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Anything goes? Recognising norms, leadership and moderating behaviours at folk clubs in England

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the behavioural norms at folk clubs in England is complex because their rules of operation are rarely explicit. It is unclear how singers acquire the appropriate skills for successful engagement, and how rule management works within a musical community that prides itself on following egalitarian principles is unknown. Data from four fieldwork projects between 2008 and 2018 is combined with the authors' experience as long term participants to trace how folk clubs in England operate, with an emphasis on how normative patterns of musical behaviour are established and maintained. We found variations in how explicit folk clubs are about stating what music may be performed and how the performance context is structured. Concepts of accepted repertoire and membership show that appropriateness is incrementally learned, alongside generating a sense of belonging. This process of developing cumulative norms makes explicit rule making difficult, resulting in moderating behaviours that are correspondingly complex. As a result, opaque techniques such as humour, sarcasm or avoidance are applied. The projected images of openness and inclusiveness disguise the extent to which various forms of power operate in the range of musical experiences available within the same folk club tradition.

KEYWORDS: Musical behaviour, folk club, power, leadership, discipline

Introduction

Folk clubs have been an important part of the music scene in England since their establishment in the late 1950s, both as a social practice and as a means of preserving a body of songs widely regarded as traditional.[1] There has been concern that the network of folk clubs has been in a steady decline since its 1960s heyday of around 3000 clubs (Bean 2014), to an estimated 500–900 clubs in 1987 (MacKinnon 1993). Whilst dedicated enthusiasts continue to attend, the scene continues to shrink with the inevitable drop out due to relocation, change in musical tastes and (increasingly significant considering the aging demographic) health issues. New members do sporadically attend but few are retained as regular members to replenish the declining numbers.

There is confusion from existing members as to why this is. They view their clubs as exuding a welcome feel, relaxed and sociable without the constraints or formalities implicit in many other singing activities. By holding events in semi-public settings, such as the back rooms of pubs, and avoiding the prerequisite of rehearsal, folk clubs present an opportunity for musical participation with low level obligation. Whilst the label *folk club* implies a preference for material collected during the early years of the twentieth century or for songs that are deemed to share narrative or musical qualities with historic repertoire, many clubs are at pains to emphasise an eclectic music policy, making claims such as ‘folk, blues, country, ANYTHING GOES’ (Minchinhampton Folk Club 2019). In practice, in contrast to this projected ethos,

Jonathan Stock recognises that at instrumental folk sessions 'musical and social interactions are, in fact, markedly directed over the course of an evening by the agency of particular individuals and by largely implicit conventions that take shape over time' (2004: 43), and that 'the rules that govern session behaviour remain largely unstated; players decide individually when appropriate behaviour has been infringed and how to react to it, if at all' (2004: 67). Michael Brocken also points this out within the folk club context and this structure of implicit codes leads him to criticise '[t]he arrangements at work in performance and participation … ' revealing 'significant structuring ideologies in folk music that are carefully contrived to convey a sense of informality … at odds with the ethos they were erected to sustain' (2003: 121). On a positive note, in her study of music-making in Milton Keynes, Ruth Finnegan finds that folk clubs inspire great loyalty and are extremely important parts of regular participants' social lives and understanding of their identity (1989: 69–70). Given that they have the potential for such positive social impact, it is timely to understand how this uniquely structured at-risk musical practice can engender such depth of feeling for participants. At the same time, it is important to discuss how its leadership and disciplinary practices may be contributing to excluding new members.

No study involving behavioural norms could proceed without consideration of Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory of habitus, or the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that we possess due to life experience. Building from this, Thomas Turino (2008) struggled with the binary of earlier anthropological writings discussing cultures as unified, homogeneous and stable wholes against more recent postmodern approaches which went to the other extreme in describing culture and identity as extremely fluid, social constructions. His response was to conceptualise cultural formations (pervasive habits and traits across a society) and cultural cohorts (smaller sects that have pervasive traits in one area). Here, the behaviours of individuals and their world views (their habitus) are built in a fluid way, imitating those around them. Still, given that for many their experience is typically with people from the same cultural formation, or within their cohort, their imitations develop from, and feed into, a stable set of principles, creating relatively fixed frameworks. There may be the potential for identity to be fluid and flexible, but in practice, the limited variation of exposure within cultural formations dictates stability.

It is not merely shared worldviews that create cultural cohesion, however. As Dorothy Noyes points out, emotional bonds are generated through enacting similar behaviours and communal action (1995). Noyes' conception of 'group' is a *product* of interaction rather than its *precondition*, stating that 'if individual acts of identification create the reality of social categories, the reality of a community with which to identify comes from collective acts … Acting in common makes community' (1995: 468). Similarly, Kay Kaufman Shelemay defines a 'musical community' as 'a collectivity constructed through and sustained by musical processes and/ or performances', which 'can be socially and/ or symbolically constituted' (2011: 364). While the emergence of a new musical practice during these processes might be flexible, Jennifer Lena points out that popular music genres often pass a peak of popularity and enter into a 'traditionalist phase', in which committed followers 'seek to preserve the community's heritage and inculcate in a rising generation of devotees

the performance techniques, history, and rituals of the style' (2014: 47). It is not only a shared skill set, but also the value placed on these practices and individuals' identification with them, that defines the group. Georgina Born (2012) emphasises the 'affective identification' that participants have with a music event, an identification that is social as much as it is musical (2012: 261–262); for Born, a musical community exists not only during the event, but also before and after it, with community marked by social identities alongside the lived experiences of participants.

The focus on shared experience or worldview traits draws the eye towards the centre of a group. However, when more symbolic associations are explored, points of group differentiation are of more value. Boundary theorists look towards the edges for the ideological motivations behind their construction and maintenance. Anthropologist Anthony Cohen interprets how groups use symbolic boundaries to perceive themselves as a community, articulating 'who we are not'. Cohen argues that 'people construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity' (1985: 118). As these symbols are typically undisclosed except by learning through continued involvement with events, Noyes suggests this creates a context similar to that of the shibboleth, with outsiders recognised by their failure to master certain gestures, exclamations, or nuances of dress, insignificant except as they testify to long familiarity. These seemingly insignificant acts restrict the access of outsiders to a sense of belonging within the group, regardless of other forms of shared activity (1995: 465). Habermas (1984) calls this stock of understandings the 'lifeworld'. He argues that language is not simply a tool to convey information, rather it has an inbuilt aim of understanding. Objectivity is not just correspondence to an independent world but something that is ascribed to mutual understandings, intersubjectively achieved in communication. Rifts in cultural cohesion are emphasised where this understanding is lacking. Gidal's work exploring musical boundaries in a multi-faith setting demonstrates how music is utilised within rituals to both reinforce purity for, and draw connections between, different religious groups (2014). He finds that people will guard or dispute boundaries when sensing conflicts over ideas or practices, such as when other peoples' behaviour challenges assumptions about authenticity, appropriateness or control, but that they are willing to dissolve aspects of their boundary in order to reach out and develop links with others (2014: 85–86). This shows that groups are not fixed. In regard to this Turino finds 'the practices that emerge from the unique aspects of individuals and groups in relation to novel circumstances affect the social and physical environment … it is here where there is room for innovation, creativity, and transformations at the individual and group levels' (2008: 121).

Existing literature provides a useful framework to understand how musical cohorts, groups or communities form through shared practice and cultural imitation, and how their boundaries can be utilised as a tool for identity building when held strong, and for bridge-building when made deliberately porous. There is, however, a paucity of literature addressing the role of direct leadership or training (beyond enculturation) to foster adherence to established norms, or how unintentional departure from typical behaviours might be disciplined. Such interventions impact upon the development

and maintenance of norms; yet the wielders of power are underexplored. In particular, and with relevance to the setting under discussion here, how rule management works within a musical community that prides itself on being unbounded, and on following egalitarian principles, is unknown.

The role of leadership within an egalitarian context opens up questions about who holds power within these contexts and how that power is exercised. Our investigation could shed light on how systems of implicit regulation prove gratifying to long term members of the group along with how they create potential obstacles for newcomers to the practice. Understanding how power relations function in this setting, and its implications for an expanding membership, could provide a platform for applied work, helping to reimagine the folk club for the twenty-first century.

This article draws on data gleaned from several phases of fieldwork conducted independently by the two authors between 2008 and 2018. Source material has been obtained from four projects conducted independently by the authors and brought together for joint analysis.[2] The associated fieldwork trips span ten years between 2007 and 2019 and cover the length of England from Lewes on the south coast to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the northeast, passing through London, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and South, West and North Yorkshire on the way. While the data comes from four distinct research projects, they contain common themes relating to event structures and the authors felt it pertinent to draw the material together to provide comparison and add weight to the distinct studies. The methods employed are various, though all studies included both participant observation and interviews with participants and/or the organisers of events. Some events were audio and video recorded; focus groups were held (London and Whitby – Hield; Leicestershire – Mansfield); Sheffield participants completed an event diary and an online national survey was conducted. We have used the mixed methods approach to corroborate findings across the projects and highlight examples of regional and local difference. In terms of ethical permissions, in many cases the use of existing data was covered by consent to re-use material for further studies. Where this was not the case, participants were approached to obtain consent for their data to be used specifically for this article, in some cases generating more useful material to incorporate.

Introducing the folk club structure

While the folk club culture under discussion here consists of numerous events found throughout England, there is no umbrella organisation governing folk music activity in the UK, and no defining rules. Predominantly voluntarily run, events typically take place weekly or monthly, and each series is self-contained in organisational structure. At the same time, there is a strong overlap in attendees between clubs, and the other events that form what is commonly termed the folk scene. While some clubs have met up regularly (often at the same venue) for decades, others come and go. With no requirement for official registration, it is difficult to monitor the extent of the practice and there has been no attempt at a comprehensive account since MacKinnon's (1993) landmark folk club survey to provide reliable figures. A cursory survey of online listings suggests that there are around 35 folk clubs in Greater

London and 26 in Yorkshire; this suggests a ratio of around one folk club to every 230,000 people. However, coverage is not even throughout the country and some areas have a high density of participants with multiple opportunities to find a club that suits, while others are more restricted in their practice.

There is much crossover between the various activities that describe themselves as *folk* with the degree of participation being one means of distinguishing folk music activities from other kinds of musical event. Armstrong and Pearson (1979: 95) suggest that for the post-1945 revivalists who established the social scene still evident today 'the important thing was simply to get people singing and creating their own entertainment … They cared little for standards and were cheerfully contemptuous of theory. Participation was the thing to aim for.' Since then, there have been developments in respect of both professionalism and the spectrum of music that is considered acceptable. Large scale commercial concerts sit alongside intimate amateur sessions in folk directories. The folk club nestles in the middle, straddling these extremes and retaining the central ethos of staged participation established in the 1960s–1970s. While audiences for professionalised performances are growing, attendance at the more participatory events is in decline. The folk club scene in England has been perceived as under threat for many years, for example in the respect of an ageing audience. The late English folk performer Vin Garbutt said:

It's essentially the sixties teenager growing older. Some of the younger performers have got a younger audience … they get big audiences but they're not folk club supporters. It might just develop into big concerts and audiences at one end and singarounds at the other. (2010 quoted in Bean 2014: 387)

This concern extends to the availability of volunteer organisers, as illustrated in an editorial in The Living Tradition magazine:

There are more and more people trying to make a living from the folk scene and less and less people behind the scenes, organising festivals, clubs and events where people can actually play. (2018: 5)

Bean confirms Garbutt's prediction that some scenes which have survived are in effect mini-concert venues while at the other end of the spectrum clubs have become singarounds with guests booked only a few times a year (2014: xiii). This presents a contemporary English folk club scene composed of a myriad of individual events each with its own ethos and emphasis. Understanding these differences can be problematic, as organiser of The Goose is Out! events in south-east London, Nygel, points out:

The singaround is very different to the club night, which is also very different to how the concert works and if somebody's new to the whole thing they come and they don't really know the format of the evening. (Nygel, London, 2017)

As can be seen, differences exist between individual clubs and between events in a single club. However, there are similarities common enough to draw conclusions about the different structures and their impact on participation. This section unravels the impacts and power challenges at play in the organisation of the singing itself.

The folk club model sees groups meeting weekly or monthly, and usually includes a mixture of guest nights and singers' nights.

Guest nights

Guest nights function like concerts, with two 45-minute sets by a paid artist, but the conventional support slot is filled by a series of floor singers (audience members who sing one or two songs) usually before each half. Production levels vary from a raised stage with professionally supplied PA and lighting to artists performing acoustically from a specified area of the floor (see Figure 1(a,b)). This format enables novices and professionals to perform alongside each other. As MacKinnon (1993, 88) finds, 'for many clubs the floor spots are more than 'warm-up' spots and it is the informal performance by known people which makes the atmosphere of the club night and which makes it a "club" as such'. The limited nature of performance opportunities in the guest night format necessitates some editorial decision-making about how many floor spots there should be, and who should take them. Some, like The Goose is Out! work on a first come first served basis; others curate more directly. Although many people come wanting to perform, the sacrificing of one's turn for a newcomer or occasional visitor shows a performer's wider consideration for the club ethos. John Smith observes that the MC can assume 'the experienced resident singer will not take offence or regard it as a negative comment on his or her ability' if they are not selected to sing, 'if anything, it is an acknowledgement that their status is unquestioned' (Smith 1987: 158). Jenny Scott from Bacca Pipes Folk Club describes the process of selection:

If you're actually running a guest night, people are paying to see a guest and you've got to put on the best show you can actually think of. It's a quality control thing you have in yourself and you think yep so-and-so they're good, they're worth the money and you may step on a few egos by not putting some people on. (Keighley, 2007, focus group)

Figure 1. Examples of event layout (a) Nancy Kerr and James Fagan at Bright Phoebus, 2010 (photograph by Fay Hield) (b) Scuppered at The Hollybush Folk Club (photograph by Pete Shaw), 2007 (c) Judy Dalton at Anston Folk Club (photograph by Bob Butler), 2007 (d) Kelham Island Singing Session, 2007.

a.

b.

c.

d.

Jenny is lucky to have a wide selection of good singers at Bacca Pipes to choose from. Folk 21, an organisation actively promoting ways for folk clubs to increase their audiences, finds poor quality floor singers a major issue and suggests an alternative:

If you feel that there is insufficient acceptable quality among your regulars to provide decent support, why not approach non-regular up-and-coming artists to do it? (Folk 21 2011: 5)

Bryan, an organiser at Lewes Saturday Folk Club, objects to this approach:

You get people quite high up saying you shouldn't have floor singers on a guest night because people have paid their money to go and see the guest, to which my reaction is no they haven't, they've paid the money to go to a folk club which has a guest on that night, and you get the whole folk club experience. If you just want to see the guest go to a concert somewhere. (Bryan, Lewes, 2017)

The issue of mixing floor singers and guests is indeed well known to organisers such as John B, comparing the Tigerfolk club to a more informal event:

[At Whitwick] it's totally different because they're just singing round, it's less formal. I'm not saying the clubs are formal, but if you've got a guest, you've got time strictures … [at Whitwick] you've not got the 'we want our money's worth' out of the guest. (John, Long Eaton, 2018)

This presents a complex set of criteria by which MCs select singers for their floor spots: rewarding regulars for continued support, celebrating casual attendees for coming along, putting on as many people as possible, and putting on a high-quality

show. Each club navigates this complexity differently, necessarily favouring one or more criteria over others.

Singers' nights and singarounds

Singers' nights are often programmed as part of the same series of events and involve the same core audience, though not invited guests. These are organised either as a long sequence of floor spots, where singers are called to the front in turn and sing one or two songs each (see Figure 1(c)), or run as a *singaround* (see Figure 1(d)). At a singaround people sing from where they are sitting at tables roughly arranged around the room. Everyone has an equal opportunity to perform and, although not everyone accepts the invitation, it is common for the majority and sometimes all of those present to perform. During three consecutive weekly singers' nights at the Second Time Around Folk Club in Nottinghamshire during 2017, 84% of the people present in one week performed on the night, compared to 61% and 71% respectively on the other two occasions. At Belper Folk Club, Derbyshire, over ten weeks in the second half of 2018, the participation rate averaged at 76% (range 64%–87%). These are all high proportions, and the consequent relative weakness of the performer / audience divide is one way in which this kind of evening is distinct from that of an open-mic night (see Behr 2012: 562). Chorus songs are common and the whole room can join in making this a highly participatory event. There is no discernible differentiation between performers and audiences, and most people act in both capacities at some point.

At singarounds, as the name might suggest, the order of singing moves around the room. Depending on how many people are present and keen to sing, they might go round the room once, twice or perhaps more. Things are done differently at The Goose is Out!:

How Do I Know When It's My Turn To Sing?

You put your name on the list on the table when you arrive … The order of the names is the order of singing, unless the person has gone to the bar or the loo! We will call your name when it's your turn … We give people one song each until we reach the end of the list, then we start again, so if you are early you are more likely to get more than one song. If there are a lot of people, though, we usually only go through once. Confusing? Nah! (The Goose is Out! 2019a)

Though the process is different, it shares the egalitarian ethos; the order of singers is dictated by positioning either on the list or within the room, as opposed to selected by artistic merit. While this structure suggests there is no sense of curation, the MC commonly makes deviations to vary performance styles, maintain a gender, instrumental or chorus / solo balance, to incorporate latecomers, or to place stronger singers at particular points in the event. Bob, a regular singer at Raise the Roof, Sheffield, says:

For about 11 years the order of singing at Raise The Roof was anti-clockwise from the MC's corner. When they handed over the MC responsibility to three deputies,

Ron said that we must not change the event. However, we soon noticed that it's important to have at least two strong singers following the MC to establish the ambience, and we'd recently had a change of personnel on the left of the fire which caused the mood to falter; so now you'll often see the MC choosing a different start point and direction. (Bob, Sheffield, 2008, email)

Similarly, John C, from the Second Time Around club, observes:

Some songs need to be listened to, with others it might be that the more join in, the better … It's all about mixing it up, getting a balance of quiet and loud songs. I'm not averse to switching across the room to make sure those who come to listen get a good deal (John C, Beeston, 2017)

The Goose is Out! organisers make a conscious effort to remove any feelings of emerging core groups, residents or regulars. Organisers Sue Whitehead and Nygel Packett call singers in turn by the name they put on the signup sheet – each singer is therefore introduced in the same way, with no awkwardness of knowing some people's names and not others.

At singarounds, there is an assumption that everyone has an opportunity to sing, and those wishing not to lead a song have to actively decline when the turn passes to them. There is a strong turn-by-default ethos for most of the evening, but MCs will actively intervene at the start and end of events to ensure the right atmosphere is created.

Singing sessions

While session structures are not usually adopted within folk clubs, they are a common feature of festival gatherings and other regular singing events the same singers may attend. Within the singing session format, there is no official leader or MC, but internal hierarchies are still present. These centre on the strongest singers or those who have undertaken organisational duties and feel a sense of ownership over the event. The order of performance is more erratic, and people choose to sing at any point. Ordering decisions need to be negotiated by singers themselves during the event which can be open to interpretation. In a Facebook thread discussing singing session etiquette different perspectives are evident, as seen in comments by Piers and Vikki, two regular singers at various clubs around South Yorkshire:

I used to just jump in (if there's not an established format) if the lull got too long. I'm more likely to say something like 'if nobody starts something, I WILL sing another one' these day(s) it seems to me that, in a session, the silence is there to be filled. (Piers, Doncaster, 2017
Facebook https://www.facebook.com/raymond.padgett?ref=br_rs)

I definitely hold back, keep an eye on who hasn't sung yet and hold off to give others a chance to sing. Although I'm not the session 'leader,' I will even risk being presumptuous by asking/ suggesting someone give us a song, especially if they are the quieter types. I confess that I do resent it when someone happily jumps in and does four or five songs during the session when most others sing only one or two.

(Vikki, Sheffield, 2017,
Facebook https://www.facebook.com/raymond.padgett?ref=br_rs)

Unlike guest nights or singarounds, the singing session does not automatically facilitate a certain number of songs per person. Curation occurs in the moment when callers let a responsive flow develop. Jumping in with a song requires a certain level of confidence, separating the gregarious from the timid. Developing the confidence to participate is a marker of having gained the skills to be a part of the group, giving a deep sense of belonging. There are usually people like Vikki, keeping an eye out for potential singers who might need a little encouragement. Some people never sing unless they are invited, and even an experienced singer such as Jenny Day admits that 'at a new club … I would not sing unless specifically asked' (Sheffield, 2008 email).

These descriptions present a scheme of event types that follows certain traits, and to a certain extent there is stability in how folk events are organised. However, the variation in individual organisers' attitudes and the longevity of practice creating localised conditions creates a collection of unique events with differing understandings of appropriate behaviour for each.

(Self) defining ethos

Potential participants or audience members might be willing to experience the unknown and adjust to the structure of locally-available events – and they may have little choice if living in a rural area or in a town or city that lacks a vibrant music scene – but others may prefer to know what awaits them if they are attending for the first time. Club organisers learn to decide how to describe their club's activity, balancing the need to provide realistic expectations on the one hand, without intimidating potential attendees with too much detail on the other. The ways folk clubs outwardly describe themselves provides an indication of the activity a new attendee might expect to experience.

Since the inception of the scene in the 1960s, folk clubs have primarily advertised in the specialist folk press, with some contributing to listings in regional press. Many clubs display leaflets from other clubs in the area despite the potential conflict and the role of word-of-mouth as a means of sharing news of local and national events should not be underestimated. The nature of these media requires low levels of self-explanation: talking to established folk audiences presumes an existing understanding; listings are too condensed to provide elaborate explanation while word-of-mouth relies on what the speaker says rather than an official club line. The advent of websites and social media has provided wider opportunities for publicity, but these opportunities have introduced decisions to be made regarding public-facing messages.

For example, the name of Tigerfolk Traditional Music Club in Long Eaton, on the border of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, immediately indicates a focus on traditional music, but the point is not laboured on its website. It is a monthly club which mostly features guest nights (8–9 occasions out of 11 meetings, with a break in August). Unlike some folk clubs, Tigerfolk feature a substantial number of floor

singers before each of the sets performed by its guest artist for the evening: as an example, fifteen floor singers performed at the guest night in October 2019. The Tigerfolk website simply says that the club is ‘dedicated to supporting, sharing and promoting the very best in traditional folk music’ (Tigerfolk 2019). Similarly, the issue of participation at Tigerfolk is confined to the statement:

Our idea of a good time involves singing, playing, listening to others do the same. If you sing and / or play and enjoy listening to the very best artists on the Folk Scene, come and join us. (ibid.)

In contrast, The Goose Is Out! distinguishes three different types of evenings: concerts, club nights, and singarounds. Their club night is the nearest equivalent to the guest nights at Tigerfolk in that both guest and floor singers are featured. When it comes to describing their events The Goose is Out! takes a strikingly different approach from Tigerfolk: its web content on singarounds alone runs to 2,000 words. The explanation for this lies in the organisers’ past experiences of confusion as to what to expect at events. The organisers for example use a mixture of negative and positive descriptions in the web content on singarounds, explaining what it is and what it is not:

People often ask us what a Singaround actually is – or else they confuse it with a Singalong … or an Open Mic evening (There is no mic! There is no audience! It is NOT NOT NOT Open Mic!). A Singaround – well, ours anyway – consists of people – or sometimes small groups of people – taking it in turns to sing a song. Don’t stop reading there!! You don’t have to sing if you don’t want to!!

Our Singaround is very informal and participative – no mics, no lights, no audience, we sing for ourselves … you can sing whatever you like, but as we’re a folk club many people do sing folk or folk-influenced songs. If your song has a chorus or people can join in with it, all the better!

Anecdotal evidence at Tigerfolk suggests that, occasionally, visitors have been surprised, not to say disappointed, with finding that they have to listen to floor singers on a guest night. Here, though, the organisers are comfortable about what they do and assume that most people who attend are in-the-know about the club’s general profile. It may be difficult to make such an assumption in context to the larger and more transient population of the Goose is Out! events in London.

The growing significance of web content results in further variation from club to club, for example in the respective importance of websites and social media. Further changes may be expected in the wake of the coronavirus crisis as clubs explore further online possibilities. Some websites have minimal information, referring readers to a Facebook page instead; Belper Folk Club in Derbyshire is an example of this (Belper Folk Club 2019). The replication of the word-of-mouth system in the digital realm is seen through the use of social media. For clubs such as Lewes Saturday Folk Club in Sussex, this is an important new outlet which has impacted upon their audience numbers. Lewes Saturday Folk Club organiser, Valmai, describes:

There are lots of irritating things about Facebook, but you can get news of events to people who aren't on your mailing list because people see other people's things and they pop up in your news feed. I do think that's quite valuable because you do get the information around. So everything we do goes on Facebook and in the run-up to a Saturday night, I'll put it in different groups to try and get it churning through people's newsfeeds … I noticed when I started doing it that numbers seemed to go up a bit. So I think it's probably getting through. (Valmai, Lewes, 2017)

Rather than deliberately presenting a club's ethos through some kind of mission statement, the cumulative nature of social media postings enables multiple messages, authored by multiple members, to contribute to an impression of a club. The organisers' ethos is enacted rather than statically defined and as such this digital footprint reflects the experience an attendee might expect if they were to attend regularly, accumulating their knowledge through multiple engagements. The online system supports the word of mouth structures already established to recruit new attendees. Existing followers of the club's online media share materials to potentially like-minded friends, increasing the likelihood that new audiences will be attracted from those with existing ties to established audiences of the club (Hield and Crossley 2014).

The emergence of online publicity creates space for more extensive content than was previously provided by physical posters, adverts or listings. These opportunities effectively force organisers to make decisions about changing content depicting the club. Such judgements might be based on the need to differentiate a club event from other local musical gatherings, or to place the club within the wider folk scene, or to explain the difference between separate events organised under the auspices of the same club. Although decisions are made with varying degrees of reflection, with some material presented as statements while others are incrementally-built impressions, many clubs' ethos are articulated beyond the frame of the event to a far greater extent than previously. This opens up the opportunity for engagement by new participants, rather than the inward-looking nature of the in-the-know methods previously employed. This said, there still remains a potential disjuncture between how the organisers represent the club to the kind of experience an attendee might expect to have.

Establishing boundaries in practice: membership and repertoire

While public descriptions exist to show how folk clubs see themselves, and want to be perceived by others, a closer examination of functioning memberships of groups, and how the selection of acceptable repertoire occurs in practice highlights potential differences between groups. The 'club' aspect of folk clubs could imply that some kind of formal membership is involved, or conversely it could align with the more transient membership associated with nightclubs. In reality, it falls somewhere between the two:

Although it's sort of a club, we don't have members, though we do have a lot of lovely people who come regularly! (The Goose is Out! 2019b)

Regular and *resident* are titles earned, bestowed or self-applied depending on frequency and longevity of attendance, depth of engagement and a perceived hierarchy within the wider body of singers. Regulars are those who attend most meetings and show an emotional commitment to the club. They constitute the core body of attendees and are seen as the backbone of folk clubs; 'the faithful few that keep the club going' (Bob, Sheffield, 2008, diary). Residents are a more officially recognised group of high status (often semi-professional) singers found in some events, and they may be identified in event publicity. This second role, regarded as an honour and generally offered in invitation by the organisers, carries an obligation for frequent attendance and being readily willing to sing when requested. Residents are viewed as representatives of the club, indicating its musical style and standing. While this role is associated with singing ability, that of the club regular is not. As John Smith astutely observes of these status, 'the important factor here is a demonstrable commitment to the club rather than artistic ability' (1987: 158). Alongside performers, non-singers may be regulars and are valued members of the group.

While regularity is celebrated, folk clubs are not rigid in their attendance requirements and people are welcome to take part sporadically. Due to this flexibility, tensions that have been identified amongst barbershop singers due to 'spotty attendance' are avoided (Stebbins 1996: 69–70). Each attendee is provided equal opportunity to participate without fear of reprimand for absence. The non-compulsory mode of attendance creates a level of unpredictability, as the personnel differs for each meeting. This is important to organisers who are keen to avoid the impression of a closed group or clique. Sue, an organiser of The Goose is Out!, London illustrates:

We've got a small core of regulars. They don't necessarily come every time, but they come a lot … If it was just them it would be a completely different feel, kind of exclusive I think and that's what we've really tried to avoid. We tried deliberately not to have 'the regulars', we don't refer to them as residents or the regulars or anything. (Sue, London, 2017)

Bryan, another organiser, this time from Lewes, observes in parallel:

When we moved from the Lewes Arms there was some worry about whether we keep the 'club' on the end because it can sound exclusive – do we look like a closed group form the outside? We hope once we get someone through the door we dispel that. (Bryan, Lewes, 2017)

Terms of membership in folk clubs are built around emotional ties. On one level, everyone present is a member of the group; however, there remains a hierarchy distinguishing the frequent attendees of a club from its casual participants. On a positive note this creates a sense of bonding and community, giving regular members stalwart status. However, this has the potential to generate a cliquey atmosphere, which many organisers take steps to challenge. This is motivated by the desire to retain new members due to dwindling numbers as mentioned earlier, but is also driven by an interest in avoiding a contradiction of the open-to-all ethos

folk music as a genre has established. This does not mean, however, that in practice every musical contribution will be welcomed.

The sense of belonging and identity may also be linked to the music performed at the club, but further ambiguities arise here about whether particular boundaries of *folk* as a genre are accepted as part of a club's norms. As anything could be interpreted as a folk song, an open policy towards repertoire can be claimed. Organisers 'encourage anybody to sing, we don't mind what' (Jenny, Sheffield, 2008, email), events are described as 'anything goes' (Ann, Sheffield 2008, diary), and claims are made that 'the rule is: sing whatever you want to sing' (Bob, Sheffield, 2008, diary). Singers are usually quite aware of the clubs that more closely fit the putative 'anything goes' rule:

Because you go to a 'folk club' first of all, in inverted commas, and think right, I'd better do some 'folk music' then, and it turns out Second Time Around are quite OK with whatever you do, get up and do a Buddy Holly or you can sing something more modern, you can sing the singer-songwriters, you can sing Dylan, you can do what you like really. (Colin, Beeston, 2017)

It is significant that the Second Time Around's website states that 'all types of folk music are welcome' (Second Time Around Folk Club 2020), but it is not until one attends that it becomes clear that there is a substantial proportion of popular music, especially from the 1960s, performed, with traditional folk music constituting no more than 20–30% of the repertoire. Singers who attend more than one club often adjust their repertoire accordingly, but not every singer is prepared to do this (Mansfield 2019: 96–97). The Goose is Out! has a broadly accepting repertoire range:

When we first started our club nights, we were a bit precious about having just traditional and traditional-influenced folk music, but we have broadened our policy to enable us to include excellent headliners who do not necessarily fit into that category (though hey, all music is traditional-influenced to some extent, no?). (The Goose is Out! 2019b)

Yet even here they still present implicit limitations, as a 'within reason' comment on their website closing their repertoire advice implies (The Goose is Out! 2019c). Other clubs such as the Bodmin Folk club are more enthusiastically traditional, or favour chorus songs like Raise the Roof, Sheffield. While there may be purist traditional and singer-songwriter extremes in theory, practice in the folk world shows a greyer scale of acceptability.

The types of song deemed appropriate within distinct events are established through explicit and implicit processes. Guidance as to song type can be given through wording in event names or their advertisements to communicate the usual, or preferred, repertoire. At Royal Traditions in Sheffield, there is no reference to 'folk' or 'acoustic' music and such terms are consciously avoided to indicate the organisers' disinclination towards contemporary singer-songwriters in favour of established repertoires and a cappella performance styles. At Raise the Roof the promise of

‘plenty of chorus songs and lots of harmonies to join in on’ alerts new singers to the kind of experience they might expect to have.

Those either new to folk singing in general, or keen to fit into a particular event, may modify their repertoire over time. In 2013, Hield witnessed a group of new attendees at The Goose is Out!, performing two contemporary songs. They enjoyed the setting and wanted to come back, but felt their songs didn’t quite fit in. They said they wanted to learn something more ‘folky’, intending to look up songs they’d heard others sing that night and search for similar songs on Spotify. William McFarlane describes a similar situation at Crookes Folk Club where he regularly sings:

About three or four weeks ago a group of 5 or 6 younger people came along … I got chatting to them and asked if they played. They said yes but wanted to see what sort of things people played before committing to playing. I am very pleased to say that they have been every week since and one or two have now started to play and join in. (William, Sheffield, 2013, email)

These two cases are from clubs that particularly welcome a broad mix of traditional and contemporary material. There are more opportunities for a newcomer to feel that their song will fit into an already broad range:

I think the reason that the Crookes club has such a diverse cross-section of ages is because it is more an acoustic music club than a traditional folk club in the strictest sense. Therefore, the cross-section of music played there is also very diverse. Performers don’t feel that they can’t play a particular song or tune because it is not regarded as traditional. However, there is also a reasonable amount of traditional and new folk songs and tunes played there. (William, Sheffield, 2013, email)

The strength of the group is found both in terms of fitting in with established collective behavioural norms and, more spontaneously, selecting material to create an unfolding event in the moment. Most singers perceive such responsiveness to be a responsibility, strongly influencing how they select their songs on the night and what repertoire they chose to learn. The ability to enact this behaviour strengthens their sense of hierarchy within the group, developing a clear sense of membership and belonging. A lack of flexibility in this area, or selection of material perceived as inappropriate exposes the uninitiated. Lacking the skill to participate adequately can engender feelings of loose connection with the group, a weak sense of membership resulting in reduced emotional commitment. Ultimately the lack of the positive aspects that keep regular members returning can stifle newcomers’ engagement before they have had the opportunity to become full members of the group.

Maintaining norms: power and policing

We have so far concentrated on the communal aspects of group function – self-moderation and a co-constructionist approach to generating event norms. There are, however, limitations to this as a process at times when group level decisions need to be made or when people do not adhere to the unwritten rules. In a setting advocating that every voice is valued, there are tensions in prescribing one directive and identifying and handling inappropriate actions. One clear mechanism for maintaining

the smooth running of events is the inclusion of an MC. Activities that occur within the frame of a folk club are carefully managed by an MC. These MCs appear to hold considerable power, as they create the general vibe through directly addressing the audience and dictating the timings of events. Many places have a regular MC but at Lewes Saturday Folk Club, organisers alternate to make sure that this position of power does not become static. Valmai of the group, says:

We do try and have a different MC every week because we don't like it to look like one person or two people's outfit. You want the change because everybody manages to annoy somebody I'm sure so at least you get annoyed by a different person each week! (Valmai, Lewes, 2017)

Identified MCs, or those in self-designated control, dictate how time is managed through selecting performers and setting the length of breaks in the performance. They are responsible for keeping the event running to time and can dictate the number and identity of singers to provide a coherent musical event. One night at The Goose is Out! in February, 2017 there was insufficient time to fit everyone in before the end of the event. To fit as many people in as possible, the MC, Sue, called: 'As we're running out of time, can you choose a short one. Or if you're going to do a long one, do half of it!' Everyone complied, some declining their turn to give others the time. Here, the MC dictated the required behaviour and there is a shared sense of responsibility to support this during individual performance slots. Following the MCs wishes, singers moderated their behaviour to comply.

While the ordering of performance shapes the musical outputs, managing social time is equally important. Imbalance results in either over-socialising getting in the way of singing, or not having enough opportunity for socialising. Ostensibly to buy alcohol, the beer break is not strictly necessary as people may visit the bar anytime they like. However, if well managed, this time-out provides a necessary opportunity for socialisation. John A, a singer from Sheffield explains:

If you have virtually no interval or an interval so short that it just allows people to go for a drink and to the bathroom and so on then it doesn't fulfil its social function. So, sounding a bit old fashioned, I think it's very important to have an interval long enough to allow questions of the guest who's often there, to allow people to talk to new people who are in the audience. So these little organisational things make an enormous difference, I feel, to the community aspect of a club. (John A, Sheffield, 2007, focus group)

Talking is a point of particular tension. Informality and socialising are encouraged, generating an environment akin to a public bar room. However, continuing to chat over performances is unwelcome. Following the behaviour of others is often enough and 'anyone new to the "club scene" meeting a wall of respectful silence at the bottom of the stairs seems to show them the type of behaviour required' (Jenny, Keighley, 2020, email). John Smith notes 'when novices are present in the audience (especially if in large numbers), the M/C will often articulate two of the basic rules of the club: the audience should keep reasonably quiet while the singer performs' (1987: 157–158). For the same purpose, The Goose is Out! used a sign recently outside its designated session venue:

We used to have notices on the door ‘this is a singaround you’re welcome to come but if you want to chat please go to one of the other lovely Ivy House rooms’. (Sue, London, 2017)

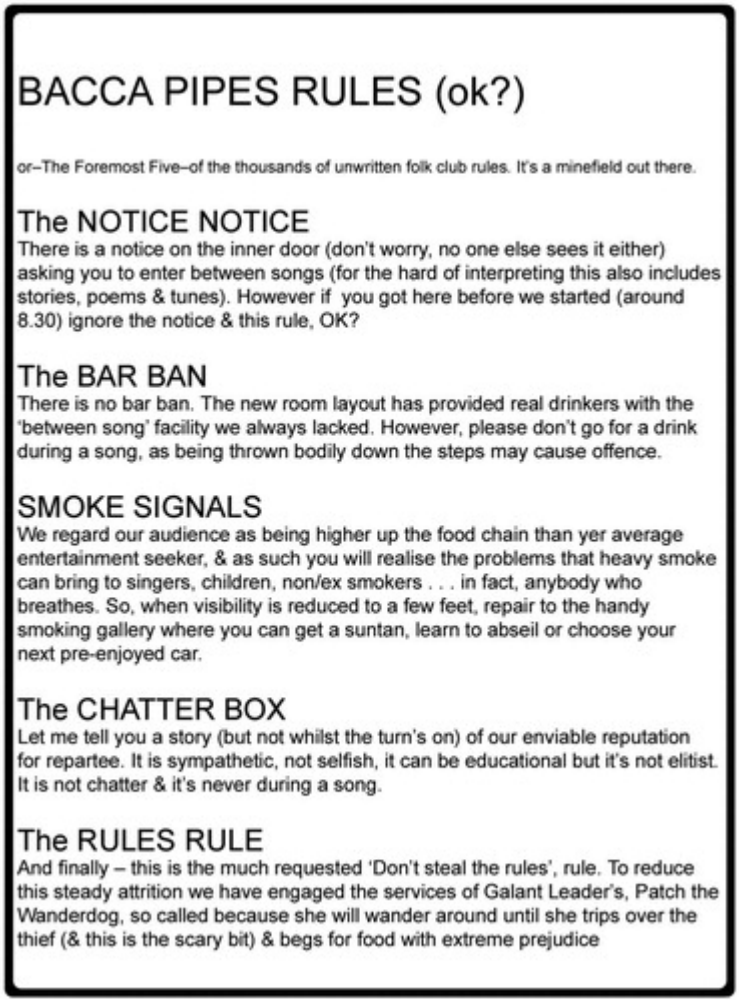
Taking it a step further, following the move to a room with a bar to gain the level of quiet which an unaccompanied performer would need, organisers of Bacca Pipes Folk Club recognised there had to be some control over the noise from the bar itself and went on to produce and place a set of ‘house rules’ on each table (see Figure 2). This strategy was deliberately employed in lieu of the MC verbally delivering them to avoid appearing too officious, or unnecessarily repeating the rules to regulars each week. Such pre-emptive methods perform a twofold function: informing new attendees of the ‘house rules’ and affirming the established modes of behaviour to others. Printed rules are unusual perhaps because they are explicit, providing clarity in a murky area. Providing rules does not align with the stated ethos of *anything goes*.

Because required behaviours are not explicit, it is common for session visitors unfamiliar with the norms to behave in ways seen as inappropriate to the regular members. When people behave outside the commonly accepted ideals it can generate diverse reactions. These range from direct intervention to more subtle measures such as humour or snide remarks, in some cases avoiding any acknowledgement of the faux pas, instead relying on the perpetrator to realise their mistake. Raymond, a singer from Sheffield, describes an interaction he had with a group of non-singers at a singing session he attended in 2008:

Five talkative blokes were quite disruptive until gently rebuked, at which point they all flounced out. (it was me, in the event, who had to tick off the natterers …). So a bit more discipline would be nice … The whole ethic of Play On is its ramshackle approach, which I often find engaging. But when disruptive elements threaten the jovial atmosphere, the organisers seem unwilling to deal with them. (Sheffield, 2008, diary)

A similar episode happened at The Goose is Out!, as Sue recalls:

Figure 2. An example of house rules as displayed by Bacca Pipes Folk Club circa 1998.



BACCA PIPES RULES (ok?)

or–The Foremost Five–of the thousands of unwritten folk club rules. It's a minefield out there.

The NOTICE NOTICE
There is a notice on the inner door (don't worry, no one else sees it either) asking you to enter between songs (for the hard of interpreting this also includes stories, poems & tunes). However if you got here before we started (around 8.30) ignore the notice & this rule, OK?

The BAR BAN
There is no bar ban. The new room layout has provided real drinkers with the 'between song' facility we always lacked. However, please don't go for a drink during a song, as being thrown bodily down the steps may cause offence.

SMOKE SIGNALS
We regard our audience as being higher up the food chain than yer average entertainment seeker, & as such you will realise the problems that heavy smoke can bring to singers, children, non/ex smokers . . . in fact, anybody who breathes. So, when visibility is reduced to a few feet, repair to the handy smoking gallery where you can get a suntan, learn to abseil or choose your next pre-enjoyed car.

The CHATTER BOX
Let me tell you a story (but not whilst the turn's on) of our enviable reputation for repartee. It is sympathetic, not selfish, it can be educational but it's not elitist. It is not chatter & it's never during a song.

The RULES RULE
And finally – this is the much requested 'Don't steal the rules', rule. To reduce this steady attrition we have engaged the services of Galant Leader's, Patch the Wanderdog, so called because she will wander around until she trips over the thief (& this is the scary bit) & begs for food with extreme prejudice

They'd come up from Bournemouth and stood at the bar and talk through it. I think I asked them to leave in the end. It all got a bit heated. We told them once, but we had to tell them again, you know. On the whole, we've been quite lucky … (Sue, London, 2017)

These examples relate to the perceived (anti-)social behaviour of talking over performers; when it comes to maintaining musical norms the situation becomes even more problematic, as Bryan describes:

Someone related the story of a young chap who got up and sang a pop song and I said 'and you all joined in' and he said 'no we booed him off'. (Bryan, Lewes, 2017)

Bryan cites this as highly unusual behaviour and goes on to talk about his club: 'Our core is traditional but no one's going to get hauled off the stage for even singing a pop song.' (Lewes, 2017). Musical norms are established through group participation, but the 'anything goes' rhetoric remains strong. While a pop song sung in a similar performance style to a traditional song may be acceptable to Bryan, performances that do not adopt enough normative markers of the folk genre are more problematic – anything is accepted to a matter of degree. Sue and Nygel explain their recent difficult decision of un-inviting a visitor:

Sue: There is only one person we more or less asked not to come. We thought the first time she came she would realise it was not the sort of setting for what she was doing, but she didn't realise and came back several times. She was plastered in makeup and a little short thing, but she was shimmying up and down at the front, she'd go to the front and she was like this. Because she stayed to see what other people were doing you'd think she would realise that it wasn't that kind of … She came with two men, and in the end I had an email for one of them and I said 'look, you know … ' and we did suggest some other places she could go, look, these places locally do open mic, suggested it might be a better place.'

Nygel: It was a bit strange because it felt a bit odd having to turn somebody away. That's not really what we're about. But what she was doing wasn't really appropriate.

Sue: It was so far away [from the club's typical performance style] … we were also worried for the other people coming, we thought it was off-putting for the other people. (London, 2017)

Sue and Nygel have a very broad acceptance threshold and are 'tolerant of most things', though the extreme dislocation between the usual performance norms and this overtly performative behaviour 'complete with dressing up' illustrates the limit of their boundary (Sue, London, 2020, email). Reluctance for direct action is palpable when folk singers talk about these occasions. Exclusion goes against the accepted norms of the folk club scene, and although it is recognised that certain behaviours disrupt the experience for others and have to be dealt with, this is not undertaken lightly and causes distress. Organisers end up feeling they are being too controlling, and are reluctant to use, or display, their powers as leaders.

While serious conflict can be dealt with directly, the pervading desire for a jovial atmosphere leads to the avoidance of confrontation. Tactics such as humour, ridicule or ostracism are commonly used to discourage people from operating outside the normative boundaries of group behaviour, as attested to by Jenny and Colin separately:

We walk a very thin line and you can either be too formal or you can let the whole thing get away from you … I think the whole thing has to be done with a light touch and you need humour and you can actually control people a lot better either with humour or taking the piss out of yourself or allowing others to do it. (Jenny, Keighley 2007, focus group)

I've only said 'don't join in' as a joke – but I did mean it [laughs]. The MC is a facilitator, having a bit of banter but balancing against excluding people who aren't part of that banter, or they're new. (Colin, Beeston, Nottinghamshire, 2017)

One night at the Second Time Around club, the MC had asked, in an ambiguous tone blurring the boundaries between a joke and criticism: 'are there no depths ..?'. This was in response to a regular who had just contributed what they described as 'a Max Bygraves song from 1950s Family Favourites' (a light entertainment BBC Radio programme from that era). The apparently lighthearted comment hinted at the boundaries of acceptability, both for that particular performer, and to others in attendance for future reference.

Humorous references to *the folk police* can be often heard. This implies that boundaries are perceived and maintained in deference to a disciplinary Other. Jenny finds that making fun of the MC or other singers 'helps to make the atmosphere more inclusive and shows that we don't take ourselves too seriously' (Keighley, 2020, email). While these references are seen as tongue in cheek, the chastising implication of error serves to displace the act of discipline. No individual takes responsibility for defining the rules, and they are not firmly delivered. Nevertheless, the suggestion is made that doing things right is a consideration.

Less jovial methods are also employed and while not many people were keen to discuss this, we have over the years witnessed people rolling or catching one another's eyes to discreetly indicate displeasure. Some of this has amounted to generally unfriendly, snide or unwelcoming microaggresions towards those not conforming to expectations. One organiser describes how her club would deal with a singer displaying inappropriate behaviour:

If someone was really bad we would only ask them to sing once and hope they got the message. (2010, email)

As these disciplinary measures involve subterfuge, it is difficult for the perpetrator to interpret their meaning. Denying performance opportunities, turning backs or refraining from joining in on participatory songs serves only to alienate the wrongdoer rather than providing any practical solution. This doubly engenders feelings of disconnection with the group, through both being unable to adhere to established group behaviours and through the negative reactions received for lacking this implicit knowledge.

Although an MC may ostensibly be in charge, there is a question over what power this role yields. Often, they have the power to order singers to maintain a good quality event, but they are also loath to display overt curatorial actions or exclude singers. They can make suggestions for time management but have no power to affect the behaviour of a singer during their slot. At events with no official MC these directions are provided informally by more experienced members of the group, or those seen as in charge. The group enacts subtle, and potentially confusing, strategies to control behavioural norms, decentralising the task from any leader of the group. Interventions by individuals including, centrally, the singers themselves, create shared responsibility to maintain order.

Behavioural norms, leadership and navigating (invisible) rules

Our account of folk clubs in England has referred to the concept of behaviour, how it is learnt, established and maintained within a group, and the extent to which diverse means might be used to enforce emerging norms. Club members establish and (to an extent) enforce group norms by various formal and informal means. Norms are in effect more acted out rather than formally prescribed. Issues of leadership sit within a context in which the folk club's character and identity is established both by its self-definition (which might be more or less static) and by the behaviour of its members. The latter develops dynamically in response to several factors including the degree to which attendance is consistent. The combination of long-term involvement and

incremental learning is liable to create tight-knit musical communities, although the strong sense of belonging may vary from club to club and region to region. In a large city such as London, there are many folk events to choose from, and so attendance patterns may be relatively transient. Here, a unique folk club habitus, based on commitment to a single event types and perhaps a single location, is less likely to develop.

There is also a link between the strength of commitment to the event and a commitment to the music itself as a distinct genre with firm boundaries. Lena's (2014) reference to the 'traditionalist phase' of musical genres emphasises music as heritage, something to be protected in respect of what the music is and how it is to be performed, producing a coterie of highly motivated custodians of the performance repertoire and participatory behavioural style. Those clubs with a significant proportion of participants committed in this way have the most powerful norms, and the least desire to adapt their existing practice to accommodate the differing skills, repertoire and knowledge of newcomers. All the adaptation needs to come from one side in order to reach compatibility.

While obligatory behaviours vary within different contexts, for people to feel part of that community, adherence to the environment-specific set of rules is necessary. Official membership procedures and instruction in the rules are not relevant here – membership is visceral and implicitly understood. The newcomer's problem is that the behavioural boundaries are opaque and are correspondingly challenging to negotiate in the absence of explicit 'clues'; newcomers to the practice have to learn the rules through participation (Hield 2013). Taking the view of community as based on communication as described by Habermas (1984), this explains, in part, some of the problems faced by newcomers to the environment; the absence of openly understood communication results in a lack of access to engage as a part of the established group.

This process of enculturation does not function alone and the process of norms being created and maintained by repeated participation sits alongside what might appear to be a top-down form of leadership, characterised by the role of the MC. It is clear that the actions of the MC are important, but power is also distributed within the group: there may be an element of conformity to peer pressure for example, and we have observed disciplinary action being taken by individuals other than the MC. MCs and singers have agency, but the prevalence of convention suggests power is also held in structures and systems. The stability of practices within individual events, and across events which share a similar ethos and common structures, contribute to a view of folk singing as a ritualised practice. The existing format enables new events to establish within an existing frame. In their discussion of invented traditions, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) describe norms of behaviour which automatically implies continuity with the past. Taken from this viewpoint, the shared models of ritualised behaviour between disparate folk events create a sustained practice that could be seen as the folk club tradition.

As Gidal observes, the seemingly subtle behaviours of participants are 'neither minor details nor negligible minutia of idiosyncratic behaviour' (2014: 104). They

cumulatively build an understanding of acceptable practices, defining individual and group identities. Through almost imperceptible acts of discipline, individuals assert their power in local identity politics. Folk singers draw on the commonalities of a shared cultural formation: that we are all the same, the folk, the people; yet they neglect to acknowledge the specificity of their cultural cohort – consisting of the specific knowledge and behaviours associated with participation in folk music. This lack of acceptance of the boundary between the two, where a boundary nonetheless exists, causes confusions for both the people negotiating access to it and those trying to preserve the specific behaviours conducted within. The challenge is all the greater because the norms common to the folk scene have local variants; they vary from club to club, between one event type and another, and by the preferences of different MCs and audiences. To navigate such a complex map is difficult indeed for the new entrant to the scene.

Our ethnography spans over a decade from 2007 to 2019 and we can make some tentative statements about the changing trends the folk club scene has seen during that time. Essentially, we find that the demographic block identified by MacKinnon in 1993 remains stable, with many of the same actual people continuing to participate in their folk club. With this stability of personnel, it is unsurprising that the habitus and performed repertoires have similarly retained established patterns. One area of significant development can be seen in the promotion mechanisms used, with a number of clubs developing an online presence. That this has not significantly affected the participant make up of events could be attributed to the system of spreading information about folk events which still reaches those in the know, through isolated club-specific websites or through social media. These networks mirror those established through the former means of communication, the specialist press and word of mouth. The second salient difference is the introduction of explicit rules either as door signs, table notices or as delivered verbally by the MC. These are typically introduced at times where clubs experience an influx of newcomers and removed from practice as soon as there is no longer a perceived need for them. This suggests they are used to maintain the group norm rather than aimed at supporting new singers, which may arrive at any time. Whilst one or two newcomers can be educated through enculturation within a tightly bound set of practices, when newcomers appear in significant number the status quo is challenged, meaning the established modes of behaviour and repertoire choice are diluted. This is perhaps the most clear illustration that there are behavioural expectations within folk clubs, and that the preferred mechanisms for imparting them are enculturation and participation; pursued over time, these methods give the appearance of being natural phenomena. While there are many more ways to participate in folk music throughout the wider folk scene, following different forms of habitus at festivals, concert venues and sessions, the folk club model has not undergone notable change, with the core of its practice, repertoire and participants remaining stable.

Conclusion

Common habitus, achieved through imitation, can be incrementally learnt, but for the newcomer to a group it is difficult to establish quickly. No doubt explicit teaching and

the provision of agreed procedures would advance the process; however, musical events which aspire to be welcoming and which present themselves as open and accessible remove allusion to explicit rules and requirements. Indeed, this can be subconscious as there can be a lack of acknowledgement of the depth of ingrained habitus from regular participants themselves in response to newcomers, viewing the insiders' behaviours as normal, or common sense. If musicians do not recognise the particularity of their practice, they cannot serve to address it. This, ironically, has an adverse effect, as underestimating the specificity of particular habitus, and assuming newcomers can adopt the prevalent behaviours, belittles the complex patterns of behaviour to be navigated, resulting in errors being committed where there was no anticipation that mistakes could be made. Rudeness is perceived where there is a case of simple misunderstanding, or underappreciation of the requirements of others, within a social situation involving individuals from different cultural cohorts. Cultural cohorts here follows Turino's usage as introduced at the start of the article, depicting a group with specific genre-based specialist knowledge. Where people from significantly different cultural backgrounds, or with perceived cultural difference, are concerned there are pertinent deeper questions to explore. Such questions are beyond the scope of this article, but would warrant focused attention to expand upon the work undertaken by Winter and Keegan-Phipps (2013).

Affinity with a shared interest, and even shared participation in a musical activity does not equate to integration of a lifeworld. Verbal and musical communication can easily be distorted without the implicit understandings developed through long term interaction. This creates a disquieting effect for the newcomer, who still ends up participating albeit on a different plane, and without the capacity of fully grasping the meanings of their own, and others', actions.

While there is potential for boundaries to be porous, to facilitate interaction with new singers and potentially new practices requires acknowledgement of existing practices and a conscious leniency of the rules. Through identifying the impact of their seemingly insignificant behaviours, MCs and regular members could recognise the power they wield within the construction of the structures they inhabit, and the potential for them to address these. Attention to the requirements needed to make genuinely open, hospitable spaces, over the rhetoric of merely claiming them to be, could provide a platform for applied work and to reimagine the folk club for the twenty-first century.

Tension exists between the ideal of the folk scene being unstructured and open, and the reality that enabling the functioning of this community in its desired form requires the establishment and maintenance of boundaries. Continuous involvement including incremental learning by trial and error primarily identified through self-government is the means of establishing a place within this scene. Folk singers might embrace and articulate a coherent set of values around inclusivity, access and open participation. However, their highly nuanced and strongly guarded musical and social practices contradict these intentions. There is, of course, a difference between openness as a recruitment sustainability strategy and openness as an 'anything goes' musical policy, a position which our fieldwork experiences suggest is not the stance adopted by all clubs in practice. Navigating such an activity without explicit guidance is not

easy and newcomers may well, as a result, view clubs as cliquey and unwelcoming. This would be ironically the very opposite of what clubs are attempting to achieve, ideologically at least, even if not every club is actively looking for new recruits. The self-description of clubs in physical or online publicity may provide a certain level of information (e.g. in relation to genre boundaries), but it is unlikely to make transparent all the subtleties of behavioural norms. As was jokingly indicated in the Bacca Pipes rules, ‘it’s a minefield out there’.

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An AHRC Connected Communities project: Musical Networks (Hield & Crossley 2012), survey and email interviews with Sheffield folk singers.

Follow up research to explore phenomena nationally (Hield 2017). Participant observation, interviews and focus groups with organisers and singers at Lewes, London, Newcastle, Keighley and Warwick. Facebook research online.

An MA in World and Traditional Music at the University of Sheffield involving participant observation project at a folk club in Nottinghamshire (Mansfield 2017) and interviews, diary project and focus group with singers in Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire (Mansfield 2018).

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Notes

1 For a fuller discussion of meanings of traditional repertoires, see Roud (2017).

2 see Acknowledgements for further details.

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