HIPSTERS *VERSUS* POSERS: FANNISH SPLIT IN THE INDIE MUSIC WORLD[1]

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Web 2.0 technologies have enhanced relational dynamics in fan communities. Indie music fans significantly identify themselves with the genre and participate in these communities within a music industry reinvention scenario. Based on the Foucauldian perspective, by sharing knowledge about media products, fans manifest truths capable of expressing subjectivities – parrhesia, a way of mutually affecting different truths. Thus, the aim of the present study is to analyze how parrhesia is operated in interactions among indie music fans.

Originality/value: The present research expands an important theoretical-investigative path in the consumer culture theory (CCT) field by adopting Michel Foucault's later theoretical cycle, which addresses the construction of subjectivities.

Design/methodology/approach: Netnography of interactions among indie music fans was carried out in one of the largest online discussion forums on the topic.

Findings: Heated discussions observed in the investigated community often create a split that shows a dispute focused on defining what being an indie music fan means. Based on disruptive parrhesia anchored in moral backgrounds associated with erudition and collectivism *versus* hedonism and individuality, self-declared true fans and those who seek fun establish alter-subjectivities as hipsters and posers.

KEYWORDS

1. INTRODUCTION

Indie music has emerged in the 1980s as a way of establishing a more creative and authentic alternative to trade low-budget musical productions (Dale, 2008); since then, it has gained increasingly relevant room in the music scene (Cummings, 2008). From the 1990s on, it started incorporating other genres and, consequently, it gave rise to several subgenres that also did not fit the market premise set by the music industry at that time (Scaruffi, 2003). This growth has led some of its subgenres to gain popularity and to achieve surprising market performance (McDonald, 2000; Meier & Hesmondhalgh, 2014). As the 21st century arrived, indie artists kept on gaining worldwide relevance, and it consolidated the growth of the genre in the music market and created a paradox as to the origin of the movement, which rejected mainstream music (Skancke, 2007; Mead, 2009).

The ultimate consolidation of indie music takes place at a time of crisis in the music industry caused by the easy exchange of digital files. Nowadays, the indie genre plays a key role in reconfiguring this industry since its profitability mainly results from digital streaming, download, and concert platforms (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, 2017). It is part of the entertainment industry growth, whose global revenues reach approximately two trillion dollars – 8% of this amount refers to music consumption (International Trade Administration, 2017).

The indie music path was built based on significant participation of indie fans, who strongly identified themselves with the aesthetics and ideology of the movement and started to relate to indie artists in a more visceral way (Bromwich, 2014; Coscarelli, 2017) – investigations about this phenomenon have started in cultural studies conducted in the early 1990s (Grossberg, 1992; Fiske, 1992; Jenkins, 1992). Jenkins (1992) has pointed out that fans often write texts comprising shared or produced collective discursive practices capable of indicating their values, communal behavior, and worldviews.

According to the consumer culture theory (CCT), fans are understood as specialized consumers who participate in a consumer subculture linked to media products (Souza-Leão & Costa, 2018; Kozinets, 2001). This productivity feature indicates that they are understood as prosumers (Chen, 2018; Souza-Leão & Costa, 2018). The prosumerization phenomenon takes into consideration production and consumption work in a symbiotic way. Consumers take on tasks that would be up to producers in the traditional dual production-consumption model. This idea was widely addressed in the CCT field after studies conducted by Ritzer (2005, 2008), and it even gained

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greater repercussion when it was inserted in the Web 2.0 context (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010).

Technologies emerging in the Web 2.0 context have enabled users to interact with each other in a fluid and constant manner, as well as to produce and disseminate contents (e.g., comments, photos, videos) associated with their interests (Cova & Dalli, 2009). Such production is inserted in the concept of participatory culture, which points out how individuals produce based on technology using in a collaborative and media convergent way (Guschwan, 2012; Booth, 2013).

Technologies based on Internet spread have significantly changed the music industry. First, they enabled users to exchange and share musical contents (i.e., peer-to-peer), and, later, they turned streaming services into the main music consumption model in the 2010s (Sinclair & Green, 2016). Factors such as easy interaction among consumers, access to music productions and contents, and even the production of new content have boosted the productivity of indie music fans (Sinclair & Tinson, 2017).

Fans interacting with each other tend to share meanings and build knowledge about their relationship with products consumed by them, as well as about the very social spaces where they meet each other (Fiske, 1992). Such a social construction of knowledge is one of the basic conditions for expressing truths that, in their turn, enable building subjectivities, according to the later theory by Michel Foucault. This process refers to the operation of truths that lead individuals to relate to the other truths surrounding them (Foucault, 2011).

According to Foucault (2017), the operation of truths is an ethical process that plays an essential role in subjectivity building. Among the operations of truth, parrhesia is the manifestation according to which the expressed knowledge about a given topic affects different perceptions of truth about oneself and others, while different truths are mutually affected. Thus, parrhesia leads to ruptures in socially established truths that get (re)constructed based on the negotiation of truths among individuals (Foucault, 2006).

Fans sharing opinions about indie music often express personal and collective perceptions since their interactions are featured as one of the main ways of understanding, having contact with, and consuming the genre (Hesmondhalgh, 1999; Skancke, 2007). Since individuals often prefer to express their perceptions rather than to follow certain consumer consensus (West & Broniarczyk, 1998; Lee & Cranage, 2012é), consumers are expected to argue with each other about their viewpoints. Therefore, the world-views of a given consumer tend to affect and be affected by other consumers'

perceptions (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Cova & Dalli, 2009). Thus, based on Foucauldian concepts, the current study considers that fan interactions reinforce positions capable of enabling parrhesia. In light of the foregoing, the present study was developed based on the following research question:

- How is parrhesia operated in interactions among indie music fans in virtual communities?

Although the music industry is already consolidated, it is one of the entertainment segments that has mostly undergone changes and reinventions due to technological advances and to its democratic consumption. Market fragmentation is increasingly evident, and it opens room for a wide range of musical genres, such as indie music (Magaudda, 2011; Leguina, Arancibia-Carvajal, & Widdop, 2015). However, studies focused on investigating consumption practices adopted by music fans participating in virtual communities remain incipient. Therefore, the current research is inserted in the relevance agenda adopted by CCT, since it adopts Michel Foucault's later theoretical cycle – which addresses the construction of subjectivities – and expands an important theoretical investigative path in this field, which often focuses on Foucault's theory of power at the time to approach this philosopher (see Kedzior & Allen, 2016; Denegri-Knott & Tadajewski, 2017).

2. INDIE: GENRE AND FANITY

The indie genre has emerged when artists started to "break free" from their relationship with major labels and conglomerates in the music industry. It is not by accident that the term is closely related to the idea of independence from, and alternative to, the mainstream (Meier & Hesmondhalgh, 2014). The genre was legitimized by its lack of concern about resonating in large audiences and by its rejection of the idea of pursuing profitability, which was in line with the experimentation discourse (Skancke, 2007).

Its relevance as a movement became clearer in the mid-1980s when artists in the United States and England started launching their productions under the do-it-yourself (DIY) order, which is featured by low production cost and highly creative level (Dale, 2008). The genre was initially marked by its great aspects such as experimentation with aggressive melodies (Fairchild, 1995) and melodic sounds (Hesmondhalgh, 1999).

The globalization process experienced in the 1990s had a direct impact on the musical genre, and it enabled the indie genre to unfold into several

subgenres (e.g., lo-fi, dream pop, noise pop, post-rock). Such an unfolding process has boosted not only the emergence of new bands and artists who aligned with new possibilities in the indie portfolio, but also the popularization of its consumption. Consequently, some artists linked to the indie music genre have achieved remarkable resonance in the market. The space in the media and high profitability have led to questions about the limits of what can be considered indie, as well as about the limits of artists' success and space in the mainstream media (Scaruffi, 2003).

At the turn of the century, improvements in production, information, and communication technologies have enabled new development and release possibilities that influenced the new generation of indie artists (Mead, 2009). The tenuous relationship between this genre and the industry – initially rejected by it – became increasingly clear due to the growing popularity of artists and to the popularization of their music festivals (Cummings, 2008; Walts, 2008). In response to that, new subgenres (e.g., garage rock, post-punk revival) have emerged as an attempt to resume the movement's origins (Mead, 2009). Thus, the indie genre became relevant both for the big music industry and for small local scenes (Skancke, 2007; Drew, 2011).

The consolidation of the indie genre is closely related to the performance of its fans. It happens because the main indie consumers differentiate themselves from other music fans, both for their level of involvement with the genre and for its adoption as an ideology (Bromwich, 2014; Coscarelli, 2017), which makes them take positions such as fiercely criticizing artists who do not prioritize quality and originality over success (Cummings, 2008), as well as antagonizing those whom they believe to not be aligned with independent music production (Sanneh, 2005). Thus, cultural practices adopted by indie fans can naturally break away from previously established consumption meanings (Drew, 2011).

3. FAN PRODUCTIVITY

Fans, who are known for their intense relationship with products consumed by them, have been investigated since the 1990s (Grossberg, 1992; Fiske, 1992). A striking feature of these consumers lies in their proactivity (Ortiz, Reynolds, & Franke, 2013; Syrjälä, 2016), which is strongly linked to their desire to discover new things (Jenkins, 1992). They are consumers who voluntarily engage in the consumption of media and entertainment products, mainly by interacting with other fans (Hills, 2012; Duffett, 2013).

According to Jenkins (2006), fans are the emblematic members of participatory culture, which results from technological appropriation and from cultural and media convergence processes. Participatory cultures enable different individuals to become members of communities where they establish social connections based on message exchanging practices, identification of similar choices, and civic engagements (Jenkins, 2006; Langlois, 2013). The functioning of participatory cultures is based on sharing information capable of fostering collective knowledge about what community members consume and produce. Such knowledge does not belong to anyone; it is formulated by everyone who shares an interest in cultural production and who is part of the community (Jenkins, 2006; Delwiche & Henderson, 2012; Guschwan, 2012).

Fan communities are known as fandoms – i.e., social spaces where fans interact and build relationships based on common consumer interests (Booth, 2013; Fuschillo, 2018). Nowadays, these social spaces have been formulated, mainly through social media and online forums, where fans connect to each other, as well as produce and spread information and opinions (Delwiche & Henderson, 2012; Fuschillo, 2018). However, these communities tend to be heterogeneous since they have different types of members who can contribute to the collectivity in different ways (Duffett, 2013). Kozinets (1999) has classified them into four different types, namely: tourists – who do not have strong social ties with the group and just keep superficial or momentary interest in consumer activity; minglers – although they have strong social ties with the community, they are slightly interested in the object of consumption that brings them together; devotees, on the other hand, are strongly tied to the object of consumption, but they may show disregard for the community; and finally, insiders have an intense relationship both with the community and with the object of consumption. There are also the anti-fans who stopped idealizing the product they had a positive connection with and started to attack the way it was produced (Gray, 2003; Hills, 2019). Their criticisms can be directed both to the media product and to the superficial (Sheffield & Merlo, 2010; Souza-Leão & Costa, 2018) or useless (Booth, 2013; Souza-Leão & Moura, 2018) behavior of other fans.

These behaviors show different forms and levels of how fans perform prosumer activities (Chen, 2018; Souza-Leão & Costa, 2018). Prosumerism refers to the symbiosis between production and consumption, which may feature compulsory or voluntary consumption (Ritzer, 2005, 2008, 2014). This practice is often spontaneous and increasingly hard to be controlled by producers in the Web 2.0 context due to the sophisticated ability of

users who collaboratively produce and share contents (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Thus, a new marketing logic has been established – based on consumers' collaboration and interactivity – according to which consumption value results from collective exchanges (Cova & Cova, 2012; Gamble & Gilmore, 2013).

4. FAN DIALOGUE SEEN AS PARRHESIA

Although fans are notoriously known for their mutual collaboration in fandoms, they can disagree with each other based on their intimate relationship with media products (Hills, 2013). Consumers often express their opinions rather than just follow common senses or consensual positions, and this enables negotiating consumption meanings (West & Broniarczyk, 1998; Lee & Cranage, 2012).

According to CCT-based studies, meanings shared in the market create conditions for certain lifestyles (Mikkonen, Moisander, & Firat, 2011; Minowa, 2012; Duffy, 2014). Consumers' knowledge about the world around them and its role in guiding their consumption acts play a key role in legitimating marketing practices. Consumers' worldviews affect and are affected by market knowledge, which is capable of influencing the way they position themselves (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Cova & Dalli, 2009). Thus, market-based worldviews produce knowledge capable of influencing consumers' behavior (Mikkonen & Bajde, 2012; Denegri-Knott & Tadajewski, 2017).

In Foucauldian terms, these "worldviews" refer to different truths. Foucault (2017) understands truth as what we know about the world and ourselves, and such knowledge plays a critical role in subjectivation processes. Subjectivation practices enable building ethics anchored in a complex heteronomy and autonomy system (Foucault, 2013). Thus, it is necessary to implement a critical ontology, which lies not only in asking ourselves about structures capable of affecting the definition of the subject but also in analyzing rationality practices and modes expressed in social behaviors (Foucault, 2010a). Such a critical ontology, in its turn, is based on the historical ontology of ourselves in relation to the truth. According to historical ontology, the way individuals formulate themselves as subjects of knowledge is intrinsic to their position in power relations. These are the critical structures and systems driving subjections. Consequently, critical ontology is a tool capable of shaping subjects; it is the way individuals perceive themselves as subjects of action, both on themselves and on others. Thus, when

historical ontology becomes critical, it turns into an ethical ontology based on which individuals build themselves as moral agents (Foucault, 2010a).

Thus, despite being famously known for his work (i.e., theoretical cycle) about power and government, Foucault (2010a, 2012a) indicates that he has always followed a single philosophical path, namely: developing ethical subjects. The historical knowledge (i.e., discursive formations) explored in its first cycle – i.e., the archaeological cycle – enables identifying critical power structures (i.e., devices), which are the starting point to better understand how to implement governmental models and moral codes capable of influencing subjects to tell the truth. These truths are, ultimately, the knowledge to be validated.

Truth is the element guiding subjectivities, not as formal orders issued by a person or an institution, but as the operation of "practices of ourselves"; positions taken by us that affect ourselves and others (Foucault, 2012a). Thus, truth is not a fixed and universal knowledge about to be discovered by someone who is trained or enlightened; it is mobile, associated with some social context, and built based on a set of micro-operations in which it is negotiated, disputed, and consolidated in an interactive way (Foucault, 2010b).

This whole process gives room to truth games, in which truths are affected by and combined with other truths in a series of processes associated with the social construction of these truths. This construction goes through an operation called truth-telling, which attests that knowledge can be considered true. Thus, truth games concern the practice of taking to oneself certain true constructions or of advocating for others (Foucault, 2012b). Knowledge shapes and influences the way we build truths for ourselves and for others (Foucault, 2012a). According to Foucault (2012b), there is not an individual who rationally decides about him/herself, but a subject who fluctuates according to social-historical knowledge flows. Therefore, truth is not a linear or universal construction process.

The production of truths is associated with the construction of subjectivities to the extent that subjects need to accept certain discourses as true. Discourses are considered true when they guide individuals' behavior. Thus, certain discourses are considered true by certain subjectivities and may have a wide reach in certain social contexts (Foucault, 2017).

Among the operations of truth, Foucault (2006) highlights parrhesia as a way of launching truth to others. It is a driving practice featured by the act of telling the truth to convey a certain way of living. Parrhesia turns individuals into catalysts for the subjectivation process since they get truths to

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be told, discussed, negotiated. It is featured as the technical procedure or moral attitude necessary for the truth to be told and for constituting individuals themselves. Parrhesia means saying everything in a frank, free and open way so that one can say what one has to say when one wants to say it and the way one feels it is appropriate to say it. However, all these make parrhesia an ambiguous process, given its multiple possibilities in the truth-operation dynamics (Foucault, 2010b).

Individuals elaborating truth through parrhesia actively influence others around them and associate themselves with certain truths at the same time; thus, they also assert themselves (Foucault, 2011). Parrhesia enables discursive formations to contact each other and point toward directions arising interaction outcomes. Thus, it is possible seeing conflict among institutions, social groups, different historical and moral arrangements, and a wide range of dialogues between different social backgrounds in this practice (Foucault, 2010b).

5. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In epistemological terms, it is possible placing the work by Michel Foucault in two different instances, namely: theoretical cycles and methodological movements (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2010). Despite the correlation between these instances, they are autonomous since archaeological and genealogical movements are presented as adequate choices for rereading phenomena (e.g., madness, sexuality) capable of representing the construction of subjectivities in Western history (Deleuze, 2005). Consequently, Foucault (2010b) considers that his contributions are a theory of practices (i.e., discursive, non-discursive). Thus, it seems to make sense to analyze data in practical situations, such as the case of data collected based on naturalistic approaches (e.g., ethnographic methods), which require researchers to be sensitive enough to capture interactions between the investigated parties (Bispo & Godoy, 2012).

Ethnographic methods are featured by the description and interpretation of communities' cultural behavior (DaMatta, 1978; Wolcott, 1999). Netnography was developed by Kozinets (2010, 2015) to observe consumer relationships in virtual environments; it was adapted from traditional ethnography to be applied to online communities. Thus, netnography was herein adopted to investigate interactions among indie music fans in the Web 2.0 context. Such an option is also in line with the post-structuralist perspective –

based on which Foucault's theory was developed – since both approaches share the perception that reality is grounded in language and that it comprises a system of cultural symbols (Kozinets, 1998, 2015).

By allowing researchers to immerse themselves in the virtual cultural community in order to observe how it works, netnography provides a means to collect textually accessible behaviors (i.e., forums, social networks, comments) that, in their turn, help better understanding signs, symbols, practices, and discourses observed in the investigated virtual community (Kozinets, 1998, 2010). Kozinets (2010, 2015) indicates some steps to be carried out at the time to perform netnography research. They are herein presented based on their definitions and on how they were operationalized in the current study.

Selecting the community to be observed – the stage preceding netnography implementation – is a process that must take into consideration the relevance of such a community to the phenomenon, activities, and frequent interactions, as well as to content substantiality, heterogeneity, and richness in the posts. The forum called Music Banter was herein selected after several options of virtual communities focused on addressing indie music were compared to each other. This virtual domain is often accessed by active users worldwide, who often exchange substantial and rich messages about the genre.

Once the community to be investigated was selected, the *cultural entreé* was carried out to enable researchers to experience a naturalization process capable of raising awareness about the cultural context. This process enabled them to better understand the behavior of community members without losing details that only these members often understand. An anonymous profile (allowed by the forum) was used by researchers to observe interactions among members of the selected community, and it allowed understanding how the community worked. Using the anonymous profile enabled researchers to understand that it is a common practice among fandom members, as well as using impersonal profiles referring to bands/artists in the segment, which does not expose their non-virtual identities. It is worth clarifying that researchers worked as listeners to the genre in order to capture meanings and changes in the flow of messages posted in the community.

After this preparatory process was over, *data collection* was performed based on the recording of messages exchanged by members of the investigated community. It was done by focusing on descriptive contents addressing the research problem. The analyzed data referred to comments posted in English by users worldwide, from January 2004 to December 2017. Collected messages addressed a wide variety of topics (e.g., indie subgenres, emblematic

artists in the segment, movement evolution, fan behavior) about the genre. The current study focused on analyzing the thirteen main topics (i.e., threads) addressed on the platform, among more than five hundred thousand messages sent by approximately 28 thousand active Music Banter users. These topics were fully explored; they comprised approximately three hundred thousand words in messages of the most different styles, such as short responses, cross-sectional comments, and long explanations. Collected data clipping-time corresponded to the time when indie music consumption recorded its greatest increase, as well as to changes in the access to music consumption itself, which was primarily done via digital access (i.e., files, streaming).

Data analysis and interpretation were divided into analytical movements such as reading, coding, refinement, categorization, identification of the relationship between categories, and theoretical interpretation. Message reading enabled researchers to better understand meanings built through fan interactions. Next, these meanings were codified based on the observed discursive practices. Subsequently, codes were organized based on their similarity in order to be thematically refined, grouped, and used as basis to categorize topics aligned with the research problem. A similar operational process enabled establishing associations between categories – one process required returning to the messages for confirmatory purposes. Finally, results were interpreted based on theoretical contributions substantiating the current study.

These procedures must be based on an accurate *research representation* (highlighted criteria), which concerns quality criteria adopted at the time to implement netnography (Kozinets, 2015). The netnography method guidelines were strictly followed in the current study, which focused on capturing the human dimension of observed interactions in a credible way in order to evoke the *resonance* and *verisimilitude* of the empirical context. Analysis of "comings and goings" was carried out to confirm the current inferences based on a *reflexivity* process. Results were described in a clear and reliable way in order to provide readers with clear *instructions* about the findings, as well as to *respect the observed praxis*. Finally, *theoretically-based* result interpretation was carried out.

Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize that the ethical principles adopted in the current research have followed Kozinets' (2009, 2010) guidelines about researchers' behavior in forums, contacts, and interactions with virtual community members. According to the aforementioned author, data collected on the web must be free and give the status of general democracy

to the investigated *ethos* whenever the observed social interactions do not inhibit, suppress or ban users' participation. By respecting members' anonymity, not interfering in interactions, and making use of resources available to all other members, researchers have respected the public nature of the forum, avoided invading topics addressed in the forum, and, consequently, respected the privacy of the community members.

6. RESULTS

The current study has identified five *categories* (C) concerning indie music fan practices; they comprised 11 *codes* (Cod) featuring these practices. These categories were associated with each other, and it indicated how fandom practices are mutually influenced and affected by each other. Figure 6.1 depicts these associations.

(Figure 6.1)

FAN PRACTICES ABOUT THE INDIE MUSIC GENRE
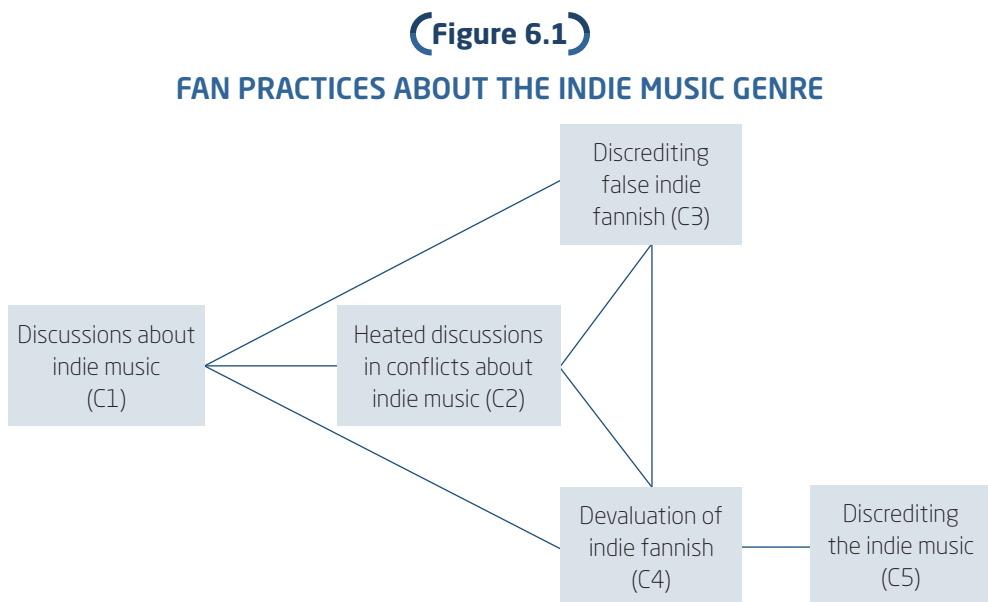
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Discussions about indie music (C1) have evidenced a dialogical process, as well as different opinions among indie music fans. Discussions whose central topic lay on the genre bringing fans together enabled participants to understand each other, as well as to exchange information or make moderate criticisms to different aspects of the topic. Their statements have shown

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individual and collective perceptions that were mutually influenced by the exchange of ideas in the fandom. The definition of differences and the pursuit of consensus among consumers is a natural part of collective consumption. It is preferable to disagree critically and presenting one's personal opinion about the product bringing fans together, rather than reaching consumption consensus (Lee & Cranage, 2012; West & Broniarczyk, 1998). Accordingly, Shankar (2000) has indicated that expressing subjective perceptions is fundamental to collective music consumption.

Indie music triggers debates (Cod01) at the heart of the communal meeting itself. The community often presents flows of exchanged comments on productions of indie music artists. Fans persuasively try to convince others to consume music or artists, based on arguments substantiated in the indie universe. Besides highlighting objective aspects (i.e., sound, cultural relevance, albums sold), the exposure of ideas also brings up subjective perceptions (i.e., viewpoints, personal connections to songs).

In addition, *personal impressions about indie* (Cod02) have pointed out how fans' perceptions about indie objects (i.e., artists, aesthetics, sound) were negotiated in the fandom. Some fans have created flows of subjects through speeches that showed how they signified indie music consumption. These subjects, in their turn, were fed back by other fans who added new insights in order to enrich the debates.

The following excerpt presents fans talking about comparisons between two bands. Opinions converge, although one of them accepts the comparison, whereas the other does not.

> – dashboard is compared to death cab a lot. It is what I consider a teeny bopper band, which isn't always so bad. They do have one song that I like "vindicated", I think.
> – They don't sound alike; the comparison is invalid.
> – That may be true, but either way they are compared, I think death cab is better and not as well, but I have read on several sites and they are compared as invalid as it may be.

Such discussions can unfold in heated and aggressive debates that express personal opinions in a toxic way and generate *heated discussions in conflicts about indie music* (C2). Some fans participating in interactions that go beyond the level of the debate are often aggressive towards others to the point of questioning their fannish and indie music consumption choices. On the one hand, some fans attack others for their positioning and statements in the fandom. Also, fans also strongly react to this aggression. According to

Hills (2013), the intimate relationship with the consumed object leads fans to discredit other fans' choices as a way to legitimize their own choices.

Aggressive arguments (Cod03) emerge in the heat of the debate and can be seen in harsh comments, provocations, bad word using and humiliations involving the indie universe. Fans do not always agree on everything in their activities within the community. Sometimes they try to prove their viewpoint in a forceful way that exceeds the limits of civility. The following excerpt shows a fan who aggressively belittles the taste of another fan in order to support his argument in a debate about the mainstream's influence on indie music:

> You literally have no taste. None. There's a record company marketing exec on acid frantically masturbating and pressing a button that sends a message to a satellite that bounces it down to your brain and gives you a shot of dopamine whenever you listen to any artist with "e" in their name. That is how you interpret music.

Strong rebukes (Cod04) are typical of this type of behavior. They are means used by some fans to try to stop the escalation of aggressiveness by presenting themselves as bastions of the behavior understood as appropriate in the community. Although trying to end conflicts, they end up being influenced by the heated tone and rejecting aggressive fans by using equally strong words. The following excerpt presents one fan scolding the other for the aggressive way he spoke in his messages, but he ends up using insults.

> You've spammed the thread with stupid insults that had nothing to do with the topic. "Yes" would have been way easier to type. Allow me to make a suggestion... If you are unable to deal with opinions that differ from yours: go away.

These heated (C2) debates (C1) have repercussions on the very concept of fannish. One of them lies in *discrediting false indie fannish* (C3), which refers to the disgust of some fans about how other fandom members have shown to be indie music fans. Starting from the standardization of what it is to be an indie music fan, some fans point out flawed positions and lack of information about the genre, which put in question the likelihood of having other members categorized as fans. Excessive attachment, demand for positions, and for participation during consumption experiences feature fannish as consumer devotion. This feature differentiates passive from active consumers (Ortiz et al., 2013; Syrjälä, 2016). Souza-Leão and Costa (2018) have highlighted the practice of questioning superficial or temporary fan-object rela-

tionships (i.e., accusing individuals of being posers). According to Obiegbu, Larsen, and Ellis (2019), this practice is even more significant among music consumers: it is used to show who is really loyal to the artists and not only got to know the songs through media and marketing actions.

The practice of *pointing out mistakes and community members* (Cod05) reflects criticism about lack of information among the ones accused of such a failure. It is understood that community members should have in-depth knowledge about the genre and its artists in order to be fans. By criticizing misconceptions about details (e.g., clothes, music, records, release dates, band formation), individuals question the fannish of indie community members. The cultural universe of the indie genre was built as an alternative to the mainstream; thus, information on the subject is not easily accessible, it is often fed and known only by devout fans who have followed the genre for years.

Therefore, *exposing superficialities* (Cod06) highlights individuals' failure in keeping their fan status through a coherent fan history. Fans use their comments to accuse other community members of being posers, individuals who pretend to be fans but lack the knowledge or experience to do so. Their statements present an alert tone when they check comments from other members who emulate mastery of certain topics but spread false information and details. Accusations are based on fans' experience and relationship with the genre (or artist) at the time they expose members who are doing a disservice to the fandom.

The following excerpt presents a dialogue about the artist Elliott Smith and the use of his songs in the game called Guitar Hero. It was done to illustrate codes rejecting the stance of other fans. In this excerpt, a fan criticizes the stance of others based on their relationship with the game; he accuses the ones who make the mistake of not using the correct shirt associated with the artist of being "posers". Such a statement reveals the overzealousness of demanding other fans to show a more assertive position. In his other comment, the fan retorts that the game will place the artist under the spotlight: other consumers will pretend to like Elliott Smith without really knowing him.

> – Sonic Youth is a good band for these kind of games but not Elliott. I don't think it'll be a Needle in the Haystack because it doesn't seem Guitar Hero worthy. I mean it was one of the first songs I learned to play on the guitar. I'm thinking something from Figure 8 or From a Basement.

– But sir… I got one of the last Lilys T's so… it would be highly unlikely that I'd find a poser wearing one. Also, those scene ***gots are going to be pretending to like Elliott Smith after this is out for a couple of months.

In the opposite direction, but also deriving from discussions (C1), often from heated discussions (C2), there is the *devaluation of indie fannish* (C4). Some fans go against the fandom's contributions by arguing that being indie means going against the opinion of the majority. Such an event is noticed in practices such as the statement of an individual to the detriment of the community that music is just entertainment and that fannish is based on the simplicity of enjoying the media product. This positioning tries to establish the authority of argument opposite to the one discrediting false fannish (C3) due to lack of greater involvement and knowledge level. Thus, despite participating in the fandom, part of virtual community members questions the validity of fannish, and it indicates the social perception, according to which being a fan is an exaggerated and useless practice (Booth, 2013; Souza-Leão & Moura, 2018). According to Kozinets (1999), this position can be linked to two types of consumer community members, namely: tourists and minglers. In both cases, they do not present the devotion to consumption deemed by Hills (2002) as fundamental to be a fan.

The *affirmation of individuality* (Cod07) places this fan as divergent from consensus about artistic stances, media products, or even about artists' personal lives. This perception is seen in the way some fans insist on disagreeing with most individuals in the fandom, on criticizing bands supported by the community, and on praising their personal opinions (i.e., private judgment to the detriment of common sense) by highlighting the existence of herd movements in the group they are part of.

Consequently, these consumers point out that *music is just entertainment* (Cod08); thus, they are opposed to the ones who see it as something that goes beyond sound enjoyment. Their speeches belittle those who consider music consumption as something extraordinary and even question the validity of being a fan. They criticize excessive content production or the importance attributed to objects they classify as mere fun.

Finally, they also state that *music enjoyment should be hassle-free* (Cod09), unlike what most community members do since they overvalue this experience and make it too complex. They argue that deep knowledge about the genre and its artists does not guarantee a better music consumption experience.

The following excerpt highlights the speech of a fan who expresses himself in a way contrary to enthusiastic opinions about an album released

by the band called Arcade Fire. In addition to comparing their work to so many others, the fan criticizes the way the fandom often rejects divergent opinions.

> Right so I'll probably get flamed to hell for this because it seems if you don't agree with popular opinion you're 'arrogant' or 'elitist' but, what the hell. I'm past the point of caring what people think. Seriously, I've seen so many normal rightminded people go nuts about this album declaring it the best thing ever, people whose opinions & tastes I normally hold dear, wetting themselves over it like R Kelly at a primary school. Yet it's one of the dullest things I've ever heard, there are already a million bands that sound like this lot, what are they doing to deserve such a praise?

Based on this behavior, it is possible seeing how some indie consumers also make negative comments about the universe they follow, either about their fans or even about artists with whom they do not identify, a fact that leads to *indie music discrediting* (C5). These consumers – called anti-fans – position themselves contrary to fandom practices and to products consumed by them (Gray, 2003; Duffett, 2013). In some cases, anti-fans even specialize themselves in the subject to be addressed before they express their criticisms in order to make their speech as accurate as possible. This behavior evidences a paradoxical and intense involvement with a depreciated object of consumption (Gray, 2003; Hills, 2019). It is an emblematic practice when consumption is used to express the authenticity and individuality of consumers who end up rejecting other people's trends and tastes in an attempt to be cool (i.e., hipsters) and to achieve social prestige (Michael, 2013). Sheffield and Merlo (2010) call this practice the rhetoric of superiority, which implies showing one's elite status within the fandom.

Fans also indicate *negative features in the* indie *fannish mode* (Cod10). The typical way of being an indie music fan is snobbish in the way of treating others and the topics bringing them together. The following comment presents this perception and suggests that the accuracy of the term defining the genre has been lost: "Every genre has subgenres – but so long as the kids 'get' what the word 'indie' actually means, that should eliminate any snobbery that sadly accompanies the word".

With respect to indie artists and productions, anti-fans make comments that work as *notes about low-quality productions* (Cod11). It is the case of albums considered by fans as poorly made since they lack the level of quality already seen in other works. Likewise, they target songs lacking originality, which

are labeled as badly finished versions of other songs. They also speak ill of artistic works that do not excite fans – these works are classified as boring. In order to illustrate this aspect, the following excerpt presents the speech of a fan who expresses severe criticism on the evolution of a band called The Strokes.

> I am not that interested in what The Strokes can do, but their first album was an indication that they can take something tried and true and at least make it fun to listen to. But after that, they just went down more and more... getting more boring as they go. Angles are just a rock bottom product of mediocrity. I am sure even by their standards, they are able to do much better, just a shame they never will.

Different fan movements used to validate their truths in the virtual community they interact in (i.e., categories) are attempts to validate opinions, either in an erudite and collective or hedonic and individual way about the indie genre. These validations of opinion correspond to what Foucault (2010b) calls the practice of a true saying: when an apprentice (i.e., fan) exposes his knowledge about a certain subject to be validated to his master (i.e., fandom) in a mutual affection relationship (i.e., fan relationships).

Mutual affection relationship and a feeling of security enable individuals to spread the truth about themselves without limitations. Such a lack of restrictions enables the apprentice to continuously improve by exposing his/her truths to the master: it is the validation of the knowledge he/she has achieved through his/her own reflections; a movement through which one's truth is no longer limited to itself since it can become social knowledge. This movement both advances and resumes previous knowledge: reasoning about oneself based on parrhesia is the only way individuals get to know themselves (Foucault, 2010b).

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Back to the research question, and based on the herein presented results, it was possible concluding that interactions among indie music fans lead them to operate rupture parrhesia based on the different perceptions they have about indie genre and fannish. Their discussions (C1) about the subject have evidenced different opinions and behaviors that become even more visible when they get into heated discussions (C2). This split is perceived on two different fronts: on the one hand, fans strongly engaged in the indie universe criticize the ones who do not show the same behavior and discredit

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them as fans (C3); on the other hand, these other fans promote a similar movement, since they devalue their own indie fannish (C4), by anchoring themselves in an uncompromised enjoyment discourse to discredit their behavior and the genre itself (C5).

Such a rupture reveals the dispute for establishing what indie music fannish really is (i.e., subjectivity). On the one hand, it is possible seeing those who consider themselves true fans establish argumentative authority to define themselves as such, as well as to exclude the ones who do not fit this definition from such a category. Therefore, being an indie music fan would presuppose high expertise standards and involvement with both the genre and its artists. On the other hand, the strategy adopted by those who do not fit these orderlies on devaluing it, as well as the gender itself. Thus, they proclaim music fruition based on personal taste and fun. Therefore, it is possible seeing that parrhesia is anchored on quite different moral backgrounds, namely: on the one hand, erudition and collectivism; on the other hand, hedonism and individuality.

Therefore, the schism observed among indie music fans is established in the mid-collision between truth games that fail to communicate to each other. It seems evident that the first group took ownership of the narrative, founding the indie movement itself in order to maintain its *status quo*. At the time, the genre has fragmented into several subgenres and started to draw the attention of a large number of music lovers. Thus, it is possible to understand that the second group is not actually attacking the indie music and its fans, but the version presented by the first group; this is the reason why they express themselves through a truth game that goes against what is presented as an established truth.

The herein observed rupture parrhesia takes place in a difference-defining game in which subjectivity construction ends up being mostly based on the definition of another subjectivity, which seems menacing. Therefore, these are definitions of alter-subjectivities much stronger than that of subjectivities themselves: fans who declare themselves true fans preserve their condition by accusing those who do not behave like them of being false fans; fans accused of not being authentic, in their turn, accuse the "true fans" of innocuous overzealousness. Based on the otherness perspective, what could be understood as a dispute between engaged and fun-seeking fans is, in fact, a divergence of opinions between alter-declared hipsters and posers.

These constructions reveal that, even among media product consumers, social stigma issues – behavior typically imposed from the outside into the community (see Souza-Leão & Moura, 2018; Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2017) are expressed. On the other hand, this finding highlights the hetero-

geneity observed in fan relationships, which diverges from the idea of unity and fannish-based contribution, as well as enables a better understanding of inter-fandom disputes (see Hills, 2013). The study also revealed the incidence of parrhesia in digital interactions when virtual community members feel so safe in these social spaces that they allow themselves to say and exposing what they think about what brings the community together, in an ethical exercise of telling the truth in social practices capable of legitimizing the digital *ethos* (see Gilewicz & François, 2013). In addition to their theoretical contribution, such aspects reveal the social contribution of the current study by highlighting the voice of a poorly-known and sometimes stigmatized social subject, and it shows the complexity of relational dynamics common to different, significantly notorious, and legitimate social arrangements. Finally, the current study also presented a theoretical contribution to the CCT field, namely: A Foucauldian approach that, despite being in line with discussions in the field (e.g., Denegri-Knott & Tadajewski, 2017; Chen, 2018; Mikkonen & Bajde, 2012), remains poorly explored.

It is worth emphasizing that the herein selected research design presented both a limit and a limitation since it only analyzed one of the most emblematic virtual communities of indie music fans. Its limitation lies in the fact that it excludes indie fans who do not take ownership of the available technology (i.e., social networks, forums, blogs) to deepen their relationship with the indie music movement. As for its limit, it is an incidental choice in line with the research problem itself, which focuses on consumers of more participatory media texts (Jenkins, 2008).

Further studies focused on investigating other pop culture fandoms should be conducted to help to improve the theory about fannish splits observed in the subjectivation of fans. In broader terms, using the theoretical contributions by Michel Foucault in studies about the relationship between consumers and market logics would also be useful to further unfold what was herein presented.

HIPSTERS VERSUS POSERS: RUPTURA FÂNICA NO MUNDO DA MÚSICA *INDIE*

RESUMO

Objetivo: Tecnologias Web 2.0 potencializaram a dinâmica relacional em comunidades de fãs. Fãs de música *indie* se demonstram altamente

identificados com o gênero e participativos nessas comunidades, em um cenário de reinvenção da indústria fonográfica. De um ponto de vista foucaultiano, ao circularem saberes sobre produtos de mídia, os fãs manifestam verdades constitutivas de subjetividades, sendo a parresia uma forma de diferentes verdades serem mutuamente afetadas. Com isso, o presente estudo analisa como a parresia é operada em interações de fãs de música *indie*.

Originalidade/valor: Ao adotar o ciclo teórico ulterior de Michel Foucault, que trata da constituição de subjetividades, a pesquisa expande uma importante trilha investigativa teórica para o campo da *consumer culture theory* (CCT).

***Design*/metodologia/abordagem:** Foi realizada uma netnografia das interações de fãs de música *indie* em um dos maiores fóruns de discussão *on-line* sobre o tema.

Resultados: Discussões que se tornam exaltadas na comunidade observada criam uma cisão que revela uma disputa para se estabelecer o que seja a fanidade em relação à música *indie*. Por meio de uma parresia de ruptura ancorada em fundamentos morais relacionados à erudição e ao coletivismo contra o hedonismo e a individualidade, os fãs que se declaram verdadeiros e os que buscam diversão estabelecem as alter-subjetividades de *hipsters* e *posers*.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Fãs. Música *indie*. Subjetividade. Parresia. Netnografia.

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