in which members of a subculture may organize around an appreciation of cultural objects, like music (Baym, 2007). In particular, Murthy (2010) found that “Facebook has been instrumental” allowing individuals to openly express themselves within their subculture. Therefore, a fifth research question was developed to determine if Facebook increased participation within an indie folk subculture.

In order to answer the first four research questions, 12 artists from the Rhode Island indie folk scene were interviewed regarding their participation in the subculture. Within this interview, a series of questions were asked related to identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness, and the autonomy of the subculture. Based on the participant responses, the first four research questions were answered, in which participants (1) identified themselves with an indie folk subculture, (2) they committed themselves to the consumption of and participation in an indie folk subculture, (3) they



recognized a consistent distinctiveness within the subculture, and (4) they acknowledged the subculture as autonomous.

Specifically, with regard to participant identification with the subculture, it was demonstrated that specific bands mentioned by the research, served as a gauge for their identification with the community. Popular Rhode Island bands such as Deer Tick and the Low Anthem served as the basis for the way in which individuals described the Rhode Island scene, and saw their membership as occurring. Within the participant identification of their commitment to the subculture, this also held true in that some believed their participation was seen as “fledgling” to the bands like Deer Tick and Low Anthem, who are seen as the “owners” of the scene. For the Rhode Island indie folk scene, this is one defining feature, in that membership is seen as being subordinate to the “owners” of the scene (owners being Deer Tick, Low Anthem, and Joe Fletcher).

Participants also saw a consistent distinctiveness from other subcultures, which they recognized through a set of distinct features to the subculture. This included the dress and construction of the music, as well as connectedness amongst members that was unlike other subcultures. In many ways this connectedness can be demonstrated in how participants identified the subculture as autonomous, in that they identified that members helped other members to record, produce, and master their own music, as well as coordinate shows for the community.

Based on the information gleaned from these interviews, the researcher was able to identify that a music subculture related to indie folk does exist. It was also demonstrated that the conceptualization of this community as “indie folk” was rather

suited to its commonalities with independent music communities, being that interview responses reflect a subcultural preference for the “DIY” aesthetic and “homemade.”

This study has effectively helped to develop a measure for identifying the music subcultures, and has helped to further the conceptualization of subcultures. According to Hebdige, subcultures act as a solution to the “problems” in the dominant culture, in which members resist through ritual and style (McArthur, 2009; Negus, 1996). Within the results of these interviews, it was demonstrated that members believe that indie folk does act as a way to resist for these members.

According to one participant, “I think that also means, kind of sounds broad, but it’s like folk is like about stressing maybe your differences with other people or government or something like that . . .” Also mentioned previously in the discussion of the scene by one participant,

“. . . I’m just supportive of anything music or the arts and I think especially like, you know, um a lot of popular music on the radio these days is really like synthesized and auto auto-tuned vocals and it’s very very overly produced and so it’s kind of neat to see like popular bands like bands like you mentioned like Low Anthem, Deer Tick, Joe Fletcher like getting popular just kind of playing very traditional instruments with not you know, its um kind of you know its um like a old school in a way kind of traditional stuff and not um . . . um having it you know having it be recognized national is really cool . . .”

This description demonstrates that members of the community are directly resisting and expressing their differences with the popularity of “synthesized and “auto-tuned vocals,” through a more “traditional” style of doing things. As one participant mentioned, this included the adoption of certain cultural objects, saying

“Everything about it has its own like defining features all the way down to the type of amps that you see. Um . . . I played like progressive, kind of like experimental rock on the vein of [unintelligible] and the

Deerhunter and stuff for many years in bands and then like you move into the folk genre and nobody plays out of the car amps that have taps and head. It's always combo amps. Never two pieces. Um . . . the older and more ripped and like smaller the amps are, the more like authentically folk you look. And the damaged guitars and like very minimalist drum kit. There's a whole thing. And then the way you dress, the lyrical content, it's it's very . . . it has its own very distinct look to it . . .”

It is in this way that one can see how members are demonstrating how this community reflects Hebdige's (1979) conceptualization of subculture.

Finally, to answer the fifth and last research question, a survey was conducted with the fans of the indie folk subculture to identify how Facebook may play a role in participation of the community. Within the results, positive correlations were discovered between those items relating to the connection with an indie folk community and connectedness with the community of Facebook, between activity in the community and connectedness with the community on Facebook, between activity in the community and Facebook use as it relates to music, and connection with the subculture and Facebook use as it relates to music.

This study also demonstrated that there were three main ways in which Facebook impacts participation. The first was posting and sharing of media, including videos, photos, music, articles, and posters. Secondly, participants identified that members connected through the creation and sharing of events, in which members would create an event page and invite their friends or followers. Lastly, participants identified that members connect through interactions on pages, such as fan pages, band pages, and group pages.

Other means for connection were word of mouth, going to events, promoting in local papers, using other social networking sites, and connecting with people by phone

or email. However, it was identified that Facebook was a major tool for connecting with the community.

Limitations of using Facebook included its impersonal nature, an increase in commerciality of the site. Participants also identified a lack of understanding of the site, the overabundance of information that the site contains, and the site's inability to show everything that everyone posts.

While this study was able to achieve answers to each of its research questions, it is clear that there were some limitations. The first was the number of participants for each of the instruments; it would have been much more beneficial to have a greater numbers of participants for both the interview and the survey, so that there was a greater population size to sample. The reason why this was not achieved for this study is that the method of recruitment was not ideal. In future studies, it is recommended that participants instead be recruited through concerts, as this may be a more easily accessible environment to obtain participants.

Another limitation to this study was the survey itself. Many of the participants who took part in the survey did not complete the survey in its entirety. Many of these individuals stopped at the open-ended questions. This may be perhaps the time it took to complete these types of questions was a disincentive for many taking part in the survey. Instead, perhaps these questions would have been more suited for inclusion in the interview so as to limit the amount of time spent on the survey.

The last limitation for this study was the very low number of females responding to the interview. While somewhat representative of the indie folk community, females were rather underrepresented in this portion of the study. While

efforts were made to obtain a more equal male and female perspective, I was unable to encourage greater female participation.

However, a great deal can be learned from this study. While many scholars have debated the continued existence of subcultures, it can be seen in this study that subcultures do, in fact, still exist, and that members take their membership rather seriously. It can also be demonstrated that Facebook does impact participation in the indie folk subculture. It is also through this study that one can understand that subcultures have changed very little; despite the fact that the world has changed enormously since Hebdige (1979) originally conceptualized them. It is in this that I hope this study will further research related to this conceptualization and to aid in identification and examination of other music subcultures.

## APPENDICES

### *Interview Guide*

**Indie folk** can best be described as possessing pop accessibility and sensitive lyrics, with a “regular guy/girl” image, and a folk rock edge to it. It echoes the folk revival that brought about “folk rock,” a mix of folk and British invasion sounds. The sound could either be acoustic, electric, or a combination of both, and is often inspired by the work of Bob Dylan, Woodie Guthrie, and Pete Seeger (Morrison, 2001). Examples of bands belonging to this subculture include Deer Tick, the Low Anthem, and Joe Fletcher and the Wrong Reasons.

Throughout the study, please note that the term **subculture** will be used synonymously with community and scene. Subculture refers to a collection of individuals who come to form a minority group within a larger culture, or outside of the “mainstream.” These communities express a sense of style through particular speech, behavior, and/or dress (Brake, 1980; Williams, 2003).

#### Instructions:

*For this interview you will be asked a series of questions related to your participation within the indie folk scene. After you have been read the question, you will be given a chance to respond. At any point during this study you may ask for clarification if needed. Should you feel uncomfortable answering a question, you may choose to skip the question and either stop or move on with the remainder of the interview.*

*For the purposes of this study, audio recording equipment will be utilized to ensure clarity and accuracy of results. However, your identity and participation will remain anonymous. Participation in this interview is not mandatory but appreciated.*

#### Identification

1. Do you believe that a community exists for indie folk artists and fans?
2. Would you identify yourself as a member of the indie folk community?

*Instructions:* Please circle the number that best represents your agreement with the following statements.

STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have spent time trying to find out more about the indie folk community, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am active in organizations or social	1	2	3	4	5

groups that include mostly members of the indie folk community.					
3. I have a clear sense of the indie folk community and what it means to me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my membership in the indie folk community.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am happy that I am a member of the indie folk community.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am not very clear about the role my membership in the indie folk community plays in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I often spend time with people from music communities other than my own.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of the indie folk community.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have a strong sense of belonging to the indie folk community.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I understand pretty well what my membership in the indie folk community means to me, in terms of how to relate to the community and other communities.	1	2	3	4	5
11. In order to learn more about the indie folk community, I have often talked to other people in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have a lot of pride in the indie folk	1	2	3	4	5

community and its accomplishments.					
13. I participate in cultural practices of the indie folk community, such as music and events.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel a strong attachment toward the indie folk community.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I feel good about my membership in the indie folk community.	1	2	3	4	5

**Commitment**

1. Do you prefer the values of the indie folk community over those of others?
2. Do you believe that what the indie folk community stands for is important to you?
3. Do you feel a sense of “ownership” for the indie folk community rather than just being a member?
4. Do you attend concerts by artists who belong to the indie folk subculture (e.g. Deer Tick, Low Anthem)?
5. Do you listen to music from artists who belong to the indie folk subculture (e.g. Deer Tick, Low Anthem)?
6. Do you purchase and/or download music from artists who belong to the indie folk subculture?

*Instructions:* Please circle the number that best represents your agreement with the following statements.

STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I talk up this community to my friends as a great community to be a part of.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel very little loyalty to this community.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I find that my values and the community’s values are very similar.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this community.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I could just as well belong to a different community as long as the communities were similar.	1	2	3	4	5



6. This community really inspires the best in me in the way of being a musician or fan.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this community.	1	2	3	4	5
8. There's not much to be gained by sticking with this community indefinitely.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this community's values on important matters relating to its members.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I really care about the fate of this community.	1	2	3	4	5
11. For me, this is the best of all communities for which to belong.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Deciding to belong to this community was a definite mistake on my part.	1	2	3	4	5

### **Consistent Distinctiveness**

1. Would you identify the indie folk subculture as distinct from other subcultures?
2. How distinctive do you feel the indie folk community is from other music communities on a scale of 1 to 5, five being the very distinctive, 3 being neutral, and 1 being not distinctive at all?
3. Would you identify the indie folk subculture as being consistently distinctive from other subcultures?

### **Autonomy**

1. Do members of the indie folk community work to create their own music (i.e. do they write and compose all or almost all of their own music)?
2. Do members of the indie folk community work to record their own music (i.e. do they do the actual recording themselves or pay for the recording through their own personal funds)?
3. Do members of the indie folk community work to produce their own music (i.e. either do the actual production [mixing, mastering, etc.] themselves or pay through their personal funds to have their music produced)?
4. Do members of the indie folk community work to market their own music?
5. Do members of the community work to produce events for indie folk artists?
6. Do members of the community work to coordinate events for indie folk artists?

## Survey

**Indie folk** can best be described as possessing pop accessibility and sensitive lyrics, with a “regular guy/girl” image, and a folk rock edge to it. It echoes the folk revival that brought about “folk rock,” a mix of folk and British invasion sounds. The sound could either be acoustic, electric, or a combination of both, and is often inspired by the work of Bob Dylan, Woodie Guthrie, and Pete Seeger (Morrison, 2001). Examples of bands belonging to this subculture include Deer Tick, the Low Anthem, and Joe Fletcher and the Wrong Reasons.

Throughout the study, please note that the term **subculture** will be used synonymously with community and scene. Subculture refers to a collection of individuals who come to form a minority group within a larger culture, or outside of the “mainstream.” These communities express a sense of style through particular speech, behavior, and/or dress (Brake, 1980; Williams, 2003).

### Instructions:

*For this survey you will be asked a series of questions related to your participation within the indie folk scene and your use of Facebook. Your responses to these questions will remain anonymous. Should you feel uncomfortable answering a question, you may choose to skip the question and either stop or move on with the remainder of the survey.*

*Your identity will be kept anonymous in the final written analysis of this study. However, should you so choose, once you have completed this survey, you may choose to enter your name into a contest to win [free concert tickets or band merchandise (TBD)]. The information you provide for this contest will not be shared and will only serve to determine the winner. Participation in this survey is not mandatory but appreciated.*

### **Demographics**

1. Age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
3. Race/Ethnicity
  - a. Hispanic/Latino
  - b. American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - c. Asian
  - d. Black or African American
  - e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - f. White
  - g. Two or more races
  - h. Other

**Participation in Subculture**

4. Do you believe that a scene or community exists for indie folk artists and fans?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Would you identify yourself as a member of that community?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Do you identify yourself with other members of that community?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. How strongly do you identify with the indie folk community?
  - a. Do not identify myself with this community at all
  - b. Only identify myself with this community somewhat
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Identify myself with this community
  - e. Strongly identify myself with this community

*Instructions:* Please circle the number that best represents your agreement with the following statements.

STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel that participating in the indie folk community is a positive thing to do.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel a bond with the other members of the community.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel proud about the community.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel that working with others can solve community problems.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel the problems of the community are mine as well.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Most of the artists I listen to would be considered indie folk artists.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I learn of events of indie folk artists all the time.	1	2	3	4	5

8. I receive invitations for events of indie folk artists all the time.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I often attend events of indie folk artists.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I often hear about information on indie folk artists.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I often seek out information on indie folk artists.	1	2	3	4	5

*Instructions:* Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. How do fans within the indie folk subculture use Facebook to promote events related to the community?
2. How do indie folk artists use Facebook to promote their events?
3. How do fans within the indie folk subculture use Facebook to promote indie folk artists?
4. How do indie folk artists use Facebook to promote themselves?
5. Is Facebook the main means by which members of the indie folk subculture might connect with other members of the community?
6. How do fans within the indie folk subculture use Facebook to connect with other members of the subculture?
7. How do indie folk artists use Facebook to connect with other members of the subculture?
8. Is Facebook an effective method for fans to connect with the indie folk community? Explain why or why not.
9. Is Facebook an effective method for indie folk artists to connect with the indie folk community? Explain why or why not.
10. Do you see any limitations to using Facebook to connect with the indie folk community?

### **Facebook Use**

1. Do you have a Facebook account? (circle one)
  - a. Yes (continue to question 2)
  - b. No (do not complete the rest of this survey)
2. About how many total Facebook friends do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many times do you go onto Facebook per week, on average? \_\_\_\_\_
4. When you go onto Facebook, on average, how much time do you spend using the site (e.g. posting on your wall, looking at photos, creating events, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions:* Please circle the number that best represents your agreement with the following statements.

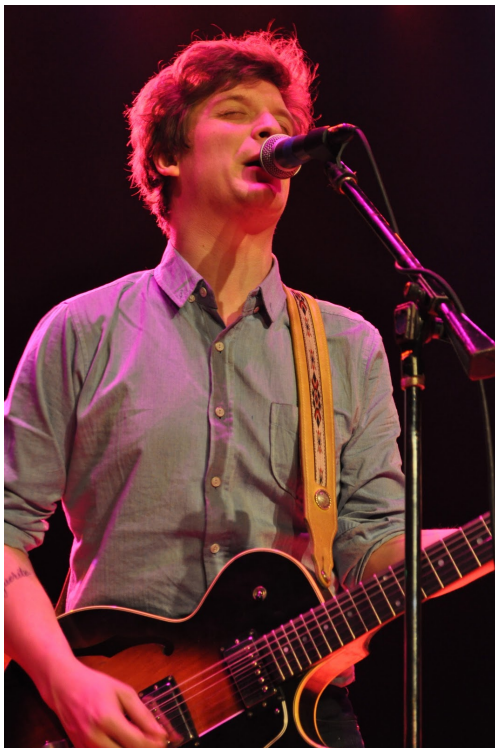
STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Facebook is part of my everyday activity.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Facebook has become part of my daily routine.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook in a while	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel I am part of the Facebook community.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I would be sorry if Facebook shut down.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I openly share my musical tastes (i.e. preferred genres) on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I follow many of my favorite artists or bands on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I "Like" many of my favorite musical artists or bands on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Facebook helps me to learn of events all the time.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I receive invitations to events on Facebook all of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I often attend the events I hear about on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I often hear about information on musical artists or bands through Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I often seek out information on musical	1	2	3	4	5

artists or bands through Facebook.					
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*Photographs*



*Deer Tick playing live at Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island on March 4, 2011 accompanied by Liz Isenberg (another RI musician), and Taylor Goldsmith of Dawes.*



*Ian O'Neil of Deer Tick playing at the same event at Lupos' Heartbreak Hotel in downtown Providence, RI.*



*Joe Fletcher and the Wrong Reasons  
backstage before playing at the Met Café  
on July 1, 2011 in Pawtucket, RI.*



*Joe Fletcher and the Wrong Reasons  
playing at the same event at the Met  
Café in Pawtucket, RI.*



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