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Thesis title:	English Folk Singing And The Construction Of Community
Qualification:	PhD

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Abstract

This thesis presents the ways contemporary English folk singers construct and enact community though their musical participation. To complement my existing knowledge from a 30 year long participation in folk singing, I use a combined approach of sociological methods including participant observation, diary, interview and focus group to obtain naturally occurring and elicited data. This information was collected following an adaptation of the Grounded Theory method and coded using the Atlas.ti programme.

This process established various themes pertaining to the experience of community within folk singing environments arranged here in four chapters: the development of a folk repertoire and conceptions of tradition, the physical and temporal structures of folk events, the social environment, and the ways the sounds of folk singing are produced. A variety of theoretical approaches to the concept of 'community' are applied to these phenomena, including imagined community, symbolic community, moral community, communities of practice, communitas and the role of individualism within the group.

This research shows that, although 'community' is not a term routinely applied by folk singers to their activities, interpretations of the term are evident in their behaviours. I have found the boundary of community within this context to be a fluid concept and the core of community to be based on individual perception. The ideological, organisational and social environments found in folk singing events suggest the capacity for open access and inclusivity, however, a relatively stable group of practitioners has developed and the resulting tacit behavioural norms creates a considerable barrier to participation for newcomers. Attaining the knowledge to fully engage, however, provides participants with a heightened sense of belonging and community is strongly felt precisely because it is difficult to achieve.

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Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

For many people, 'folk singing' suggests romantic visions of rural villagers celebrating calendar customs in the local pub. The contemporary practice, while not conforming to this traditional interpretation, is nevertheless built around notions of community. Although folk singers do not tend to apply the term to their own social groupings, their activity frequently conforms to various forms of community theory. This provides an interesting field in which to explore the ways in which community is constructed and enacted within contemporary society.

'Community' has been a recurring theme through the various English folk song revivals. Early folk song collectors at the turn of the 19th century cite the industrial revolution and the resulting demise of rural communities as an impetus for their activities (as discussed by Boyes 1993). Subsequently, a body of material described as 'folk song' emerged. This contains implicit associations with idyllic rural communities and is used as a marker of lost society. This material is commonly viewed as beyond authorship or ownership – a music belonging to the people.

The second major revival in interest in folk songs in England occurred in the 1960-70s. Fuelled by the political climate, especially links with socialist ideas and organisations such as CND (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) and the WEA (Workers Education Association), folk song clubs were established in many cities and major towns throughout England. The emphasis here was for music made by and for the working class. The movement promotes egalitarian performance rights and rejects the hierarchies perceived within the music industry (as discussed by MacKinnon 1993:21-32). Consequently, two key features developed – contributions from singers with varying levels of ability, and periods of mass participation.

Though there are many contradictory elements to these two folk song revival movements, together they influence the activity structures and ideology behind much contemporary folk singing. Building on the folk song club structure which originated in the 1960s revival, folk clubs and festivals have developed nationwide. These are supported by a specialist media and recording industry advocating the performance and reception of folk songs.

The interaction of singers between numerous events creates connections beyond distinct clubs and this network of activity has become commonly termed 'the folk scene', creating a distinct musical genre.[1]

The particular combination of political ideals, social engagement and musical practice which underlies the ideology of the folk scene has made it home to particular kinds of events and types of people. This structure however, contains a curious contradiction: a music that belongs to the people and an activity that provides equal access to all has become bound within a conceptual musical scene distinct from other musical forms. This paradox raises a number of questions, which form the central themes of this thesis:

- How do the boundaries of this community operate?
- How are differences and conflict addressed within the structure of this musical community?
- How does a social scene that purports to be inclusive enact excluding policies?

More centrally, and perhaps less sceptically,

- How is a sense of community created and enacted through participation in folk singing?

The purpose of this thesis is twofold: to document and analyse the social and musical practices of contemporary English folk singers and to theorise about a relationship between musical participation and community construction. The principal aim, to investigate how folk singers identify themselves within a broader social body and how this body functions as a community, has involved analysis of participants' opinions about their activities within a musical community. For this, I utilised a qualitative approach based on the grounded theory method. The secondary aim was to consider the implications of my findings from the context of folk singing for current debates on community, music and folklore. This has involved a critical examination of concepts of social and musical interaction in the light of current discourse. Through this thesis, I hope to contribute to these interrelated fields by testing the usefulness of existing and emerging theoretical frameworks relating to these concepts.

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[1] 'Scene' is a contentious term within the literatures of sociology and music; how I employ the term throughout the thesis should have been explained by the end of this chapter.

'Folk' and 'community', two of the key terms found throughout this study, have problematic histories and deserve preliminary explanation. They are both widely used terms with a variety of applications differing markedly between those discussed within academia and those in general usage.

The label of 'folk' has historically been applied to differing sectors of society and their artistic outputs often targeting primitive or rural contexts. Work in the field of folklore has attempted to expand these delimitations, however, when Alan Dundes states that 'the term "folk" can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor' he raises problems for researchers in the area of folk music scholarship (1965:2). The meanings associated with its earlier usage have permeated contemporary practice and the term's meaning in contemporary vernacular.

The 'folk' studied in this thesis share a musical behaviour, but a complexity arises as this behaviour is bounded by their participation in activities that are described as 'folk'. In this context, the term 'folk' is applied to a body of material collected at a time when a particular stratum of society was labelled 'the folk'. The contexts for the re-performance of this material became known as 'folk clubs' and 'folk festivals'. Other songs performed in these settings have become absorbed into the category of 'folk song', including genres of protest song and some contemporary song writing.[2]

Following the practice of using participants' own vernacular in academic writing (Pitts 2005:12), I use the term 'folk' throughout the thesis in the way the participants in my study use it: to define a particular type of music and its performance context rather than following academic usage established in the field of folklore.

My use of the term 'community' is less straightforward to justify as it is incorporated within my analysis as a research tool to investigate various applications of the concept. Suffice to say here that I veer away from the style of classification that delimits on the basis of those who inhabit a geographically defined area, and favour approaches that involve delimiting groups through common practice. In this way I use the term 'community' to describe groupings of people, following a similar classification system as

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[2] Issues surrounding the establishment of this repertoire are further investigated in Chapter 3.

those succeeding Dundes who utilise the term 'folk'. This is not the only application of the term, however, and I take into account the idea that community can be of different kinds and can exist at different levels, and that these kinds and levels may come into conflict with one another. I undertake a more detailed exploration into academic uses of the term 'community' in Section 1.3.1 later in this chapter. This thesis presents an ethnomusicological view of contemporary English folk singing through the lens of various academic approaches to the concept of community.

1.1 Introduction to the field and theoretical perspective

Folk singing in England occurs in a number of distinct contexts including (though not exclusively) folk clubs, singing sessions and folk festivals, as well as less event-oriented structures such as the recording industry and representation in regional folk magazines and specialist websites. This complex of events contains micro-communities that may be more narrowly geographically identified, though these are not bounded as people often travel considerable distances to participate in specialist activities. Individuals create their own musical 'pathways' (Finnegan 1989) through the available resources generating a social network, internally described as 'the folk scene'.[3]

Defining a field of research within such an interrelated body of people and events raises problems for applying the label of a single 'community' to a group of people. This highlights the trend towards studying by phenomena rather than by geography, an approach described by Helena Wulff (2003) in her study of Irish dance events. Wulff found the subject of her study occurred in 'multi-local' locations resulting in the need for non-traditionally ethnographic approaches to field definition. This involves engaging in short periods of field work as the sites of research are temporarily formed and a technique of trying to 'document a process rather than a slice of time, which used to be the case in traditional fieldwork' (2003:122). I have been further

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[3] The English folk scene includes a variety of art forms including folk dance, music, song, theatre and performance poetry. This study looks only at the singing activity within this complex.

influenced by Dorothy Noyes' approach to the organising concept of
networks:

> [T]he network as both field procedure and organising
> metaphor is better adapted than more bounded notions of
> group to get at the social grounding of expressive
> practices. The network lets us get rid of those boundaries,
> so theoretically troublesome, and gives us a structure for
> talking about long-distance and mediated relationships. It
> addresses our concerns with multivocality and complexity
> by understanding actors as both interrelated and uniquely
> positioned agents. (1995:465-6)

This approach to community as a transient concept means that the 'field' is
no longer tied to a geographical location and its inhabitants but rather moves
with individuals through their activity within individual self-defined 'folk'
events to their unique conceptualisation of the 'folk scene'.

To further refine the concept of the field to include the presence of the
researcher, I raise Michelle Kisluik's questions concerning 'What is "the field"
– is it spatially or temporally defined, or defined by a state of mind or attitude,
an openness and readiness to see, to experience, to interpret?' (1997:24).
Rather than seeing the field as based around the participants, Kisluik
suggests the focus is instead placed upon the researcher's motivations,
enquiries, and conceptions.

As the designer of this research project and author of this thesis, I
have made subjective decisions as to the topic under study and the nature of
investigation and interpretation. Beyond this, my life-long involvement as an
active participant in the English folk scene has provided me with a foundation
of knowledge from which to begin the research. As a result of both, I
recognise myself as a central element of this study.

I have been surrounded by folk activities for as long as I can
remember including morris dancing weekends away with my mother and
visits to the folk club with my father as a child. As a teenager, I worked as a
nanny for two families of professional folk performers. Aged 18-20 I lived in
Ireland with a professional folk singer and on returning to England began to
regularly sing publicly myself. I completed a degree in Folk and Traditional
Music at Newcastle University in 2005 and alongside taking the course I
established an a cappella group, *The Witches of Elswick,* performing widely

at nationwide folk clubs and festivals and releasing two commercial albums. At this time I was also a volunteer director of *Three's Company* and *Yorkshire Dales Workshops*, two not-for-profit organisations running participatory folk music and dance events.

Occupying such a subjective position has provided a number of advantages and disadvantages. My existing knowledge of the field and its internal issues enabled me to design useful areas of study early on in the research. My existing opinions on the subjects, however, called for an adapted research methodology in order to satisfactorily address the issue of subjectivity. Having close relationships in the field enabled contact to be made with appropriate participants quickly, however, maintaining the quality of these relationships throughout the process of researching required attention. Due to the crossover between my academic, professional and social interests I designed the methodology to enable quality data retrieval in the short-term alongside maintaining long-term relationships. This called for techniques that would allow me to participate as an unobtrusive member of folk singing events whilst taking care not to conceal my research activities from my peers and potential participants. To this end, I employed a multi-method approach to data retrieval. I used a version of the Grounded Theory model as outlined by Straus and Corbin (1990) (further described in the following chapter). This involved the collection of both naturally occurring and elicited data providing a wealth of detail on actual practices and their ideological foundations. This data has been continually viewed during the research through a number of analytical models.

The nature of my inter-disciplinary studentship with supervisors from the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) and the Ethnomusicology section of the department of Music at the University of Sheffield initiated a diverse approach to the subject. Jonathan Stock's (1999) article highlighting the potential for interactions between the fields of ethnomusicology and folk music research further encouraged my movement in this direction, providing confirmation that this approach could help bridge a gap within the scope of the current academic community.

The concept of community is a recurrent theme in this thesis, where it is interrogated from a number of perspectives including imagined community,

communities of practice, community as process, common locality, and moral community. Other theoretical frames through which the data is explored include repertoire construction, tradition, authenticity, leisure management, rituals, verbal and nonverbal social interaction, socio-musical values, individual and group identification, performance constructions, and musical participation. These are sourced from diverse fields including ethnomusicology, (music) sociology, folklore and folk song scholarship. The thesis is cross-disciplinary in nature drawing upon a variety of perspectives to facilitate a diverse enquiry into an under-researched musical field.

This introduction to the field, both musical and theoretical, calls for a clarification of the terms *folk scene* and *folk community*. I use the term scene to describe the musical environment these singers perform and socialise within. It contains the events and people, the media and the musical outputs. People who engage with folk music within the social events are part of, and indeed constitute the folk scene. This echoes Howard Becker's description of *art worlds* with his 'patterns of collective activity' (1982:1), yet this world is not fixed in its constitution and is modified by the practices of its participants. In this way it is a more transient phenomenon as described by Will Straw (2004) in his work on popular music scenes. My second rationale for using the term scene is that it is in common usage by participants to describe their activities and the social network of people and events which tie them together.

In contrast, folk singers do not talk of the 'folk community'. I have applied the term and its various interpretations of this musical activity to generate knowledge about the ways people interact and identify within the environment they perceive as the folk scene. I view community as an experienced phenomenon, exploring the ways it is performed and felt by participants throughout their involvements in folk singing, whereas the scene can be physically mapped (albeit loosely) and is generally conceived as an object in its own right.

1.2 Overview of the thesis

The thesis presents my findings on how contemporary folk singing in England impacts upon participants' sense of community. I look at the phenomenon of folk singing through the theoretical frames described above in four distinct chapters focusing on its conceptual background, the physical and temporal systems at play, social activities and the sonic characteristics of the music. This discussion is preceded by a description of my methodology and followed by my overall conclusions from the study.

Following this introduction, in Chapter 2, I provide an outline of the methodology utilised for the research including explanations for its implementation and ethical issues arising from the project. Due to the variety of academic fields encompassed in this thesis, I have categorised the remaining analytical chapters according to areas of theoretical discussion. In Chapter 3 I further introduce the history and nature of the field under study and situate the project in relation to theoretical approaches to repertoire and tradition. I provide a frame for viewing the construction of repertoires by both individuals and groups and present the complications of viewing tradition within this context where active participation contributes to the creation of such a concept. Theories on the sense of lost community and connections with imagined communities are investigated here.

In Chapter 4 I provide a description of the more concrete physical and temporal constructions of the folk scene including event management and timetabling. Issues of geographical influence (both regional and within the confines of the event space) are investigated along with network theory and the process of ritual. I discuss how a sense of belonging in place is, in part, generated through the activities contained within them. I demonstrate how the organisational features of events impact upon the creation of local and conceptual communities as well as producing barriers to participation.

This is followed by an examination of social constructions in Chapter 5. Here I draw on sociological theory to examine the ways participants in folk singing events interact. I discuss concepts of roles and leisure careers along with the types of relationships found within this context and a description of behavioural norms. I propose that the element of community generated

through common experience and knowledge shapes the social structure of the folk scene creating a framework in which participants feel they belong; I also argue that as socialisation occurs through active participation this can create difficulties for those new to particular social environments.

In Chapter 6, I focus upon music-making activities through the analysis of musical examples and provide connections with the social groupings from which these sounds emerge. This includes examination of the ways sound is organised, particular learning techniques utilised within this communal context and a discussion on the levels of tolerance concerning ability and effort. Here I further highlight the dichotomy between the ideal of open involvement and the necessity of musical socialisation. The relationship between the individual and the concept of community is also explored through the conflicts between individual aspirations and the requisite adherence to group ideals.

I conclude, in Chapter 7, that despite the projected notion of an open and inclusive environment for singing, the folk singing scene has developed many barriers to participation through implicit behavioural norms and modes of interacting. Holding the required knowledge to participate fully in folk singing activities provides singers with a deep sense of community, but the process also enforces feelings of exclusion to those without.

I would like to pre-warn readers from within the folk scene that I have been critical of various aspects of folk singing activities at various times throughout the thesis. This has been necessary in order to address the research questions and intended outcomes of the research. Along with a desire to present the benefits folk singing provides through its social and musical contributions, I feel it is also necessary to explore the potential barriers to participation. Falling attendance is a major concern voiced by many within the folk scene and, although it may appear that I am being negative or over critical of episodes, I am intending to highlight issues that may be addressed for the overall benefit and continuity of this practice which, along with many other singers, I value highly.

1.3 The context for the research

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this research, my journey through the literature has led me to a variety of resources. I have drawn upon concepts, theories and methodology from a cross-disciplinary body of literature to facilitate a diverse enquiry into musical behaviour. Here I review theories about community and music and the ways in which the concepts relate to one another.

1.3.1 Identifying community

Community is a contentious term, both problematic and powerful, yet any clear definition remains elusive. In the field of anthropology, the term has been separated into three categories: common interests between people; a common ecology and locality; or a common social system or structure (Rapport and Overing 2000). However, in dialogue within the cultural disciplines, none of these are used independently and a deeper sense of belonging or emotional connectedness is usually perceptible.

A number of ideas stand out in the literature from social philosophy. First, there is the notion that to be in a *moral community* is to have a concern for one's own integrity and for the well-being of others (Selznick 1992). Secondly, there is a belief that it is required for social relations to be dense within communities, a limited number of people being bound together, sharing beliefs and values, in a set of ties that 'encompass the whole of their lives rather than one or a few aspects' (Daley 1994:xv). Following these schools of thought, community is moral and deep.

This depth of connection, however, is challenged in other circles. These are demonstrated through William Corlett's (1995) use of *communis*, as in 'with oneness or unity', and *communus*, emphasising the 'doing of one's duty'. However, the central premise of Corlett's thesis is the sense of 'community without unity'. Communities may, in fact, as Henry Glassie suggests, be more factious than we might normally recognise them to be, and he questions the extent of assumed unity, describing community as 'a matter of constant negotiation, always shifting, sometimes radically'

(1982:26). This suggests a fluidity and transience of community not often apparent from the other approaches that focus on unity and stability.

From the field of folklore, Victor Turner (1969) argues that community is to be understood in opposition to structure and suggests a view of community in terms of anti-structure moments within society. Turner presents a theory of *communitas* to distinguish a particular kind of social relationship that is not reducible to a fixed spatially specific grouping. He describes communitas as an acute moment of community feeling, allowing the whole of a group to share a common experience.

This approach to viewing community through interaction is reflected in Etienne Wenger's (1998) theory of 'communities of practice' which proposes that we belong to a number of communities simultaneously, encompassing family, work and social groupings. Having defined the specifics of group membership based on active participation resulting in shared knowledge and behaviour with both explicit and implicit markers, Wenger goes on to argue that the boundaries of practice are not simple lines of demarcation, and that a complex social landscape of boundaries and peripheries exists that cannot be considered independently from other practices. Gary Alan Fine (2004) similarly recognises that whenever individuals discover a common focus, and find a time and place to get together, a community forms. In his conception of how small groups function, he finds that:

> Community is one of the central images by which we understand how the world hangs together. Whether real or imagined, community matters. A sense of belonging is the glue that transforms individuals into a group, both psychologically and as a social reality. (2004:171)

Another manifestation of community is found in the romantic echoes of loss and recovery. Nostalgia for a lost community and a desire to find a way back to it is at the fore of Zygmunt Bauman's (2001) approach to the subject. He feels that 'community' stands for the kind of world which is not available to us, 'but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess' (Bauman 2001:3). Others who share this presentation of community as an idealised, imaginary or fictional concept often choose to avoid applying the term to real social interactions. An example of this is

found in Dorothy Noyes' (1995) decision not to entitle her chapter 'community' for the 'Keywords' volume of the *Journal of American Folklore*, instead using 'group' as she felt this was less ideologically loaded. Association with oneness or unity, or imagined ideals evoked by 'community' were avoided; however, an opportunity to address this contentious term within the field of folklore was also lost.

Following criticism for the relabeling of 'subculture' with various terms ('neo-tribe'; 'scene'; 'lifestyle'; 'postmodern subculture'; 'bunde') with little to distinguish them from one another (Hodkinson 2004), I see no reason to avoid the use of 'community' in this thesis. Terms do not take their meaning from an immutable relationship with objective realty, but from their use in discourse. The question of what is a community is an obstinate one to which there is a debate rather than an answer and I hope to advance the debate by means of actively using the term throughout this thesis. I use the term community to describe a feeling of belonging within a group, and occasionally to describe a group within which this feeling is widely felt.

Community, as an idea, has continued to possess both practical and ideological significance for people and there has been a recent upsurge in 'community consciousness', 'community development' and 'community values and works'; as Anthony Giddens notes, 'On each side of the political spectrum today we see a fear of social disintegration and a call for a revival in community' (1994:124). This thesis will contribute to the discourse on the ways community functions within a contemporary musical social context.

1.3.2   The fields of music

Musicology, as an academic discipline, has been dominated by the study of musical texts from the Western art tradition. Various fields have broken away from this, proposing music as a process rather than an object, and it is from this conception of musical scholarship that I approach the current study.

The discipline of ethnomusicology was established utilising ethnographic method to investigate musical concepts in contexts outside Western art music. Like anthropology, the discipline has its origins in assumptions of cultures as whole and bounded. However, the change in

conception from positioning the study of music in its cultural context to music as culture as instigated by Alan P. Merriam (1964) has brought the discipline more in line with other theories of cultural formation and practices. There has been a further shift from viewing cultures as homogeneous to seeing them as multifaceted and shifting entities constructed of individuals (Turino 1993). Perspectives in this field vary between those who perceive cultures as producing music and those who follow the perspective that music produces culture. Along with many contemporary approaches to ethnomusicology, I prefer to take a stance between these polarities and view the two functioning in dialogue.

Turning to how the notion of 'community' has been approached in the field of ethnomusicology I look to the work of Gregory Barz (2006). Barz finds that, although the concept of community is central to many ethnographic studies, it is seldom examined sufficiently. Where explanation does appear, he feels it leads readers to believe that communities are well bounded, well-determined entities. From his own research into Tanzanian Kwayas, however, Barz finds that 'communities are never simple gatherings of people. They are gatherings of people involved in social action, in processes that allow performance to function in the definition of self(selves) within society(-ies)' (2006:29). This view of community as *a social process* as opposed to *a body of people* is similarly found in Burt Feintuch's research into Northumbrian piping sessions (2001:25-6).

This shift in focus from people to processes opens up a new debate within defining the notion of community and Barz questions if he, as a researcher, creates the 'community' of Kwaya ya Upendo in order to elaborate on what is contained within it. This is of particular relevance within the current study where several approaches to folk singing are included within one folk scene and the field is constituted of a fluid number of activities between which I have drawn connections. In order to address this I have attempted to present a variety of activities and perspectives and displayed the connections (and discords) between them as recognised by their participants.

Although ethnomusicological studies offer a wealth of material for comparison, the origins of the field being the study of musics of an 'other'

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culture raises issues. Jonathan Stock and Chou Chiener (2008) address this in their article concerning 'fieldwork at home' where they discuss a variety of issues arising from conducting research within one's own musical culture. Stock and Chou acknowledge that the discipline's methodological (and I would add theoretical) approaches stem from an 'other' perspective and as such can be problematic when attempting to research within 'home' cultures. In an attempt to address this I have looked towards studies of English musical cultures from the field of music sociology.

Tia DeNora (2000) presents an inspiring body of research into the social and psychological effects and uses of music listening in everyday life. Performance studies, however, have tended to focus on professional classical musicians (for example Rink 2002). An exception to this is provided in Ruth Finnegan's (1989) pioneering research into the amateur musical activity in Milton Keynes, and Christopher Small (1998) instigated a shift in thinking with his theory of 'musicking'. A wave of research has followed and a growing body of genre-specific sociological research focusing on amateur musical performance is emerging.

Barbershop singers have been well served with a number of investigations into the social processes within this genre. The American tradition has been documented from two perspectives: Gage Averill (2003) provides a social history of the movement, and Robert Stebbins (1996) looks towards an analysis of the social interactions that occur within the contemporary community. Liz Garnett (2005) combines these approaches providing insights into the barbershop community in Britain.

Although there are substantial differences between the structure of the barbershop genre and that of folk singing, a number of comparisons can be drawn between Garnett's work and my study. I have built on Garnett's discussions about the nature of ritual activity, sense of tradition and identification with a social group to build theory within the folk genre. Stebbins' (2007) research combines a study of barbershop singing with the development of his 'serious leisure' perspective in which he draws connections between participants' depth of involvement and their sense of achievement and belonging. I have employed this theory in Section 5.1

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during my exploration of how folk singers interact with the social structures in which they participate.

A text which has strongly influenced both my theoretical and methodological approach is Stephanie Pitts' (2005) investigation into the value of musical participation. This involves four case studies from within classical music and Pitts' analysis produced a number of themes, describing musical participation as:

- a potential source of confirmation and confidence
- an opportunity to demonstrate or acquire skills
- a way of promoting and preserving repertoire
- an opportunity to perform with others
- a forum for social interaction and friendships
- a way of enhancing everyday life
- a way of escaping from everyday life
- a source of spiritual fulfilment and pleasure

Although Pitts places no specific focus on the concept of community, her insights into the impacts of amateur music making have provided a theoretical frame through which to view the folk genre. Although this work has been influential, Pitts' focus upon the positive values of participation over the barriers to participation has left a gap in the literature and consequently, I have built upon this area in my thesis.

Works published looking at community music as a social entity tend to focus on activities whose ideologies can be traced back to the 'Community Arts' movement of the early 1970s (for example see Everitt 1997; Matarasso 1997; Moser and McKay 2005). However, the newly forming academic field of community music is undergoing conflict about what to include in its remit.

Lee Higgins (2002) calls for adherence to established ideas about Community Music. He specifically does not regard traditional Irish music sessions in a pub setting as a Community Music event, although he acknowledges that this type of music may have developed within the locality and is considered as belonging to the community. For Higgins:

> Community Music should be understood as a group of practitioners actively committed to encouraging people's music making and doing. From my perspective, Community Music is a strategic intervention. Clearly, then, Community Music in the sense I use it here differs significantly from notions of 'music in the community' or

'communal music making' , where these terms are
intended to indicate a community being musical.
(2007:77)

This approach is challenged by Helen Phelan (2008) who calls for a more
inclusive policy. Phelan asks for the question to change from one of what is
(or is not) community music towards investigating the ways community is
expressed through music. This is an approach utilised by the contributors to
the edited volume *Chorus and Community* (Ahlquist 2006) and, although
their field is designated as community choirs and choruses with a remit that
would exclude the folk singing events under discussion here, their approach
to discovering community within musical practice is one I follow.

1.3.3   Understanding folk music

As suggested earlier, English 'folk music' is not a clearly demarcated area
and attempting its definition has been problematic. For this thesis I use the
term in relation to its common usage within a social practice self-defined as
the 'folk scene'. I have studied events that are described as 'folk' in some
way, or otherwise affiliate themselves with this movement through
advertising in the specialist 'folk' press, and the singers who perform in these
contexts.

This definition is often related to the types of material performed or the
organisational factors that govern the running of events. It is clear from the
following discussions that these are not closed categories and there is wide
variation in what individuals understand the term to signify. This social
movement has developed alongside, and at times in conjunction with, a
series of academic interventions which have attempted to define the term.
Cecil Sharp's (1907) initial essay *English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions*
presents a romanticised vision of 'the folk' and of the origins of folk song
being lost in time. The suggestion that folk song was somehow natural was
challenged by contemporaries Frank Kidson and Mary Neal (1915), as well
as subsequent scholars (Harker 1985).

A.L. Lloyd's (1969) seminal work presents a view of folk song which
reflects contemporary Socialist perspectives. While he expanded Sharp's

remit from a rural idyll to include songs performed by industrial workers, many of Sharp's original concepts remain in his thesis.[4]   Along with other period-based musical forms, such as Gilbert and Sullivan societies and traditional jazz, there is a high level of amateur scholarly interest in the history of folk song by many of its practitioners. These texts have been widely circulated amongst contemporary folk singers and their dated claims for folk song have remained strong within contemporary musical practice. Meanwhile, within the field of academia, theoretical perspectives have progressed.

The research of folk song material has been approached from a variety of perspectives demonstrated by David Atkinson's (2002) use of literary and folkloristic approaches to his research into the ballad form and Vic Gammon's (2008) recent exploration into the social history surrounding broadsides 1600-1850. The study of folk song performance has undergone similar academic modernisation.

Philip Bohlman's (1988) *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* questions the notion of folk music against Dundes' categorisation of a folk as any group with a shared characteristic. Though his work advances many interesting theories on folk musics, there remains an assumption that an element of long-term tradition or ethnic identification remains a prerequisite for the genre.

A number of studies have appeared which, although not specifically utilising the term 'folk', are following subjects which may be incorporated in Bohlman's outline of the field. Michael Pickering and Tony Green's (1987) volume looking at what they call the 'vernacular milieu' presents a number of studies of performers within everyday social settings. Ian Russell provides a further example in his research into the musical activities of a hunt and of carol singers in South Yorkshire (2002; 2003; 2004). Although these contexts have, in the main, developed independently of the folk song activities under discussion in this thesis, they fulfil an ideal of an authentic folk music for many people and as a result ties have formed with folk revival

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[4] A detailed history of the English folk revival throughout the early-mid 1900s has been provided by Georgina Boyes (1993) outlining the key activists and social movements which have contributed to the development of the contemporary folk scene.

singers. Russell's (2003) findings on the nature of individual involvement in community formation have been of particular interest to this thesis. A further interest from Russell's (2006) work is found in his approach to field method. The long-term relationships he has formed within his field of research have raised questions about authorship and representation and his promotional activities force consideration of the researcher's impact on the field. Russell's concept of field method has been influential in my own study and has affected how I approach and represent participants, favouring the attribution of ideas to named participants and incorporating an element of reciprocity in my work through my continued activities as an event organiser. These have, in the main, provided useful and beneficial impacts. Some issues are described in section 2.5.

Work has been conducted concerning the process of folk revivals including Dave Harker's (1985) take on *Fakesong*, Georgina Boyes' (1993) *The Imagined Village* and Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger's (1983) 'Invented Traditions'. While these propose an interesting view of the development of revived musical (and other) cultures, I feel it is important to recognise that the product of these revivals, in this case the contemporary English folk singing scene, is a legitimate field of study in its own right.

Work in this field broadly falls into two categories: those who look to the commercial performance and recording genre (Sweers 2005), and those focusing on social activity. Although the field of enquiry remains little researched, there are a number of texts which have provided useful insights into the contemporary folk scene.

From these, Niall MacKinnon's (1993) sociological examination of the British folk scene has proved most influential. Although my research has taken place over a decade later, many findings remain true to MacKinnon's and I have attempted to build on these observations and draw comparisons or highlight differences where relevant. My focus on aspects of community also provides a new perspective on the data. MacKinnon's work is rich in observation, but perhaps lacking in theoretical grounding so, where possible, I have attempted to remedy this through comparing developing theory with academic discourse.

Another book-length study of the British folk revival 1944-2002 has been provided by Michael Brocken (2003). Coming from a popular music perspective, this work is a hybrid between the detailed historical work supplied by Boyes (1993) and MacKinnon's sociological perspective. Though Brocken discusses some interesting ideas, they are rarely theoretically grounded and the absence of definitions of often used terms such as 'folkies' makes the work appear highly subjective. Therefore, I have made less use of this publication through my research.

Other work based in the contemporary folk scene tends to concentrate on instrumental music and includes examination of the social and musical ordering of folk music sessions (Stock 2004), and the learning methods employed for folk instrumentalists (Cope and Smith 1997; Cope 2002; Keegan-Phipps 2007).

Comparisons can also be drawn between the English folk singing scene and those of other nations. Ailie Munro's (1984) description of the Folk Music Revival in Scotland mainly discusses the singing element of this tradition highlighting the impact of the American revival on proceedings. Millie Rahn (2001) describes this American folk revival with a focus on the positioning of participants within frames of tradition and authenticity. Helen O'Shea (2006) talks of conflict within the idealised community of Irish traditional music sessions. These studies supply interesting insights into folk music construction through various frames and provide useful comparative data for my discussion of the English folk singing context. The differences bring to light the specifics of the singing environment, a context that is currently under-represented within this new wave of instrumental-based research.

Highlighting the coherence between this growing number of studies strengthens the developing discourse where it has previously been felt that articles appeared in isolation. The influx of work within the field of contemporary folk music revivals since the turn of the century demonstrates the growing academic interest in this form of musical activity. Coupled with the recent formulation of a Folk and Traditional Music BMus at Newcastle University and a BA in Traditional Musics with Folklore at the University of Sheffield, the need for a developing body of literature and theoretical thinking

within this field is paramount. This thesis provides an ethnomusicological record of the current practice of folk singing in England, providing a comparative work against which to measure MacKinnon's earlier sociological findings. The particular emphasis on how the activity creates a sense of community for its participants contributes to the current discourse on fractured communities and the impacts of leisure in society.

2 Methodological and ethical considerations

I have based my study around Strauss and Corbin's (1990) Grounded Theory method, building knowledge and analysis in tandem throughout the research process. In this chapter, the methods I use to combine my knowledge as an existing participant in the field with generating new knowledge for the purposes of this research are explored, along with an introduction to the participants of the study. Particular emphasis is placed on my experience of gaining consent due to my problematic positioning as a participating researcher.

2.1   Epistemological stance

As I have approached this study from a position of knowing a great deal about the field before commencing the project, I have continually questioned the nature of knowledge and the authority of individual perspectives. I recognise that my personal experience of participation provides a deep, but narrow perspective on the subject. Whilst this was a concern in the early stages of this work, many scholars who have influenced my research design have faced similar issues (Smith 1987; Chou 2002a; Garnett 2005). Stock and Chou (2008), in particular, discuss the benefits and disadvantages of conducting research 'at home' and provided reassurance that I have pursued a legitimate and rewarding mode of enquiry.

My involvement with the organisation of a number of folk events has given me insights into the tasks involved, and enabled me to adopt an empathetic stance when discussing this with other organisers. My experience as a touring performer has given me the opportunity to observe the same actions in a number of different folk club, or festival contexts. Through this, I have been able to compare events and recognise typical folk club behaviours. Having a working knowledge of many aspects of the folk scene (as organiser, performer and audience member) meant I was able to recognise idiosyncrasies and delve deeper into individual elements of the scene rather than spend my research time gaining a basic understanding.

Although I feel I hold a deep knowledge base on this subject, however broadly I cast for information, I do not believe that ethnographies, case studies, or any other form of research can tell the 'truth' about a culture. My ideas have altered during the period of research, and the supply of contradictory statements from participants supports this fluidity of perspective. I make no claims of truth, and attempt instead to present a number of perspectives on the various subjects under discussion.

2.2   Participant recruitment and consents

As an active singer in the field under study, I regard myself as a core participant in the research. However, the majority of the data collected for this thesis is based on the experiences and perspectives of others. These 'others' fall into two categories; those who were engaged in their normal activity at events I attended and those who agreed to participate in various additional data retrieval methods.

The first category includes those I have come into contact with through my 'normal' singing activities, and some events I attended specifically for the purposes of this research. This includes singers from a number of Sheffield based events: Raise the Roof folk club, The Kelham Island Singing Session, Folk at Home, Royal Folk, The Hollybush Folk Club and Rivelin Folk. This observational knowledge bank is not limited to the three years of active research for this thesis, but has been on-going throughout my 30-year long involvement in folk singing. Notable participants in this category include long term and short term attendees of the Bacca Pipes folk club, Keighley (1990-2008), song session goers at The Half Moon, Oxford (2001-2008), and singers from The Cumberland Arms, Newcastle (2000-2005). As described above, my activity as a professional performer also brought me into contact with a large number of other folk clubs and festivals on a less regular basis and these interactions have further enhanced my knowledge on the activities of others within the wider folk scene. These participants range in age from early 20s to Late 60s, with the majority falling in the 50+ bracket. All events contain both male and female

singers and attendees; however there is an overall majority of male performers.

Recruitment of the second category of participants was conducted on a more localised scale through appeals for volunteers at events that are labelled as 'folk' within the Sheffield area. Having built relationships within the local folk scene I was in a position to ask those with authority over particular events for permission to present my research and call for volunteers; this was universally granted. In order to broaden the field of research I visited events I did not normally attend as a singer to recruit participants. These appeals generated 48 responses representing a variety of participant roles including audience members, organisers and professional and amateur singers. They also cover a range of depth of involvement including some new to folk singing and others for whom it has been the mainstay of their social and/or professional lives for many years. There were 20 female and 28 male participants and, although I did not specifically ask for their ages to be divulged, I estimate they span a range of mid 20s to 60s, the majority being in their 50s. I prepared a consent form for each person who agreed to participate in one or more of the data retrieval tasks that required involvement beyond their normal singing activity. From this participant pool, 27 people returned diaries, 16 attended the focus group and 7 people were interviewed.[5] Numerous others have contributed through the informal means of email correspondence and face-to-face conversation in non-interview contexts.

After a year of conducting research I approached the organisers of three events I regularly attend for permission to record their meeting using a digital audio recording device. 'Raise the Roof' is a public monthly singaround-type folk club who book guests twice a year and actively encourage chorus songs. They meet in a private upstairs room of The Red Deer pub, Sheffield and attendance can vary from between 15-40 people and both singers and non-singers sit together. An MC orders the performance which contains an interval for people to replenish their glasses. 'Folk at Home' is an invite-only group of around 20 singers who meet roughly

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[5] A list of these participants along with the data retrieval methods in which they participated can be found in Appendix 1.

monthly at various members' houses around Sheffield. They encourage the performance of songs that might not be accepted elsewhere, such as long ballads or works in progress. The host usually orders performance and they break in the middle for drinks, nibbles and socialising. The 'Kelham Island Singing Session' meets monthly in a public room in The Kelham Island Tavern, Sheffield.[6] There is no MC, structured interval or explicit rules on the repertoire though they ban the use of all instruments. Although there is no explicit organisational system, the session is perceived to be led by members of the local semi-professional instrumental and vocal harmony band, *Crucible*. This event attracts considerably younger participants than either of the former. Attendance ranges from around 10-25 participants.

Two of the three organisers I approached consulted their regular members before agreeing to my recording, while one organiser agreed outright with no consultation of the other singers. The semi-public nature of events meant that permission could not be sought from everyone likely to attend in advance so before I commenced recording in each of these environments I introduced myself and the research I was conducting. In each case I invited objections, but as none were forthcoming I proceeded without seeking any further consent.

I considered preparing written consent forms for all attendees, as this would be useful for defining future uses of the material. However, I felt that making a recording in these contexts was intrusive enough, and to further interfere with proceedings through the formality of gaining signatures would be prohibitive. I was also undecided as to the extent of consent needed for these purposes. Would just the lead singers need to complete a form for 'their' songs, or would those contributing the odd chorus also have to comply? If someone refused to sign, would that render the whole recording unusable? I could find no definitive guidance on this within the literature so, in order to avoid such complications and intrusions, I decided upon a system of assumed informed consent. I have sought explicit written consent from

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[6] It is not the main bar, but other punters have to pass through the room to access the outside smoking area and coffee machine. People not intending to attend the singing session are often in the room at the start of the singing event and can remain throughout.

lead singers after the event for material I want to use in forms beyond the thesis.

As the research progressed and the focus of my research narrowed, I sought richer detail from specific people and I have therefore not collected a comparable amount of material from all participants. Trends have been identified where appropriate, but I have frequently illustrated points from individuals' perspectives rather than attempting to be broadly characteristic. The nature of my changing relationship with participants from fellow singer to researcher and other ethical issues arising from conducting the research will be discussed in Section 2.5 towards the end of this chapter.

2.3   Data retrieval

As Stock and Chou note, 'a writer's reliance on a base of experience accumulated prior to a training in the full niceties of ethnomusicological fieldwork can raise questions as to how far the account represents wider realities in the society in question' (2008:118). In order to provide a variety of perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation I have built from my previously held ideas about folk singing through a multi-method approach to data collection. This includes the traditional ethnographic method of participant observation alongside tools gleaned from sociological approaches to researching music. This has provided sufficient data to employ a system of triangulation in a further attempt to avoid the (unconscious) manipulation of results by the researcher (Davidson 2004).

I utilised three main data retrieval systems: participant observation, diary and focus group. Interviews, personal communication, audio recording and documentary sources supplemented these. There follows a description of the models used for each method including details of their development and application.

Participant observation can be conducted in a number of forms, producing differing data depending upon the starting point of the researcher, commonly termed insider and outsider perspectives. Although I have a deep personal understanding of folk singing, my involvement with the Sheffield scene is relatively recent and I therefore have limited knowledge of localised

practices. This places me in the interesting position of being an 'outsider' within a context whose general structures I am familiar with and, as such, I am well placed to notice idiosyncrasies within this environment, highlighting what are localised or more widely spread practices. Further, as my relationships developed within the Sheffield scene over the past three years, I have been able to make observations from a number of stages between being an outsider to becoming an insider in particular contexts.

Whereas researchers usually undergo a process of transition to become a participant, I have undergone the transition to become an observer. I anticipated that this would involve periods of participating naturally, and periods of acting as a researcher, an approach followed by Garnett (2005). However, in practice I felt I was always myself and found, both in the field and when considering it away from the music-making context, that I could not separate my opinions or behaviours so clearly. Some of the participants in my study, however, seemed to prefer the division of my roles and people's behaviours towards me changed when I displayed any outward display of data collection.

From previous experience of folk singing events I felt that taking photographs or making audio recordings during events would be disruptive and decided to limit this type of activity; I expected that note taking would be acceptable. In practice, however, I found that this also created a barrier between myself and other participants, serving as a constant reminder that I was researching and raising suspicions about what I was writing. I ceased this as a general practice preferring to make notes away from the event.

In order to collect data directly from events I asked permission to conduct 'intrusive' fieldwork at one meeting of each of the three events described above. This approach worked well, as participants understood the limitations of my activity and did not feel their meetings were being excessively disrupted. I also found that note taking in conjunction with recording seemed to raise less suspicion than note taking alone.

For the purposes of my analysis, it would have been useful to have used more complex recording techniques utilised elsewhere such as multi-tracked recordings (Arom 1991) or video recordings (Qureshi 1995). However, I felt these methods would have caused considerable disruption,

both physically and psychologically to the normal functioning of events. I recorded events in audio form using an Edirol R-09 with internal stereo mics, and stored as 16 bit 44.1 kHz .wav files. Still images were taken using a Canon Powershot A510 3.2 mega pixel camera and stored as .jpg files. These technologies were selected for their high technical specification whilst remaining small enough to minimize intrusion.

To increase my collection of visual material I supplied some participants with disposable cameras and asked them to take pictures of the events they attended. The intended benefit of this approach was to dissipate the power base from me as the researcher to limit intrusiveness. A surprise benefit, however, was found in the generation of a body of images portraying what participants felt was of interest rather than those based on my own assumptions. The quality of these images was low due to the technological specifications of the cameras and therefore of little use in publicly presenting results. However, the material was nevertheless valuable for analysis.

In order to gather knowledge of the extent of individuals' involvement with folk singing beyond the limits of individual events I chose to conduct a time-based study. John Sloboda et al (2001) conducted research utilising an 'experience sampling method' which involved participants being bleeped at intervals to instigate note-making of any music they were, or had recently been, listening to. While this approach would provide real time data, it seems less useful when studying timetabled events and I instead opted for a diary based method.

In ethnomusicology, diaries have long been used by researchers to record their observations in fieldnote form. Their use as a tool to generate data directly from participants however, is relatively new. The form has received praise and criticism from the fields of sociology and psychology.

Jane Davidson (2004) claims that an investigation which asked children to keep diaries provided more accurate detail about their level of activity in instrumental practice than was provided when they were questioned retrospectively. In contrast, Robson (1993) suggests there is the risk that entries may be biased as participants either report their behaviour more extremely, or moderate their behaviour in an effort to satisfy the research. The diary method could therefore be seen as a dubious form of

data retrieval used alone, but as some of these issues can be addressed through interview or participant observation, I incorporated the tool into my varied methodology.

Pitts (2005) has used diaries to monitor the activity and views of members of a week-long residential course through asking participants to make a note of their activities and respond to set questions. I ran a two week trial during April-May 2007 with 8 participants involving two diary designs based on this model provided by Pitts. The design was modified and the main diary project involved 27 participants maintaining a diary for two months from 1st October – 31st November 2007.[7]

Participants contributed varying amounts of data, both in terms of the number of events they attended and the amount of detail in which they described each event. Along with providing a record of activity illuminating the scope and nature of their involvement with folk singing, I found that this method provided useful data concerning the 'critical incident' (Robson 1993). This enabled me to uncover specific happenings that participants considered important, providing a foundation from which to develop in the Grounded Theory style. In this way, diary data was used for quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as identifying areas for future questioning.

These follow-up questions were designed as extensions from information previously supplied and therefore specifically tailored to each participant. Further questioning usually took the form of email correspondence, though occasionally face-to-face informal questioning occurred. I felt uncomfortable approaching people during events to discuss their involvement with the research, or to gather further data, as I feared I would be intruding on their leisure experience. I also felt they would have more time to consider responses away from the event rather than giving 'sound bite' responses that may have been less insightful.

To investigate complex or sensitive subjects I felt interviews would be more conducive and employed this technique to gather data around issues of professionalism. Discouraged from using either of Jackson's (1987:96) 'directive' and 'non-directive' methods as they would produce data extreme in

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[7] See Appendix 2 for the diary model.

either rigidity or lack of focus, I opted for a semi-structured model. I devised a subject scheme and adapted the questions to allow interviewees the freedom to express themselves and their particular situations (Davidson 2004).[8] This was particularly necessary as I included participants from a range of perspectives: two professional musicians, four semi-professional musicians, and one non-professional (2 female; 5 male); all were Sheffield residents.

As the data sought was not specifically influenced by time-based issues such as preparation for performance I felt little benefit would be gained from a contextual approach. I gathered this data in participants' homes rather than other leisure singing contexts as I did not want to intrude upon interview participants' (or other singers') social experiences and felt this would provide a non-threatening atmosphere. To further avoid a situation where participants may feel interviews are test-like and struggle to find the 'right' answer (Stock 2004), I conducted these in a style as close to natural discourse as possible.

A further form of data collection was designed in order to maximise the opportunity to gain a variety of perspectives from within the folk scene and not mould participants' responses to my own frame of thinking. This involved a focus group approach in which I contributed little and the participants discussed themes amongst themselves.

The model was based upon a design by Krueger (1988) and involved fifteen participants (7 male and 8 female) and conducted at Whitby Folk Week 2007.[9] At the start of the 1 hour 45 minute session, individuals were asked to reflect on their experiences of folk singing communities and write down key words or phrases. Each then fed these back to the group along with some introductory biographical detail. This was useful both as a tool to generate thinking and as a warm up exercise to encourage free speaking. Participants then wrote key words and phrases on a form containing four headings (prepared in advance by myself) and group discussion was held for each particular heading. A general discussion and any other reflections were

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[8] See Appendix 3 for the interview frame.
[9] This is a week long, annual festival of folk song, music and dance held in various locations around the town of Whitby, North Yorkshire. For more details see http://www.whitbyfolk.co.uk.

invited in the last 10 minutes of the session.[10] The session was recorded and transcribed and the key-word sheets were collected.

This approach has the benefit of allowing debate between participants and identified individual and consensus opinions, enabling people with differing opinions about a subject to highlight areas of agreement and disagreement. Individual opinion could be seen on the initial written sheets, and how the following discussion altered perceptions could be monitored. It also enabled a more detailed exploration of points which would be left undisclosed through comparing two contradictory responses in the diary form as the participants had the opportunity to question each other's perspectives and explain their own positions. Although the method was undemanding in terms of preparation, recruitment or time commitment (for either researcher or participant), it was particularly illuminating for this study.

Along with the above-mentioned forms of humanistic data collection I also consulted documentary and archival resources. Regional and national folk music publications in the form of paper based magazines provide an insight into current internal discourses (through editorials and letters pages) and the ways in which participants within the scene communicate with one another (through event advertisements and reviews). How folk is presented in the wider press was also monitored.

The internet provides another resource through which folk singers communicate and I monitored the activities within various chat-rooms and online discussion groups. There is, however, a tendency for these formats to present extremist ideas, and as such, I have made little use of opinions gained from this exploration within the thesis.

Throughout this research I have found great warmth of feeling and a general enthusiasm to contribute to the project. A similar phenomenon was described by Garnett in her study of barbershop singers and she felt this was attributable to their desire to explain themselves and make excuses for what they do (2005:9). I have the impression that folk singers similarly want other people to understand their activities and to be represented alongside other musical genres as a form of legitimisation for their art; a factor that helpfully

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[10] See Appendix 4 for the focus group model.

facilitated my data gathering and has made conducting this research particularly enjoyable.

2.4 Data analysis and presentation

To analyse the data I employed a version of grounded theory as set out by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990). This method assists in the process of building or adapting theories through providing techniques for sorting and analysing data to reveal patterns and meanings. A key element of the method dictates that data is incrementally collected and simultaneously analysed and that theories are built and tested during the process. This process inevitably began from the questions I generated as the focus for the research, but themes became more participant-led as the data gathering and analytical process progressed:

> One does not begin with a theory, and then prove it.
> Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is
> relevant to that area is allowed to emerge. (Strauss and
> Corbin 1990:23)

This further combated the potential to emphasise my own presumptions and personal perspectives on the phenomena during analysis as I relied on the data collected from other participants as the basis of emerging themes.

I inputted all text-based data into the Atlas.ti 5.5 computer programme. This is a workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual and multimedia data. Inputting each piece of data as a Primary Document enabled me to attach descriptive codes to selected quotes. I then worked at code level grouping related codes into families and themes and noting developing trends. The programme provides the flexibility to group related fragments of data and build theoretical models through identified relational ties.

This approach aided the triangulation system (Denzin 1978) as a number of different data sources describing the same phenomenon could be viewed simultaneously, highlighting the depth of occurrence and producing a marker of validity. Issues arose, however, where there were conflicts in the data and the neatness of a supposedly supported assertion did not fit with the contradictions found in real world empirical data. Issues arose through

conflicting opinions being provided by different participants or through contradictory responses in different data forms from the same participant. Atlas.ti aided understanding of this process by drawing links between complementary and conflicting codes to highlight where these discrepancies occurred to enable either further questioning to take place for clarification, or to ensure the variety of perspectives within one theme were clearly presented.

While the Atlas.ti programme helped manage the quantity of information in a systematic way, it also produced analytical barriers. I found it important to conduct discourse analysis as guided by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as language does not reflect reality in a straightforward way. Quotations chosen for their literal meaning could lead to misunderstandings of their contextual meaning. To avoid this, I cross-referenced quotes with their original data source and wrote memos for potentially controversial material. The quotes utilised to support this thesis were selected after this process had been completed.

To place the data within a wider frame, I recognise the connections between my data analysis from this project and the literature from relevant academic fields. Here my approach differs from Strauss and Corbin's as they avoid researching the literature until data analysis is complete. As previously stated, I do not believe that *a* truth is derived from the data, and rather that what emerges is a result of my interpretation as analyst. I found incorporating ideas from the literature during the analytical process provided useful leaps in theoretical thought.

I should also highlight the Atlas.ti programme's reliance on the items of data (interview transcriptions/dairy responses etc.) for evidence and the potential to neglect phenomena recorded in other forms (for example, the literature, researcher's memory, images or recordings).[11] While I coded my detailed fieldnotes of the recorded events, it was impractical to incorporate every thought (either that I have ever had or during the three years of conducting research) on the phenomenon into the Atlas.ti programme as

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[11] The programme does facilitate the inclusion of images and recordings within the system of PDs, however, I took the decision that coding these was inefficient for the current study and preferred to cross reference through memos and written notes.

Primary Documents. To ensure this data was incorporated into the theory building process, I produced a series of memos on various themes, providing a space to incorporate my own developing ideas and reflections against the hard evidence from other participants.

This process proved particularly useful to aid the clarity between what I thought and what I had external evidence for, and the constant revision and redrafting of memos in the light of newly gathered data served to aid my thinking about certain phenomena. This provides another link between the two influential methodological approaches of sociology and ethnology for this thesis.

From the field of ethnomusicology, the centrality of field notes as a research tool was established by John Blacking (Discussed by Reily 1998). The process has been extended to include the practice of analysis through writing by Gregory Barz (1997; and republished in edited form in Barz and Cooley 2008) where he introduces the concept of using fieldnotes as process tools to organise thought rather than as fixed records of fact. Following this perspective, I present this thesis as a point in time of the analytical process. This is not the only form in which I will present data from this research project, nor have I reached the end of my learning. While every effort has been made to develop theories to a useful stage, I do not intend this thesis as the final point on my journey to discovery within the field. As such, I will now address a few points on the presentation of material in this thesis.

As my focus solidified throughout the Grounded Theory process, some data was omitted from detailed analysis for this thesis. On a large scale, this includes diary responses from participants who did not attend any events which were self described as folk during the diary period; on a smaller scale, data unrelated to the final subjects discussed in the thesis were omitted. This process was affected by two factors: the depth of significance within the collected data (i.e. the number of references to the phenomena uncovered by the Atlas.ti coding technique) and my own editorial decisions based on relevance to my research interests. I have also used my editorial powers in the ways I present findings. Where possible, I have provided quotations from data sources to corroborate my analysis. However, due to

issues of discourse analysis outlined above I have tried to avoid the facade of a 'cut and paste' technique.

Jonathan Stock (2004) emphasises that, as researchers, we have a responsibility to those we are representing in our outputs. As mediators, we need to take into consideration the impact our publications have on the communities under investigation. On the other hand, he is keen to make it clear that we also have a responsibility to our audiences and to present material in an accurate and representative manner – not to be solely the 'mouthpiece of our informants' (Stock 2004:30). In developing a model for fieldwork practices Ian Russell (2006) also raises the issue of research outputs being affected by intimidation by informants. For Russell, this can be in the form of acquiescing to their desires or avoiding presenting material which the researcher feels to be significant, but which may cause personal offence to participants.

To avoid these difficulties I have endeavoured to present my opinions alongside the views of individuals as transparently as possible. Where I have felt it pertinent to discuss potentially problematic issues I have taken the mouthpiece and presented my own opinions on the subject based on the wider data rather than attributing volatile material to other individuals. This has involved a process of reflexivity and an attempt to make my standpoint explicit enabling readers to reach their own conclusions (Kisluik 1997:23-44).

I have also tried not to shun potentially divisive subjects: as an example of this, the nature of the question concerning barriers to participation constitutes one such area. I have, however, attempted to deal with such subjects sensitively within this thesis and would further consider the implications of presenting these subjects in other forms and to other audiences.

To help remind me that the quotes I utilise come from real people and represent real people's opinions I have retained the use of participants' real names. This also serves as a reminder that anonymity is not possible in this close-knit context where individual cases are easily identifiable.[12] Where

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[12] This was explained when seeking consent from participants.

direct quotes are presented, participants' names are preceded by the collection method as this may have implications for understanding the data.[13]

Another language related issue is the decision whether to use vernacular terms found within the field of study or those employed in academic discourse. Examples here include 'performer' or 'singer'; 'instrumentalist' or 'musician'; 'melody' or tune'. I have generally used the terms found within the field, variation being for coherence when referencing cited literature. Related to this is the naming of songs. Where possible, I have used the titles of songs as provided by the singers themselves either during performance or in their diaries. Where the singer has provided no explicit title I have inserted my own.

A final terminology issue is the use of pronouns. As I am an active folk singer and participant within the scene under investigation it would seem appropriate to use 'us' and 'we'. However, as I was attempting to distance myself from my own assumptions I found it clearer to write in terms of 'them' and 'they'. Further to this I have found myself writing in different registers depending upon the nature of material being presented (i.e. theoretical argument; personal experience) reflecting the view that the writer's identity is not a singular authoritative figure and is capable of shifting depending upon the context of writing.

Within this thesis, I have included a number of figures following different styles of sonic representation. These are intended to illustrate particular musical features and not document the full extent of musical performance. I recognise the limitations of graphic representations of music and so have included an audio CD with featured examples so readers may listen to the various phenomena under discussion.[14]

As indicated above, the outcomes of this research project are not limited to this thesis alone. While academic papers and journal articles may arise, a further impact I should like to draw attention to is in the ways in which it has impacted upon my activities as a participant within the field. The impacts of research upon the research context have been discussed

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[13] D=Diary, FG=Focus Group, FN=Field Notes, I=Interview, PC=Personal Communication (predominantly via email). For example (D~Bob) = Method of data collection – Diary; Participant – Bob Butler.
[14] See page vi for a list of the contents of the enclosed CD.

(Shelemay 1997), and along with the possible negative implications a more positive approach to 'giving back' or 'knowledge transfer' has also been explored (Sheehy 1992; Keil 1998). During the research period I have run a singing group aimed at introducing university students, staff and the general public to group folk singing through a process of taught workshop followed by singing sessions. Along with my partner, I have also recently started a singers' club in our local pub following a format not found within current Sheffield events. While it is too early to tell the impacts of these projects, ideas that have developed through the process of undertaking this research have affected the ways in which I approach both ventures.

2.5   Issues arising from the methodology

Although the methods utilised to conduct this research project were broadly successful and the variety of approaches ensured weaknesses in one tool were compensated for in another, a couple of issues arose that should be discussed further.

Firstly, my use of the term 'community' in the early stages of fieldwork affected participant's responses. This was particularly noticeable in the focus group where many participants used the term to describe their activities and the groups in which they participate in ways I did not expect from my previous engagement with the scene (for example, 'my folk singing community' where I would have expected 'my folk club'). I subsequently used the term more selectively during interviews and personal communications. This had a notable impact upon the ways participants phrased their responses when compared to the focus group data. However, as much of the participant recruitment was carried out before this change in policy it may have affected the nature of information participants felt relevant to divulge. I have addressed this through periods of intensive observation in areas where I have identified this could affect the research findings, for example the nature of relationships as discussed in Section 5.3. While 'community' is a key element of my research question, I have approached this area through the literature, rather than seeking participants' reflections on community as a concept.

The necessity to gather data from newcomers to folk singing provides a second issue. A study from the perspective of music sociology would suggest taking participants who have never been to a folk singing event and monitoring their expectations and experiences. The necessity of long-term involvement within the folk scene to become an active member of the group dictates a longer term process to be monitored – above and beyond reasonable expectations of a research participant. From an ethnomusicological perspective such a one-off method with isolated participants seems incongruous and a sociological method too far. To gather newcomer experience I encouraged some people who I knew were relatively new to attending folk singing events to complete the diary project and asked longer term participants to reflect on their experiences both as newcomers to the scene as a whole and as participants in new events they had not previously attended.

This method only generates data from people currently participating in the folk scene and omits the experiences of those who found the barriers to participation too cumbersome. In my defence, the experiences provided by active participants were diverse and the folk scene has many facets. Many found complete barriers to certain events and chose not attend for a variety of reasons. The experiences of relatively new practitioners therefore shed some light on barriers to participation, though further investigation with those who stopped attending might also be useful in a future project.

A third issue arose when listening back to the audio recordings as my vocal appears most prominently. This is due to a combination of my decision to use an unobtrusive table-top recording method and my active participation. Although single point recording inevitably results in volume differentiation between those closest and those furthest away from the device, for future recordings I would further consider the implications of microphone positioning.

Whilst this research project was deemed low risk by the University of Sheffield's ethics committee and passed its review procedure, there were a number of ethical considerations not yet discussed that affected the research. Attaining consent from participants was a key issue. Gaining permission for people to be actively involved in the diary, interview and focus

groups was relatively straightforward and consent forms were produced, but the less clearly defined method of participant observation proposed some problems.

Although I recognise it was not viable for me to gather signed consent from everyone I witnessed during the course of this research, I do not want to risk accusations of covert research. I made it publicly known that I was conducting a research project in the field of contemporary folk singing and while my public interaction was ostensibly for the purpose of recruiting participants, I also used it as an opportunity to alert others to the research. This was achieved through two means: letters to regional and national folk magazines outlining the research and making public announcements at events. Though people learned of the generic research project there was confusion as to the detail of what I was researching and when, an issue raised by Georgina Born (1995:89). Some people appeared suspicious of me and appeared anxious that they would feature in my work without having given consent. To an extent, this is substantiated, as all my activities (whether explicitly labelled as research or not) have contributed to the thesis. However, I have not used specific singers' names or identifiable examples within the thesis without first gaining explicit consent; where this has not been possible, I have translated the data into general terms.

The change in relationships between myself and some other singers as a result of becoming a researcher also caused some personal problems. Although most people were willing, indeed enthusiastic, to contribute to the research I felt there were some who had issues with my undertaking the project. A status shift was recognised by some and I felt a perception that I thought myself better than others, demonstrated by my self-given role as a spokesperson for the group (Shelemay 1997). Although I do not assume any intrinsic worth over and above my fellow singers, I note that the luxury of having spent a prolonged period researching the phenomenon and my subsequent qualification to discuss it within certain contexts provides grounding for this concern, and it is a position that I am eager not to abuse.

2.6 Conclusions on the methodology

The continually shifting nature of the Grounded Theory method enabled my reflections to develop as new pieces of data were gathered and my interactions with the literature guided me to new areas of investigation. This felt, at times, a haphazard approach and there is a difference in focus between data collected early on in the process and that towards the end. The process has, however, produced a work which is strongly grounded in the data collected from other participants and any of my initial doubts that the thesis would be a product of my preconceptions has been laid to rest.

Incorporating sociological methods into an essentially ethnomusicological study has proved an interesting exercise and produced useful results for ethnomusicologists working in 'at home' situations. While judgements have to be made to ensure the central focus of the study remains an actual musical practice rather than becoming a sociological experiment, this study has shown that techniques such as the diary method and focus group can be utilised to good effect for generating relatively independent data. Further exploration into the possibilities of developing these methodologies within ethnomusicology would be valuable.

The relationships between my fellow singers and participants and myself as a singer and researcher are continually developing. I do not think the process of conducting the research and producing this thesis has created too many ripples in the groups I sing with, or the wider folk scene, however, when the thesis is published a new wave of implications may develop. Although I have taken steps to address potential issues in the presentation of this work, I appreciate that this is an on-going process.

3 The construction of repertoires and tradition

English folk singing is built around a perceived repertoire and sense of tradition. Folk song materials were collected as items of heritage value and the practice of re-performing these songs is closely associated with celebrating traditional practices. As this thesis is concerned with the practices of 'folk singing' it is pertinent to begin with a discussion of what is considered to be 'folk song'. In this chapter, I discuss various aspects of the materials, or 'texts', sung during folk singing events and how perceptions of them contribute to the creation of a sense of community.

I begin with a discussion of repertoires, including how the body of material commonly recognised as the folk genre has developed resulting in a semi bounded social practice. The ways in which group and individual repertoires function within this body are explored demonstrating how material can be used to create group identity and a sense of belonging. The second section describes the longevity of this material and how notions of tradition are perceived within contemporary society. The chapter closes drawing these two themes together in a discussion of the ways new material is incorporated into traditional repertoires and how this serves to continue the tradition of folk singing.

3.1 The construction of repertoires

In order to contribute to this study, participants had to meet the criteria that they were involved in an event that was described by its organisers or attendees as 'folk'. This method of self-definition implies an adherence to a body of folk song material. The limits of this body, however, have proved difficult to clearly establish. Here I discuss the literature concerning the development of this body and definitions of folk song. I then compare this with my findings on how group and individual repertoires function in contemporary folk singing events. This section concludes with a discussion of how particular songs become associated with groups or individuals and the resulting issues of ownership.

3.1.1 The genre of folk

The application of *genre* as an organising concept within folklore studies began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Harris 1995). Around this time, Cecil Sharp (1907) developed an understanding of 'folk song' through his book-length study of the genre. He approached a definition in terms of being 'created by the common people' as opposed to being 'composed by the educated' (1907:4). Elements of this approach have been criticised, but the core of Sharp's definition, based around the principles of communality, continuity, variation and selection, remain central to many academics' and practitioners' working definition of folk song. Sharp's theory adhered to a particular set of contemporary concepts concerning subjects such as authorship and orality.

Due to academic criticism (both at the time of publication and subsequently), and the recognition in the later 20th century that any system of categorisation is ever evolving, there has been revision of what is understood as the folk song genre. Detailed work has been conducted regarding this process (Harker 1985; Boyes 1993), which I do not attempt to reproduce here, but it is useful to recognise a couple of key examples that demonstrate shifts in the perspective. Anonymity and the emphasis on communal rather than individual authorship has been challenged by Frank Kidson (1915) who advocates the recognition of known composers. Albert L. Lloyd (1969) includes urban, industrial workers' songs to expand the remit of the genre, though this categorisation system remains tied to notions of social class. The emphasis on oral transmission and lack of written transcription as a defining marker of traditional material (which has strong links to the folk repertoire) is demonstrated to be problematic by David Atkinson (2004).

Dave Harker (1972; 1985) attacks what he perceives as the bourgeois decontextualisation of material and the editorial privileges employed by collectors and presents a controversial account of folk song collection from a Marxist perspective. While this work has itself not passed without criticism, in terms of both approach and accuracy (Pegg 1987; Bearman 2002), it is helpful to acknowledge Harker's foundational point that the contemporarily

recognised body of folk song has been, and continues to be, engineered through the actions and categorisations of particular folk song advocates.

Although these various progressions have impacted upon the accepted body of folk song for both singers and scholars, the early categorisation devices developed in the context of the specific period in which the genre was established have remained powerful concepts throughout the development of the genre. David Atkinson defends the use of these established categorisation systems as he states (in relation to 'ballads'):

> singers are quite capable of distinguishing different kinds of song, and by now will most probably know what they have come to be called by more than a century of folk song scholarship, and even employ the terminology themselves. (2002:17)

The interface between singers and scholars provides interesting ground within the contemporary folk scene as many singers have an amateur-academic interest in folk song with an awareness of Cecil Sharp and Albert L. Lloyd's works in particular. This results in dated academic theory being enacted through contemporary performance practice. In the meantime, the ways in which the academic community address the phenomena have developed, as Harris observes in relation to the discipline of folklore scholarship:

> folklorists have begun to place less emphasis upon the need to validate an item of folklore through hundreds of years of circulation, countless versions, anonymity of creation, or location of circulation, and turned their attention more to the function of lore within communities. (1995:14-5)

This shows the possibility of a paradigm shift within the field of folk song scholarship. Although there remains an entirely legitimate interest in the historical element of folk song, some scholars are advancing this 'lived' perspective, including Ian Russell's work on contemporary singing by groups such as those associated with hunt songs (2002; 2003), or carol singers in South Yorkshire (2004).

Similarly, Niall MacKinnon's work on the British folk scene moves the discussion away from that of material categorisation and questions 'whether

the survival of the folk scene and folk music is not more connected to the form of performance and the nature of the folk music event than it is to musical content' (1993:96-7). He notes that this would affect the very criteria for defining folk and traditional music, pointing to a definition located in social meaning.

If we follow this argument and define 'folk music' as a repertoire performed by a particular group of people, rather than as a body of historical materials, as posited by Philip Bolhman (1988:57-8), there is immediately a complication as these approaches conflate for the current participants of folk singing.

A third potential 'folk song' categorisation system can be approached through the contexts for production and uses of music rather than by particular people or through the material texts themselves. Millie Rahn writes of the American folk revival that 'singers and audiences alike were more interested in the ideological stance of protest songs than in the musical style or virtuosity' (2001:198). Indeed perceived ideological connotations are often more significant to the listening community than an actual textual meaning and there remains a strong association of folk with a political affiliation and with the use of song to comment.

In an analysis of a singers' night at a live music club from a social psychology perspective, John Smith finds that 'the Glebe environment is conductive to the development of a more critical attitude to song amongst members of the club' (1987:169). Simon Frith further explores the association of folk music with its value structure rather than its material form:

> Folk…did not describe musical production but musical values, and these values were derived from a critique of commercialism: the description of folk creation (active, collective, honest) was in fact, an idealised response to the experience of mass consumption (fragmented, passive, alienating). (1981:160)

Frith suggests that the rock music ideology follows this pattern and could potentially be classed as a folk music. Steve Redhead and John Street, however, highlight that 'the problem of the folk ideology lies not just in its assumptions about actual communities but also about the way music relates to them. For Redhead and Street, folk ideology runs the risk of

misconceiving the politics of music and encourages an overly deterministic – and hence unsuccessful – merging of music and ideas' (1989:183). This association of folk song with critical practices has resulted in the inclusion of demonstration songs and political affiliation of the genre (this will be discussed further in Section 5.2.1).

While these approaches all contain useful categorisation tools, I suggest they have to be viewed collectively in order to reach any useful understanding of the folk genre. A definitive account of which, however, is something I feel is unattainable, hence my leaning on participants usage of the term rather than attempting to impose one through this research. Keith Negus and Roman Velazquez state that '[i]nstead of folk music (or Latin music) being produced by the folk (or people with a Latin identity), the folk (or Latin identities) are produced by and through the music' (2002:137). This is the perspective I take through this thesis, suggesting that the folk singers under study here are bounded in community through the practice of singing an elusive body of songs on which they have placed significance.

3.1.2   Defining the group and individual (through) repertoire

Without a closed definition of the folk song genre then, I proceed with an examination of the body of material actively performed by the participants of this study. These participants, in the main, describe themselves as singers of 'folk songs' and, as such, their perception of 'folk' materials is of vital significance. However, as with the problems identified when attempting an academic definition of the folk song genre, there is variation within the approaches taken by practitioners. In her study of music-making in Milton Keynes Ruth Finnegan notes:

> It is not easy to define precisely the kind of music played in the folk clubs and groups. It varied not only between different groups and clubs, but even at the same clubs on different nights; and it was not fully agreed where the boundaries of 'folk' should be drawn. (1989:65)

This section introduces the types of material various events embrace or reject and the structures placed on repertoire choice within distinct events and for individual singers.

Appendix 5 provides annotated lists of the material performed at four events examined for this research. I have attributed authors, where known, and indicated instrumentation. I have not undertaken independent research into the songs' origins, but additional information supplied by singers themselves preceding the performance has also been listed. While, as Finnegan points out above, these are not complete club repertoires as different material is sung on differing nights, they go some way to demonstrate trends in material selection. These can be differentiated in terms of age of material, national origin and material structure.[15] While none of these trends exclusively guide an event's repertoire, for clarity of understanding, I discuss them independently here.

Some participants in this study were drawn to certain events due to 'the strong traditional bias' (D~Bob) and criticised others for having 'a few too many pop/indie(ish) songs for my purist liking!' (D~Oli). Others explicitly commented on their preference for 'clubs that will allow us to sing contemporary stuff, stuff that isn't what I would class as traditional folk' (D~William). These trends can be seen in a comparison of the material performed at Royal Folk and that of the Kelham Island Singing Session (Appendix 5). It is interesting to note that both those who prefer to sing material they perceive as traditional, and those who consciously shun it recognise the notion of authentic traditional folk song.

The ballad, a song form which is often recognised as the quintessential folk song, is however, often excluded from performance settings (for a discussion of the ballad form see Atkinson 2002). Whilst researching for a magazine editorial, Gavin Davenport asked a group of ballad singers about their activity and a number of comments were made to the effect of how they were not tolerated in many situations (PC~Gavin). While not all ballads are excluded, variants of this song type appear to be disregarded due to their length, unaccompanied delivery style and perceived level of attention needed to 'engage' with the song. Observations about how folk audiences deeply engage with listening form the basis of Niall MacKinnon's (1993:79-80) distinction of the social group. Through my

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[15] This section is concerned with repertoire only; performance style is discussed in section 6.1.

research, however, a number of people seem less drawn to this highly attentive practice in favour of more 'accessible' material and distinct clubs have formed in Sheffield to fulfil the need of a minority of singers who wish to perform these types of song (Folk at Home; The Ballad Session).

While the age of material is one method to distinguish this trend, other factors come into play such as the relationship with the mainstream music industry or an established historical association with the folk canon. In this, tradition is a key concept and will be discussed in more depth in Section 3.3.

A lesser trend can be seen in the national origin of material. This thesis is concerned with English folk singing, however, I do not presume that all the material discussed here is English and it is valuable to note the inclusion of material from 'other' nations within performances in England.

There are numerous debates over the national origins of folk song material both within the musical field and the academic community. While I do not attempt to ascertain particular songs' provenance here, songs that are broadly recognised as 'Scottish' and 'Irish' songs are frequently sung in English folk events. This is particularly the case when a singer has connections (of birth, family or previous habitation) with another country (Track 2) but is also common from those with no connection beyond enjoying the music. This is unlike the situation found in other national folk scenes where prominence is placed on the music of the host nation.

Jonathan Stock (2004:42) notes the ethnic diversity in material within an English instrumental folk tune session. These typically incorporate not only tunes from Ireland and Scotland, but also from Scandinavian countries and France. Although there are musicological differences between national folk musics, these instrumental materials can be performed alongside each other without the clear obstacles of the language barrier. Foreign language songs do occasionally appear within English folk singing events, however, they are most commonly found in events that have a bias towards celebrating traditional material rather than encouraging mass participation. It is interesting to note that within some events, material from an 'other' folk heritage is more readily integrated into event repertoires than material originating from other English musical genres.

While repertoire preferences can be made in terms of associations with different time periods or places, the structure of material can also be utilised as an organising concept. Of the three Sheffield-based events I closely observed for this study, Raise the Roof and the Kelham Island Singing Session tend to contain a large body of chorus songs, whilst Folk at Home focus more on solo repertoire. As indicated earlier Folk at Home was founded to fill a gap in provision for attentive listening, while the other events are renowned for their chorus singing properties. Responses to performances of chorus songs at Folk at Home such as 'should have done that at Harthill…Shouldn't be able to go wrong at Harthill' or 'sing that at the Red Deer next time' (FN~28 February 2008) demonstrate how particular songs are seen as suited to events where a strong body of chorus singers are present.

The performance of types of material that is deemed appropriate within distinct events is governed through a number of explicit and implicit processes. While no event I have come across has provided a set repertoire list, guidance as to song type can be given. This can be displayed through the use of specific wording in the names of events or their advertisements to enlighten people as to the usual, or preferred, repertoire and encourage the performance of certain types of material. In figure 3.1a the word 'tradition' forms part of the event name and there is no reference to 'folk' or 'acoustic' music. This is an event I jointly run and such wording was intentionally employed to indicate disinclination towards contemporary singer songwriters, political songs or commercial covers. In figure 3.1b the promise of 'plenty of chorus songs and lots of harmonies to join in on' not only alerts new singers to the kind of experience they might expect, but also influences their repertoire choice, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It is, however, common for organisers not to use any descriptive terminology in their promotions and for singers to claim that the events they attend have an open policy towards repertoire choice. Comments were made throughout my research suggesting that organisers 'encourage anybody to sing, we don't mind what they sing' (PC~Jenny), events are

Figure 3:1 Event advertisements in Stirrings Magazine for Royal Traditions (issue 140) and Raise the Roof (issue 131) showing the use of descriptive terms in promotional material.

described as 'anything goes' (D~Ann), and claims are made that '[t]he rule is: sing whatever you want to sing' (D~Bob). However, the repertoires chosen at these events often adhere to implicit specialised criteria. At the Folk at The Royal, singers favour contemporary, 'easy listening' songs, while at Folk at Home singers tend to engage in challenging 'traditional' material. While in these cases the club policy may be to include a diverse body of material, attendance by singers sharing aesthetic ideals creates a similarity of type within specific events; the existing members of a group control what is perceived as the appropriate repertoire type through their own material choices.

In the majority of cases, where there is little explicit guidance, incremental hearing to gain an understanding of what others sing is the only method available to conform to an existing group trend. As Philip says, after his first visit to the Kelham Island Singing Session: 'I went for things with choruses, as that's what they usually sing' (D~Philip). This can cause problems for newcomers if their known repertoire does not conform to that

being performed. While non-uniform events create diversity within the folk scene, the lack of explicit differentiation can result in newcomers being unable to contribute the particular type of repertoire preferred at a certain event. Frequent comments of not knowing many chorus songs, or 'traditional songs', were made by newcomers or infrequent attendees at events where these were the norm.

Moving beyond song type trends, the existence of a regular body of performers can result in a semi-stable repertoire forming within a group. As songs are sung repeatedly, they become familiar to the assembled company and a core group repertoire can emerge. This process is led by singers in their choice of material and the frequency with which they choose to sing a piece in a particular context. In some cases club repertoire can become more formalised with particular songs being requested from singers at particular times. This is particularly the case at Raise the Roof where the custom is to end each event with the same song – 'Rolling Home' (the ritual phenomenon is further discussed in Section 4.3.2, and the effects of song repetition is further discussed in Section 6.3.2). For those who know the song this serves as a unifying feature, however, those new to a particular context may feel excluded from the group due to their lack of knowledge of a particular song or regular group repertoire. A similar phenomenon has been found within folk tune sessions (Stock 2004:48).

While clubs may have established material or trends, the notion of repertoire remains fluid and at each club's meeting the material performed varies. Bob describes how the organiser of Anston Folk Club consciously engineers differences in repertoire through the implementation of theme nights. Songs were chosen 'sometimes in a torturously contrived way!' yet he says it helps to vary the songs and encourages singers to extend their repertoire (D~Bob). Variation also occurs through the selection of material associated with calendar events, such as Christmas, May Day or harvest time. This shows a connection to wider social processes beyond the confines of the group, however, calendar customs often relate to an idealised 'folk' lifestyle concentrating on historical or rural connections or those that are nationalistic in terms of celebrating Englishness or Irishness, for example on St Patrick's Day.

Alongside external linkages, themes can emerge internally throughout the course of an event. This results from verbal interactions or song dialogues and appears when individual songs provoke a response from one or more singers resulting in a cluster of related songs.

This happens more naturally at song sessions where the flexible ordering of performers enables those with related material to participate in a timely manner. It also occurs, however, in other more explicitly ordered environments (the methods of ordering of performance are further discussed in Section 4.3.1). After two songs of perceived Scottish origin were sung at Raise the Roof an impromptu Scottish theme emerged. Some singers contributed to the theme, while others sang material with no obvious thematic relationship. Although the Scottish theme was not adhered to by all present, it nevertheless impacted upon others' material selection and reference to deviating from this informal practice was made for a song which was not Scottish (Track 14).

Along with explicit thematic connections, another form of repertoire interaction can be found in the choice of songs 'that fitted in, whilst contrasting with others' songs' (D~Pete), or that 'suited the mood on the night' (D~William). This practice of selection on the basis of 'what went before' (D~Keith) ensures the individual event contains a balanced repertoire with a variety of mood and style, managed on an individual basis by singers.

This demonstrates how individual event material programming is conducted by individuals on a group level, as opposed to being dictated through a hierarchical structure (such as a concert programme). While those who do not lead songs do not usually have the opportunity to affect the choice of material during an event, those who lead, or request, a song have a direct impact upon the repertoire that constitutes that particular event. The repetitive nature of folk events means material performed at one meeting influences the type of material felt relevant to perform at the next and common repertoire types develop within distinct events. Group repertoires are established through performance as a product of the choices made by people who participate in these events. It is apparent from the diaries that singers feel this responsibility and it strongly influences the ways in which they select their repertoire.

While it is relatively simple to present a list of the material performed during a specific folk event as a bounded repertoire, individual singers' repertoires are not so easily defined. I will now look at the construction and selection methods involved in an individual singer's repertoire and go on to describe how individual's repertoires are used as a device to communicate the singer's identity to the group. I begin by presenting three main ideas involved in the repertoire building process as explored in the folk and traditional music literature.

That a singer's repertoire is not a static entity, but continually revitalised and augmented, has been observed by Carole Pegg (1984:57). The ways in which this process occurs and the motivations behind it have been explored by Philip Bohlman who describes how an Irish-American farmer adapts his current repertoire and learns new material to suit different audiences (1988:60).   Ian Russell similarly discusses the effects of different audiences and shows how the singer Arthur Howard would select his songs according to the company he was with, concluding that he had several repertoires and used 'appropriateness' as a criterion for choice in different settings (1986:49).

Drawing on the earlier work of Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1948) and later Kenneth Goldstein (1971), Ginette Dunn approaches the subject from a different perspective and, instead of defining context based repertoires, recognises a difference between material that is deliberately learned for performance and that which is absorbed through exposure, describing these in terms of active and passive repertoires (1980:173). These studies explore the various ways in which an individual's repertoire is mutable and transitory. Here I wish to draw these concepts together and explore issues which affect the building of a sense of community through individual repertoire building.

As described previously, selecting songs to suit a particular context is a common practice. This also has an impact upon the material singers choose to learn as they select songs that would fit in with the events they attend:

> I am constantly reviewing them, adding to the list or
> dropping them from my repertoire in an attempt to make
> the ones I do 'better', nicer to listen to and/or more

> interesting, I do feel that I could do with finding some longer songs and some with more chorus. (D~Pete)

This highlights a division between making choices based on a singer's own aesthetic criteria and trying to complement the repertoire type commonly found within the performance context. As such, 'the acquisition of a repertoire is thus dependent upon the taste of both singer and audience' (Dunn 1980:174). For those new to a particular context, diversity in their personal repertoire can speed inclusion into new contexts. This ensures that barriers to participation through not being able to perform material that fits in with the group's established repertoire preference are avoided.

The group also affects the development of an individual's repertoire in a more direct way. Many singers cited choosing to learn songs from other singers, and less purposely, the notion of Dunn's notion of passive repertoire (those songs that are not consciously learnt for lead-performance) is also of relevance here.[16]

> There is a huge reservoir of material in my brain that has accumulated over the past thirty five years, absorbed by osmosis from records and tapes, that I've been quarrying diligently since I started singing in public about five years ago. (D~Raymond)

Exposure to the performances of others (in live or recorded form) impacts upon the contents of an individual's repertoire. The level and type of exposure affects the depth of knowledge a singer holds about a song. Those specifically learnt for lead singing purposes are intricately known musically and lyrically, others are sketchily known and singers can participate on choruses. Other songs are known by their title, plot, or provenance, but singers would be unable to perform them. While these later categories of song are not used in a singer's lead performing repertoire, I would argue that they retain a place in the wider repertoire of the individual as they contribute to performance (chorus singing) and knowledge base (awareness of material). While the 'singing out' of a song for the first time is a pivotal point in a singer's conception of their relationship with that song, this should not undermine the extent of their wider musical repertoire.

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[16] The methods singers use to learn songs are further discussed in section 6.4.2.

Nor should it be assumed that after one public performance a song will remain a part of the singer's lead singing repertoire. I found that even those songs which have been actively learnt do not remain in a stable state of knowledge. Some songs are well known, 'comfortable' parts of the repertoire, others exist on the periphery of the singer's knowledge due to being newly learned, or poorly remembered, and are performed more selectively. Material falls along this trajectory and moves its position continually depending on the singer's exposure and activity.

While it might be assumed that singers choose to perform material from the 'well known' end of this scale, other factors occurring during the event (such as seasonal themes or song chains as described earlier) can affect the choice. The ability to provide interesting songs in these situations, or to have the knowledge to discuss the performances of others, is used as a status marker within the folk scene. This can be held by singers and non-singers alike and is demonstrated through discussion of versions, origins and other detail surrounding the material and its past performers.

While it has been shown to be important for singers to select material to suit the context, they are also aware of the amount of repetition within their personal performance history and some singers actively rotate songs in their repertoire to avoid such an occurrence. This serves a twofold function: firstly it ensures songs that are not closely suited to many singing contexts 'get an airing' (D~Bob), and secondly it stops over repetition of particular favourites, something singers are keen to avoid (FN~Vikki). Over the short term, singers also mentioned having 'current favourites' which are heavily performed in diverse contexts due to a singer's phases of preference for a particular song (D~Marjorie). These various selection criteria show a desire to fulfil personal aesthetic preferences and manage one's own repertoire alongside the obligations felt towards choosing the ideal song for the context, highlighting potential tensions between making choices due to individual desires and community benefit.

This discussion has gone some way to describing how singers build and perform their repertoires. However, it is also pertinent to examine how material reflects the singer. John Smith (1987) describes singers as communicating through their songs, using them as a tool for conversation,

for challenging stereotypes and as a language to describe the self. Displays of personal and communal politics have been widespread within the history of the folk singing scene and the concept of performing personal identities is strongly supported within the folk genre. This demonstrates a way in which individuals can use their repertoire, through choosing subject matters or morals they identify with, as a means of communicating personal sentiments.

A more direct way of representing people through songs is provided through composing material which cites local people, places or events, or adapting existing repertoire to include such references. Ian Russell describes how this phenomenon occurs within the hunt community, noting that invariably the meanings of such references are impenetrable to the outsider (2002:133). This phenomenon is not commonly found within the folk singing scene under discussion here, despite the materials that contain such a structure being commonly performed. Songs such as 'Doffin Mistress' could have particular workers' names substituted, but these songs are perceived to have been removed from their original performance contexts and appear to have solidified as relics rather than adapting as parts of a living tradition.

While such compositional practices are not generally employed, singers have a strong sense of having played a compositional or interpretive part in the adaptation of a song to suit their performance style. Singers develop a relationship with their chosen material, feeling that they have 'made it their own' (D~Gavin; D~Bob). Jerry Simon describes this process:

> I don't usually first try out a song live without LOTS of
> going over phrasing, emphasis, tweaking the tune and
> words etc, possibly over months, occasionally years! I like
> to feel that it's very much MY interpretation that I present.
> By that time I've already put a lot of myself into it, so I
> guess I feel quite strongly about the songs. (D~Jerry)

Through this means of personal interpretation, associations of particular songs with their singers are common and a song may become 'so closely identified with its new performer to the extent that the two become inseparable' (Russell 2003:278).

Similarly, songs can become associated with particular times, a perspective provided in Tony Green's (1987) discussion of the repertoire

acquisition of singer James Lyons. Green suggests that repertoire is connected to particular life events which occur either at the time of learning, or become associated with a song in some other way. Subsequent performance of this material can then be used as a tool for remembering (1987:122). This mirrors Tia DeNora's proposal of 'music's role as a building material of self-identity' and her assertion that 'the song is you' (2000:62, 63). Although DeNora discusses music listening practices, the relationships between material and self-identity, musical performance and life experience are evident for many folk singers.

3.1.3 The ownership of material

Recognising individual associations with particular songs introduces the problematic notion of material ownership within the folk scene. Building a personal relationship with a piece of music is integral to a meaningful performance for many singers; however, claims over the ownership of a particular song are not generally accepted. This may have originated from the notion of 'folk songs' being a music of the people, however, there is a contradiction in the attitudes of many singers towards the rights over their repertoire. The conflict arises from the extent to which they want to share and spread songs through performance versus the extent to which they want to retain recognition for the discovery of, or artistic input into, a musical piece.

It has been recognised in the literature that traditional singing communities have often followed a structure of song ownership, whereby an older or respected singer owns the right to sing certain songs. In a study of singers in East Suffolk, Carole Pegg describes how 'songs and tunes were owned by individuals who had the sole right of performance in that village… If he or she left, then the song might be taken over in his or her absence but was only formally inherited upon the death of the owner' (1987:347). Ginette Dunn (1980:189-204) provides a more in-depth analysis of how ownership functions for a similar group of local Suffolk singers, noting various acceptable systems of transfer involving permissions being granted for performance of particular songs requiring acknowledgement of the source.

David Atkinson (2002:7) notes that while these regulations seem, on one level, to be a matter of natural courtesy, they are nonetheless contentious even on these relatively localised scales.

Echoes of these performance rights systems can be observed within the contemporary folk scene, however, the structure of multiple singing events and the possibility of transitory group membership provides points of departure. As described above, repetitive performances can generate associations between particular songs and singers; it is subsequently considered bad form to sing another's song. However, due to the network-like structure of events that constitute the folk scene and the individually devised pathways navigated through this (further discussed in Section 4:1), it is common for participants of an event to be unaware of each other's performance repertoire and the performance of songs over which different singers feel a claim can occur.[17]

Song ownership can also be challenged more consciously. Carol Schofield describes how she deals with having an overlapping repertoire with another singer:

> As a regular Scottish singer was absent, I took the
> opportunity to sing two of the songs she usually sings…
> Wondering how it would be received singing other
> people's repertoire - I wouldn't have done it if the singer
> had turned up… I'm not usually able to sing them at the
> Red Deer because of the other singer. (D~Carol)

This demonstrates the depth of perceived performance ownership. Although Carol adopts the right to perform the song within this context, she recognises the potential breach of etiquette suggesting that singers retain the right to perform songs in a context they regularly attend, even in their absence.

This is further illustrated by the singers at Kelham Island Singing Session who continue to sing the repertoire of a regular member while he is away on a round-the-world trip. '[T]he group has developed a routine of celebrating Smithy's absence… by singing his songs with gusto' (D~Carol).

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[17] A positive aspect to this is that singers can potentially find other places to sing material away from contexts in which they know that performance rights have previously been claimed.

At most events I attended during this research, Dave Staves sang 'Byker Hill' in memory of Smithy (Track 12).

> Well Smithy's back in three weeks, I'd better do 'Byker Hill' hadn't I… I'll not be able to sing it in three weeks cause Smithy'll get in there first. (FN~24 February 2008)

Openly singing the material associated with an established member of the group in this way restates its ties to a particular singer. The group are maintaining his place within the community and sonically 'reserving his seat', ensuring his material remains associated with him until his return.

While there is ample evidence to suggest that there is a strong sense of individual song ownership, there is no universal agreement on performance rights and many singers feel, at least when directly questioned, that everybody has a right to perform 'folk songs'. Here there is a conflict between the perception of this being a 'music of the people' and recognising individual performance rights. At the Kelham Island Singing Session, I observed these differing perspectives side by side:

> Jess Arrowsmith sings 'Watch the Wall', and Dave comments that he has been learning it for 6 months, but now won't be able to sing it He feels her performance has somehow laid claim to the song and it would be inappropriate for him to now do another rendition, during this or a subsequent meeting of this group. Jess' reaction, on the surface, shows opposition to this opinion and suggests there is no reason why he can't sing it, but her initial response, of saying 'sorry, I didn't know' suggests she would have avoided the performance if she had been aware it was 'his' song (FN~24 February 2008, track 5)

While this interaction was amicable, it nevertheless shows the assumptions of performance rights inherent in even those who generally disagree with the notion of performance rights.

Some folk songs are widely known and performed and it is therefore difficult to attach deep personal claims. Lesser known songs or versions which have been heavily modified by the singer are easier to attribute to individuals. In the case of 'Rolling Home', described above, the song belongs to Raise the Roof rather than an individual singer. Without any form of explicit rules regarding song ownership, this system of performance rights

can only function through a detailed knowledge of each other's repertoire built over an extended time-frame. Newcomers to a particular context cannot have the requisite knowledge and are exempt from ill feeling if an already attributed song is performed. It is common, however, for this to be commented on after their performance, which may discourage them from singing it in the future. Holding knowledge of others' repertoires enables singers to understand where their own repertoire fits within the performance environment as a whole. Feeling a right to performance within a particular context enforces a singer's perceived position within the group and can be used as a status marker.

Moving the focus of the discussion on ownership back to where I began this chapter and the creation of genre, Michael Brocken has suggested 'the meaning of folk song has become to "belong" to a certain cultural hierarchy of those who sought refuge in the self and an intellectualised echelon of antiquarian connoisseur – a folk ruling class' (2003:113). Brocken criticises the self-claimed power to delimit a body of material and the resulting sense of ownership of 'folk songs' by 'folkies'. I recognise that a practice has developed surrounding the performance of this body of material, indeed this forms the premise of the thesis, however, I do not follow Brocken's assertion that folk singers place limits in the way he describes. I have rather found that those who engage in the particular social and musical context of the contemporary folk scene feel a sense of custodianship over the repertoire they have chosen to perform. While interpretations of songs are closely guarded between singers, there remains a strong impetus to disseminate the canon of folk song to a wider audience, reaching beyond the current participants of the folk scene.

3.2   The tradition and the community

Along with the conception of folk song repertoires, a second principle is equally prevalent in understandings of folk singing: the notion of tradition. Here I present the various ways tradition has been discussed within the literature, and compare these to the ways it is conceived and performed by participants in the contemporary folk singing scene.

3.2.1   Definitions of tradition

The concept of tradition frequently features in cultural studies and the term has developed a complex a system of meanings. Within American folklore studies, Dan Ben-Amos (1984) identified seven distinct senses of the term, and subsequent scholars have offered new approaches or distinctions. These often present contradictory definitions.

Tradition has widely been associated with stability through processes of unchanging transmission and the preservation of authentic practices. However, the possibility of static stability has been disputed and a recognition of the process of change through editorial decisions has been introduced (Glassie 1995). Similarly, general associations of the term with the past have been challenged by the suggestion that tradition is more concerned with the activities of the present (Handler and Linnekin 1984), or indeed of the future through the commitment towards continuing the practice for further generations (McDonald 1996).

Another development with particular significance for this study is the critical view of 'revivals' as opposed to 'living traditions'. Theories have developed on *invented traditions* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983); *imagined communities* (Anderson 1983); the construction of *fake-lore* (Dorson 1976) or *fake song* (Harker 1985) and the performance practices of *neo traditionalists* (Pegg 1984). Ruptures in the continuity of practice help distinguish these groups from so called authentic traditions, but the main basis for differentiating between authentic and non-authentic traditions in these studies seems to be the level of consciousness participants hold for the aspect of tradition with which they are involved. For example, one of Burt Feintuch's reasons for not being comfortable with describing a contemporary Northumbrian piping group as 'a community' is their 'self-conscious involvement in realms [they] associate with tradition' and the resulting 'ideal of community' (2001:159), suggesting an unnaturalness about their activities.

My perspective follows that of Glassie where he claims all action is undertaken by human beings going through the processes of life and that '[t]he fact that cultures and traditions are created, invented – wilfully compiled by knowledgeable individuals – seems a surprise to scholars who cling to

super organic concepts and who invent in order to sharpen spurious contrasts, uninvented, natural traditions' (1995:398).   The notion that participants in 'authentic' traditions have no perspective on the tradition they are a part of is, at best, naïve. And, with regard to non-authentic traditions, I acknowledge Feintuch's disclosure that describing revival music as 'an invented tradition…always left me uneasy. It seemed arrogant. It felt as if a body of theory trivialised its subject' (2001:152).

Turning the focus now onto the interaction between the concept of community and that of tradition, Gerard Delanty finds that direct comparisons can be drawn between historical approaches to 'traditional societies' and 'communities' in that both tended to be viewed as homogeneous and complete systems (2003:31-49). As the notion of community has diversified, so to have approaches to tradition and the variety of perspectives found in the literature have led Simon Bronner to ask:

> If tradition as the basis for folklore is indeed both invented
> and inherited, individual and social, stable and changing,
> oral and written, of past and present, of time and space,
> about authority and freedom, then what does it exclude?
> Is it shorthand for a feeling of connection rather than a
> process of transmission? (Bronner 2000:96)

I believe it is, and this view of tradition as a feeling of connection, perhaps described as a sense of community, is one I take within this thesis. This is not necessarily a view shared by all the participants in the study and many conceptions of tradition exist within the practice of folk singing. In this musical scene, the term 'traditional song' or 'trad' is used to define a sub-set of the folk song repertoire that has no known author, and commonly predating the 1900s. Many participants also apply the term 'traditional' to the practice of folk singing. I now turn the discussion to some of the ways the participants in this study engage with the notion of tradition.

3.2.2   Preserving songs and practices

The people involved in my study found a sense of relating to the people of the past through repeating both the materials of folk song and the activity of communal singing in social settings. This demonstrates that, for folk singers, engaging in tradition is not merely tied to the preservation of specific folk

songs, but also involves perpetuating the activities and ideologies that facilitate performance of the material. Michael Pickering and Tony Green found this to have implications for folk singers in the 1980s:

> What is sought in songs of past times we have never personally known is a sense of identity in relation to difference with what has gone before. Continuity is established with those who produced these songs in a way of life long disappeared, and this produces a way of assimilating the transformations that have endlessly ensued. What is provided may be a source of compensatory meaning for our own feelings of loss, violation and anxiety about our place in the historical process, but what is also involved is a way of negotiating that process through a counter process of traditionalization, which so often serves to make a deficient 'now' unequal to a sanctified 'then'. (1987:31)

Zygmunt Bauman recognises this is the general trend towards searching for community. He writes: 'we miss community because we miss security, a quality crucial to a happy life, but one which the world we inhabit is ever less able to offer and ever more reluctant to promise' (2001:144).

The attempt to revive an imagined community of the past can be found within the skinhead movement in Britain in the 1960s as recognised by John Clarke (1993). Clarke describes skinheads as 'dispossessed inheritors', having received a tradition with its themes and imagery persisting but deprived of its real social base. Clarke suggests that 'this dislocated relation to the traditional community accounts for the exaggerated and intensified form which the values and concerns of that community received in the form of the skinhead style' (1993:100). He implies that they became a parody of that which they were attempting to re-create.

While this may be the case for some folk singers, it is rare that historical aesthetics inform folk singers' wider lifestyle in the way of the skinhead community and their relationship to an imagined past is, in the main, limited to their folk singing practices. Bearing this in mind, I will discuss singers' relationships with the materials and practices independently, beginning with a discussion of the ways participants engage with the notion of tradition through folk songs.

A sense of universality has an effect upon how participants engage with the material and my results show there is an appreciation of the continuity of key concepts through history. Love, justice and joviality are widely found themes in material sung at folk events with origins that span generations. One singer felt that 'Singing trad songs makes me feel connected with something bigger than the everyday' (D~Kit). This contradicts Pickering and Green's binary position of now and then and I agree with Niall MacKinnon when he finds that, for British folk singers, engaging in the re-performance of folk song material 'should be understood in terms other than nostalgia' (1993:97).

There are a variety of perspectives with regard to how folk singers identify with their material. Some singers select songs that hold personal connections and appreciate folk songs for their contemporary relevance. For example, William MacFarlane tends to 'prefer songs that are relevant today rather than singing about the historical stories of King Henry etc…' (PC~William). Others do not feel the need for such personal connections and equally enjoy the re-performance of songs that reflect particular points in history. In this case, Bob Butler feels that 'Perhaps you could say that I regard the song as more important than what I think or what it says about me' (PC~Bob).

Similarly, there are differences of opinion regarding the importance of the origins or provenance of songs:

> If the song tells a story about something that actually happened or reflects social behaviour at that time I do feel that I am keeping that memory alive and that enhances my enjoyment of the song. (PC~Marjorie)

> The provenance of a song is usually of little importance to me, whether it has come from a dyslexic farmer or has simply been 'folk processed' to give words of limited sense is irrelevant if it is still a song worth singing either for its tune or its words. (PC~Peter)

Whatever perspective a singer holds in this matter, ambivalence is rarely found, and the contextualisation of songs within a frame of contemporary relevance or performance history is an integral aspect of appreciating material within this context.

As previously noted in relation to an individual's repertoire, material can be viewed as a reflection of the singer. While these connections can be generated by audiences during the reception of the song, singers also describe the sensation of embodying the song through associating with characters and mentally 'acting out' the events of a song through performance. This could be described as participating in a fantasy community within the frame of the song, drawing associations with descriptions of leisure pursuits being an escape from real life. An alternative world is created through the act of singing stories which participants may briefly inhabit. This is most closely aligned with Pickering and Greens' (1987) concerns over folk singing as a compensatory activity.

Other singers feel connections with others through performance in more concrete terms. For these singers, a song's journey from conception to their performance provides a frame for association: 'I do feel that the act of singing them forges a link not just with the material itself, but with all those who have passed them on down the years' (D~Raymond). The individuals involved in the process of transmission are acknowledged and a connection is felt with singers of the past due to a common relationship with particular song material. This gives individual singers a sense of association with their predecessors:

> I like to think that by choosing to sing a song that
> someone else has sung I'm making a connection and an
> identification with them. I think people retain songs that
> strike a chord with them, so if I say, chose Bob Robert's
> version of 'Gamekeepers lie Sleeping' over Chris Wood's
> then I'm aligning myself with a person I never met, and
> hoping that maybe something of his tastes and mine
> would be compatible. (PC~Gavin)

Although this level of contextualisation does not involve integration into the fantasy community of the song, the perceived connections between contemporary and historical singers is not dissimilar. Chris Wood, professional folk singer and composer, describes the process of identifying with people who have sung the song in the past in more abstract terms:

> Standing behind the singer is the ghost of the singer they
> learnt the song from. Standing behind that ghost is
> another ghost, back to the beginning of music. For a short

time this 'common sense' is ours to learn from, to add to
and then to hand on. (Wood 2008)

The participants in this study often described how they felt that they fit into a continuum of people who have engaged with folk song material. Current participants feel a responsibility to those who formed the singing communities of the past, and those who will come in the future. 'Fantasy' or 'imaginary community' may be appropriate terms to use within this context as the lack of direct interaction means this form of community functions solely in the minds of contemporary performers. This is not to undermine the existence of past or future singers, or the strength of community felt in this way. Indeed, it is of great value to many contemporary folk singers.

The emphasis on recognising past performers has resulted in the conception of 'source singers'. This term refers to those who provide the earliest recording of a particular song version or those who conform to idealised notions of an 'authentic folk singer' (for example Will Noble, a dry stone waller residing in rural Yorkshire). This process has placed an emphasis on the performance style of a particular time period, that in which recording technologies were developed. However, as Chou Chiener recognises, 'there is no reason to suspect that the practices of the early to mid-twentieth century were themselves completely unchanged from those of the preceding generations' (Chou 2002a:92). Similarly, the elevation of particular individuals (conducting appropriately 'folk' lifestyles) to the status of living relics creates stratification and something akin to social inequality.

Drawing connections through songs to other singers brings us beyond the histories of songs to the second approach to tradition discussed in this section – that of continuing a musical practice for future generations. People regard this form of musical participation as culturally beneficial, and feel a responsibility to maintain the tradition for future generations. There is a common perception that, through their actions, singers are an active component of the tradition. As Bob Butler describes it, he feels he is 'contributing to part of my heritage, or at least the continuance of it' (PC~Bob). Performing a shared body of 'folk songs' gives people a sense of collaboration and community, but equally, holding the power to transmit

songs and become a part of that process binds people in a sense of community through time. Transmitting not just the song, but the very power of transmission (McDonald 1996).

Despite the successes achieved through on-going attempts to revive (or in some cases preserve) folk singing practices, there remains a common feeling that the folk scene is in demise and in need of protection and revitalisation. This vulnerability may be an ingrained attitude stemming from the folk song collectors of the 1900s, or grounded in more contemporary concerns regarding the practice of communal singing.

Two particular periods of history have dominated common perceptions of what folk singing should be: firstly the documentation by the major collectors, and secondly the formation of performance norms during the 1970s folk music revival. In his recent appraisal of the British folk revival, Michael Broken feels that 'the balance in the performance dialectic, which has swung away from the musician and towards the antiquarian listener, needs to be restored so that creativity, rather than re-enactment, is paramount' (2003:122). While, academically speaking, this is a value-laden judgement based upon what Brocken would like the folk scene to be, from my experience in Sheffield, there are many people who share a similar attitude.

Along with other musical genres which adhere to concepts of authenticity in performance context or style, such as barbershop singing, there have been claims that '[i]n their effort to preserve the traditional form… the societies are alienating many young adults as well as some disenchanted older adults' (Stebbins 1996:98). However, unlike this musical form which displays similar ideological frictions (Garnett 2005:44-5), the less formalised governing structure found within the folk scene enables different traditions to develop within the genre and statutes laying out an explicit remit for 'tradition' or 'folk' are avoided. This freedom enables the process of producing folk music to be moderated through the practices of the people who engage within it, on a grass roots level.

Through this research I have noted a diverse range of events including those which specifically cater for creativity in performance running alongside others that focus more on the preservation of traditional material.

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Both function within their own ideological frames and appeal to distinct groups of singers (see discussion on networks in Section 4.1). In this way the folk scene is well structured to incrementally develop following the practices of participants rather than becoming a rule-governed museum for folk song performance as some fear.

Henry Glassie describes how 'we are apt to congratulate ourselves for enduring in times of such complexity, times when traditions dedicated to stability, progress, and revival meet in confusion. But no golden age of integration lies in the past. It was ever thus' (1995:405). Whether real or imagined, the past practices of folk singing communities influence the ways in which contemporary folk singers feel about, and conduct, their activity. I feel it is important to move beyond labels such as *revival* and understand tradition within the contemporary folk singing society as a process of identifying with these ideas through the reuse of both materials and actions, with particular recognition for the resultant sense of belonging within a larger conception of a folk singing community.

3.3 Absorbing new material into a traditional repertoire

From one perspective, 'traditional songs' hold an intrinsic value and should be preserved in their own right, from another, the practice of folk singing is to reflect contemporary concerns and as such the material needs to be continuously updated. Through not changing the materials performed, the ideological basis for social singing alters and the process becomes one of preservation rather than communication; this in turn produces a change in the practice.

Although both approaches include efforts to protect from change, the differences between preserving what are perceived to be traditional songs and preserving the practice of making music as a contemporary community is the root cause of many conflicts found within the folk singing scene as the preservation of one necessitates a change in the other. In this final section I bring the two themes of the chapter together and discuss the ways in which new repertoire is incorporated into contemporary folk singing traditions.

For those singers that incorporate new material into their repertoires, there is a sense of continuing tradition by contributing to the established song-pool. Pauline Burnett describes how she 'love[s] the idea of continuing tradition by singing old and new songs' (D~Pauline); similarly, William MacFarlane feels 'I am probably a bit of a philistine, but I am just as happy performing a song that was either written back in the mists of time or written yesterday' (PC~William). While these examples show how some singers are enthusiastic about incorporating new material alongside the established repertoire, the second example also highlights a perceived inferiority with this practice. Although many singers enjoy singing contemporary material they retain recognition of its perceived inferiority to the repertoire commonly regarded as traditional song.

Various measures of authenticity are applied to materials of folk song, often centring on periods of creation or popularisation. Songs that are taken from commercial composers, such as Bob Dylan or The Beatles are frequently performed in a variety of folk singing contexts, though they are not generally regarded as authentically 'folk' as songs that were collected from rural singers at the turn of the 20th century or before. Similarly, the popularisation of 'authentic' songs by commercial folk singers during the 1960s revival has created a further stratum. This can be heard in Betty Hemmings' apology for singing a 'revival' version of Barbara Allen as opposed to Gordon Hoyland's 'traditional' version (FN~28 February 2008).

This differentiation between songs that have enjoyed widespread success and other less-known songs generates an inherent snobbery about forming connections with contemporary songs and singers. There is an oft cited opinion that singers should refer to older texts and adapt personalised versions rather than learning songs directly from contemporary performances (PC~Gavin). This jars with the sense of continuing tradition and emphasises the rift between the singing practices of old and contemporary practices.

Another means of introducing new material into established repertoires can be found in song composition. This aligns with the folk ideologies of communicating everyday experiences and the abandonment of musical hierarchies, however, the form is not without conflict. In the main, there were very few self-written songs at the events I attended during this

research, but one performer, Carol Schofield, often performed her own material (Track 9). This form is not always welcomed within some events, however, and Carol appears 'surprised how varied the folk scene is and what is considered to be folk music – yet how some people frown upon songs written currently' (D~Carol). This could be answered in part by Bob Butler's assertion that he does not 'attend events dominated by amateur or little-known singer-songwriters, for fear that they may only sing songs about their own anxieties' (D~Bob).

This implies a difference in song writing styles rather than exclusively focusing upon the date of composition. Many newly composed songs have been absorbed into the repertoires of events that favour material that is perceived as traditional as in the case of 'Dave Webbers newly traditional May Song' (PC~Bob). This raises questions about how new material can become 'traditional':

> It doesn't matter if a song is actually traditional and old, what matters is that it 'feels right' to me. I'm really quite equally happy to sing a song written last week if it's got the right feel. (PC~Jerry).

This element of 'right feel' can be explained through John Miles Foley's concept of 'traditional referentiality'. Although the model was designed to explain how versions of traditional song are related, I suggest it also has implications for the absorption of new material into an existing canon.

> Traditional referentiality, then, entails the invoking of a context that is enormously larger and more echoic than the text or work itself, that brings the lifeblood of generations of poems and performances to the individual performance or text. Each element in the phraseology or narrative thematics stands not simply for that singular instance but for the plurality and multiformity that are beyond the reach of textualization. From the perspective of traditional context, these elements are foci for meaning, still points in the exchange of meaning between an always impinging tradition and the momentary and nominal fossilization of a text or version. (1991:7)

Following this model, I suggest that if newly composed materials contain enough common reference points they are able to fit within an existing repertoire. If the context can supply a range of complementary extra-textual

and extra-performance data, this shows connections between the new material and the existing repertoire, facilitating absorption.

Supporting this concept, Dorothy Noyes suggests that cultural objects gain entextualisation when changing contexts (1995:463). This is particularly recognisable with issues described earlier regarding the use of commercial compositions or revival versions of songs. Folk songs carry a narrative based upon conceptions of the material and this extra-musical information is equally as important as the internal musical construction of the piece when attempting to introduce a new song into an existing repertoire.

3.4 Conclusions

Through this chapter I have attempted to unravel the ways in which a particular genre, that of contemporary folk song, has originated and been perpetuated. Throughout my discussion of repertoire formation and conceptions of tradition, there resides a common theme of contemporary folk singing participants identifying with multiple conceptions of folk song. Anthony Cohen (1985) describes how the coming together of ideas into a shared, yet largely internalised conception of belonging is sustained by symbols which, while sharing outwardly similar forms, are capable of multiple interpretations by members of the community according to what it means to them to be a member. He writes 'the reality of community in people's experience thus inheres in their attachment or commitment to a common body of symbols' and yet these 'symbols do not so much express meaning as give us the capacity to make meaning' (1985:15-6).

The boundaries of genre have been shown to be mutable and what is recognised as folk song is open to interpretation. The unifying feature is found in the extra-musical meanings placed upon materials by participants in the contexts of performance, strongly aligned, in this musical context, with notions of tradition. This shared symbol of folk music, in whatever ways it is understood, is what binds these people together in what might be reasonably construed as a community.

4 Physical and temporal constructions of the English folk singing scene

Whilst it is important to recognise the symbolically constructed nature of community, it is equally important to ground this study in the concrete world in which folk singing is realised. The contemporary English folk scene is constructed of individual events, clubs or groups each with its own emphasis and ethos. Although there are undeniable differences in the organisational structures of these groups a great number of activities and ideologies are shared between events that describe themselves as 'folk'. Niall MacKinnon's (1993) key text on the British folk scene has provided an introduction to a number of issues relevant here. MacKinnon's central point is that, while folk events are often perceived as being informal, there are a number of underlying structures in place that direct the course of events.

> A very conscious destaging and destruction of glamour occurs to maintain the face-to-face intercommunicative nature of [folk] musical performance. This occurs in very informal settings, but settings which are elaborately set up and structured to contain the events. Folk events are not in the form of 'anything goes' or 'free-for-alls', and contain within them elaborate means of maintaining their own core socio-musical aesthetic and ethos. (1993:81)

This has been previously touched upon in terms of accepted repertoires and, throughout the thesis; I explore the form of these organisational structures and their impact upon creating boundaries. Without wishing to reproduce MacKinnon's work, I have attempted to build from his observations within the contemporary context and investigate avenues he little explored such as the relationship between folk events and the venues in which they are held, and the effects of long-term involvement in folk activities for participants. Where our subjects overlap, I provide a new perspective through applying the question of community creation to the phenomenon.

In this chapter I investigate a variety of organisational structures through their physical and temporal manifestations: physical, in terms of the locations of events and how their spaces are utilised, and temporal,

describing how time is managed within each event, the impacts of an interlacing event timetable and the role of long-term repetitive meetings.

4.1   The locations of folk singing

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies' has been criticised for its lack of consideration to the effects of place in its approach to sub-cultural identities. Belinda Wheaton suggests they 'failed to consider the local and global variations in youths' response to music and style' (2007:291-2). Within the field of ethnomusicology however, a sense of place is paramount and a number of popular music scholars also recognise its importance. Within her study of house music Hillegonda Reitveld (1998) observes that even within this recognisably 'global' or 'international' type of dance music local differences were of significance. Reitveld finds that '[w]ithin each locality there had been various contributions of cultural discourses which were specific to the cultural history of its users' (ibid:5-6). Sara Cohen (1991) draws comparisons between the physical, political and social make up of the Liverpool area and the resulting rock music style recognising that media representations of cultural activity can affect inhabitants' behaviour.

Following Alan O'Connor's (2002) position on *cultural hybridity*, I draw connections between the folk scene and his exploration of the punk movement. O'Connor emphasises the duality of global musical movements and their localised enactments. He claims there is no self-contained (punk) scene in any distinct city unaffected by global trends, yet the impacts of particular places ensure each region's scene is distinct.

This study explores the English folk singing scene, with a focus on the Sheffield area and here I introduce some specifics of the scene within the region in which I conducted fieldwork for this study. A recent article in *fROOTS*, a national specialist folk magazine, claimed that 'Sheffield has become the new centre of English folk music' (Nickson 2006). This is attributed to the activities of *ceilidhsoc*, a University of Sheffield student society, and how its reputation has encouraged more young folk enthusiasts

to study in the city.[18] The article was commented upon within the local folk press and it was further noted that although there was indeed a vibrant instrumental session scene in Sheffield there was an absence of singing orientated, concert style guest folk clubs (West 2008). This is a notable local difference as the majority of cities and major towns in England have a weekly or monthly folk club with invited guests running alongside an instrumental and singing session scene. A third notable specific of this region is the Sheffield Folk Chorale. This group functions as an 80 strong community choir mostly performing arrangements of folk songs. Despite considerable organisational and ideological differences many of their members also participate in other folk singing activities.[19]

Stirrings magazine provides specialist media coverage for 'folk roots and acoustic music in South Yorks and beyond'. The magazine has a print run of 500 copies and is distributed through subscription (c100), existing folk events and some specialist shops such as *Rare and Racy*, selling recordings of non-mainstream musics and *Hobgoblin Leeds*, an acoustic musical instrument supplier. This publication provides a valuable resource for current participants of the folk scene. Some local events pay to advertise in this volume and it contains a listings section providing information for the majority of folk music song and dance events occurring in the region. However, the methods of distribution mean access for a newcomer to the regional folk scene is limited, creating a barrier to wider participation.

From this publication it is apparent that the inner-Sheffield situation consists of a number of events occurring monthly and mostly consisting of do-it-yourself participation. The concert clubs that appear in *Stirrings* occur outside the city: in Harthill and Maltby, villages in the Rotherham area, or Chesterfield, a neighbouring major town. Participants in the diary study attend events covering a wide geographical area with a range of settings

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[18] There are also folk dance societies at a number of other University cities including Newcastle, Durham and Exeter which are providing similar concentrations of youth activity in folk music and dance. See Simon Kegan-Phipps (2007) for a discussion on the influences of education systems on folk music.

[19] Although some participants are members of the Sheffield Folk Chorale, and further reference to it is made, a detailed analysis of this community choir form is beyond the remit of this thesis. The differences between community choirs and folk singing events would provide a fruitful area for future research.

including inner city, suburban and rural locations. Les Haywood et al. (1995) suggests that 'less profitable [leisure] activities are relegated to less advantaged, inaccessible, or less sought after locations, often towards the edges of town or city' which may account for the location of some folk events.

Figure 4.1 shows the location of self-identifying 'folk' events attended by participants during the diary period. These are not limited to a closed geographical area around Sheffield and indicate a broader network of activity nationwide (further discussed in Section 4.3). While there is broad geographical coverage of events it is notable that participants do not necessarily attend those closest to their place of residence. With enhanced modes of transportation and a variety of experiences on offer, people are willing to travel considerable distances to participate in their chosen activities. Ruth Finnegan (1989:301) describes this changing situation within city culture, claiming that instead of 'urban villages' being regionally identified within the city, people travel to participate in activities that interest them. This has similarly been found within the folk scene. Niall MacKinnon highlights the distances travelled by attendees of a rural folk club in Essex and the absence of local residents at the event (1993:37). This situation continues to be the case in Sheffield's rural locations, for example at Royal Folk held in the village of Dungworth, the folk event attendees and local residents tend to remain in distinct areas of the pub.

The propensity to travel creates attendance-based transportation issues. The (non)availability of suitable public transport and its resulting impact upon reduced attendance (i.e. having to leave early for the last bus (D~Raymond), or having to drive to rural locations in inclement weather (D~Ann) can act as a barrier to participation. This can affect both the possibility of attending certain events and the ways in which individuals can interact with them. Despite these obstacles, it seems more important for participants to have their preferred experience than the nearest one. Where pleasure was expressed that events are 'close to home' (D~Ann; D~Bob; D~Pete; D~William), this was due to their chosen event type being close to home rather than merely having some local folk activity.

1. Anston Folk Club
2. Bacca Pipes Folk Club
3. Baildon Hall
4. Beacon's event, Parkwood springs
5. Beehive Folk Club
6. Belper Harvest Service
7. Belper Music Festival
8. Black Bull
9. Booitstraps Folk Club
10. Carols
11. Castle Inn
12. Cobden View
13. Concert Bradway Hall
14. Corringham Folk Club
15. Dance teams
16. Epworth Folk Club
17. Faldingworth Folk Concert

18. Folk at Home
19. Folk at the Royal
20. Forest School Camps
21. Full Circle Folk Club
22. Gainsborough Folk Club
23. Gainsborough Folk Festival
24. Kelham Island
25. No Smoke Folk
26. Old Red Lion
27. Play On
28. Private Party
29. Raise The Roof
30. Red Shed
31. Rivelin Folk Club
32. Rolling Stock Company Choir
33. Royal Folk
34. Ryburn 3 Step Singing Class

35. Sacred Harp
36. Sheffield Folk Chorale
37. Sheffield Folk Festival
38. Singing Out
39. Silsden Singers
40. Sportsman Folk
41. The Castle
42. The Folk Train
43. The Holly Bush
44. The Moon Folk Night
45. The Red House
46. The Singing Group
47. Three Merry Lads Folk Night
48. Three' Merry Lads (session)
49. Wath Folk Club
50. West Gallery Music Association
51. Wortley Folk Club

Figure 4:1 Four maps showing the locations of events attended by participants during the diary project.

Participants are content to travel long distances for specific experiences. After hearing some of Ryburn 3 Step's resident singers, Bob Butler 'immediately decided that their club would be worth the 64 mile weekday round trip' (D~Bob). This willingness to travel facilitates groups of likeminded individuals to come together for a specific, shared purpose enabling disparate groups to form, each with their own set of preferences and resulting behaviours. This avoids the negotiations that might be necessary for a group of closely geographically situated people who have different aesthetic criteria to gather and make music. The resulting groups are highly self-selected and geared towards specific musical practices.

As participants frequently travel half an hour or more to attend events, the journey itself can be seen as contributing to the experience. John Kelly observes that 'travel itself is not only a cost in time and money, but also a part of the recreational experience. In fact, that prerequisite of so much away-from-home leisure, the car, is often a leisure environment itself' (1983:49). Lifts or taxi sharing are common, some making prior arrangements, others offering impromptu lifts home. The privately organised Folk at Home group, for example, aim to minimise the number of cars attending each meeting and espouse an obligation to either offer or receive lifts to facilitate this. Whilst these activities have the potential to forge connections within a group, they also come with a sense of responsibility: '[i]n some cases people have come to rely on me for a lift, or at least a car-share, so it would be difficult to miss [an event] even if I wanted to' (PC~Bob). These interactions, distinct from the actual singing event, enable a deepening of relationships through alternative modes of conversation and behaviour. This contributes to the creation of community in terms of building stronger relationships and encouraging regular attendance.

In a study of leisure interactions, John Kelly states that 'most leisure *takes place*' emphasising the need to examine the specific places used for leisure interactions (1983:45). In his study of concert hall culture, Christopher Small claims that '[h]uman beings have been musicking for as long as there have been humans and have done so without feeling the need for a specialized building to house their activities, certainly not for anything on so grand a scale as this' (1998:21). I would argue that people have

ritually designated special times and places for their musical activity, and the concert hall is just another manifestation of this practice.[20] Different environments are deemed suitable for different kinds of musical activity, that no practices have required a concert hall until relatively recent times does not mean spaces are not considered and applied appropriate to their users' specific needs. Here I explore the venues used for folk singing and describe the features that make particular places conducive to different kinds of folk singing activity.

That folk singers recognise the importance of adequate spaces, and fear for the lack of suitable venues, can be seen through folk music discourse of both the field of academia and the context under study (MacKinnon 1993:39; West 2008). It should be of little surprise, therefore, that when a suitable venue is found it may house a number of different events. The Royal Hotel, The Kelham Island Tavern and The Hillsborough Hotel all host a variety of different clubs and/or sessions.

Gaining a reputation for being a folk music pub can generate a sense of community around a building as well as with individually organised events. This is evidenced by the patterns of attendance of diary participants during the Sheffield Folk Festival. While some people used the festival as an opportunity to explore new venues, a number of people attended events held at the same venue as one of their regular activities, but failed to explore the wider festival programme happening elsewhere in the city. This is similarly found by Ben Malbon (1998) in his study of the way people relate to places within the nightclub scene. According to Malbon, clubbers felt an affinity with places as well as with the people within them. This shows that familiarity with a venue impacts upon an individual's sense of belonging; venues could therefore be seen as a constituent part of the community.

The style of an environment communicates certain assumptions about the community that meets therein and similarities or differences can be identified which describe variations in the experience participants may expect to have (further discussed in the following section 4.2). This affects the criteria folk organisers use to choose the venues for their events.

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[20] Palaeolithic hunter gatherers, for example, held rituals in the most acoustic parts of caves (Hale 2007:28-31).

While connections between folk music and rural locations due to romantic imaginings of folk traditions have been drawn (MacKinnon 1993; Feintuch 2001), I did not find evidence to suggest this in the contemporary context. Although both were used for folk singing activities, rural locations were deemed no more suitable for folk singing than urban ones, and rather the venues' internal environment and the attitudes of landlords were of higher significance.

The association between folk singing and the consumption of alcohol is strongly ingrained within the folk singing community. One common theme found in the events attended by participants during the diary period was that they were, without exception, either held in alcohol licensed premises or people were invited to bring their own. Particularly strong associations are drawn with Real Ale and many organisers stress that they select bars that provide such beverages. While Michael Brocken implies a negative connotation to the way folk singers 'conform to intellectual predispositions' through their drink choices (2003:116), the use of style based mood enhancers is not unique to the folk scene. Other forms of alcohol are popular in different social contexts, and recreational drugs are associated with the experience found in dance music scenes (Malbon 1998).

Beyond the use of alcohol as a group defining marker, Michael Argyle states that '[a]lcohol is a common feature of social life with friends… alcohol produces enhanced feelings of happiness, sociability, excitement and freedom…It leads to enhanced sociability by the reduction of inhibitions, and increased intimacy' (1996:112). While there may be some who drink to excess within folk events, the general population drink moderately, and as many have driven to venues a relatively high percentage (compared to the average pub attendees) are sober. Including alcohol within events not only has the effect of enhancing the experience for individuals, but raises the general atmosphere and contributes to the experience had by others as the increased sociability is projected around the group.

Most events are organised by people otherwise unaffiliated with the venue, however, many incorporate the name of the pub in which they are held in their event titles (for example Royal Folk; The Beehive Folk Club and Kelham Island Singing session). This recently caused problems for a club

held at The Rockingham Arms that, due to a change in brewer policy, was forced to leave the pub. The club now meet in a new venue but have retained a modified version of their established name (see figure 4.2).

Despite the earlier made point regarding participants' relationship with venues, this highlights the 'club' nature of the relationship between participants and events as committed attendees faithfully follow their club to its new location. Invariably, some attendees leave the club during these changes and the nature of the event alters to suit the particulars of its new venue. Organisers do not tend to view this form of change as desirable and the process is usually initiated by the pub rather than through the choice of the organiser. This can often involve periods of short notice.

Due to a desire for swift relocation (organisers do not wish to miss meetings for fear of members finding a new club to attend, or the necessity to fulfil financial contracts with artists), and an unwillingness to change their regular evening, there may not be a wide variety of suitable, available

Figure 4:2 Two adverts appearing on the back pages of Stirrings magazine demonstrating the name change of 'The Rockingham Arms' (issue) to 'The Rock' (issue 141).

venues to choose from. This can result in clubs meeting in sub-ideal spaces for prolonged periods due to their disinclination for further relocation, and subsequent change.

This draws attention to the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between the landlord and staff, and the organisers and attendees of clubs. Methods of maintaining good relationships with venues include organisers being conscious of finishing on time and requesting people take their glasses back to the bar.

Beyond holding the power to allow a club to meet on their premises, venue personnel can also affect the event in other ways. Friendly, accommodating and encouraging landlords are described by diary participants as being valuable, and positive actions include providing a genial welcome for attendees, contributing to publicising the event and making financial contributions/concessions. Negative comments were made where the management seem unsupportive or unsympathetic towards their events. This manifests itself in the use of jukeboxes or watching televised football alongside folk events, or participating in the event in an inappropriate way. These faux pas were attributed to publicans' lack of knowledge about 'folk club etiquette' with the suggestion that they might be able to be trained (D~Roy). In general, however, there is little interaction between folk attendees and the bar personnel except when purchasing beer and it is unusual for them to actively participate in the folk singing activities they accommodate.

The editor of *Stirrings* recognises a lack of connection between the folk scene and wider society*:*

> I dance every week in a community hall but have no
> contact with those people who use the hall for local history
> or even other dance events. How many times is this
> repeated? – whilst we're fiercely protective of our own
> fascinations, there is a bigger world out there, often the
> very one which we're sheltering our fragile passions from.
> Perhaps our activities would endure (and benefit) the
> outside world a little better if we really invited the outside
> world in. (Davenport 2007)

While this is a common cry from many folk singers, there remains a practice of keeping the sites of performance private. The attendees of folk

singing events are, as described above, frequently distinct from local residents, and similarly from other patrons of the pub. The majority of events are held in self-enclosed back- or upstairs-rooms in semi-private spaces. Others are in areas distinct from the main bar, but include interaction with other patrons. (For example, the back room of the Kelham Island Tavern has access to the beer garden and a coffee machine and so accommodates a flow of other pub-based traffic.) Where events are held in fully public areas they receive negative comments during the diary project concerning interference from other pub entertainment, bar functions (till noise; glass washing etc) or from other patrons.

To investigate this further I tested two contexts within the same pub on participants of The Singing Group, an informal session I run. One week we sang in the main bar, the following meeting we sat in an adjacent conservatory. None found it enjoyable singing in the main bar, with frequent comments about having difficulty concentrating or hearing others over the noise. The conservatory was much preferred as it offered a semi-private space in which 'we could hear each other better' (D~Philip). This demonstrates that, while interacting with the wider public is desirable in order to increase awareness of folk singing, it is not conducive to the practice. Fulfilling the desire for a successful event results in private or semi-private spaces being used and self-enclosed meeting places appear to be the ideal for those participating.

The clear physical demarcation between folk singing activities and other pub activities creates the possibility of distinct types of behaviour. John Smith writes:

> One solution to the problem of providing a good performance environment in a pub where the pervading space is semi-public is to create, within the pub itself, a new semi-private zone and thereby re-establish the spatial hierarchy. I suggest that the spatio-temporal marking off of a particular room on a particular evening as a "Folk Club" does just that. This enables a separate set of rules governing the social behaviour of those who chose to enter that environment to be developed. (1987:165)

Having different areas for different behaviours is evident for other types of music for example the concert hall with its foyer for socialising/consuming

behaviour and the auditorium for listening (Small 1998:23). Folk attendees similarly only interact with the main section of the pub as a place to travel through to reach the performance space and for buying beer or using other facilities. A salient difference is that within the concert hall the same individuals are exhibiting different behaviours in different spaces whereas within the folk context 'others' have to be negotiated.

The barrier to the room then, the boundary between public and semi-public space has to be negotiated. At concert halls 'we show our tickets to an attendant who stands on guard to ensure that only those entitled to do so will enter' (Small 1998:22), at night clubs there are bouncers on the door allowing admittance on the basis of dress codes or attitude (Rietveld 1998:175). Admission to folk events however, is usually less formalised. There may be people selling tickets at the door at some concert style events but this is not a widespread practice and there is often no explicit barrier to the altered space. The consequence of a lack of overt structure can create problems for the uninitiated as Raymond Greenoaken describes:

> I think etiquette is only ever an issue when you get people who are not there to sing or to listen. The upstairs room at the Fat Cat is open to the clientele, and often people who drift in genuinely don't realise that they're in the midst of a folk club. Strange but true. (PC~Raymond)

By holding events in public houses and by not providing visible barriers to entry, folk events aspire to exude a welcome feel and a policy of openness-to-all. In reality however, it creates a situation in which only the initiated can easily negotiate conversely making it less accessible to 'outsiders'.

Admission procedures are useful for the uninitiated, or for events that gather disparate people together, but unlike the concert audience or night clubbers, the folk club or session is not a group of strangers meeting for a common purpose. Regular attendees do not need overt pointers or encouragement to enter. In this sense they are more closely related to a semi-private group such as a community choir or barbershop chorus. A salient difference is that unlike these groups who meet privately for rehearsals then perform in public, folk activities are held solely within the semi-private environment.

New members to the Sheffield Folk Chorale are attracted through their public performances whereas the folk activities described here exist exclusively behind closed doors. This limits the ways in which the activity can widen participation. Dorothy Noyes suggests that public performance is a way of grounding and confirming the community: '[t]he community exists in collective performances: they are the locus of its imagining in their content and of its realization in their performance' (1995:468).[21] The absence of such public appearances by 'the folk club' within the wider community further enhances the community's status as distinct from society reinforcing the sense (for both sides) of it being a marginalised group existing in limbo between a private club and a public activity.

This section has presented the Sheffield folk scene through an examination of its relationships to the places of performance. There is a perception of a local Sheffield folk scene evidenced through the regional publication *Stirrings*. However, this is recognised as a subset of the regional population and, along with the propensity to travel, the form of community displayed within folk singing contexts is unrelated to traditional approaches to the term as defined by inhabitants of a closed geographical locality. Folk singers are therefore more closely aligned to the concept of transient special interest groups who, in this case, tend to be (though not exclusively) attracted from a relatively localised regional area.

Although the locations of performance affect folk singing practices, I suggest that the connections between people and places are more conceptual than physical. While strong ties exist between folk events and places, the 'place' in question is temporally contained within the frame of the folk singing event and the specific ways the place is used rather than the physical building and its patrons per se. The sense of a deep relationship with a pub through the naming of events is somewhat notional.

Folk singing occurs in semi-private spaces and is mostly promoted in closed circuits through existing members. This presents difficulties for potential newcomers to learn about the practice of folk singing, or its particular locations. When new people do attend an event there are

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[21] 'Performance', in this context, can be read as either behavioural or an artistic performance.

difficulties in recognising the boundaries of the event and the need for adopting acceptable behaviours.

4.2 Managing space and creating territories

Having established that the relationship between a place and its inhabitants is based upon how a space is used, through the following section I investigate the ways in which different systems are employed to manipulate physical environments to make it conducive to the needs of folk singers. I discuss décor, the ways of demarking stages along with the wider layout issues and explore the effect of these on the hierarchical levels found within the folk singing environment.

Following the ideology that folk singing is a simple music that can be made by anyone, it is similarly viewed as not needing complicated equipment or ostentatious facilities. This is not to suggest, however, that any environment is conducive to folk singing. Niall MacKinnon describes a folk event that 'for a while met in a night club but there was a general feeling that the décor of a disco unit was not conducive to a folk club atmosphere' (1993:39). Similarly, the décor in the concert hall is designed to be representative of the types of experience intended to be held within: 'they convey an impression of opulence, even sumptuousness. There is wealth here, and the power that wealth brings… What is to happen here is serious and important and will not appeal to the vulgar' (Small 1998:25). This does not fit comfortably with the ideologies expressed by folk singers.

The décor of folk venues is rarely plush or geared towards technical effects, and the use of old furniture in little used pub back rooms is more commonplace. From the comments made by diary participants, if the environment is unobtrusive and comfortable, it will suffice. While this suggests a minimum of décor, a homely feel is desired and negative comments were made about venues which felt like 'an austere conference room' (PC~Bob) or atmospheres like 'a works' canteen' (D~Janet).

Along with décor, the number of people inhabiting a space can impact upon the desired atmosphere. Organisers select venues that will comfortably accommodate the number of people they anticipate to attend

their event. However, overcrowding provides a preferable atmosphere for this kind of music than half-empty venues. The impact of relative audience size will be further visited in relation to musical outputs (Section 6.1).

Given that people are gathering for the purpose of singing, the acoustic qualities of the space and how they are manipulated, or not, is of particular interest. As Ben Malbon points out, 'it is the ability of music (and sound more generally) to create an *atmosphere* (an emotionally charged space) which is of crucial importance, for it is largely this atmosphere that the clubbers consume' (1998:271). This invites discussion of the ways the sound of singing is affected by its environment of performance.

Many folk singing events do not use amplifying devices and the natural acoustics of rooms were frequently commented upon in the diary project and participants valued 'good places to sing' (D~Jenny). However, a number of folk events prefer to utilise a PA system.

In Niall MacKinnon's survey of folk club audiences he found that 30% of people felt that amplification enhanced their enjoyment and 47% did not, surmising that they were truly split on the issue (1993:49). Although the use of PAs has seen a general increase since the early 1990s, negative attitudes towards them appear to have remained. Despite the increase of relatively cheap equipment and the number of people with a basic knowledge of its functioning there remains a high number of events that do not employ such technology. This provides a division within the folk scene as to what sort of acoustic environments in which people feel comfortable, and the presence or absence of a PA is one signifier of the type of activity that will be conducted within the space.

PA systems are selective about what sound is amplified and the emphasis on a lead singer over audience participation creates a sense of hierarchy within the performance. Paul Davenport highlights the dangers of the effects of amplification on audience participation as he describes a festival he attended:

> One afternoon the big marquee, all the electrics went and
> Bill Whaley and Dave Fletcher were in full flight and they
> stepped sideways from the microphones and the hitherto
> silent passive audience joined in with the chorus and lifted
> the roof off the marquee. Now there is something

> fundamentally wrong about the amplification if it is killing
> that interaction and that community. (FG~Paul)

This demonstrates a division between the singer and the group and while this may be desirable within the format of certain events, it nevertheless creates a sense of audience-and-performer less evident when there is an equal sonic balance. Therefore events which utilise a PA system tend to be more directed towards individual performances, and environments that favour group singing tend not to employ such equipment.

MacKinnon describes the effect of amplification on listeners:

> [T]he presence of recording technology at live music
> events reinforces a mental configuration deriving from
> recorded music itself. It is now possible to talk over live
> music and for that music not to be disrupted, for the talk
> not to prevent or interrupt the performance. Musical
> performance is then transmuted into something quite
> different from what it was in direct face-to-face situations.
> (1993:78)

Mackinnon recognises that many folk singers and audiences value actively listening to each other's performance and this effect of amplification is not universally appreciated. John Smith notes this paradox when describing the decision he took to introduce a PA at his music club in the 1980s. He recognised that new audiences did not want to adhere to the strict policy of silence while listening to music, so compromised with a modest increase of amplification to match the slight increase in audience noise (1987:166-7).

This is emblematic of a developing national trend towards larger amplified gigs though the difference in resulting environments is an issue recently raised in *Stirrings.* Simon Heywood feels that '[t]he best of the music is trying to adapt itself to the formal concert platform… and in doing so it's changing its basic sound and losing its heart', and calls for folk organisers to 'restore the small acoustic gig to its central place in the folk environment' (2008:12,15).

While amplified concert style events are on the increase in the folk scene, they are not the majority of events attended by diary participants and therefore not the focus of this thesis. However, other staging devices can be observed beyond the use of PA and here I concentrate the following

discussion on unamplified environments and the ways in which they construct staging devices.

A detailed analysis of the complex ways in which participants of the folk scene attempt to destage their performances has previously been produced (MacKinnon 1993), but it is salient to further comment here on the ways in which these different forms of staging can produce feelings of alienation or inclusion. There are various models of staging found within folk singing events:

- Only guest performers use the stage (figure 4.3:a)
- Floor singers use the stage acting as support for the guest (figure 4.3:b)
- Floor performers are the sole occupiers of the stage as no guests are invited (figure 4.3:c)
- People sing from where they are seated and there is no invited guest (figure 4.3:d)

At larger scale events where professional musicians perform from a fixed stage area (figure 4.3:a) there is a strong barrier, both physical and psychological, between the singer and the audience. Bob Butler finds that he 'seldom go[es] to concert events, because at a large venue few acts can make me feel involved' (D~Bob):

> I like to see the whites of the performer's eyes; I want to
> see the performer at an intimate venue, interacting with
> the audience. (PC~Bob)

When describing the difference between singarounds and performing on stage professional folk singer Jon Boden says that, in an informal environment:

> There's hardly any barrier up between the performer and
> the audience you're all there together it's just that one of
> you's singing. Whereas when you're on stage you have
> quite a significant barrier, emotional barrier between the
> performer and the audience. Which you can pretend is
> not there and a lot of people pretend it's not there but it is,
> that's just part of their act is pretending that it's not there.
> (I~Jon)[22]

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[22] The ways in which professionals amateurise themselves will be further explored in the following chapter.

Figure 4:3 Examples of staging arrangements a) Nancy Kerr and James Fagan at Bright Phoebus, 15 April 2010 b) Scuppered at The Hollybush Folk Club (photograph by Pete Shaw), circa October 2007 c) Judy Dalton at Anston Folk Club (photograph by Bob Butler), circa October 2007 d) Kelham Island Singing Session, 24 June 2007.

This illustrates that the division of artists from audiences through large scale staging needs conscious effort from professional performers to dispel and, where this is unsuccessful, it does not conform to everybody's desired folk singing experience.

Niall MacKinnon (1993:87-8) describes how the process of having guest performers and floor singers sharing the stage (albeit at different times) can act as a destaging device, levelling out hierarchies between the performers (figure 4.3:b). However, the mere presence of a stage is not appealing to many folk singers. Bob Butler describes how he 'hated having to go up front at Anston' (PC~Bob), and that 'If the first club I'd attended in Yorkshire had been one of those instead of a round-robin [singaround], I may never have started singing' (D~Bob).

It is common in other singaround events for singers to perform from where they are seated (figure 4.3:d). John Humphreys feels that giving people the option of where they prefer to perform can 'help this community aspect enormously' (FG~John), and at some events a combination of staging devices can be employed. This is the case at Raise the Roof where individual singers decide whether to sing from their seat, to stand where they were sitting or to move to another area of the room chosen for its stage-like benefits in terms of sight and sound lines.

While those singers who do not change to a designated stage area may dispel certain notions of staging, I found that singers nevertheless demark themselves as a lead singer through physical actions such as standing up, leaning forward in their seats or closing their eyes. These acts may be ostensibly for ease of singing, but they also have the effect of differentiating the lead singer from the rest of the group, creating a sense of stage.

The effects of becoming an overtly staged musical genre cause a shift not only in the sonic production of the music, but also in the community's social dynamic, creating a generic *performer-audience* culture rather than that of the *club*. It is important to remember, however, that, although the majority of diary participants prefer environments that adhere to such destaging devices, other individuals seek different experiences from their folk singing activities, and the variety of environments allows 'one… to find a club that "fits"' (D~Marjorie).

The social aspect of folk singing remains a key element of the phenomenon and John Smith stresses the importance of viewing the physical environment as a basis for social interaction:

> The scene thus set should not be thought of as being merely an arrangement of physical objects, since norms will already have been developed with regard to how this space is typically used. If the space is thought of as territory, then the setting takes on a socially meaningful texture and the use of space will provide information about the social status or roles of those who may legitimately occupy it, or not, as the case may be. (1987:155-6)

This being the case for my study, I now look to the wider room layout and how this can affect social interactions which create the sense of community found within the group.

Providing seating in rows facing a stage promotes a certain type of behaviour. 'The very form of the auditorium tells us that the performance is aimed not at a community of interacting people but to a collection of individuals, strangers even, who happen to have come together to hear musical works' (Small 1998:27). Conversely, providing seating arrangements that are more convivial can encourage social interaction:

> At Music in the Round the 'friendliness' commented on by many participants seemed to be connected with the noting of familiar faces and exchanging smiles, rather than with more substantial interactions… The 'in the round' venue may be partly responsible for this tendency, since it fosters the easy recognition of other audience members. (Pitts 2005:101)

Within participatory folk singing contexts it is more usual to have seating arranged around the edges of a room, or cabaret-style, both providing the possibility of visual interactions as described above. Strict rows of seats are found at concert-style events featuring professional performers. Although a comparison between these layout structures would prove an interesting line of enquiry, here I limit the discussion to the interactive arrangements provided at participatory events.

Unlike other events which focus upon participant interaction, such as Community Arts workshops where the 'workshop space becomes a contingent site, a deterritorialized environment designed to enable and enhance experimentation and exploration' (Higgins 2007:80), folk singing environments tend to have specific arrangement systems, which, although not necessarily explicitly marked, nevertheless dictate the use of the space.

From my research I have uncovered perceived right and wrong ways of choosing seats within the folk singing environment, the five main reasons for seating selection being:

- Access to facilities and comfort.
- Certain places allowing for specific sight and sound lines.
- Sympathising with the pattern of seating established by those already present.

- Preference for sitting in a usual seat.
- Some areas hold hierarchical status and are only available to certain people.

Being next to cold windows, on uncomfortable stools or near the loo were reasons given by diary participants for, or for not, choosing particular seats. Also, the proximity to other singers or being in the perceived centre of things affects people's choices due to the impacts others have on their experience of the event. In many venues the outside of the room will fill up first with 'late arrivals filling the centre and apologising for sitting with their back to whoever is behind them' (Stock 2004:51).

Once a choice has been made, this can be altered, however, and I experienced several seat changes at the Kelham Island Tavern. As non-folk attendees vacated seats usually used by the folk singers the singing group moved around to their preferred position. Movements also occur to fill out the gaps as a result of singers leaving events early:

> Jess asked Rich to move. With the exodus of some people the group seating was moderated to maintain a group feel. When more people were there it was OK to have some people sitting behind others but when numbers were reduced a circular arrangement seemed to be desired by Jess. (FN~24 February 2008)

On the other hand, once a seat or area of the room has been chosen, regular attendees may routinely inhabit that space. Respecting others' established seating claims is something I have been acutely aware of when visiting new venues for this research. Although the situation is somewhat different to the antisocial 'reserved for musicians' experience found by Helen O'Shea within the Irish session community (2006:4-5), to intrude on someone's preferred area nevertheless creates a social faux pas.

> Most other people have habitual seats, and it's part of the familiarity of the event to see the same faces in roughly the same places, but I don't think they feel they own them (with the possible exception of the Beehive gang at Raise The Roof, 6 or 7 of them, who would complain if someone encroached on their comfort space at the end of the window wall). (PC~Bob)

This comment also serves to demonstrate how distinct groups exist within the overall community of the event and how social ties are reinforced through seating patterns.

The 'Beehive gang' are a group who also attend The Beehive folk club and have a reputation for being a friend group within the wider group of Raise the Roof attendees. Accommodating social structures such as this creates a multi-layered experience forming more complex social interactions.

Other groups or individuals also have claims on specific spaces within the room. The MC, for example, will usually sit in the same place each meeting, often in a position with clear sightlines around the room for ease of calling on people to sing. At events where ticket money is collected, there may be a table secured near the door for such a purpose. There are also high status areas for certain singers and residents may have a space notionally reserved for them with ease of access to the performing area or close to the centre of the action (Smith 1987:156). While this has a practical application, it also reinforces the social structuring within the group denoting status and privilege.

This rule-laden designation of space makes a rather inhospitable environment for the newcomer. Even for someone who is familiar with the mores of folk events per se, specific information about individual events has to be learnt in order to avoid social faux pas. Further, the physical arrangement of seats to ensure clear sightlines provides nowhere for the novice to hide. Learning the intricacies of behaviour can function as a personal rite of passage, acting as a marker for the newcomer's understanding of, and therefore membership of, the group. The familiarity of having one's own place within the room contributes to a sense of belonging.

The systems employed to create a sense of equality within folk events, such as not using amplification or applying destaging devices, suggest that folk events aim for an equal experience for all without the influence of hierarchy. This is an approach to community not unlike that found in the Enlightment period, which advocates 'a vision of pure or pristine social bond that did not need a state' (Delanty 2003:9). The reality of distinctions created through the subtle indicators of lead singers or hierarchical seating patterns suggests these utopian ideals are not

necessarily being met. The result is an environment presented as open and accessible to the newcomer, yet peppered with inexplicit etiquettes of behaviour. This conflict will be further explored through the following chapters.

4.3   Managing time

Having identified that spaces are modified to suit folk singing practices, and that relationships with places are dependent upon time bound activities, I now turn my attention towards the way this time is managed on a variety of scales. Beginning on an intimate level, the ways in which individual events are structured is investigated and I discuss how ordering within events is communally upheld. I then broaden the lens to view the effects of repetition on events including discussion of the theory of *ritual*. Finally, the way events are interrelated to constitute the sense of *scene* is explored with an emphasis on how individuals create their own pathways through a wider folk singing community.

4.3.1   Timings within the event

Jonathan Stock notes that for instrumental folk musicians, '[t]heir 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). Through this section, I further explore these observations and comment on four aspects of the effects of intricacies of timing on the creation of group identity: keeping to time; ordering performers; the relationship between music making and socialising; and the ways people extend the event.

Folk clubs and singing sessions usually have predetermined start and end times. The activities that occur within this time frame are carefully managed to maintain energy levels throughout its programmed timeslot. Events frequently advertise that they start at '8.30pm *promptly'* (Raise the Roof 2008 my emphasis), and comments are often made about punctuality, wanting to get started early and keeping to time. This highlights the structured quality of events in contrast to more informal visits to the pub.

While there is general enthusiasm for starting on time, the extent of reference to this suggests that it is not a common occurrence and rather provides a point of contention between some participants. To compound this, the opening performance slot of an event is seen as unappealing and few singers are eager to take this spot. Due to this, at least in part, the MC or another regularly designated person will often open the event.

Similarly, end times are closely adhered to, partially because of the restrictions placed on events by the public house in which they meet, but also due to the wishes of participants. Even if it is a busy night, there is an assumption that events must finish on time and deviation from this is an exception that must be approved by the group. In many formats people are reluctant to leave before the end (indeed, in some contexts it is seen as rude not to remain as an audience member for others after your performance) which dictates the event must end for everyone at the same time. Those who do not adhere to the prescribed timings through non-punctuality or leaving early can form tensions within the group. This presents a situation more akin to concert formats than that of casual pub attendance.

In order to finish at the appropriate time the performance has to be managed. How the order of performance is determined differs within the various folk singing event formats. In guest clubs or more formally staged floor singer events there is typically an MC who programmes the singers. At singarounds there may also be an MC, but the established pattern of moving around the room somewhat dictates their decisions. In more informal session settings singers themselves are responsible for managing the order of performance. These are rather simplified explanations of the way performances are organised and I now look at each context in turn highlighting the specific factors within each that affect the ways a sense of community is constructed.

Niall MacKinnon remarks on the unique character of the structure most commonly found in folk clubs:

> The folk club formula of two halves, with a guest turn and
> floor performer spots in each half, was a phenomenon
> which the British folk scene had created for itself. It
> certainly did not belong in the settings of traditional music
> and it was not imported from the United States. But it is

the formula which has demarcated the performance frame
and thereby set up the particular forms of staging which
now characterise the British folk scene. (1993:94)

This format enables a mixture of novices and professionals to perform within the same event, not a situation commonly found elsewhere. Floor singers act as a warm up for the main guest artist and supplement the amount of entertainment provided for audiences. The impact of having performances from club members provides more than a support act does within a concert setting. Again MacKinnon observes: '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' (ibid:88).

The limited nature of performance opportunities in this format necessitates a certain amount of editorial decision making on the part of the MC. Jenny Scott describes the process:

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. (FG~Jenny S)

This shows attention being paid to singing quality and the possibility of progression through the ranks of floor singers to higher positions. This emphasis on prioritising quality is not universally found within folk events and at singarounds or floor-singers-only folk clubs, there is often an expectation that everyone will have an opportunity to perform regardless of their technical ability. Indeed a number of participants expressed dislike of events where there was an apparent unevenness in song distribution based on status levels (D~Chas; D~Ann). Singing quality is a contentious subject within the folk singing scene and will be further explored in section 6.2.

In singarounds, the order of performance usually travels round the room in a circular fashion, often clockwise. Due to irregular seating patterns this is rarely strictly adhered to and a number of deviations are frequently made. These can be in order to vary performance styles, to maintain a

gender, instrumental or chorus/solo balance, to incorporate latecomers, or to place stronger singers at particular points in the event:

> For about 11 years the order of singing at Raise The Roof was anti-clockwise from the MC's (Ron & Jenny'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. (PC~Bob)

Through manipulating the order of performers a certain atmosphere and ambience is created. Ensuring a strong opening and ending is desirable, but within the event there is a peak and trough structure differing from a continual build in quality found in gigs following a support act structure.

The (semi) predictability of this format involves everyone in the room as it is inclusive in the way that it gives everyone the opportunity to perform (although not everyone accepts the invitation). As the order of singers moves in a predictable manner, people know when it is coming round to their turn and can psychologically prepare. Despite knowing they are next in the circle, participants usually wait for an invitation from the MC before singing, denoting their acquiescence to authority.

Within the singing session format there is no official leader of the group in the form of an MC, though internal hierarchies are still present. These usually centre on the strongest singers or those who have negotiated with the venue to hold the session or undertake other organisational duties. These people usually open proceedings and may feel the responsibility to take the lead if there is a lull in singing. The order of performance depends upon individuals making the decision when to sing themselves. Others can specifically invite people to sing. This can be done for two reasons: if a singer seems nervous and needs encouragement to begin, or if the performance of a particular song is desired.

The more informal system of structuring within this context enables one or more people to dominate, providing a filter for those who have the confidence and ability to initiate performance under these conditions. In this

sense it can separate the strong from the weak, or rather the gregarious from the timid, resulting in a different form of inclusiveness. Unlike the two formats described above, the singing session does not have a requirement to facilitate a certain number of songs per person, or adhere to set timings and the evening can run at a pace defined by those present, enabling a comfortable mixture of musical activity and socialising.

This highlights the importance of social time within events and along with keeping to time, another major responsibility of the MC is to maintain a balance between social interaction and musical activity. Problems can occur when there is a perceived imbalance resulting in either socialising getting in the way of singing (D~Roy), or not providing enough opportunity for socialising (D~Ann). The intricacies of social interactions are explored more fully in Chapter 5, but maintaining the balance between social and musical activity necessitates organisers to employ time management strategies.

One mechanism commonly used to enable social interaction is to provide a beer break. Although a specific break is ostensibly provided for the purposes of buying beer, the activity is not limited to this slot and a number of people visit the bar outside its limitations. It does, however, provide a break in musical activity for socialisation. John Humphreys highlighted the importance of this period:

> [I]f 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. (FG~John)

Through actively designated times for social interaction, the club can affect its internal sociability which influences the ways relationships are built or maintained.

In many contexts MCs control how time is managed through selecting performers and dictating the length of breaks. In accordance with this, however, participants need to moderate their behaviour to comply with their requests, for example through singing shorter songs or by reducing the

amount of talking between numbers. This demonstrates a shared sense of responsibility and the distribution of power. The MC holds overall responsibility for the group but other participants need to comply to ensure events run as considered necessary. More informal sessions (at festival fringe events or in bars that hold a late licence for example) tend not to have this same time pressure. These draw to a close as momentum fades. The onus for time management is squarely placed on participants in these contexts and there is rarely a designated MC.

From a business studies perspective, these patterns of leadership could be described as *supportive* for folk clubs, and *enlightened* for sessions (Manning, Curtis et al. 1996:73). Within the folk club '[p]ower resides with the leaders, but there is good communication and participation throughout the organisation'; within the session environment '[p]eople at all levels of the organisation have a high degree of freedom to initiate, coordinate, and execute plans to accomplish goals' (1996:73). George Manning, Kent Curtis and Steve McMillen suggest that all organisations should aspire to run as enlightened structures as this improves morale and productivity; however, their thesis resides strongly within the world of business. When it comes to leisure, people appear to want varying levels of involvement; some enjoy being passive consumers while others prefer to be more in control of their activities. I revisit the impacts of hierarchies and distribution of power within the social structure further in Section 5.1, but here the main premise is that a shared sense of responsibility with regards to time keeping helps maintain order for the benefit of the group.

This section has so far discussed the internal management of folk singing events, however, related activities can extend beyond the programmed time envelope of the event. The practice of expanding the event experience was found in classical concert audiences who listen to recordings of the music performed at the concert beforehand in preparation for the event, or afterwards in order to relive the experience (Pitts 2005:99).

Within my study, participants wrote of extending their social or musical time outside of the event envelope through continuing the practice of singing on the way home (D~Bob; D~Carol; D~Kit), or by visiting friends' houses after events (D~Pauline). Participants also talked of singing beforehand at

home or on the way to events for the purposes of warming up or to get in the mood (D~Carol; D~Jerry; D~Raymond). These practices, along with others such as learning new material or organising events, demonstrate how participation in folk singing activities impacts upon a wider section of people's time than the period defined as *the event*. The amount of time some individuals spend participating in folk singing activities 'often taking up just about the whole of their non-working time and playing a large part in their self-definition', cannot go unnoted (Finnegan 1989:58).   I further discuss the phenomenon of having a folk lifestyle and associating with the label of 'folkie' in the following chapter.

4.3.2   Repeating events

Viewing individual events as discrete entities as I have done in the previous section does not present the extent of involvement by participants in their groups. Many singers emotionally commit to particular events and tend to attend regularly each time they meet (the role of regulars is explored further in section 5.1). However, this is not a prerequisite as might be for a chorus rehearsal group (Stebbins 1992b:130), and sporadic or one-off attendees are welcomed albeit in slightly different ways (again explored more fully in section 5.1). The effects of regular participation can be seen through a variety of examples.

Participating in a particular group on a regular basis provides participants with a broader experience than they would gain from just attending a single occasion. Viewing the event as part of a string of events has the effect of evening out experience: '[e]ach month is different… if one month is not so good, you can always hope that the next will be better and it usually is' (D~Roy).

A club that has met regularly for a long time also has the capacity to build from previous mistakes and move towards perfecting the ideal environment:

> Long-established clubs always have a good MC… and
> generally have a core of good singers. They also tend to a
> have a core audience who contribute to the atmosphere
> and respond to the familiar performers readily. (The core
> singers will have 'educated' the audience to appreciate the

range of material…) So the evening is more relaxed and
warms up sooner. This seems to make it more welcoming
even to a stranger. (PC~Bob)

As a newcomer, it is easier to negotiate a group with an existing sense of community than a disparate group that is attempting to bond. A problem described for new clubs was the lack of a sociable atmosphere being created because 'quite a few of the people there didn't know each other very well' (D~Roy). Therefore, the familiarity that ensues from a long term interaction with a club impacts not only on an individual's sense of belonging within the group (and feelings of stalwartness), but also on the event atmosphere and how the environment is perceived by others.

Along with the development of social relationships through repeated contact, event structures can also be affected by repetition. This results in a series of behaviours that could be described as rituals. Most sociological and anthropological studies of ritual emphasise events that result in the separation from customary group practices on ritual occasions. Other models emphasise ritual's function in marking either a transition from one state to another or a temporary suspension of regular activities (for example Turner 1969). To investigate the nature of ritual within folk singing contexts I turn to a model proposed by Joseph C. Hermanowicz and Harriet P. Morgan (1999) where they propose that less separation exists between ritual and routine practices. They propose that:

> adopting separate ritual practices, as expected in
> traditional models of ritual, would entail suspending the
> valued activity. Suspension poses a logical problem
> under such circumstances: [h]ow does one show
> commitment to something by stopping the practice? Thus
> groups that consider their primary activities sacred…are
> likely to conform themselves by 'ritualizing the routine'.
> (1999:200)

Following this approach, and in answering Catherine Bell's (1992) call for us not to limit ritual studies to events classed as such, but rather to investigate the ways ritual is practiced, I look at the ways ritual behaviour is performed within folk singing practices.

The value of ritualized behaviour within normal musical practice has been noted within the barbershop singing community (Garnett 2005:57) and

Gilbert & Sullivan societies (Pitts 2005:53). These studies highlight how the repetition of particular musical pieces creates a sense of group identity. Unlike the Barbershop practice, where all chapters use a limited body of songs for this purpose, distinct folk events tend to have their own identifying material. This may explain the difference between Garnett's finding of 'unthinking routine re-iteration' within the weekly barbershop meetings (2005:56), and the folk community's sense of bonding as a group during this process through identification both with each other, and with the specific event in which they are participating.

Although it is not a widespread practice to have a formalised repertoire some events have songs which hold particular significance to them, or that are routinely sung during the event, often in closing:

> the MC leads 'Rolling Home' as the last song of the evening each time they meet. The MC sings the first verse, then everyone participates through the chorus and for the remainder of the song. This is unlike other folk singing performances where the verses would usually revert to the person who began the song. The style of group singing is somewhat different to that conducted during the earlier section of the evening being generally louder and containing more diverse harmonies. One week there was an unusually high attendance and as time was running short singers had been asked to sing short songs in order to fit everyone in. Because the evening was finishing late Vikki, the MC, asked if they should cut 'Rolling Home'. This was met with general disapproval and a truncated version was sung, missing out the middle two verses. (FN~13 March 2008; Track 18)

This example highlights how the participants found singing the closing group song central to the success of their experience. Although the 'tone of the process reflects the groups' customary tone', it has 'an increased consciousness of group activities and values'; singing 'Rolling Home' remains recognisable as a conventional activity but contains 'some added flourish and flair' (Hermanowicz and Morgan 1999:211). They further comment that:

> Ritual draws upon the ordinary, intensifying and thus confirming it. Affirmation, as the term suggests, honours valued practices not by suspending them but by

The central differences between the ritualised singing of 'Rolling Home' and normal singing styles serve as a demonstration of what is perceived to be of value within this community. From this, we could assume that the sacred aspects in this particular context are group participation and an unrestrained style of singing. Repetition of these core principles through a ritualised act can create cultural stability through affirming these principles.

The performance of rituals can also serve as a marker of cultural change. In a study on secular ceremony, Kathleen Manning (2000:47-9) suggests that the health of the culture can be measured through an assessment of whether or not these events are convincing, or successful. If the sacred aspects of this performance were not adequately met, the ethos of the group would be shaken and its validity placed under question. Maintaining the practice of repetitive performance can, therefore, be seen as a method of monitoring an event's achievements.

Moving beyond discussion of the performance of particular musical pieces to other forms of ritualised behaviour found within folk singing contexts, I propose that the ordering of performances including MCs introductions and the beer break contribute to a view of folk singing as a ritualised practice. These practices are widespread between events which share similar ethos and common structures exist. This established format enables new events to become established within an existing frame. Manning suggests that newly formed events can 'employ ceremonial forms to build community as well as credibility… In this way, repetition of ceremonial form and content perpetuates old forms and provides a template upon which new forms are constructed' (ibid:47).

This practice is also recognised by Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (1983) in their discussion of invented traditions when they describe the establishment of norms of behaviour which automatically imply continuity with the past. In this sense, the transferred models of ritual behaviour between various folk events create a sustained practice that could be seen as *the folk club tradition*. That this has developed since the 1960s revival is

insignificant; there is a sense of continuity of practice, both with traditions of the past and between contemporary events.

The various events that constitute the folk scene share more than organisational structures however, and in the early 1990s, Niall MacKinnon found that over a third of folk club attendees attended more than one club (1993:47). Similarly, within my research, and despite the sense of loyalty formed through regular attendance at individual clubs as described above, there remains a tendency for folk singers to attend a variety of venues. All but one of the participants involved in the diary project attended two or more events, and half attended five or more different events. This pattern differs from that of barbershop singers who, though no less committed, are more commonly a member of one chorus, or occasionally of a related quartet and chorus (Stebbins 1996:35).

Figure 4.4 shows the events attended by participants during the period of the diary project.[23] This density and overlapping of events enables individuals to design their own passage through the folk singing landscape tailor-making their own experiences reminiscent of Ruth Finnegan's 'pathways' (1989:305-6). Following this model, people design individualised monthly timetables containing their regular commitments with supplementary sporadic appearances at other events. People with similar tastes often follow similar routes, but there is no concrete stability in these attendance patterns.

Clashes of events frequently occur with weekly clubs meeting on the same evening, or when a monthly club is held on the same evening as a weekly club. The relative number of clubs in a particular geographical area, and the resulting issues of attendance conflict, could create a competition for members in a Darwinian battle for survival (Argyle 1996:117). However, folk singers generally hold the attitude that more activity is better for the scene as a whole. This follows a pattern as identified through Gary Fine and Brooke Harrington's exploration of small group culture:

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[23] This is not inclusive of all events in Sheffield region at this time and other events occurred which do not feature in the diaries.

Oct 2007

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 Booit Straps FC; Rolling Stock practice; SFC practice; Sportman, Wadsley	**2** The Singing Group	**3** Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**4** Folk @ the Royal; Three Merry Lads	**5** Beehive Folk Club; No Smoke Folk; Play On	**6** Corringham Folk Club; Private Party; SFC Concert Banner ...	**7** Harvest Service; Royal Folk Club; Sandygate, Wath
8 Booit Straps FC; Rolling Stock practice; SFC practice	**9**	**10** Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**11** Gainsborough Folk ...; Raise the Roof; Three Merry Lads	**12** Belper Music Festival; Bacca Pipes Folk Club	**13** Sacred Harp Woodse...	**14** Sandygate, Wath
15 Rolling Stock practice; SFC practice; Sheffield City Morris; Sportsman, Worral	**16** Silsden Singers Party; The Singing Group	**17** Castle Inn; Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**18** Full Circle; Ryburn 3 Step singing; Three Merry Lads	**19** Gainsborough Festival; West Gallery weekend Whitby; Full Circle; Red Lion open mic; SFC home rehersal	**20** Beacons event; SFC Concert Youlgrave; Wortley Folk Club	**21** Black Bull; Kelam Island; Sandygate, Wath
22 Booit Straps FC; Rolling Stock practice; SFC Recording Banner	**23**	**24** Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**25** Cobden View; Gainsborough Folk ...; Ryburn 3 Step singing; Three Merry Lads	**26** Sheffield Folk Festival	**27**	**28** Sandygate, Wath
29 Booit Straps FC; SFC practice; Three Merry Lads S10	**30** Singing Out Ryburn	**31** Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club				

Nov 2007

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1 Ryburn 3 Step singing; Three Merry Lads	**2** Beehive Folk Club; Bradway Hall Concert; Folk at Home @ Home; Play On	**3** Corringham Folk Club	**4** Royal Folk Club; Sandygate, Wath
5 Booit Straps FC; SFC practice	**6** The Singing Group	**7** Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**8** Cobden View; Gainsborough Folk ...; Raise the Roof; Three Merry Lads	**9** Faldingworth Folk C...	**10** Red Shed; Sacred Harp Olney	**11** Kellam Island; Private Party; Sandygate, Wath; The Red House
12 Castle Folk Club; Rolling Stock practice; SFC practice	**13**	**14** Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**15** Anston Folk Club; Ryburn 3 Step singing; Three Merry Lads	**16** Folk at Home @ Home; Full Circle; Sacred Harp House S...	**17** Sacred Harp Haworth	**18** Carols - Blue Ball; Epworth Folk Club
19 Baildon Hall Concert; SFC practice; Sportsman, Worral; The Moon Folk Night	**20** The Singing Group	**21** Handsworth Sword S...; Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**22** Carols - Black Bull; Gainsborough Folk ...; Ryburn 3 Step singing; Three Merry Lads	**23** No Smoke Folk	**24** Private Party; West Gallery Earsden	**25** Carols - Blue Ball; Kellam Island
26 Rolling Stock practice; SFC practice; The Moon Folk Night; Three Merry Lads S10	**27** Singing Out Ryburn; The Folk Train	**28** Handsworth Sword S...; Holly Bush Folk Club; Rivelin Folk Club	**29** Carols - Black Bull; Carols - Red Lion; Ryburn 3 Step singing; Three Merry Lads	**30** No Smoke Folk		

Figure 4:4 A calendar displaying the events attended by participants during the diary project highlighting their overlapping nature and repetitive structures.

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> while groups see themselves as distinct from others, they usually do not define themselves as embattled with others… In addition, the boundaries of most groups are porous: since members belong to multiple groups, simultaneously and sequentially, connections among groups are created, limiting the hostility that otherwise might be felt. (2004:352)

Event organisers who fear a reduction in their audience numbers do not necessarily share this view. However, there is little outright hostility and efforts towards co-operation, such as maintaining an online conflict calendar[24] and by contributing to the same specialist press, show an acknowledgement of targeting the same specialist audience.

People with similar tastes are attracted to events sharing similar elements and a network-like structure emerges. This could be likened to Michel Maffesoli's (1995) theory of 'neo-tribes' which connects likeminded people, removing the barriers of sub-cultural groupings by class, gender or race; the emphasis is more upon 'flitting *between* groups than of membership *per se* of a group or community' (Malbon 1998:280). However, this is not wholly applicable in the current context. Participants of the folk scene retain their sense of membership within individual groups and strictly adhere to group norms. Further participation expands their sense of belonging beyond the limits of individual groups to the wider community of folk singers. Their participation within a number of events is not as transient as Maffesoli's theory suggests and the levels of commitment exhibited by the majority of participants is not captured by notions such as the neo-tribe, which implies a more fickle sensibility.

A theory more suited to the context of the folk scene is found in Dorothy Noyes' (1995) description of the functioning of 'groups' through network ties. Noyes' networks are created by 'placing an individual at the centre and charting all of his or her social relationships, then tracing the relationships between all of his or her connections and adding in all of their connections' (1995:457). The network provided in figure 4.5 shows the interactions by diary participants in the thirteen most frequently attended events. This differs from Noyes' model in that it is based on events rather

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[24] http://www.yorkshire-folk-arts.com/calendar/index.html.

than individuals, and that only folk singing contexts are included rather than subjects' whole life experiences. While there are differences in our network constructions, much of Noyes' analysis is useful here.

Noyes states that various factors affect the density and strength of ties, for example longevity of relationship or frequency of interaction, and argues that in more stable situations, dense networks in which everyone knows everyone else are likely to emerge.

Within the patterns of movement through the Sheffield folk singing scene clusters appear with people attending the same events and interrelationships being formed. This is demonstrated on figure 4.5 by the dense groupings labelled A and B. These are not closed groups, however, and what Noyes terms 'culture brokers' forge links between the dense areas.

This pattern of cross over between events can create groups within groups, as previously described with 'The Beehive Gang', which may cause social rifts between the participants of individual events:

> I come in with I bet you've all got hangovers from last night - I saw them in the pub the previous evening and they had been having a photo shoot. These discussions about relationships outside the group are common but a bit exclusive. Though about 6 of us had been there, it identifies division lines within the group. This was also highlighted when Bob was leaving and said 'See you on Thursday' to a few of us who would be going to Folk at Home, but not everyone is invited to this event so not everyone could be addressed. This creates a bit of a rift and demonstrates distinct communities within communities. (FN~24th February 2008)

Through continual interaction in a number of contexts, the community of folk singers extends beyond the attendees of distinct folk events to a wider network that contributes to the citywide, countrywide or global folk scene. Direct contact with a variety of events provides individuals with a pathway through this scene, however, the interrelated activity of a large number of folk singers forges links that spread beyond individual's folk singing experience. Specific phenomena occur in distinct times and places, but these are related to other activities and ties spread beyond the specific location, creating the conceptual notion of a wider folk scene.
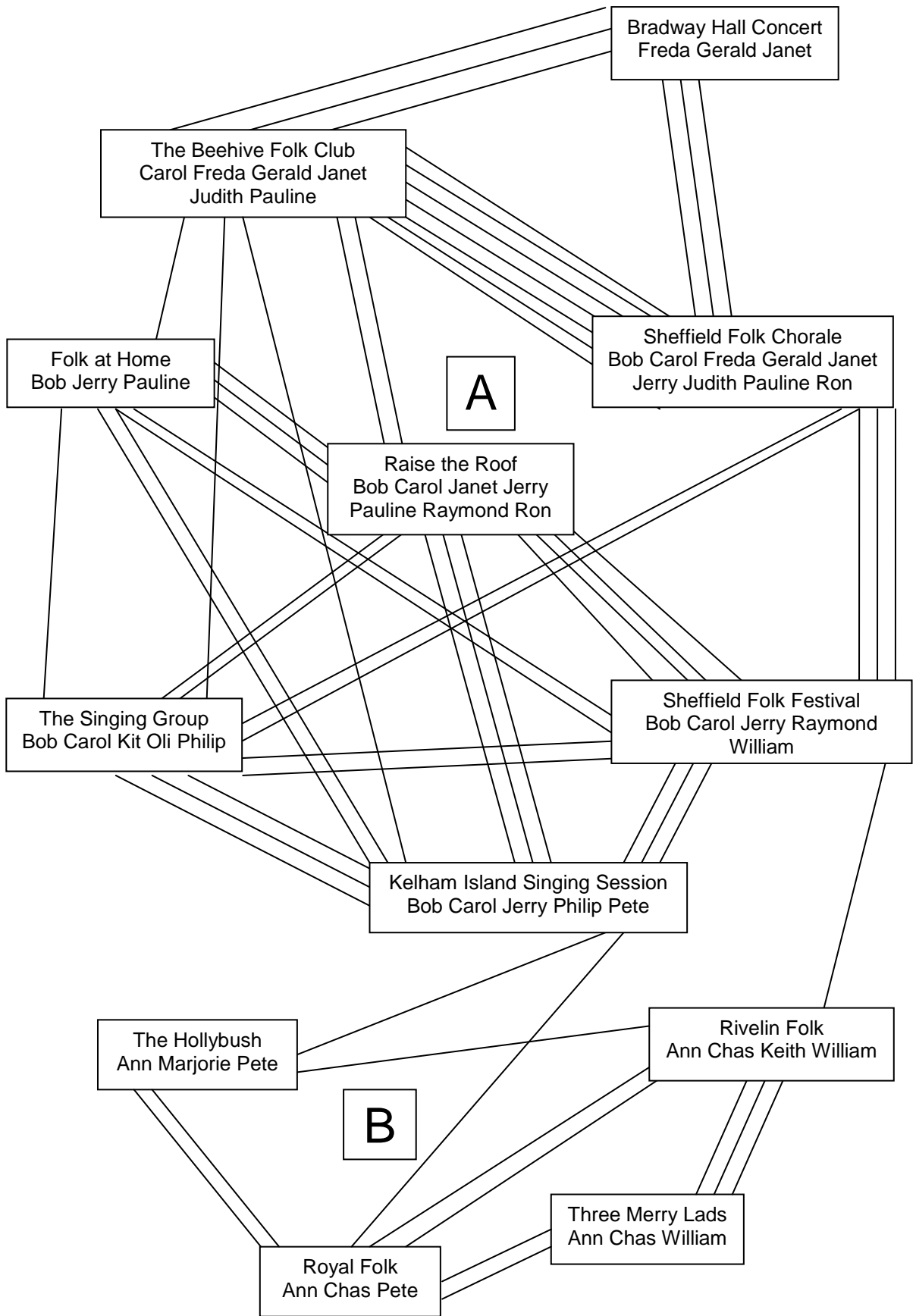
Figure 4:5 A network of activity showing the top 12 attended events from the diary project.

4.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I present a view of the Sheffield folk scene as a borderless construct rather than a geographically distinct entity. However, community is both a process and product of making places in which the sense of being in a group in a time and place emerge simultaneously and are mutually constitutive. Place making and the resultant sense of place are an essential part of how people experience community.

Repetition in the form of ritualised behaviour expounds the groups' central ethos and creates a heightened sense of belonging. Recognition of the group's established mores gives participants a sense of belonging within the group and ownership over its practices. While familiarity with the systems which create the places in which folk singing occurs creates a sense of belonging for insiders, the tacit rule system makes it difficult for the uninitiated to navigate social processes.

5 The social interaction of folk singers

While symbolic and structural elements of community have been identified in the previous chapters, the presence of people must not be ignored. It is vital now to re-embed community in a social as well as a conceptual context. The social element of folk singing is a key feature of the musical genre under discussion here. Participants often describe open, friendly environments and an equality of experience, but the lived reality presents hierarchical structures, strictly followed norms of behaviour and a complex web of relationships forming obstacles to full participation. In this chapter, I look at the ways the social interactions specific to this environment contribute to feelings of community for those who participate in folk singing, and how they act as a barrier for newcomers to the activity. I investigate the ways that people interact within folk singing practices, describing these in three sections dealing with: the roles people can take and the levels on which they engage with these roles; participants' communicative practices including spoken and behavioural interactions; and finally, the nature of various types of relationship found in this musical scene.

5.1 Having a role

Although there is a perception of an equality of experience within folk singing events, suggesting homogeneity of behaviours, the organisational structures described in the previous section dictate that there are a number of distinct functions that need to be fulfilled. Consequently, when people participate in folk singing there are a number of roles they can occupy. These vary from the recognisable jobs of MC, raffle ticket seller, performer or audience member to more subtle distinctions within the spectrum of membership. Here I identify the roles available to people involved in folk singing activities and follow this with an exploration of the depths of commitment individuals make while embodying these roles in order to facilitate the group experience. This discussion extends beyond participation in individual events and I introduce the notion of the 'folkie' and its conceptual impacts upon the identity of folk singers.

5.1.1 Available Roles

There is a wide variety of roles available to participants of folk singing activities. Firstly are the 'organisers' (including 'committee members' and 'helpers') who undertake the management of events and ensure they run as planned. These people commit to specific responsibilities and have an active input into the structure and organisation of events. Secondly, I have identified distinct levels of membership. 'Regulars', 'residents' and 'members' are terms used within the folk scene to describe people of differing status. These roles are secured through frequency of attendance and commitment to the club. Finally, the roles of 'singers' and 'audience members' are of particular interest within folk singing activities due to the crossover of activity and the interface between these roles.

As observed in Chapter 4, the extent to which folk singing events are overtly organised varies. Helen Eyre notes in her study of folk music in Sheffield: '[s]essions appear to arise spontaneously but in fact are usually orchestrated unobtrusively by one or two strong characters' (2001:5). However informal the apparent structure, people are needed to facilitate events. This role can take a number of forms.

The duties of organisers include practicalities such as securing a space for events to meet, booking guests, advertising events and arranging furniture. During the course of the event, they also undertake social duties such as welcoming people and maintaining the desired atmosphere through monitoring and directing activities. These duties can be conducted by an individual or by a number of people within the group. Some leaders are self-appointed while others run as a committee. There are also people who hold a less official status but who also contribute to the running of events.

Ian Russell (2003) notes the importance of key people in the role of organiser in a Pennine hunt singing tradition. In this instance, Haydn Thorpe, 'an extraordinary and inspirational individual… demonstrated the power to transform his community' through organising singing events' (ibid:278). Though the individual in this case is presented as having bonding qualities beyond the norm, individuals within my study were similarly named

as vital to the continuance of events, which comments such as '[the] event relies upon Judy's dedication' (D~Bob) typically demonstrate.

Michael Brocken highlights the 'hidden authority' of the few who make the decisions that shape the event (2003:118), a point that is in part recognised by my diary respondents, though not in the underhand way Brocken implies. Here, participants recognise the commitment and hard work of individuals to ensure that activities occur, and in the main accept the necessary placement of power. Groups are often not democratically run, and the members do not object. In support of this, Niall Mackinnon's survey of folk club audiences found that there was an even split in agreement with the proposition that 'folk events are run efficiently' (1993:48). This suggests that despite a private questioning of leadership ability, the majority of people respect the authority of those holding organisational roles, and adhere to the orders and structuring their leaders dictate. I investigate disciplinary practices in section 5.2.3. In cases where conflict arises, it is rarely because explicit rules have been broken.

Compared to some other forms of singing leisure, such as belonging to a choir or taking a course, folk singing events are less rigid in their attendance requirements and individuals are able to attend regularly or sporadically. Due to this flexibility, tensions that have been identified amongst barbershop singers due to 'spotty attendance', are avoided (Stebbins 1996:69-70). However, folk singers are not oblivious to attendance patterns, and have developed a culture that rewards frequent attendance in place of the more common practice of penalising infrequent visitors.

The titles of 'member', 'regular' and 'resident' are earned, bestowed or self-applied within the group. They depend upon various factors including frequency and longevity of attendance, depth of engagement and, for the more formally recognised 'resident' status, their perceived hierarchy within the wider body of singers. 'Residents' are a group of high status (often professional or semi-professional) singers found in some, but not all, events and may be actively identified in event publicity (see figure 5.1). These individuals are generally approached by the organisers and invited to accept the role which carries an obligation for frequent attendance and being

Figure 5:1 An advertisement appearing in Tykes News (issue Autumn 2009) by Ryburn Folk Club featuring a list of their residents.

available and willing to sing when requested (PC~Bob). Holding this role is regarded as an honour, and provides recognition of singing ability. Residents are also viewed as representative of the club, indicating its musical style and standing.

While this role is associated with singing ability, the regular and member statuses are not and, as John Smith astutely observes, 'the important factor here is a demonstrable commitment to the club rather than artistic ability' (1987:158). It should also be noted that alongside singers, non-singers can hold the roles of 'member' and 'regular' and are valued members of the group. 'Regulars' and 'members' are those who attend most event meetings and show an emotional commitment to the event. Those who hold these roles constitute the core body of attendees and are seen as the backbone of folk clubs; 'the faithful few that keep the club going' (D~Bob). Without a regular body of people meeting, the events would transform into a concert-type environment, in conflict with the 'club' ethos.

The non-compulsory mode of attendance creates a level of unpredictability as the personnel may differ for each meeting. In addition to variation in the core body of attendees, casual attendees and newcomers provide change for each meeting, ensuring a stagnant social body does not develop. These informal terms of membership are built around emotional ties rather than practical application and create a hierarchy distinguishing the frequent attendees of a club from its casual attendees. This in turn creates a sense of belonging and an identified, earned place within the group.

A further designation of roles can be seen in the musical activities undertaken by those participating in folk singing events. In Stephanie Pitts' study of musical participation she raises issues with the label of 'musician' and the myth of the "non-musician"' is also discussed. Pitts finds 'such blunt terminology is symptomatic of the hierarchical way in which musical involvement and achievement is classified' (ibid:21-22).

Elements of these findings can be seen in the context under discussion here. Folk singing is portrayed as an open and inclusive avenue for musical participation and the performance structure enables participants to hold a number of roles within this spectrum rather than the binary of singer or non-singer. Niall MacKinnon's 1993 survey found that 93% of the audience participated in singing (i.e. as chorus-singers) and of these 42% performed at the club (i.e. were lead-singers) (1993:47-48). That left only 7% within the non-singers bracket described above. The label of 'singer' is typically applied to those who lead songs with those who solely join in choruses not usually called singers, but appreciated nonetheless for their contribution to the singing. John Smith notes that:

> a given individual may occupy a position in the
> performance role set but, excluding the time spent in
> performance at the rostrum, will also occupy a position in
> the audience role set. The relation between these two
> role sets (performance and audience) is asymmetrical
> since there will be people who occupy audience roles but
> do not occupy a position in the performance role set.
> (Smith 1987:157)

This distinction is complex and the terms 'singer' and 'audience' will henceforth refer to the roles or activities rather than distinct groupings of people. For most participants, the amount of time spent leading a song

(Smith's *performance role*) is minimal compared to the time spent listening to others or participating as a chorus singer (Smith's *audience role*). Therefore, the actual time dedicated to singing or listening for both role types is similar. A conceptual differentiation, however, remains between the two groups, which is further discussed in Section 6.1.

Although participating in singing activity provides a certain status, audience members can also occupy specific roles. Michel Brocken describes how 'a vigilant listener/receivership' had developed by the 1970s (2003:116). Knowledge of the folk song repertoire and history of performance is widespread through both singing and non-singing participants of the folk scene, evening out a potential differentiation between those who know (singers) and those who do not (audience). This supports Robert Stebbins' assertion that 'amateurs, as specialist members of the public, know better than its ordinary members what constitutes a credible performance' (1980:415). This contributes to the club feel of events where all are active participants, as opposed to specialists performing to an inactive audience. Specialist audiences are valued and many participants noted the importance of audiences for the fulfilment of their singing experience.

Within the Irish instrumental session environment, Charlie Lennon (1993) recognises how good listeners positioned around the musicians can make the session a success. He also highlights the inverse, that it is easy for unsympathetic or insensitive punters to overpower musicians. This is similarly noted by the participants of this study and demonstrates how audience members need to be socialised into the context of performance. Absolute newcomers to folk music are unusual and either transient and leave the group or soon become socialised into the norms of behaviour and progress from the position of being an outsider audience member.

Here the nature of folk audiences is brought into question. The dearth of 'ordinary' members of the public amongst folk audiences has been noted:

> It struck me that this was all rather incestuous - singers
> and musicians performing to other singers and musicians,
> with very few people, mainly partners / family / friends of
> performers, actually making up an audience.
> Occasionally the attention of locals or other customers in
> the pub would be attracted, perhaps by a particular song,
> but generally we were just background music to them…

folk is not in fact a "spectator sport"; most people on the folk scene couldn't care less about an audience and just want to play and sing regardless of whether anyone is listening. (Reade 2007)

This can be observed in the use of semi-private spaces as described in Section 4.2 that act as a barrier to the general public acting as an 'outsider audience' (Garnett 2005:176-7).

Another group of casual attendees are worthy of note. When guests are playing at a club they can attract their own fan base who may not be usual attendees at the club. A number of comments were made during the diary period referring to fans of the act attending alongside other regular audience members (D~Marjorie; D~Janet). This group were seen as outside the normal demographic of the club, and although they may demonstrate an existing relationship with folk music, their lack of attendance at a particular event indicates that fans have a distinct role of their own to negotiate within specific events.

While I have separated these role categories for the sake of clarity, due to the differences of emphasis on the types presented here an individual may simultaneously occupy a number of different roles; some participants adopt many roles, others are restricted to one or two. These role definitions serve to outline the activities participants in folk singing events can undertake along with a conceptual sense of belonging based upon attendance levels and activity.

5.1.2 Levels of role interaction and progression

Having identified the roles available to folk singing participants in the previous section here I investigate the nature of people's engagement with these roles and the levels of commitment that such roles demand. This includes the application of Robert Stebbins' (2007) 'serious leisure' perspective to the English folk singing scene, and reference to the sense of *moral community* that is created through the varying levels of participation.

It has been suggested that there is intrinsic satisfaction in the fulfilment of role identities above and beyond the pleasure of participating in the activity (McCall and Simmons 1978). John Kelly claims that participants

gain satisfaction not only from their leisure experiences, but through the significance of the 'event-bound role-identity':

> In the immediate dialectic of the processual taking and developing of a characterization of a role, the reciprocal actions of others in the interaction provide feedback that not only continues the role-development but yields satisfaction as the role-identity is established and verified. There is then satisfaction not only in the theatre or sport event but in the role-identity development. (1981:313)

Francois Matarasso (1997) similarly claims that the experiences of those who participate in arts based activities are different to those of passive audiences. Matarasso suggests that some of the social impacts arise as much from people taking an active part in their personal development, and in the lives of their communities as from the production of artefacts themselves (1997:79). As noted above, this is not solely afforded to the artistic input from singers and organisers and regular audience members may also gain satisfaction from their roles.

Rejecting a previously held notion that leisure is passive, Stebbins (2007) takes a view of leisure as an active contributor to individuals' lives and identities. Through his *serious leisure* perspective, Stebbins attempts to disassociate the subject of leisure from being a frivolous activity and encourages focus on its various levels of engagement and the ensuing costs and benefits for participants. Stebbins defines the 'leisure career' as 'the typical course, or passage, of a type of amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer that carries the person into and through a leisure role and possibly into and through a work role' (2007:19).

Within folk singing contexts there are opportunities for individuals to progress into the realm of paid work or to develop within the confines of amateur participation. Here I look into each situation separately, beginning with an analysis of the ways participants engage on an amateur level, and then I explore the notion of professionalisation within the folk singing scene.

There are frequent examples of individuals committing seriously to their folk singing pursuits, developing their practice and increasing their ability through gaining skills, knowledge and experience without the motivation of becoming a professional singer. Opportunities are provided for

individuals to progress musically within the folk singing scene, either by improving singing ability and becoming more highly regarded within the club they attend, or by attending a number of different clubs and being widely recognised throughout the folk scene.

The level to which people engage with and achieve success within their leisure activities has been shown to have an impact upon their sense of being a part of the community. Rebecca Sachs Norris found that 'Community is not a unitary phenomenon' and '[t]he feeling of participation may consist of a variety of experiences and will change as the relationship of the participant and community develops' (2001:118). She finds that within the field of English country dance, having the technical ability to participate fully enhances the feeling of community and that '[a]lthough… beginners are welcomed in many folk dance venues, the experience of community comes from dancing together and being able to hold one's own' (ibid:118-9). This was reflected in my own results showing that folk singers enjoy their experiences more when they are more proficient, providing a social incentive for participants to improve their singing abilities along-side one of personal satisfaction.

Musical prowess, however, is not the sole measure of achievement and active involvement through organisation is equally valued and voluntary commitment to leisure is found not only from the singers who attend each week to perform, but also in the organisers of events (who are often not lead singers). Some embark on organisational career paths, ingratiating themselves in the scene and becoming active enablers of the activity.   The distinguishing factor between 'amateur' and 'volunteer' is the sense of the 'work' involved as opposed to 'pleasure'. Though both are necessary for the production of a folk singing event, there is a perceived differentiation between the singers and organisers who both participate for no money. Stebbins, however, is clear to point out that 'volunteering is a leisure activity' (2007:32), drawing the comparison with amateurs and distinguishing them both from work.

In discussing a theory of *communities of practice* Etienne Wenger proposes that 'we can distinguish groups [of] which we are a core member, and others that we are on the periphery of' (1998:7). These positions are not

static, however, and Liz Garnett describes the varying levels of involvement within barbershop choruses, remarking how chorus directors are encouraged 'to motivate their chorus members to move inwards towards greater involvement':

> The concept of 'circles of involvement', then, illustrates simultaneously the diversity of engagement with the category of barbershopper, and the centripetal compulsion towards greater engagement which operates within the community. (2005:162-3)

A similar structure can be found within folk singing events. Many of the diary participants refer to the 'core of regulars' (D~Carol) and an outer body of singers they know or who are semi-frequent attendees. When people previously unknown to diary participants attended events, they were highlighted as 'strangers' (D~Bob; FG~John). Central participants encourage those in the outer circles to maintain repeated attendance and become more involved within the group, progressing along their career as a regular singer or helper. Differences to the barbershop model exist, however, in relation to the levels of formal structuring to facilitate this process.

Within folk singing events it is the individual's own responsibility to make the necessary musical improvements to be promoted to a higher status singer whereas barbershop groups frequently run training programmes. Similarly, as there is less clarity in defining the members of folk singing groups, the level of attendance and depth of interaction necessary to be considered an insider of the group are determined by the individual.

In order to fulfil the requirements of a well-defined role, participants must acquire the appropriate social knowledge to be equipped 'to carry off the performances required by such roles' (Smith 1987:171). Thus, a newcomer cannot convincingly adopt the role of MC without learning the behaviours required of such a position. An understanding of role responsibility needs to be adhered to. The performer role, for example, while portrayed as open for anyone to contribute, is tightly bound by the role behaviours associated with it. As Jonathan Stock points out in relation to instrumental tune sessions:

> Although Red House participants talk of the session as being a musically open environment where expert and beginner alike can expect to freely interact… the atmosphere of the session is complex and richly shot-through with matters of authority, personal particularity and habitual structure. (Stock 2004:65)

A mechanism to avoid conflicts due to this matter of role fulfilment is found in the acknowledgement of the status level of newcomer. If the role of *newcomer* is adopted alongside that of *singer* non-conforming behaviours will be tolerated accordingly. While newcomers themselves may be oblivious to this stratum, existing practitioners describe their relationship to newcomers in these terms. The role of newcomer contains less rigid expectations than those of others within the community, though specific boundaries to their practice still apply.

If newcomers behave outside the established rules they can change the nature of the event. Regulars of events describe being suspicious of newcomers as any new character has the potential to change the group dynamic. One singer feels that 'A bad individual can fuck up a session. In case a new individual comes along and they're some poetry reciting fruitcake' (I~Jon).

In an investigation of levels of hospitality in community music, Lee Higgins observes that:

> when a music leader welcomes a new participant into a group, they do so with questions: what is your name? what instruments do you play? Have you done this before? What are your expectations? Can you make it every week? …Although questions such as these are very human, they are examples of conditional hospitality... This cannot be avoided because when we welcome one another, we do so with limits. The very the parameters [sic] (hostilities) inherent within one's welcome (hosting) is what makes hospitality possible. (2007a:284)

This echoes existing participants' fears that newcomers may affect the nature of an established event and suggests that these methods of integrating new singers into the group not only provide feelings of welcomeness (or otherwise) to newcomers, but their mode of response also alerts existing members to their potential for compatibility.

Thus a newcomer to any group, even if they are familiar with other aspects of the folk scene, has the challenge of following the specific pattern of 'acquiring skills, equipment, clothes, gradually taking on beliefs, being accepted as a proper member' (Argyle 1996:7). If these criteria are not met it can lead to feelings of incompatibility and unwelcomeness. Some newcomers describe how they chose not to persevere to learn the ways of a specific event as they felt they did not fit in and some went so far as to resent the perceived need to be socialised.

Once individuals are accepted as members, however, they leave the newcomer role and are free to further develop their role-identities. Not all members of the group have the same experience (this is further discussed in section 6.2 in relation to performance nerves). As with any kind of career, there are various leisure paths that can be followed and goals reached, but it should be understood that not everyone is aspiring to the most central or top positions. While core members have a certain raised status, they also carry responsibility, and some members are content to take a back seat, preferring not to be involved in the organisation of events (D~Bob).

Taking a more literal view on career, I now turn to discuss the involvement of professionalism within the folk singing scene. There are professional and amateur levels to many musical genres though it has been recognised that there is a division between the contexts of performance for these types of musicians:

> Professional musicians are socially distinct; full-time performing musicians rarely play with rank amateurs. (Chanan 1994:24)

Unlike the situation in classical music as described by Chanan, interaction between professionals and amateurs is widespread and arguably an integral aspect of the folk scene. The involvement of amateurs alongside professionals is twofold both in terms of placing amateurs on stage as floor spots before a professional act and in the way professionals engage in social music making alongside amateur musicians outside of their paid performance roles:

> This kind of event is live music at the grass roots –
> anything goes from people just starting to sing in public to
> professionals. (D~Ann)

Providing definitions for the terms 'amateur' and 'professional' is complex as it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between work and leisure for some people. Here I refer to 'professionals' as those who receive payment in return for a prearranged performance. This is by no means clear cut within this environment as various systems of reciprocity function including in some cases free beer for the singers. The distinction between performing for financial gain or social reasons is also gradated rather than binary in form. (For further discussion on the payment structures within the folk scene see MacKinnon 1993:70-77.) Similarly forming a distinction in terms of musical standards can be misleading as many talented and well-rehearsed singers perform in both role types.

In a study of the sociology of leisure, Stanley Parker suggests a model to describe the relationships between work and leisure:

> Extension – leisure activities are similar to work with no
> sharp distinction
> Opposition – leisure is chosen to be deliberately unlike
> work
> Neutrality – leisure is generally different to work but not
> planned to be so (1995:29)

While folk singers may fit into any of these brackets, Parker's *extension* best describes the nature of paid folk singers' activity. A number of amateurs achieve a high standard of musicianship and 'It is not uncommon for experienced resident singers to have the status of playing outside the club, perhaps doing gigs as the guest artist for other clubs in the region' (Smith 1987:158). In order to recognise this element of development from one form to the other, I propose an additional dimension:

> Progression – the leisure activity becomes an act of work

This work commonly runs alongside other, often unrelated, employment and full time professionalism is rare. It also runs alongside their leisure folk singing activities and the progression into the realms of paid employment

within this scene does not preclude singers' continuation on an amateur level.

The nature of the performance environment (as described in the previous chapter) makes this a particularly suitable context to develop professionally as 'clubs give new performers a chance to try out their talent and style before a small audience' (D~Marjorie), enabling performers in various stages of professionalism to play alongside each other:

> The relationship between the audience and the performer in the folk scene is very different to that elsewhere because pretty much everyone in the audience is a performer to some extent...There is very little to distinguish between the capacities of the performer and the capacities of the audience bar perhaps experience and confidence. (FG~Paul)

Breaking down the barriers between amateurism and professionalism creates an ideologically equalised community in keeping with the scene's ethos. The lack of a barrier also facilitates observable routes of progression through organisational and social structures enabling a freedom of movement unrestrained by formal structures.

When professional performers create distinctions between themselves and the behaviours of others within the club this can cause tensions. An anecdote was told to me about a guest at a club who 'refused' to listen to the floor spots, preferring to remain in the downstairs bar until his programmed appearance in the club room. As outlined in Section 4.1, the public bar is not generally a place for the folk singer and this rejection of the event was seen as highly inappropriate behaviour.

A second interesting phenomenon concerning the behaviours of professionals arose through this research. While singers can progress through the ranks of amateur and participate on a semi- or fully-professional level they may also seek to retain an amateur role when singing as leisure. From interviews with 6 professional and semi-professional folk musicians, I found they all progressed to employment through the ranks of amateurs, and continue to socialise in this context. Their modes of behaviour in each context, however, alter.

When professional folk musicians are socialising they adjust their musical practice in terms of performance style and repertoire choice. Behaviours that are appropriate in a staged context are disregarded, and material used for developed 'acts' is rarely used in leisure contexts, except as a test bed for new material. Professionals are more likely to take risks on singing material they are not wholly familiar with, and enjoy experimenting with instruments they rarely play. In contrast to amateurs who tend to aspire to giving their 'best' performance, professionals are content to make errors and perform below par. This could be described as professional musicians undergoing a process of *amateurising* themselves for leisure contexts.[25]

Due to the interpersonal nature of the folk scene however, their professional status remains to be recognised and this can affect their verbal interactions:

> People want to talk about what gigs I'm doing, and want to talk about their experiences of gigging and whatever. This tends to be the semi-professionals or people with a bit of professional experience, they like to sort of be hanging out with a professional which isn't a problem, but given that one would go to the pub to get away from being a professional it's a bit of a paradox. (I~Jon)

This shows that despite making behavioural changes in order to be accommodated in the amateur leisure environment a distinction remains between amateur and professional musicians. Following the equality ethos, there is no social barrier between professional and amateurs in terms of approachability. Due to the celebrity status of the professional musician (i.e. knowledge is held about them through mediated contexts rather than one-to-one social interaction) some people seem willing to speak in personal terms to a professional they have no previous personal connection with.

5.1.3   The impacts of fulfilling roles

Within the context of folk singing, individuals do not solely gather for the common purpose of singing, they fit into and indeed create a social structure. Knowing one's social place within the group impacts upon an individual's

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[25] I expanded this concept in a paper: 'Professionals are people too: The impacts of professionalism on participants in an amateur folk singing community.' Sempre Conference *Musical Participation* The University of Sheffield 20th October 2007.

understanding of where they are positioned within the event frame, and the corresponding community of people. Here I present some points regarding the impacts of role fulfilment from the literature on leisure studies, and compare this with how folk singers, and the contexts for folk singing are affected by the adoption of a role structure.

Contrary to Stebbins' approach to the 'work' element of leisure, John Kelly (1981) emphasises that leisure is fun, it is play, and stresses the independence of leisure activities from everyday life. Kelly uses the assertion that leisure is less serious than real life to demonstrate how individuals use these spaces to develop their characters without consequence. He suggests that people use leisure to define their roles outside the leisure experience as well as defining their roles within it. Because leisure events can be seen as distinct from real life, Kelly feels they provide an opportunity for risk taking 'with minimal risk to economic or familial roles' (1981:316).

Within folk singing activities, the act of singing in public could be viewed as risk taking, and participating in this distinct type of activity provides an environment in which participants can enact the role of performer which they may not do in other aspects of their lives. This is described as 'safety without safety' in Lee Higgins' notion of Community Music contexts (2007a:82-3), supporting Kelly's findings that the non-consequence of play affords opportunities for risk in self-presentations. Gary Alan Fine and Brooke Harrington further propose that these role playing activities affect the ways people behave outside specific leisure environments: 'Through the acts of framing and mobilizing, small groups create citizens, producing identities that embed individuals within larger entities, such as the nation' (2004:344). This displays the connections between the experiences found within distinct folk singing events and participants' interaction with the broader world, breaking down barriers between notions of small group community and larger civic communities.

In folk singing environments, though the core role structure outlined above is necessary for the functioning of groups, the individuals occupying these positions are changeable. These changes in personnel impact upon both the individual's role identity and upon the nature of the club itself.

Alongside moving roles in order to progress through the social cartography, it should be noted that individuals influence the roles they occupy. The roles and structures, although central to functioning, are mutable and individuals distort roles to suit their requirements and personality; for example, not all singers hold the same status and not all MCs are extrovert characters:

> On a basic level of pragmatic social interpretation, we may have certain normative expectations of a role that place parameters around the performance limits, but also expect that each actor will play the role in a unique way. In fact, in some cases we find the role redefined by the performance. There is a dialectical relationship between role and norms and how roles are taken. (Kelly 1981:312-3)

This reminds us that, although adherence to the behaviours associated with this role structure is central to the functioning of folk singing events, the people that fulfil these roles constitute the community and create the specific experiences found within each event. Community is, therefore, not a symbolically constructed 'master system' of relationships that exists beyond and above its members but rather constructed out of active participation. Through enacting roles folk singers perpetuate role definitions.

Although I have shown evidence of role development within the folk singing scene, there is also a tendency within folk clubs for regulars, committee members and organisers of events to hold positions of power for a long time. Although there is some transition within the ranks (for example a pool of MCs from which the leader of each event is chosen, being a popular feature at some clubs) there is often little change in the hierarchy and the dominant forces remain static. Dorothy Noyes remarked upon this phenomenon within her study of group culture:

> Political elites will fear contact and incipient hybridity, for it presents the possibility and perhaps the attractiveness of alternative social arrangements… the drawers of boundaries are those whose strength comes from their centrality. (1995:463-4)

While this ensures continuity of experience for the established, it also risks stagnation of the event. A static community of people aging together solidifies rather than creating a fluid social system through which people may

travel. Without the transfer of organisational powers to younger participants, events do not modify their practices to suit their preferences. That a process of regeneration has not been incremental means a major change would have to occur for folk clubs to match the ways contemporary 20 year olds are managing events and make them more accessible to this demographic.

Frequent cries are heard from within the folk scene for an increase in younger participants, particularly within the folk singing scene centred on the activities of folk clubs. Younger singers tend to be more involved in the session style events such as Kelham Island Singing Session which is run by singers in their 30s, or major folk festivals which actively target events towards this demographic. The folk club model, and its clientele, have changed little since its formation in the 1960s.

Participants who engage on various levels of involvement with the previously identified roles are affected in various ways. Folk singers take their musical participation seriously and the majority of events described here are organised in a voluntary capacity. It has been suggested that the biggest problem faced by volunteers is that there are not enough people to help and that work is increasingly being left to a few people (Gratton, Shiblis et al. 1997). However, there were relatively few remarks made about a lack of volunteers within the folk singing community of Sheffield, with apparently sufficient people volunteering to help organise events. This suggests that Sheffield has a supportive folk singing community where people readily volunteer to complete the organisational tasks necessary to facilitate events.

Unlike formalised organisations which contain a range of administrative duties to be undertaken, the emphasis upon projecting the informal structure of folk events results in few clearly delineated roles or jobs. A lot of voluntary work is therefore unlabelled and perhaps goes unrecognised. The majority of folk singing events are run voluntarily with no money (excluding expenses) being taken. Free entry to events is often granted to organisers, but this is more a token of appreciation than fiscal reward and does not alone compensate for the sacrifices made.

One indication of what volunteers gain is provided by Ron:

the bottom line is that we all want our five minutes of fame and organising an event is a kind of performance and in some ways that is meeting your needs' (FG~Ron).

This display of self-interest supports the claim that volunteers are not purely altruistic. However, once an organisational responsibility has been assumed, obligations are felt with this role. Ron continues to describe his feelings towards organising Raise the Roof:

I feel any kind of organisation is putting something back for the amount of pleasure I get back from listening and singing but you need to take that responsibility very, very seriously because it is a responsibility and you need to do it with a great deal of integrity. (FG~Ron)

This statement demonstrates another common motivation for volunteering – giving back to a cause in which one believes (Parker 1997). Following from the previous discussion on perpetuating traditions found in Section 3.2.1, folk singing organisers often feel they are providing a service for the continuance of folk singing as a movement.

Kath describes another situation where personal advantage also benefits the group as a whole:

We also have a man, a disabled man, who comes to the folk club… And he's now become a committee member and he does the things he's able to do, he arranges the room, and it's made such a difference to him, and of course to us as well. So it can really feel like a supportive community. (FG~Kath)

The people who conduct this voluntary organisational work frequently made comments about the time commitments and efforts involved, but perceived it as valued by others and therefore worthwhile (D~Bob; D~Marjorie). To this end, organisers are acting altruistically and their personal sacrifices (alongside their personal gains) deserve to be recognised. These examples demonstrate how some individuals take on responsibility for the group activity, gaining benefit for themselves while providing a service for others. This balance of cost and benefit makes voluntary organisation a valuable structuring device for the folk singing community.

The concept of work is not limited to the organisers of events. The sense of working hard at musical activities has been recognised within a

classical music summer school, Gilbert and Sullivan societies (Pitts 2005) and barbershop choruses (Stebbins 1996; Garnett 2005). Unlike these groups, which meet regularly to practise towards a performance, the folk singing events under discussion here are individual performance contexts in their own right. This creates a different longitudinal experience and the pattern of working together towards a final goal is somewhat different.

When 'work' was described within my study, it was in relation to individuals practicing a song before the event rather than seeing the event itself as work. That this phenomenon is based on event structure rather than musical genre is highlighted in the Sheffield diary study. Here a number of references were made to the levels of hard work when describing attendance at Sheffield Folk Chorale meetings, but there were relatively fewer remarks made about singing as work when discussing their activities at other folk singing events. The structure of amateur folk singing events provides individuals with the capacity for self-directed work away from scheduled events with which they can engage to the level they desire. Some singers undertake a large amount of rehearsal while others prefer limited preparatory work. Due to the individual-led musical structure, both can comfortably co-exist unlike other contexts in which the neglect of effort from one can affect group coherence. (Issues of tolerance are discussed further in Section 6.2). Satisfaction gained through hearing the results of hard work is present, but others equally value the non-pressurised level of entertainment provided by this singing context.

Singers who make performance commitments through becoming semi-professional find the effects on their leisure career can prove problematic. The time sacrifice necessary in order to maintain their status as professional musicians while maintaining a day job was described as 'hard work' (I~Rich). This also extends to amateurs and when leisure activity is perceived as obligatory, feelings of coercion can obliterate for some people the leisure and volunteer components that other people find. 'In other words, if we have to do something, it is not leisure' (Torkildsen 2005:168).

Although no explicit responsibilities are tied to the titles of 'member' or 'regular', the sense of being a constituent part of the event and sharing responsibility for its success leads participants to feel a sense of duty to

maintain regular attendance. This was demonstrated in the tensions felt when levels of attendance had lapsed, as Judith explained, she was '[l]ooking forward but a bit wary as [I haven't] been to the club for a long time and feel a bit awkward' (D~Judith). Perhaps for this reason some diary participants stated that they would not regularly attend some clubs they visited (D~Ann); whilst others made a conscious decision to become a regular (D~Jerry). These decisions could be based on the inclination to commit to an event regularly and the assumed responsibilities such attendance brings.

These comments show that involvement in the folk singing community comes at the price of joint responsibility for sustaining that community. The number of people with a high level of commitment to attendance is below organisers' desired level and having more regular singers (D~Ron) or audiences (D~Ann) was a common cry from most of the event organisers I approached during this study, with only two organisers content with the number of committed core participants they had. Although there are no restrictions on the levels of interaction, it seems the more deeply involved a person becomes, the stronger the benefits and sharper the costs. If one wants to be an insider one has to contribute to the social maintenance of the event, and accept the potential burden of guilt should this contribution decrease.

The above discussion has focused on participants' sense of belonging within individual events and clubs; however, there is a wider association felt by folk singers towards their involvement in, and identification with, the folk scene in general and here I explore the concept of the 'folkie'.

Following the discussion on networks in Section 4.3.2, and folk singers propensity to travel as described in Section 4.1.1, there exists a clear sense of a shared identity between those who participate in similar types of folk singing activities which transcends the boundaries of place. This was similarly found within the Goth movement by Paul Hodkinson who describes 'a close sense of commonality with Goths they didn't know in faraway towns and countries' (2004:144). I have previously noted that being a folk singer does not necessarily permeate multiple aspects of participants' lives, in the

way adopting a Goth lifestyle might. However, there remains an issue of identification beyond the practice of singing folk songs.

Highlighting the gap between musical act and identity, Liz Garnett (2005) states that to be a *barbershopper* is more than being a pianist, or a singer and that, on the reverse, one can sing barbershop and not be a *barbershopper*.   This is similarly recognisable within the field of folk singing and a great number of people sing folk songs that do not identify with the social group described throughout this thesis. Although there are few explicit membership markers, such as official member status, the folk scene is characterised by a particularly strong consciousness of group identity. Participants are commonly termed within the folk scene as 'folkies'.

Within the literature relating to folk scene, the term 'folkie' is often employed though with a startling lack of explanation to its meaning ('diehard folkies' Redhead and Street (1989:180); 'who are the folkies?' MacKinnon (1993:43)). Michael Brocken provides the closest to a definition:

> By the 1970s a model performance was an inscription of cultural coherence and, together with a concept of the performer as 'specialist', incorporated abstractions surrounding the importance of the listening space (the club) and a vigilant listener/receivership (the 'folkie'). The organisation of performance space had to include the serious listeners, for they were regarded as equal to the performer in every way. (2003:116)

This suggests a difference between performers and listeners, with the listeners being the 'folkies'. This does not adhere with my own understanding of the term as an active participant in the folk scene or my findings from other participants through the course of conducting this research.

As I perceive it, the term 'folkie' is applied to those who participate in the production or reception of folk music, song or dance and who hold special significance for the social environments in which they experience it, as commonly termed 'the folk scene'. This can include all those involved in the various roles outlined above, and is perhaps mostly affected by the individuals' identification with the contexts of performance and its behavioural norms. There is no definitive act or set of practices that must be performed

in order to become a 'folkie', and it spreads beyond physical activity to conceptual association.

An interesting example is provided in the case of folk music related websites and internet based discussion groups. The enthusiastic participation by disparate enthusiasts in this non-physical sphere highlights the detached nature of community, 'de-emphasizing its cultural component, emphasizing its supportive role to individuals and families, and de-linking its social existence' (Castells 2001:121).

The majority of participants in this study displayed clear feelings of belonging to the folk scene as a whole and in a number of cases, described themselves or others affectionately as a 'folkie'. However, despite this strong sense of group identity, negative connotations have become associated with the term and, unlike a general willingness for many barbershop singers to be labelled a 'barbershopper', many folk singers do not apply the term to themselves, and it can be used in an insulting capacity. For some, to be a 'folkie' is to perform as a caricature of the folk ideal: adherence to fixed 'purist' attitudes towards music production and reception, and an adherence to 1960/1970s style, associated with the heyday of the revival movement, for example wearing tie dyed clothing or beards.

The ways individuals position themselves in relation to established folk ideologies affects how they apply the term to themselves. I found participants' language could change from 'us' and 'them' depending upon the subject and how closely individuals want to align themselves with the proposition being discussed. This extends the notion of group membership from the immediate contact felt between participants of the same events, and changes group membership to one associated with a conceptual affiliation with a socio-musical ideal.

This capacity to feel a part of a community between people who may never meet face to face, or even know of each other personally is reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's (1983) view of nationalism. However, in this case the sense of belonging in the larger folk scene through a process of social imaginary is supported by actual social interactions on a local level, an element viewed as vital to the process of community by Micheal Herzfeld (1997). I suggest that despite the extra musical elements of the folk scene,

without a base in common social activity a wider sense of affiliation with other folk song practitioners would not exist.

While this chapter has so far focused on the group and community aspect of the folk scene it should be remembered that the majority of folk singing is individual-led. For participants to achieve an adequate level of engagement with their activities the relationship between an individual's desire and the behaviours needed for good group function needs to be balanced. Fine and Harrington note:

> Group members do not always maximise their individual interests (the rational choice assumption of individualism), but by recognising the value of participating in group life – explicitly or tacitly – personal interests are satisfied. (2004:348)

The interrelationships between individual desires and the sacrifices needed to be made for the group functioning are evident within folk singing practices.

Within the field of vernacular (folk) dance, Rebecca Sachs Norris writes that 'In this communal performance the self must disappear… This form of group expression attracts certain individuals because of its anonymity' (2001:120). This implies that self-expression can hinder participation in group activity. This is not generally the case in folk singing. A central feature of the kinds of singing events under discussion here is that individual (occasionally duo or more) singers lead them. When there is whole group singing there is an emphasis placed on hearing individual voices amongst the group; being a part of, but not subsumed, by the whole (further discussed in section 6.4). This is in contrast with the approach of blended singing within classical choirs. This indicates an important balance must be drawn between personal and group desires within this context. This follows the communitarian approach to viewing individuals, not as autonomous pre-social agents, but as embedded in moral relationships.

Philip Selznick (1992:33) describes this concern for both one's own integrity and for the wellbeing of others as being in a moral community. For Selznick, being moral is not only to exhibit sympathy and concern, it involves commitment and competence. These forms have been displayed in the

previous discussion of the equanimity between individual and group desires, and I suggest that folk singing communities are indeed, moral communities.

Burt Feintuch recognises this morality within his study of Northumbrian pipers. However, he feels that as these contexts are not the 'defining quality of the[ir] lives' he describes this as a community built on social imaginary (2001:159). I prefer to avoid the traditionalist approach to 'whole' communities, following perspectives from communitarianism and small group theory which highlight the civic and normative dimensions of community. There is a reality to the ties and obligations felt by folk singers and although the activity is entered into voluntarily, co-operation affects their participation and moral obligations are felt towards the community of which they are a part.

> There is a price to be paid for the privilege of 'being in a community' - and it is inoffensive or even invisible only as long as the community stays in the dream. The price is paid in the currency of freedom, variously called 'autonomy', 'right to self-assertion', 'right to be yourself'. Whatever you choose, you gain some and lose some. Missing community means missing security; gaining community, if it happens, would soon mean missing freedom. Security and freedom are two equally precious and coveted values which could be better or worse balanced, but hardly ever fully reconciled and without friction. (Bauman 2001:4-5)

Stebbins (1992b) found that personal enrichment, enjoyableness and fun were of higher importance to barbershop singers than group accomplishment. This may be equally true of folk singers, but there is also a strong sense of responsibility towards both the individual events they attend and the scene as a whole.

An example of self-sacrifice for group benefit can be seen in the ordering of performers. Although many people attend with the desire to perform the maximum number of songs themselves, decorum is kept with attention to turn taking and enabling others to equally actualise their desires. Sacrificing one's turn to sing in order to give a newcomer, or visiting guest a turn shows wider consideration than pure personal benefit:

> If there are many singers in on a given evening they may sometimes be asked NOT to play by the M/C. The

assumption is that the experienced resident singer will not take offence or regard it as a negative comment on his or her ability; if anything, it is an acknowledgement that their status is unquestioned. (Smith 1987:158)

Here, John Smith suggests that sacrificing individual desires for the maintenance of the group is the responsibility of those within the group, and provides an insider status marker. Those who are most committed to the event make the highest sacrifices in order to maintain their desired event structure.

Sacrificing personal benefit for group benefit also results in sacrificing personal reward for group reward. The following example shows how people feel they work and benefit as a community:

Ron & Jenny Day have deservedly been nominated to receive an award in recognition of their enormous contribution to the work of the South Riding Folk Arts Network. They are said to be 'gobsmacked and delighted', but would like to make it absolutely clear that they will only accept the award on behalf of everyone who has been involved in SRFAN over the years. (Davenport 2007)

These examples show that, despite a high level of individual based activity and aspiration, personal self-fulfilment and individualised expression can be highly compatible with collective participation.

The relationship between costs and benefits contributes to peoples' feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction from participating in folk singing activities. 'We have recently found that individuals who are seriously committed to a leisure activity are happier, have greater leisure satisfaction, and experience their leisure as more challenging, stressful and absorbing than those who are not' (Argyle 1992:108), yet this is not an infinite projection and too much obligation or stress or challenge can diminish the benefits.

The specific context of the folk singing environment enables a variety of interactions, with some participants showing low levels of engagement whilst others sacrifice and benefit in large quantities. Those who commit and sacrifice most are often the decision making core and direct the experience

for those on the outer levels. Although all are welcome to attend and contribute as they desire, a hierarchical structure remains.

The roles outlined above, and the individuals that fulfil them, constitute the social cartography of folk singing events. The role structure is the keystone of events and understanding them and the activities of their holders provides a means of negotiating the social system found within folk singing communities. I have previously highlighted the importance of key individuals, but the role structure is a mechanism without which events could not maintain functioning. Roles provide a structure both for the events to function and for individuals to realise themselves and explore their identities.

5.2 Communicative interactions

Moving beyond the view of community as organised around role structures, or ritualised behaviour, Jurgen Habermas has developed a theory of communicative action, suggesting that social relations in modern society are organised around communication (Habermas 1984). For Habermas, social action is based on language and, in this view, society is a linguistically created and sustained entity (1984:87). Within folk singing events, however, participation in musical activity also produces non-verbal communication. Through this section, I separate my discussion into distinct sections concerning spoken and non-verbal interactions and the ways specific communicative devices contribute to inclusive and exclusive feelings for folk singing participants. I find that folk singers continually communicate on subtle levels that build to create a complex web of meaning.

5.2.1 Spoken interactions

Verbal spoken interactions occur on a variety of scales within folk singing activities. Pairs of singers may talk together or subsections of the group or the group as a whole may participate in verbal exchange. Complimenting timetabled organisation (as discussed in section 4.3.1) these distinct speech interactions typically occur at predictable times within event proceedings; pair and small group chats at the start, interval and end of events and more cohesive group interactions during directed singing times.

Here I have selected several modes of communication found within folk singing activities that I believe to impact upon community cohesion. I begin with a section describing intimate speech contexts including how individuals generate personal histories and their modes of providing feedback on musical offerings. I then move on to discuss larger group interactions concerning how songs and singers are introduced and the process of heckling during performances. This includes a focus on the role of humour within folk singing events and, finally, I explore the ways assumptions are made about participants' political leanings and how particular associations are perpetuated.

Catching up with friends was cited as important to diary participants. While folk singing performance is typically conducted on a whole group level, there are ample opportunities before, after and within events for more personal intimate exchanges. Personal health and wellbeing were subjects frequently under discussion with regular updates being supplied at each meeting. The repetitive nature of meetings over extensive periods of time (over 30 years for some participants) enables stories to develop in real time. This produces an incremental building of knowledge and group members are provided with a living history of one another. The accumulation of small pieces of information provides a frame of understanding within which to place current interactions. Those new to the group, and therefore without this historical knowledge, could be unaware of the import of apparently insignificant comments.

This became evident when I began attending a regular singing group in Sheffield. Regular members saw it as important for me to have a medical background for one member, and several people independently told me of her recent stroke and how pleased they were she was able to continue singing. It seemed important for me to know of the obstacles this particular singer had undergone in order to understand her current situation. As I was a latecomer to this singer's particular 'story', long-standing members informed me in order to facilitate my understanding of, and therefore absorption into, the community. This demonstrates how regular attendance facilitates group membership through incremental knowledge transmission,

and how new members need to be aware of historical events in order to engage fully within the current community.

It also highlights the importance of *gossip* within contexts such as this. In a study of the social structures of a group of self-taught artists Gary Alan Fine finds that:

> The trading of gossip reveals how tightly knit the partygoers are…however, gossip can be defended as revealing the interest that people have in others in their social circle and recognising that sharing information links them, diminishing the possibility of an unintentional gaffe. We talk about others because we care for them…Gossip, after all, is simply talk about an absent third person – good or bad, true or false. Negative examples are juicy and dramatic, easily spread, but positive and neutral gossip outweighs the negative, even if the former is more forgettable. Still, this routine talk makes the community real to members. (2004:173-4)

Therefore, the culmination of routine talk provides a stable base for future social interactions and, when used in the third person, can provide a marker of social inclusion.

While these discussions frequently contain information about participants' wider lives, folk singers also like to talk about their music making. This can be about material origins and comparing versions or more occasionally, concerning singing style.

Diary participants frequently mentioned that feedback was important to them and either valued it or recognised it as lacking. Singers are concerned that what they do musically is well regarded and want to be verbally reassured of this (D~Chas). Within the folk scene, this usually takes the form of compliments rather than criticism, intended for boosting individuals' self-esteem rather than as providing an aid for improvement. Bob notes that 'you rarely get critical feedback in a folk club, only encouragement' (D~Bob). As a result, Bob was one of the founder members of the Folk at Home group, initially set up with the joint aims of singing and discussing material, incorporating an element of constructive criticism. Bob remarks, however, that this last point has never really been attempted (D~Bob).

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Within folk singing contexts, feedback is typically provided as a one-line compliment, delivered as a statement of merit, without inviting discussion or requiring a response, for example, 'well sung'. Because feedback is only ever positive, its meaningfulness could be called into question. Through this research, however, I found that the ways in which it is employed create a level of significance for folk singers. The device is used in specific contexts. It is standard behaviour to compliment newcomers with the intention that such praise will encourage them to return (D~Marjorie). Exceptional performances from regulars are also noted and, when this occurs, it has particular significance for the singer (D~Chas). Compliments are also more meaningful when they are received from someone whose opinion is valued and acknowledgement from professional singers is particularly well received (D~Bob).

With the reception of positive comments being so highly valued by folk singers, it seems surprising they are not more frequently given. If they were, however, they would then lose the meaning generated through sparse and targeted usage and become more a part of routine speech.

The giving and receiving of compliments as described here show varying levels of connection within the group. More experienced members use the device to make newcomers feel they are making a positive contribution to the group and as a marker of recognition that they conform to group ideals and are a part of the community. Longer-term singers are appreciated for especially effortful endeavours. This recognition of effort (often over ability) has the function of connecting the individuals with the group and demonstrates earned appreciation for participation (the balance between effort and ability is further discussed in Section 6.2).[26]

Though these examples demonstrate the importance of intimate interaction within relatively short and seemingly superficial exchanges they

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[26] In contrast, non verbal feedback in the form of applause is provided in a formulaic way. This signifies appreciation for every contribution to the event. Clapping becomes a social nicety rather than a performer-audience dialectic in which the audience holds the power to reward or to withhold reward. Due to the split roles of audience and performer in this context, perhaps the thought of not receiving applause for one's own performance motivates singers in the role of audience members to clap, setting a precedent for reaction to their own performance.

create a sense of individual positioning within the group and provide members with a means of engaging within the community as a whole.

While I have demonstrated that a level of personal socialising generates feelings of connection with the group, communal interactions are an equally important aspect of the social experience. These group interactions are either programmed within events and contribute to coherent group structuring or occur relatively spontaneously as part of less formalised social interaction.

The nature of group exchanges varies depending upon the event format. In more overtly organised contexts, an MC opens the event by addressing the room followed by a series of singers taking the stage who also typically address the room before each song. In less structured singing situations, no such explicit format is present, but individuals frequently address the assembled group, either in providing an introduction to their songs, or as part of group socialising. Group speech is usually for the purpose of entertainment or information transfer and accordingly the intention is to gain audience attention and elicit appreciative responses.

The MC's job is to maintain order throughout the event, exchange information and introduce singers to the floor. The MCs role is also to manage the social dynamic of the group. As one organiser put it, 'as an MC the whole evening is one long social interaction' (D~Roy). MCs hold the power to invite others to speak or sing and to control the duration of discussions.

Within less structured events (where there is no designated MC) singers adopt other mechanisms to manage the balance between their musical and social interactions. Despite the lack of a central organising figure, whole group interactions are still present, commonly taking the form of chats. A small number of people may hold a conversation to which others may listen or contribute. These end when someone starts a song, either resulting from the subject of the discussion, or interrupting it.

Having the floor is an important social aspect for singers as it is when they are distinguished from the rest of the group and achieve prominence as an individual. This provides an opportunity for singers to portray themselves to the group clearly delineating their personality, resulting in the

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strengthening of relationships between the speaker and the audience. Once they are in this role others are careful not to invade their platform. There is general protocol as to the duration of individual rights, and an MC (or others) may interject to delimit this activity.

When singers address the group, their tone is usually chatty and the subject matter usually relates to the forthcoming song, highlights global, national or local current affairs or is of a personal nature. This final aspect is of particular interest here. John Smith (1987) notes this open and frequently on-going public discussion involves the actions of individual members outside the confines of the club. He suggests that, for the event he organises, it is 'this kind of activity that makes the Glebe club a collective, as opposed to an aggregate of individuals who all happen to like a similar sort of music. In this way the club builds bridges and connections between individual biographies' (1987:162). Although this kind of behaviour is valued by regular attendees, following the same principle as described above for the building of histories through intimate exchanges, it risks feelings of exclusion for those who attend less frequently and do not possess knowledge of a context in which to understand personal narratives.

The group exchanges described so far involve individuals in a position of power addressing the group. Variations on this occur and a form of verbal interaction commonly found within folk singing is the heckle:

> A heckle is an individual, public utterance usually directed
> at a ratified current speaker, often in response to a
> particular assertion, utterance, statement, or speech.
> (McIlvenny 1996:32)

Within folk singing contexts heckling is most commonly utilised for humorous effect, often to belittle the performer or MC. Heckles can occur during song introductions or indeed throughout the musical performance itself. How singers interact with hecklers in part demonstrates their competence as a performer within the folk context (Smith 1987:158). From an 'individual, public utterance' a performer may respond and a kind of staged conversation for public enjoyment occurs, commonly known as 'banter'. John Kelly recognises this phenomenon as he discusses social interaction during a softball game:

during the course of the game, there will also be
considerable interchange – often related to the game –
that has no serious meaning. Part of the 'fun' of the event
is the bantering and joking that are expected in the social
atmosphere of the game. (1983:151)

This device is used as a method to destabilise structure in Steven
Cottrell's study of professional musicians in London:

Humour and jokes confront these rigid hierarchies of
social structure, unconsciously creating a more
egalitarian, undifferentiated field, wherein musicians
disregard their social and musical roles to create both a
sense of communal identity and, within this, smaller group
identities, all sustained in part by the social lubricant of
laughter. (2004:146)

Within folk singing contexts, banter 'contributes to the generation of a lively
and entertaining atmosphere', and contributes to building the identity of the
group (Smith 1987:158-9). From my research, this form of communication is
remarked upon as an important form of social interaction (D~Chas), and the
level of general banter can affect how well a singer feels their performance
was received, viewing more as a positive outcome as it shows enjoyment
(D~Ann). This kind of interaction is evident to varying degrees within folk
singing events.

Session environments contain a great deal of banter, whereas more
overtly staged events featuring guest artists have relatively less. During
singing sessions anecdotes, snippets of information regarding the song, or
flippant comments about performance style are made and can initiate
informal discussions between song performances. This contributes to the
destaging of events as it takes the conceptual 'floor' away from individual
performers after each song contributing to a more egalitarian performance
environment. For folk club environments, talking in small groups over an
introduction or performance is not acceptable, but, loud interjections (in the
form of controlled heckling) are routinely provided.

Niall MacKinnon suggests this is because it shows a level of
interaction and engagement by the heckler as opposed to indifference and
non-attention by the (albeit less invasive) chatterers (1993:79). Active
engagement is desired from attendees at folk events with a preference for

everyone present to be a participant (whether they are singing or not) rather than an observer (or worse ignorant) of the music. In this regard, a heckler becomes a part of the performance:

> With a verbal heckle an audience member hearably changes his or her participation status from a member of a collective audience to an individual in direct interaction with the speaker. The superordinate participation framework is contingently shifted from a dyadic speaker-audience configuration to a speaker-heckler-audience one. (McIlvenny 1996:33)

Although heckles, as McIlvenny describes them, are an individual response (as opposed to group booing or applause for example), I perceive a communal element to the form within folk singing contexts. Particular phrases can be repetitive and occur with ritual precision during certain song introductions or at other times during the event. Less specifically, themes are revisited such as highlighting the number of deaths in a song or their generic depressing nature. Raymond commented on a new session he attended: '[i]n as much as it was full of hearty strangers cracking ancient jokes ("It was in tune when I bought it…")… it did indeed match my expectations' (D~Raymond). While those who experience jokes for the first time may enjoy them in their own right, they are anticipated by those with prior experience of the particular situation and could constitute a group vocabulary.

Other humour makes reference to the material or activities of the group, or alludes to personal experience and as such cannot be enjoyed by others for its intrinsic value. This shows similarities to folk dance environments, where Rebecca Sachs Norris observes that:

> sharing in the fun requires competence and knowledge that come from a history of participation in a community. The "jokes" may be musical, for example, or may refer to events or qualities of the community itself. (2001:120)

This differs from Cottrell's experience of professional musicians where humour is used as a uniting device. Due to the nature of highly personalised discourse within folk singing contexts, this group-orientated form of humour can act as an excluding device because, although a genial and friendly

atmosphere is created through laughter, a lack of understanding the joke can serve to highlight a newcomer's position as an outsider to the group.

Jonathan Stock (2004) observes that a lot of the humour made within folk sessions can be negative. Singers are commonly self-deprecating and make fun of their own, or each other's perceived (in)abilities:

> no one takes anything too seriously and if something goes wrong – forgotten words for instance – it might jokingly be put down to age or too much to drink. This is only between friends and would not be aimed at a new performer. (PC~Marjorie)

While these negative remarks are not generally taken seriously, Jean felt this could lead to problems and was a common indicator of poor MCing with 'some who are very rude. They think they are being witty, at the expense of the person they're introducing' (FG~Jean). Similarly, excessive heckling can be seen as problematic and the MC may 'need to suppress the over-zealous', and 'excessive heckling [towards a novice] would be frowned upon' (Smith 1987:158).

This shows another level of inclusion/exclusion within the group and provides a mark of difference for newcomers. A certain level of integration into the community has to be achieved before people are comfortable directing negative remarks towards them. Receiving gentle heckling, or being included in banter, can be seen as an including device. Bob states that:

> Unless they're a group of three or more, you can be sure that regulars will talk to them, and include them gently in the banter between songs to let them know that they'll be treated like everyone else…The group always expresses appreciation of newcomers' contributions if any, but that doesn't exclude them from the banter. (PC~Bob)

This suggests that as well as understanding the subjects of banter or being a heckler as noted above, being a target of heckles is also sign of being a part of the community. While sharing knowledge and experience provides a common base for interaction, homogeneity in all areas should not be assumed.

From sub-cultural theory perspective, Hodkinson highlights how theorists should beware of oversimplifying the value systems of music and

style groupings (2004:137). Niall Mackinnon highlights the bias of the folk club audience demographic towards the 'muesli left' and emphasises the 'growth of the CND which provided the impetus for many people to get together and sing' (1993:25,46). Connections with political parties or movements have been less prominent over the past decade. However, there have been recent attempts by the far right British Nationalist Party to align its movement with folk scene. In response to this perceived threat from the far right an organisation named *Folk Against Fascism* has been set up by current participants in the folk scene. These political activities have been occurring too late to be analysed within the scope of this thesis and I am aware of current research being conducted on the subject of 'performing Englishness' within contemporary folk music (Winter and Keegan-Phipps 2010). The impacts of the developments of these political frictions on the social scene would provide fruitful future research.

Here it is pertinent to note that while it is important for theorists not to assume homogeneity, within folk singing events themselves there remains a general assumption that all members of the group will lean towards leftist ideals. It is rare for in-depth political discussion to take place within folk singing events. However, political parodies concerning current affairs and reference to contemporary or historical politics can be incorporated into singers' introductions or permeate group discussion. Singers may also verbally detach themselves from the political stance taken in particular songs if they feel they might offend the group (for example hunting or whaling songs, as can be heard in Gordon's introduction to A Few jovial Sportsmen Track 3).

The superficial nature of chat and controlled systems of interaction, coupled with group assumptions of homogeneity, provides no mechanism to challenge political statements which conform to leftist ideals. This has the effect of alienating those with differing political leanings who, although not obliged to divulge their stance, must endure being assumed to share political opinions with the rest of the group, or leave. This situation may alter if participants with far right ideals become participants in the existing folk scene, and a study of the impacts of this movement could provide fruitful further research.

This investigation into the verbal exchanges found within folk singing contexts has raised three themes relevant to the construction of community in folk singing environments: The construction of the boundaries of community through speech, the culmination of meaning through speech interactions and the use of negativity as an inclusive device.

Firstly the organisation and management of speech interactions shows how the community is governed. The power dynamic between MCs and singers shows similarities to that of a teacher in a classroom discussion context. Joanna Thornborrow suggests 'the organisation of classroom interaction is based on a system of unequal distribution of communicative rights and obligations between teachers and pupils' (2002:108). MCs have certain powers to guide events, but further structural devices are provided through song introductions and contributions by hecklers:

> although control of the talk can be seen to be in some respects in the hands of the teacher, in many instances it can also be observed in the hands of the pupils. Through their increasingly active participation, and through the design of their contributions to the talk, they play a collaborative role in shaping the discussion as an orderly event within its institutional context. (Thornborrow 2002:131)

This is reflected in folk singing contexts and the community is in a state of self-governance, with the various members responsible for their own decorum and structuring. Group ideals are (re-)established through verbal contributions and singers construct the boundary of their community through their speech interactions.

While active participation creates the boundaries of the group, not all attendees are obliged to actively participate. The informal styles of speaking and mode of publicly sharing intimate information breaks down barriers and establishes a friendly atmosphere. This enables individuals to be a part of a communal social interaction without necessarily having to verbally contribute to it.

Secondly, the majority of social interactions described within the diaries were of a 'chatty' nature. Participants rarely used words such as 'talking' or 'discussing' and it was noted that 'nothing deep and meaningful was said' (D~Jerry). Formulaic responses and heckles imply a level of social

interaction in these contexts of a superficial nature, described by Malinowski (1923) as *phatic language*. Whilst this generic speech may be seen as shallow, within the folk singing contexts it contributes to the sense of community cohesion through the provision of a non-specific friendly and sociable atmosphere. Further to this, the seeming insignificant comments made during folk singing activities may contain little meaningful content, but combine incrementally to generate deeper meaning for participants.

Finally, Burt Feintuch (2001) notes that a key feature of community definition, integrity in social relations, is very much characteristic of Northumbrian piping sessions, which have similarities to the contexts under discussion here.

> These are fundamentally civil assemblies. People are unremittingly cordial…If the musicians say that the sessions are a form of community, it's probably that sociable integrity to which they refer' (2001:158-9).

This is similarly noted in Jonathan Stock's study of instrumental folk music sessions. However, in this context we have seen that negative humour and cliquish discourse can be problematic. Intentionally jovial leg pulling can cross into the realms of insults and feelings of exclusion can be felt when one does not have the requisite background knowledge to understand certain remarks, or be included in banter.

Spoken interludes are an important element of folk singing events, fulfilling the need for social interactions beyond performing music together. The repetitive feature of folk singing events enables incremental understanding to be built and multi-layered meanings to be generated. This dictates that those who do not have a long term involvement with the group cannot access the full import of individual submissions. Established relationships also allow members who feel a sense of community to engage with each other in different ways than they do with newcomers to an event. This creates stronger rifts between those who are recognised, and feel themselves to be, a part of the community, and those who are not.

5.2.2 Non-verbal interactions

Along with verbal interactions, the ways people behave within folk singing contexts also communicate certain ideologies. Niall Mackinnon notes that, in the development of the folk club movement, there was an effort to distinguish folk clubs from their ancestral skiffle clubs with 'an extremely self-conscious attempt to change the social dynamics of performance' (1993:25-6). This has resulted in the development of a set of common behaviours which can be viewed in many contemporary folk singing events.

It has been noted here, and elsewhere in the literature (MacKinnon 1993; Brocken 2003), that the apparent informality of the folk scene does not preclude the existence of behavioural rules. Attempts to create an informal atmosphere however, preclude the possibility of explicit rules. When describing the organisation of a music session, Jonathan Stock notes that 'The social conventions of this particular event are not much articulated from week to week, and, indeed, they may even be concealed by commonly held ideas about the nature of sessions' (2004:64). The ways in which people behave within folk singing contexts display group norms, there are behaviours that are deemed appropriate and others which are not and, similarly to Stock's findings, these behaviours do not always match participants' perceptions of what folk singing should be.

While the folk singing events that combine to create the folk scene may conform to a typical set of behaviours concerning timetabling, role structures, and verbal interactions, as previously discussed, individual events consisting of distinct collections of people create a set of practices and behaviours specific to each small group. In a study of etiquette and dynamics of folk music sessions, Helen Eyre points out that '[t]here is no definitive folk music session' and '[e]very session has its own unique unspoken rules' (2001:6).

Gary Alan Fine suggests that small group culture is locally constructed and, even if larger structural conditions cannot be dismissed, 'social order is built from the actions, interpretations, and negotiations among actors' (2003:44). Fine refers to this as *ideoculture* and proposes that 'ideoculture consists of a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviours, and customs shared

by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and that serves as the basis of further interaction' (1987:125). This suggests that although many rules are genre wide, the specific ways they are implemented are specific to each context. The seating issues described in section 4.2.2 conform to this theory. Even if a newcomer to an event is aware that seating arrangements will exist within the context, they will not have specific knowledge of the particular seating norms of that event. Helen O'Shea notes that, for Irish folk musicians, the friction between newcomers and regular players is not simply a matter of ignorance that the session has 'unwritten rules', but more a matter of conflicting ideas about what these rules are (2006:9).

This form of context specific knowledge comes from sharing in physical practices and Etienne Wenger's theory of *communities of practice* is useful here. For Wenger, cultural practice includes the:

> language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedures, regulations, and contracts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognizable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views. Most of these may never be articulated, yet they are unmistakable signs of membership in communities of practice and are crucial to the success of their enterprises. (1998:47)

Wenger further implies that being with people who share the same conditions brings us together (ibid:45). When participating in a folk singing event singers and audience members share a common framework of experience. The rules and behaviours enacted within this framework structure their experience. As Wenger suggests, these can be explicit and easily observable, such as start times, but as we have found elsewhere, they can also be discrete or unspoken.

One such unspoken rule is found in the ways people enter folk singing events which are underway. Most events have an advertised start time and participants are expected to arrive before musical proceedings are under way. In session situations, or at events held as part of a festival, this is less

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clearly adhered to. Visits to the bar also provide participants with the necessity to re-enter the singing space during a performance. Beer breaks are typically provided for this kind of movement, but leaving or entering a space during singing times is not frowned upon as long as it is adheres to set etiquette. This usually involves entering between songs, and not moving around the room while people are performing.

If this etiquette is broken, it can provoke negative reactions. Folk singing participants are not oblivious to this behavioural occurrence and the following excerpt from a letter to *Stirrings* provides an example of the attitudes held towards this phenomenon by the actors themselves:

> Through the crack in the door I spied a friend of mine
> bending over his guitar. Up we came, I couldn't hear
> anything - apparently it was a quiet bit, so I opened the
> door, saw a friend next to it and said quietly 'hello!' prior to
> sitting down…
> There followed a sound like the ocean rising up and
> rushing to the shore; I had been royally shushed!
> I swear there were only around half a dozen folk in that
> room. A less confident person would have turned tail and
> fled… Retrospectively I wish I'd just given the gal by the
> door a little wave. But I didn't. I made sure my hello was
> subdued. A bit OTT, guys?... Lighten up, Chapeltown.
> Folk is supposed to be for the folk, y'know. We come out
> for a good time, not to be treated like outcasts and
> stressed out. (Eastham 2008)

Carrie describes herself as one who is familiar with folk etiquette, yet she still felt treated as an outsider within this particular event. In following correspondence published in the magazine support was provided, demonstrating that this sense of unwelcomness was not unique (n.a. 2008). However, the letter also generated defensive remarks from the session organisers:

> If she had looked at the door, she would have found a
> notice asking you to wait before coming in if there is
> someone performing. It is only common courtesy at any
> folk club; we usually shout 'come in' if we see anyone at
> the door, and we say do you perform? Your name
> appears on a list and our leader asks you in and tells you
> you're welcome. I'm sorry Carrie got the wrong
> impression. (May 2008)

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Although Ivy perceives this set of rules as following 'common courtesy', for those who are unfamiliar with the broad etiquettes of folk events, let alone the specificities of individual groups, this behavioural system must be a minefield to negotiate. The only explicit guide to the expected behaviours is found on the sign on the door instructing people to enter between songs. As this deviates from normal pub behaviour, newcomers may be forgiven for not looking for a sign instructing them how to move around a public building. As regulars of an event know of its presence it can make disregarding it a blatant form of disobedience and more strongly reinforces their error.

I observed a similar breach of protocol at Raise the Roof. This time the inappropriate entry was made by a regular member of the event:

> Alan came into the room during Gavin's song and made apologetic gestures which suggested that he couldn't hear the singing from outside and regretted causing a disturbance. He stayed in the room by the door. He didn't leave again as that would have doubled the interference, he had already affected the event he might as well come in, but he didn't intrude more by walking through the room to his seat until Gavin had finished singing. This reads a little over the top - it was incredibly subtle and there was no noise interference, just a distracting presence and a deviation from norms and protocol. (FN~13 March 2008)

This illustrates that breaking the etiquette of entering between songs can be resolved through the ways in which the situation is subsequently handled.

This provides a paradox however, as those who break established etiquette because of their lack of knowledge of the norms of behaviour are firstly unlikely to know the rule they have broken, and secondly unlikely to know the correct procedure for resolving their initial mistake. This may lead to more unwelcoming gestures from others present. The negative response from the group in the first instance here does not support the welcoming and easygoing atmosphere they like to portray. Instead, it demonstrates a presumed knowledge about the accepted behaviours, highlighting a difference between those who are members of the community through shared knowledge and behaviours and those who are not.

Other situations in which members of the group behave outside the established norms have been described in the folk music literature, either

through playing loudly and insensitively (Stock 2004) or by singing inappropriate material (MacKinnon 1993:101). Niall MacKinnon stresses that these behaviours are not intended to actively disrupt group functioning but, '[t]hough they were ready to partake in the activity, they changed it to something else' (ibid.).

These occurrences typically result from newcomers entering into an established situation. Where groups of people continue to meet together behavioural patterns are generally conformed to, even if this is in contrast to individual preference. Richard Jones speaks of differing opinions within the Brass band community:

> of course, among all these shared beliefs there are often people who have different opinions on the issues involved but who in the interest of maintaining the status quo follow the opinion of the majority. (2007:232).

While there are those who hold opinions adverse to the overriding group opinion, Jones notes that, over time, his 'own opinions have become similar if not identical to those of the other players' (2007:232). In a study of people, groups and society, Hedy Brown finds that 'subjects *adhere their judgements to bring them in line with those of other people* even when they do not think of themselves as engaged in common endeavour' (1985:3). Brown finds that people naturally form a community whether they are intending to become one or not, people group together and moderate their behaviour to fit with the group and try to contribute to a group way of behaving, feeling and thinking.

Behaving within a shared mode of conduct creates an experience for participants that is inclusive and makes them feel like they belong – they are aware of behavioural expectations and are able to adapt to fit their environment. Those who fall outside these regularities are made to feel like outsiders and must either learn to conform, leave the event, or take the role of a disruptive member of the group.

For those who do adhere to common behaviour, rewards can be found in feeling a part of the group. In a study of social capital within a community choir, Thomas Langston and Margaret Barrett find that:

> The acceptance of common norms of action by the participants…facilitates the development of common understanding and access to the shared knowledge and

> information that facilitates the development of a sense of belonging…The shared norms and values of members of MCC help to develop a feeling of belonging, unity and binding together' (2008:127)

This is similarly found within folk singing contexts and through sharing experience and behaviours connections are felt which establishes a sense of community both through propinquity, and perhaps more significantly, through conforming to established behavioural patterns and acting similarly.

5.2.3 The regulation of behavioural norms

While obligatory behaviours vary within different contexts adherence to the environment-specific set of rules is necessary for events to proceed as intended. '[S]ince the structuring and layout of the musical event do not clearly demonstrate to the uninitiated the appropriate form of social behaviour' the appropriateness of particular actions must be learnt through observing the behaviour of others and through making mistakes (MacKinnon 1993:80). Jurgen Habermas suggests that '[t]he morality of community not only lays down how its members should act: it also provides grounds for the consensual resolution of relevant conflicts' (1988:4).

Folk singing communities have previously been described to fit Habermas' perception of being moral. This morality is now explored in its capacity to resolve conflict. Here, I present a number of devices employed within folk singing contexts to administer order. Direct methods are presented first followed by a discussion of more subtle methods including the subverted use of humour and body language. Finally I explore the ways in which participants moderate their own behaviour.

Although an emphasis has been placed on the lack of overt structuring, in some instances (mainly concerts and more formal folk clubs), preferred behaviours are directly communicated. John Smith writes that '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; people should try to coincide the trips to the bar or toilet with the beer breaks during the evening'

(1987:157-8). Moving with contemporary culture a call for mobile phones to be switched off is often added.

A less common form of direct action is found at a folk club I used to frequently attend. Bacca Pipes Folk Club have a set of house rules printed on sheets of paper and placed on each table (see figure 5:2). This outlines several required behaviours as the club has recently been enjoying a rise in new attendees and wanted a way to communicate desired conduct without appearing too officious, or repeating the same rules to regulars each week. These are pre-emptive methods, and perform a twofold function of informing some of the 'house rules' to new attendees to the event and confirming correct modes of behaviour to others.

When people are behaving outside accepted ideals, other forms of discipline are used. Fine and Harrington suggest that the face-to-face interaction that is characteristic of small groups allows individuals to monitor one another's behaviour for the appropriate amount and quality of

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

Figure 5:2 An example of house rules as displayed by Baca Pipes Folk Club circa 1998.

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contribution to group goals; when individual participation is found wanting, face-to-face interaction provides immediate and powerful sanctioning (2004:349). Raymond described an interaction he had with a group of non-singers at a singing session he attended:

> 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. (D~Raymond)

It is interesting to note that those with organisational powers did not attempt to undertake disciplinary action and that individual folk singers are able to administer discipline on behalf of the group against people perceived to be breaking group norms. This breaks down the hierarchical structure as any member of the community can take responsibility for the maintenance of group behaviours as opposed to having a single authoritative figure.

While conflicts are occasionally dealt with directly as described above, the pervading desire for a jovial atmosphere can lead to the avoidance of direct confrontation for fear of creating tensions. As with a lack of musical criticism when singers provide feedback to each other, behavioural activity is similarly rarely openly criticised.

A form of negative discipline can be employed. Seckman and Crouch suggest that tactics such as ridicule or ostracism are commonly used to discourage individuals from operating outside normative boundaries of group behaviour (cited in Fine and Harrington 2004:348). This is widely evident within folk singing contexts and commented on by a number of people within this study. References were made to the 'folk police' and the 'anal' character of 'purists'. This shows that boundaries are perceived and maintained by deferral to an other rather than directly presenting one's own value system. While these references are seen as being tongue in cheek, by overemphasising potential errors, doing things right is regarded as paramount and boundaries are highlighted.

Despite these communal approaches to maintaining discipline, much management of social situations is conducted by the MC and one describes her use of humour for this purpose:

> 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 talking the piss out of yourself or allowing others to do it. (FG~Jenny S)

These approaches demonstrate how order is consciously maintained through the deliberate use of humour, demonstrating that discipline is indeed desired and that friendly and sociable devices have been developed in order to maintain it.

Whilst there is evidence of preventative, direct and humour based methods of disciplining unacceptable behaviour another common form of discipline exists incorporating more subtle methods. Jenny describes how the organisers of a club she helps run would deal with a singer displaying inappropriate behaviour:

> We would discourage anyone who was not polite when others are singing and if someone was really bad we would only ask them to sing once and hope they got the message. (PC~Jenny)

This lack of direct confrontation does not provide those 'in the wrong' an explicit basis against which to monitor their behaviour. The anti-social methods chosen, such as denying performance opportunities as described above, or turning their backs or refraining from joining in on participatory songs as I have witnessed elsewhere may serve only to alienate the wrong doer rather than provide any practical solution. This doubly engenders a feeling of not belonging within the group, both through not being able to adhere to unstated established group behaviours, and through the negative reactions received for this lack of implicit knowledge.

About a situation in an instrumental session, Jonathan Stock notes that 'If nothing else, these differing reactions remind us 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). This supports the previous suggestion that people

behave as individual agents, working for the greater good, but following independent interpretations of the group norm.

This is further evident in the final form of disciplinary behaviour discussed here: self-moderation. Within song introductions or after performances singers frequently criticise their own performance (for forgetting the words or singing a 'boring' song), or chide themselves for talking for too long in their introduction time. This displays to the group that they have observed stepping outside perceived group norms and negates the need for other forms of external discipline (though heckles supporting their assertion can still be shouted). It also alerts others to the norms of behaviour as understood by that participant and provides a measure against which they can compare their own behaviours.

As many of these disciplinary measures are in some way convoluted or involve subterfuge, this can make it difficult for the receivers to interpret their meaning. This further emphasises the diversity of understandings of group norms and it is up to the receiver to interpret disciplinary measures and alter their behaviour in the future as they feel appropriate.

There is a lack of coherence between the strength of desire for people to uphold the common group behaviours and the absence of overt mechanisms through which people can be informed of inappropriate activity. In an effort to be friendly and acquiescent, the folk scene has minimised the structures for learning behaviours. This leaves the only form of continuous involvement and incremental learning by trial and error. Navigating this process is not easy and newcomers may well view clubs as unwelcoming, the very opposite of what they are trying to achieve through providing no explicit rules.

However, a perceived freedom from the obligation of rules is an advantage of many leisure contexts. Gary Alan Fine and Brooke Harrington observe that 'Small groups provide an informal yet powerful control mechanism that promotes individuals to moderate their egocentrism without resorting to the social control that is often characteristic of organisational life. Small groups permit individuals to collaborate flexibly for common interests without infrastructure and resources that organisations entail' (2004:349). This is observable within folk singing contexts and I would continue to

suggest that when individuals feel over controlled by the confines of the group, the leisure element of the experience is lost and people may prefer to leave.

Dorothy Noyes (1995) suggests that group culture is imagined through performance.   For Noyes, a sense of togetherness is created through communal action and similar performance creates bonds identifiable here as a community. Following this, Noyes suggests that her concept of 'group' is a product of interaction rather than its precondition, stating that '[i]f 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). The shared behaviours displayed through the contexts discussed in this section attest to the strength of the folk singing communities' identification with behavioural form. Despite presenting the folk singing genre as an open and inclusive environment, the highly specialised behavioural forms and the close monitoring of boundaries of acceptable behaviour provide a tightly rule-bound context.

Noyes describes how, as these kinds of actions are undisclosed except by learning through continued involvement with events, this creates a context similar to that of the shibboleth, and she suggests that 'outsiders are recognised by their failure to master certain gestures, exclamations, or nuances of dress, insignificant except as they testify to long familiarity… The shibboleth attests to the power of the network and ensures its continuity. Controlling the access of outsiders, it also creates feelings of community within' (1995:465). Adherence to group behavioural norms not only promotes group solidarity and perpetuates the modes of group functioning, it also provides individuals with a sense of belonging and identification within the community they construct.

Participants in folk singing events communicate to each other the norms of their communities through verbal and non-verbal interactions. These communications rarely stand alone and function in subtle, often multiple forms such as incremental learning or placing humorous comments within an established frame of understanding. Taking a view of community as based on communication, as described by Habermas (1984), this may explain, in part, some of the problems faced by newcomers to this

environment. When participants have the capacity to understand the forms of communication enacted within this environment they can feel a constituent part of the community. If they are new to the context, the lack of open communication results in a lack of feeling in community with the established group.

5.3   Relationships

Within his survey of folk club audiences, Niall Mackinnon found that 72% of participants described folk music as a 'large part' of their social lives and a further 29% described it as the 'main part' (1993:48).[27] A function of leisure has been described as being to 'provide a context for the development of intimate relationships' and it is 'the centre of the working out of primary social relationships' (Kelly 1981:307). The social interactions described in the previous section provide a framework within which relationships can develop:

> Community life can be understood as the life people live in
> dense, multiplex, relatively autonomous networks of social
> relationships. Community, thus, is not a place or simply a
> small scale population aggregate, but a mode of relating,
> variable in extent. (Calhoun 1998:381)

A variety of relationship types is evident between folk singers and the ways in which they engage with one another is equally variable. In this section I discuss relationships from two perspectives. Firstly I describe the kinds of relationships that exist within the folk singing scene and then I explore the depths of involvement including cliques, the differences between deep and meaningful and superficial connections and the extent of multiplexity within relationships.

5.3.1   Types of relationship

The kinds of relationships present within folk singing events vary and contribute in myriad ways to the sense of community found within. Here I describe three relationship types commonly found within folk singing events. I begin with a discussion of how new relationships are formed in this context, and how the structure of the folk scene facilitates long term relationships.

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[27] MacKinnon's figures total 101%. I presume this is a result of rounding in his calculations.

This is followed by an examination of the role of family ties, both actual and imagined.

Francois Matarasso found that through community arts programmes:

> [M]ore than nine out of ten respondents made new friends as a result of their involvement. This is such an ordinary outcome of participating in the arts that it can be underestimated: making friends sounds so lightweight. But in urban, suburban and rural areas, poverty and isolation can make friendship hard to sustain: it is a vital asset, if possessed at all. This low key, informal relationship-building is no less powerful an agent of social cohesion for being largely unseen. (1997:27)

Many participants in my study said they had made new friends through their engagement with folk singing (D~William). Participants said they liked having 'like minded friends' (D~Pauline) or enjoyed 'meeting like minded people' (D~Peter), who they felt were also attracted to folk singing events. This supports the observations that leisure groups are composed of individuals with similar backgrounds, and that 'if you play the right sport and go to the right places, you will meet people like yourself. And you will identify yourself as a member of a particular social group' (Argyle 1994:74). While I mentioned previously that autonomy is not assumed, it seems likely that people attracted to folk singing contexts would have more in common and be more likely to become friends than random pairings. Other factors, however, are also in place to facilitate relationship development.

The small numbers present at some events enable people to talk to everyone in attendance. This creates an environment where people can speak to others they do not previously know, negating the need for participants to attend with established friends and facilitating new relationships to develop within the group (D~Chas).

While general friendliness is still apparent at larger events, the organisers and other regulars of clubs make a point of talking to new attendees to make them feel welcome (D~Carol; PC~Marjorie). One helper describes how her role involves an element of welcoming others as well as practical duties:

> I'm on the door at The Beehive and sell raffle tickets in the interval so I hope I give a friendly word to newcomers, and show interest in their reasons for coming. (PC~Pauline)

MCs often introduce singers by name and newcomer are usually asked their name and publicly introduced to the group before they perform (Tracks 10, 13). These direct personal introductions (both of the newcomer to the group and other group members names to the individual) speeds up relationship development on a group basis, rather than necessitating a series of individual communications. This practice is not universal however, and a number of MCs do not always introduce singers by name. Jean finds this assumes that everyone present knows each singer directly and could appear exclusive to those who did not (FG~Jean).

For many people, folk singing environments are particularly conducive to making new friends, as, alongside similarities of values and interests, other important predictors of friendship have been identified, such as politeness, friendliness and being easy to talk to (Blieszner and Adams 1992:74). Perhaps due to this social structure, folk singing events were highlighted as a good place to develop intimate relationships. Along with a density of 'likeminded people', the environment found within folk singing events enables individuals to mingle within a safe environment:

> I found it wonderful hunting ground as a single female…it
> is a good meeting place for males and females to meet
> without actually having to shout over loud music or making
> it perfectly obvious that you are on the pull. (FG~Claire)

However, some of these practices can have unintended outcomes and I have seen instances where newcomers have felt intimidated by overtly friendly actions.

> A young couple attended the club for the first time. They
> arrived as the MC was introducing the evening's singing
> and he waited for them to sit down before proceeding. He
> then directly addressed them, in front of a hushed room,
> and asked if they would like to sing. Although this
> adhered to their welcoming policy and including everyone
> possible, the couple looked extremely nervous, declined
> to sing, and seemed like they would have preferred to
> blend into the background a little more. At the same club
> on another occasion, I remember a man experiencing the
> same procedure. He appeared completely at home with
> it, responding that he had not been to a folk club for 15
> years, but happily joked with the MC and sang a song.
> (FN~28 April 2008)

I suggest that the practices used for socialisation into specific events work best once an individual has been socialised into general folk behavioural patterns. Following the previous discussion on semi-private spaces and open seating patterns in Chapter 4, folk singing environments are closed spaces with little opportunity for gradual inclusion. Once a newcomer has passed into the room they are included within the group, and they are expected to appropriately participate in the social interaction. For those with no previous experience of the group culture or behavioural norms this can be intimidating. A balance has to be achieved between allowing newcomers to integrate with the group on their own terms, at the risk of appearing to ignore them, and expecting them to immediately integrate into the societal norms through highly personalised interactions.

While folk singing contexts are valued for their facility to make new friendships, participants within my study also describe how important it is for them to maintain regular contact with established friends and how they enjoy catching up with people at the events they attended (D~Carol; D~Janet). Some also cite 'just being back with the regulars' as an enjoyment of attending folk singing events (D~Chris).

The regularity of contact provided through the regular and long term nature of many folk singing events enables stable relationships to develop solely within the frame of the event. Long-term relationships are further facilitated through individuals' ability to have periods of frequent attendance and periods of sporadic attendance. Returning to an old club after a break was frequently cited, alongside feelings of reunion and pleasure at seeing old friends (D~Chris). The fluid nature of membership obligations facilitates this kind of long-term relationship in a way that more tightly governed leisure groups cannot.

Further to this, the network structure of events outlined in Section 4.3.2 enables participants to meet each other in a diversity of contexts. A number of participants wrote how they met people they knew from events they regularly attended, or used to attend, in other places (D~Kit; D~Philip). These interactions typically made participants feel comforted that they knew people there, or enjoyed meeting up with people with whom they had shared a location specific relationship. This demonstrates how meeting outside

usual contexts confirms existing relationships, and the power of the links made through the wider network of folk events.

While this discussion on relationships has so far described occurrences confined to folk singing environments, wider social ties are also evident. A number of participants in the diary study wrote of how they enjoyed sharing their folk singing experiences with other members of their family (D~Philip; D~William), and I witnessed some family groupings leading songs in duet (Tracks 10, 18). It has been suggested that leisure is the single most important force developing cohesive, healthy relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and their children (Couchman cited in Zabriskie and McCormick 2001), however, a form of marital discomfort has been observed where there is an imbalance of enjoyment between couples who share leisure activities. Duane Crawford, Renate Houts et al. find that 'women may be more likely to companionately pursue activities that they do not enjoy, a pattern that likely leads to feelings of displeasure and, over time, marital disenchantment' (2002:434).

Unlike a context such as a choir, where similar activity is undertaken by all present, the structure of folk singing events enables people to participate on whatever level they wish. Within folk singing events, instances of couples where one partner sings and the other does not are frequently found. Assuming the non-singing partner benefits through enjoying the music, this context can provide a satisfying leisure experience for both parties.

The inclusion of members undertaking varying activities and abilities equally facilitates younger members taking part. Children of existing participants are often welcomed at folk events, and many of the thirty-something generation currently involved in the Sheffield folk singing scene became involved in the music through the activities of their parents. Along with other associations with continuity and tradition (as discussed in Section 3.2), wider, and especially generational, family involvement is celebrated within this leisure form and one participant found that although his daughter-in-law actively participates in folk singing events, she felt like 'a lesser citizen…because she doesn't come from a folkie family'. For this particular

singer, socialisation practices have given her the ability to participate, but, she retains a sense of exclusion due to a lack of heredity lineage.

Despite a celebration of familial ties within the folk scene, many folk singers maintain distinctions between their folk singing activities and their wider lives. One regular folk attendee said his wife showed no interest in his singing activities and 'seems to be embarrassed by unaccompanied amateur singing, especially mine!' (D~Bob), and Judy discusses how her folk life rarely intersects with her other life (FG~Judy), a phenomenon I have commonly witnessed in the field. Within a study of classical music participation, Stephanie Pitts provides an explanation for this in that 'for some…the physical escape from work and family pressures was a motivation in itself' (Pitts 2005:144).

Dorothy Noyes discusses contexts in which people differentiate between different aspects of their lives, labelling the process as *segrativity* (1995:460). Although her discussion focuses around members of diaspora groups, I suggest this could be applied to members of folk singing communities who maintain strong distinctions between their folk singing and other activities. This contributes to the previous discussion concerning how participants act out roles in contexts unrelated to their wider lives (section 5.1.2), but another reason I noted within this context was participants' embarrassment at enjoying a musical activity they felt was not understood by others. Participation in folk singing is often seen as a minority interest and some participants enjoy the exclusivity of keeping this activity private from colleagues and other acquaintances.

Approaching the discussion of family involvement from a different angle, a number of participants described their relationship with others within the events they attended as family-like. Bob describes his experience of the Raise the Roof events as 'like an extended family get together, such as I remember from my infancy' (D~Bob). Jean expands the simile to the wider folk scene:

> It's another family it really is, but what is even nicer is that you come to Whitby [Folk Week] and you find families that are even bigger because it's just like meeting all your relatives again. (FG~Jean)

Jenny has similar feelings towards her local folk club, suggesting it functions as a 'substitute family' as many people attend who aren't of local origin and 'if you're in trouble, you want something, you've got people you can turn to' (FG~Jenny). This phenomenon is recognised in Gregory Barz's discussion on Tanzanian kwaya's:

> Urbanization, the migration of people from remote villages
> and towns throughout Tanzania to larger cities such as
> Dar es Salaam, has compelled many kwayas to function
> as base communities, that is, kabila – like home
> communities away from a distant regional home.
> (2006:26)

This demonstrates how strong social bonds can be formed within contemporary society. The reduction of geographically based or family unit based communities in modern society has resulted in the need for individuals to find groups of people with which they can connect. The activity of folk singing provides a nucleus around which social relationships can develop:

> It's likely that those of us who feel a kind of displacement
> or a desire to connect talk most about community.
> Treating it as a value, at times a felt reality, the kind of
> thing people sometimes experience when festivity,
> celebration, euphoric music, or dance touches us, permits
> us to touch others, and, at least for a time, lets us feel
> connection. (Feintuch 2001:157)

5.3.2   Depth and breadth of relationships

As we have seen above, folk singers form relationships through their participation in folk singing activities. However, these relationships can function on a variety of levels. In Dorothy Noyes' (1995) discussion of network ties she recognises the myriad ways connections between people are established and maintained. Noyes states the frequency and duration of ties are relevant along with power differentials. Noyes continues to describe how community occupies a sort of 'social imaginary' suggesting that community is a felt entity perceived by those involved in events rather than using the term as a physical delimiter of a social group (1995:452). The following section looks at the ways in which participants of folk singing can

experience deep and meaningful relationships or shallow and superficial ones, depending upon the context and their preferred modes of interaction.

If we follow Noyes' perception of community as a *social imaginary* we can view distinct social groupings within the larger body of folk singing participants. Noyes describes how 'within large networks dense clusters emerge – nuclear families, small bands of close friends, cabals and so on' (1995:456). These can operate on differing levels within the folk scene, at individual event level and as subgroups within events.

At the club level, one can distinguish those who often attend an event from those who do not. The ties generated through long term, frequent interaction create a bonded group. Ann writes of a club she attends as 'This is a good club, strongly attended but sometimes seems a bit clickey [sic] always a good night music wise' (D~Ann). While these long term close friendships can provide an enjoyable experience for those within the social group, it can be negatively perceived by newcomers. Rebecca Sachs Norris finds that, for English country dance groups, '[d]ancers sometimes find it difficult to come into a community if there has been long-term participation by a core of members' and suggests a regular influx of newcomers would lessen the strength of this barrier (2001:119).

There is a high proportion of long running folk events where this practice has not been observed. Niall MacKinnon (1993) observes that the folk audience demographic is moving in a block, with the same individuals continuing to constitute the core participants. Fifteen years since his study, the demographic block remains.

This group of participants have highly developed norms of behaviour and many share demographic features beyond age (for example political affiliation, social class). Newcomers who do not share this demographic profile, or hold context-based knowledge may feel a sense of difference from the group. Compounded by the use of 'in' language as described in Section 5.2.1, newcomers can feel alienated and outside the bounds of the community. This occurs much to the distress of many folk organisers who, through utilising the methods outlined throughout this thesis, aim towards inclusivity and universal appeal within the genre. This may provide some

explanation to why newcomers, if they are in any numbers, tend to set up their own singing groups rather than joining existing folk clubs.

Within events, smaller subgroups can be seen which could appear cliquey. Robert Stebbins identifies the phenomenon within the field of Barbershop singing, but found that although singers 'noticed the existence of cliques in their chapters, only a few felt strongly enough about them to classify them as a dislike' (1992b:130). Core participants such as those who hold resident status can form social groups within the wider body of regular folk singers. Similarly, The Beehive Gang, as noted earlier, constitutes a social grouping based on relationships built elsewhere. While the existence of cliques contradicts the ethos of openness and equality portrayed by folk singers, and was highlighted negatively by many diary participants, they seem to be an inherent part of the social structure that develops through the specific contexts employed for folk singing interaction.

Although close relationships exist within folk singing communities, this does not exclude other less intimate relationship forms. In a study of the social psychology of leisure, Michael Argyle finds that having a sympathetic confidant benefits happiness and mental health, but 'companionship' has even greater effect (Argyle 1996:87). Argyle suggests a number of theories to explain this, including distraction, participation in pleasant activities, gains to self-esteem and the exchange of physical non-verbal signals (idem).

Similarly, Thomas Langston and Margaret Barrett (2008) explore this phenomenon within a community choir context. For Langston and Barrett, *fellowship* evolves from and, in turn, facilitates trust, friendship, mutual support, working together and the development of relationships. They define fellowship as:

> That feeling of trust, camaraderie, togetherness,
> friendship, warmth, support and deep appreciation of the
> feelings and needs of members within a group,
> organisation or community for other members of that
> group, organisation or community. That feeling of
> fellowship is derived from shared interests, experiences,
> norms and values. (2008:131-2)

While they claim that the subject of fellowship has been little explored in recent years, I found many references to these kinds of relationships

within the music literature, most notably for this research Ginette Dunn's *The Fellowship of Song* (1980) Most, however, did not apply the term to their discussion and treated the phenomenon in a negative way, presenting the result as inferior to more intimate forms of relationship. For example, Stephanie Pitts observes:

> At Music in the Round the 'friendliness' commented on by many participants seemed to be connected with the noting of familiar faces and exchanging smiles rather than with more substantial interaction. (Pitts 2005:101)

And for barbershop singers, Liz Garnett writes how relationships are affected by their singing activity. Those involved in high energy group singing meeting again 'cheerfully', and those who experiment together at extended harmony were 'warm friends' (2005:150). However, Robert Stebbins finds that this 'camaraderie is closely associated with the production of music itself', and that only 20% of men and 31% of women found their closest friends shared this leisure activity (1992b:127).

This distinction between real friendships and moments of friendliness is further displayed in Burt Feintuch's (2001) experience of contra dances. He finds this social interaction is 'sociability of a special sort, a time out of time when music carries the evening, all are friends and little else matters… it's more the pleasure of the moment that counts in these events and that the social relationships are largely one-dimensional' (2001:154,150). Jonathan Stock suggests this might be due to the nature of musical interaction inhibiting the development of deeper social relationships:

> People busy making music together may well be experiencing sound fellowship, as the ethnomusicologist might put it, but they are also too busy to engage with one another in other ways. (2004:64)

The positive effects of this kind of relationship, however, have also been recognised. In Betty Bailey and Jane Davidson's investigation into the social impacts of participation in a homeless men's choir they find that 'merely belonging to a group was a very important aspect of choir membership' and that this appeared to provide these marginalised individuals with a support system (2005:282).

Jonathan Stock comments that within an instrumental folk music session, 'it was noticeable that while there were firm old friends there were equally those who had played together for some years without needing to know much more than first names' (2004:64-5). This is a widespread phenomenon and many folk singing attendees may be familiar with one another without having developed intimate relationships. However shallow these relationships may appear; I found that familiarity with others affected the ways in which people felt about their singing practice. Some felt 'intimidated by all the unfamiliar faces' at events (D~Raymond), or that sporadic events were 'a little more difficult to deal with especially if you do not know many of the other people attending' (PC~Jenny).

Holding personal knowledge of others, however shallow, benefits participants' feelings of sociability. However, even without this level of previous engagement, engaging in communal activity and sharing the atmosphere of sociability found within folk singing contexts similarly provides participants with feelings of fellowship.

Many participants describe the events they attend as having a 'friendly atmosphere' (D~Bob) and gain a sense of socialisation through being in such an atmosphere. This environment has been shown to be manipulated to be such through physical room layout devices described in Section 4.2 and the chatty forms of speech interactions as described in Section 5.2.1.

A particular example of how folk singers manipulate a sociable atmosphere is provided in the ways audience members speak to professional guest musicians.

> I saw several regular audience members approach the guest musician in the interval. One man discussed the extent of his touring schedule and a woman enquired about the guest's family as his wife had recently had a baby. The guest chatted away in a very conversational tone, complaining of being tired and away from home and sharing news of his child. This all seemed as if they were old friends, but I don't believe any personal relationships exist between these people apart from that of performer-audience member. Within this scene this relationship enables intimate interaction between people with no intimate relationship. (FN~16 April 2009)

This provides an example of para-social interaction, where fans develop a relationship with performers through mediated information. Within the folk scene however, performance norms enable fans to make real connections with performers and enact these one-sided relationships. This device could be seen as supporting the scene ethos of friendliness rather than being particularly meaningful on individual terms.

Assumed friendliness is also evident between audience members as Bob describes: 'I wander around festivals by myself quite happily, treating everyone as a new friend' (PC~Bob). This displays a feeling of identification with the strangers around him through sharing a space and perceived similarity in ideology. Others describe strong feelings of togetherness at distinct times during the folk singing event, showing bonds forming within groups through shared activity.

This can be explored through the theory of the state of *communitas* as introduced by Victor Turner (1969). Within normal societal practices Turner recognises moments of an intense community spirit, the feeling of great social equality, solidarity and togetherness. He terms this *communitas*, an acute point of community allowing the whole of a community to share a common experience.

In a study of rituals and ceremonies in higher educational settings, Kathleen Manning writes that when in a 'state of communitas, structural elements such as status are rejected, or deemed irrelevant, in exchange for a release of instinctual human energies. The emotional, sacred character of the communion formed between and among people during communitas takes precedence over the structural roles and authority… This moment cannot be structured but, spontaneous and unplanned, is a time when "we are one", no longer separate, unattached individuals (Manning 2000:66-7).

Such testimonies attribute great power to relationships potentially dismissed as being superficial or shallow due to minimal links. This phenomenon can be observed through both musical and social activities within folk singing activities, for example during a particularly well executed chorus song, or series of banter. Although folk singing environments are engineered to maximise the potential of communitas through various mechanisms (such as seating arrangements, chatty forms of speech and

singing together), the experience itself cannot be programmed and remains a felt experience. Yet, as Steven Cottrell notes, while communitas is a shared, group experience, 'it also has an individual dimension; in this sense it is not 'communion', where individual 'I's are fused into a collective 'we', but an aggregate of collective individual responses which have both mass effect and individual significance' (2004:156).

The concept has been criticised by anthropologists for (amongst other issues) its incompatibility with the notion of boundary (Eade and Sallnow 1991; Rosaldo 1993), and I recognise problems regarding the homogenous application of the phenomenon. As Turner presents the theory, everyone present and participating experiences the same sensation. Through this research I found, however, that there can be others participating who, for whatever reason, do not achieve a state of communitas. This can create a rift in the experiences of participants.

The excluding qualities of the phenomenon are discussed in Keith Negus and P. Román Velázquez's (2002) study of identity and music and they highlight some of the problems of thinking about musical practices through notions of community and solidarity. They suggest that equal attention should be paid to instances when music is associated with ambivalence and detachment rather than belonging.

While communitas is undoubtedly achieved for some during folk singing events, the same activity with the same people may reach different levels of intensity at different times. Those that experience communitas may feel a strong sense of bonding as a group, some may not identify themselves as among this group, or may be oblivious to the occurrence. If they do perceive others experiencing a strong social bond that they do not feel a part of, this can heighten a sense of exclusion.

Moving beyond the discussion of the depth of relationship ties to their level of diversity, a commonly utilised defining characteristic of communities, at least within social philosophy, has been the high level of multiplexity within relationships. Folk singing has so far been presented as a relatively autonomous practice and Burt Feintuch is uncomfortable describing 'occasional musical get togethers [with] people of varied backgrounds' as a

community, due to the lack of widespread and dense network ties throughout all aspects of their lives (2001:149).

While I recognise limits to the level of multiplicity for many folk singers, there is also evidence of wider interaction beyond the individual event level as suggested by Feintuch. As Ruth Finnegan finds:

> Far from being the kind of marginal and unstructured activity often suggested by the label "leisure", with its implication of residual items somehow left over from "real" life, these musical practices were upheld not by isolated individuals in an asocial vacuum or by people merely trying to fill the time to "solve" the "problem of leisure", but through a series of socially recognised pathways which systematically linked into a wide variety of settings and institutions within the city. (1989:299)

A number of diary participants described socialising outside organised events such as going 'back to a friend's house after' (D~Pauline), or being 'invited to a party' (D~Bob). Others organise away trips with members of their group, such as visits to another singing context (D~Chris) or, as members of the Rivelin Folk Club do, going away together for weekend breaks (D~Ann). People also bring friends they know from elsewhere into folk singing contexts (D~Kit; D~Philip). These interactions show how the relationships formed within folk singing contexts cross into other aspects of people's lives demonstrating that this leisure context does not exist in a vacuum.

While Finnegan suggests that one 'could not assume a shared musical interest would be complimented by some rounded knowledge of other aspects of each other's lives…[that] such matters were unimportant for the purpose for which they had come together' (1989:302-3). I suggest that for the majority of those who engage in folk singing activities, a bond stronger than pure musical activity is desirable. The majority of people who join this musical scene discover it through word of mouth and, as a result, the community is relatively homogeneous in its demographic make-up. While individual participants may not work, live and play together they nevertheless share ties through (assumed and actual) shared ideologies and, through the modes of speech described earlier, by holding knowledge of each other's

lives away from the singing event, even if they do not actively participate in them.

One final element of relationships deserves closer examination. While I have included discussion of outsiders in the form of newcomers to a musical context, folk singing events can also contain people who do not conform to group norms due to social or musical behaviours, yet, as they seem oblivious to their incompatibility, continue to attend events.[28] As there are no definitive excluding policies from folk events and these individuals seem unaware of the subtle cues employed as disciplinary measures inappropriate behaviours can endure. As long as individuals feel welcome there is no means of excluding people from the group.

This situation highlights the problems of presenting an open and welcoming environment, yet maintaining the illusion through secrecy, collusion and lack of direct confrontation. This kind of tolerance, Burt Feintuch argues, is possible within a group that meet infrequently as the relationships are not integral to the structure of their whole lives (2001:159). I argue that, though they are only consequential within folk singing contexts, these negative relationships are important and affect the health of individual events and the folk scene as a whole. Witnessing negative responses towards oblivious others can call into question one's own place within the group and lead to feelings of disharmony.

While some participants may feel an event would be better without the attendance of such individuals, I propose that they serve as a unifying feature within groups. They can serve to highlight group norms to others and, although this process goes mostly unverbalised, having a consensus of feeling towards an unconforming individual can lead to a sense of unity for the remainder of the group. Further to this through the inclusion of undesirable participants, groups can feel they fulfil their ideal of openness and inclusion, providing the unconforming individual with a sense of belonging that becomes a reality as they occupy a specific role within the group.

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[28] I stress that non conformity referred to here relates to the social aspect of the group, or by making incongruous musical choices rather than showing musical deficiency (further discussed in chapter 6).

There exists a social landscape within folk singing events containing myriad relationship types. Some singers have long term and diverse engagement with folk singing activities and have generated strong and long term relationships that encompass various aspects of their lives, others do not have previous personal knowledge of each other, yet feel a connection through a shared space or ideology. Even without deep friendships, the presence of a friendly atmosphere can generate feelings of community for those participating in folk singing events.

This positions community on a level of individual perception and places the responsibility of inclusion in the hands of individual participants. In some cases people can witness the social activities of others and enjoy a sense of being included in the group with no active involvement. For others, recognising a social group of which they do not feel a part creates feelings of alienation and they can regard such social constructions as impenetrable cliques.

5.4   Conclusions

What is notable throughout this discussion is the disjuncture between the ideal of the folk community as unstructured and open and the reality that to achieve and maintain the functioning of this community in its desired form requires the maintenance of boundaries. Folk singers may embrace and articulate a coherent set of values around inclusivity, access and participation, but their musical and social practices contest these, contradicting the intentions of participants.

By providing a framework for inclusion, community satisfies people's desire to belong and be recognised by others. However, communities and their boundaries exist here not as social-structural systems and institutions but as worlds of meaning in the minds of their members. Despite a strong adherence to behavioural norms, membership consists not so much of adopting behaviours as of identifying with others through these behaviours, holding a shared vocabulary of value.

These symbols of community are not rigid, but communicated by participants through their participation. A cyclical pattern forms turning

between the two premises: 'we have something in common that forms the basis of our social interaction' and 'we have something in common as a result of our social interaction'. Community is not a structure that determines behaviour but forms as a result of performed behaviours. In this way, community has the capacity to change. However, within the context under discussion here, the constancy of role occupation and behavioural norms have resulted in a relatively stable community of people, behaviours and ideas.

6 Producing the sounds of folk singing

> The folk community was the community created by the musical performance itself; folk consciousness was the effect of folk singing… it was an ideological community bound by its attitude to music-making itself. (Frith 1981:162)

Perceptions of tradition and the construction of 'folk song' repertoires, along with the social and physical ways people organise their folk singing activities affect the experience for folk singers. Music making, however, is the raison d'etre for the scene and I now turn the focus upon the sound of the musical outputs performed within this environment and participants' attitudes towards their music making.

Here I explore the particular ways sound is ordered in this context, what is viewed by participants as important about the sonic qualities of folk singing. I provide some examples of how the sound structures enable participants to adhere to the social ideal through participation. The musical competencies necessary for participation in the community are described along with a discussion on levels of tolerance towards ability and effort. The chapter concludes with an exploration of how the sound structures facilitate the social interactions described in earlier chapters including discussion on how folk singers learn both their art of singing and how to perform within this social environment. Following the ideas on community developed in the previous two chapters, I further investigate the ways individuals combine to create the ideal group through their musical interactions within this environment.

6.1 The sound structures of folk singing

Songs within the generally practised repertoire of folk songs fall into two categories – those which include group participation and those without. It is rare to have whole group participation throughout a piece within folk singing contexts and those that have group participation usually contain sections of solo singing interspersed with massed vocals, often termed 'chorus songs'. Songs with no group participation are referred to here as 'solo songs'.

The distinction is primarily based upon the way lyrical and musical material is structured. Solo songs tend to have little internal lyric repetition and often have a more fluid pulse than chorus songs. Upbeat, jovial songs tend to incorporate group participation whereas slow sombre songs can be either performed solo or with group participation, as long as this is facilitated by the lyrical structure. Subject matter and material origin are less divisive and these factors do not affect a song's use for solo or group singing. These two song forms have distinct qualities and affect the lead singer and other participants in diverse ways. Bob notes the differences as a singer when he remarks that he 'primarily enjoy[s] singing songs which need to be listened to, but I also enjoy leading a good chorus song' (D~Bob). While solo singing may be enjoyed by lead singers and some audiences (particularly encouraged at Folk at Home and The Ballad Session), a number of events specified that they preferred singers to perform 'chorus songs' (Raise the Roof), and at others, joining in is a prominent feature of their singing activities (Kelham Island Singing Session).

Whichever song form is performed, a number of musical features further contribute to determine the sound of folk singing. In her study of 'local singers' in Suffolk in the 1970s, Ginette Dunn notes that:

> There is no concern for the artistic criteria of correct phrasing, descriptive ability, imagery, key control, organic form and originality, although specific criticism is made of non-emotional delivery of what is regarded as an emotional song, and of gross lack of accuracy. (1980:206)

In this context, Dunn finds the key aesthetics for a good performance are emotional performance, keeping basically in tune and strength and clarity of voice. However, Dunn describes the most important factor in this context as the act of doing it, and she stresses that a good singer is one who sings rather than one who necessarily sings well.

Though this premise looms large within the current context (and is further discussed in Section 6.2) distinct aesthetics of musical style can be detected. The ways in which the musical structures particular to this environment enable group participation are explored throughout this section, including folk singers approach to pitch, harmony, volume and

instrumentation, and how these contribute to a musical aesthetic found within this environment. I follow this with an examination of the methods used by participants to maintain the boundaries of this sound ideal.

Contrary to Dunn's premise that only gross errors in pitch are deemed an aesthetic consideration, through my research I have identified three main issues concerning pitch for contemporary folk singers: remaining in tune whilst singing, starting at the right pitch, and selecting a suitable key for the range of the song.

Remaining in relative tune during a song is associated with technical ability and affects how good people feel they are at singing. This is seen as an element of vocal control that can need 'work' to improve (D~Bob). Many singers commented that it was harder to keep in pitch when singing solo than in a group, and some suggest that singing as part of the Sheffield Folk Chorale is less demanding in this respect than singing solo at folk events (D~Carol). This supports research which found school children had greater pitch accuracy when tested in groups than they had when singing individually (Green 1994:105). Keeping 'in tune' is relative to the starting note (or overall key of the piece) as opposed to adhering to concert pitch and songs are frequently sung in tunings that do not adhere to concert pitch (see fig 6:1-2,7).

	Song Title	Key(s)	
		Before Change	After Change
1	Watch the Wall	B mixolydian	n/a
2	The Keeper	G major (slightly flat of concert)	A major (sharp of concert)
3	Drill ye Tarriers Drill	F# minor	n/a
4	Master of the Sheepfold	Db major	n/a
5	Forward my Brave Boys	G major	Ab major (gradual shift)
6	A Few Jovial Sportsmen	B major	n/a
7	Rolling Home	Ab major	G major (slightly flat of concert)

Figure 6:1 The keys of seven songs showing pitch alteration (the pitch ranges of these songs are displayed in figure 6:2)[29]

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[29] For details of these recordings see Contents of the Audio CD.

The pitch chosen for each song is determined by the lead singer and is either the one they perceive to be best suited to their voice or one they deem the best for group participation. The majority of a cappella singers do not use an external pitching device and finding the desired pitch to begin a song can be problematic. A barrier identified for finding the right starting pitch was that there was a perceived difference between singing at home and in public. Singers find that different keys are suited to different environments and one practiced at home does not sound as good in performance:

> I failed as usual to pitch 'English Ale' comfortably (I still can't work out what goes wrong with that song in performance!). (D~Bob)

A common mechanism used to achieve the correct starting pitch is to hum through the tune quietly before beginning. Along with helping to identify the range of the song for the singer, this contributes to the soundscape of the folk singing environment, creating a more incremental transition between the states of not performing and performing.

Some diary participants commented that they felt they had started in the wrong pitch, but carried on regardless. This can go unnoticed by others present, or it could be noted that a performance sounds 'a little stretched' (PC~Peter). Where a wrong key is seen to be hindering the performance, songs can be restarted in a different key (see figure 6:1-2;7). Pitching to enable mass participation was cited in some cases, and here, the lead singers would sing in a less than ideal key for themselves to increase the likelihood of others joining in (D~Bob).

> I changed the key for 'The Keeper' because I thought it was too low for the others when they came in on the chorus, especially the men, and it made the chorus sound weak. Further on through the song, I felt that I had over shot the shift and other singers sounded to be straining to reach the notes. While I recognised this during the performance, I felt it would be disruptive to make a further pitch shift during the song, so continue in the 'too high' key. (FN~13 March 2008)

This demonstrates the necessity for a balance between creating ideal singing conditions and uninterrupted performances. While lead singers

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commented negatively about having made mistakes of this kind, mis-pitching is a recognised hazard of a cappella folk singing and perceived as an acceptable error by audiences.

Along with deliberate pitch changes as described above, which provide a clear break between one key and another, it is also common for gradual shifts to occur throughout the piece (see figure 6:1-5). This mostly passes unnoticed in live settings but can easily be heard by looping recordings. As there is no conscious choice being made for this alteration, I suggest that it occurs because of a movement to a pitch that is more comfortable for the lead singer or at least for one or more of the stronger singers who initiate the shift in others.

Finding a pitch where male and female voices can sing the tune in unison can cause problems. This is particularly evident when women lead the song, as the tune an octave below
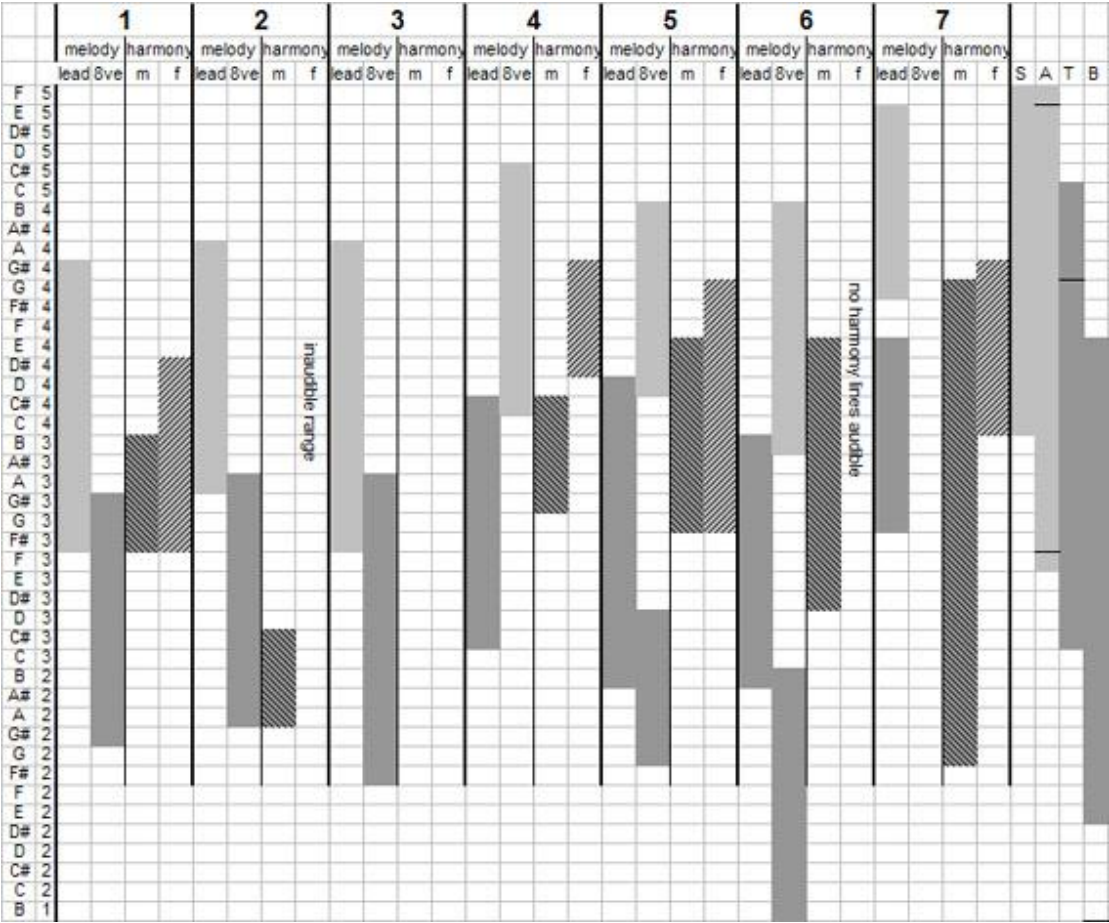

Figure 6:2 Pitch ranges for male and female lead and harmony singers for the seven songs as detailed in figure 6:1.

extends beyond the comfortable range for tenor singers (See fig 6:2). While a great many singers contribute in unison, the inclusion of harmony singing expands the capacity of awkward keys to enable participation. In relation to part-singing in a Fijian community, Joan Russell observes:

> This style of [soprano, alto, tenor and bass] part-writing avoids placing excessive demands on the voice. Women with high or low voices can find a comfortable place on the soprano, alto or even tenor part, while men with high or low voices can place themselves on the tenor or bass part. In this way, the hymn, or any vocal genre… that shares its melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and formal features, offers a 'place' for every voice. (1997:99)

Folk singing contexts do not include written harmony parts, rather individual singers improvise their own. This non-prescribed style of part-singing may seem more individually directed and therefore further avoid pitching and range issues. However, different singers found particular pitches better than others for harmonising. At Folk at Home, Julie Fotheringham commented that a song was sung in a key that she found particularly comfortable. A short discussion followed into how certain people sing in complementary keys and how others are difficult to join in with. This suggests that folk singers prefer to harmonise songs at a certain interval from the melody rather than improvising a part within their vocal range.

Due to historical presentations of folk songs being modal and following non-harmonic principles as described by Cecil Sharp (1907), there is a sense of relative freedom from conventional harmonic principles and the requirement to adhere to a single harmonic system is minimised. However, contemporary singers have had greater exposure to standardised musical formations and have their ears firmly tuned to major and minor scales and, in reality, the harmonies performed often conform to typical chordal structures found in Western Classical music.

The fluid tonal possibilities perceived as inherent in folk music and the improvisational style of performance result in much trial and error in this form of harmony singing. Harmonic structures are not established prior to a song commencing and it may take a chorus or two for the group to develop a coherent system (if at all). This occurs as weaker singers change their

harmonies to 'fit' with stronger or more experienced singers, or for two strong singers to determine aurally which chord should be sung at a given time.

At a Raise the Roof event, I noticed on some occasions chorus singers joining in with harmony and at other times in unison. I perceive this to be determined by singers' varying levels of knowledge of the pieces, and their internal harmonic complexity. When a new song is sung (i.e. one that not many of the assembled are familiar with) joining in is more tentative and usually begins in unison. Once some people have picked up the tune and gauged the harmonic structure they then begin to improvise harmonies (FN~13 March 2008). This results in singers who are more confident with a piece providing harmonies and others complementing the lead singer with the tune, ensuring that the harmonies do not overpower the tune.

The roles of unison and harmony singer are not fixed and people often drift between harmony lines and the melody for different pieces and throughout the course of a song. Some common harmonisation patterns are evident within folk singing events. Even if the majority of the song is sung in unison, it is common for folk singers to harmonise the last notes of lines. Some changes include remaining on the tonic (see figure 6:3) and descending to the third (see figure 6:4). These beginnings can establish the chordal structure of a piece and from this, more competent harmonisers can build longer lines. As more harmonic material is included, singers moderate their part to ensure balance. In this way, the process of negotiating a good harmonic sound within the group results in the scope of harmony altering from chorus to chorus. This on-going process of refinement develops a more coherent and increasingly complex harmonic structure. Through this negotiation, singers achieve a state of harmony rather than singing in harmony in pre-determined musical terms.

Occasionally the improvisatory approach results in singers trying 'to be too harmonic at times and veering dangerously into being out of tune' (D~Oli). Similarly, some singers repetitively sing notes that are not within the harmonic structure adhered to by the majority of singers. As each individual is responsible for their own output and criticism is rarely provided, singers with no 'ear' for the music can be oblivious to their lack of adherence to the musical norm and sing (what I perceive as) out of place notes. As the

general sound ideal veers towards the informal, these behaviours do not stand out as incongruously as they might in a more structured choir formation, and unusual harmonies are usually accepted as it shows enthusiasm for participation. Although it goes unchallenged, the wrongness of such behaviour remains apparent in terms of perceived good musical practice within this environment.

Figure 6:3: Three examples of harmonies remaining on the tonic.

Figure 6:4: Three examples of harmonies descending to the 3rd.

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In contrast, perceived errors in rhythm can be modified through the process of singing and massed voices can override an individual's rhythm or pace. In some cases, the chorus becomes a regulated rhythm, where the verse may have been sung more freely. The free singing in these cases is perceived to be due to lack of ability rather than a conscious preference, and therefore the regulation can be a welcome addition to the performance. A regular rhythm is useful for mass participation and they adhere to a generally accepted norm, possibly led by one or two proficient or louder singers making the pulse or rhythm of a piece more uniform.

While this function can be seen to improve individual performances, the lead singer does not always welcome changes to their established rhythm or pace. In terms of altering the pace, there are frequent comments made, both during events, and within the diaries, that people felt the group changed the song for the worse. If a singer has found this to be a recurring problem, a comment may be made in the introduction to the song directing their performance preferences. In other cases lead singers can be heard singing slightly faster (or slower) or emphasising particular rhythmic features of a song. This shows a process of directing the group orally/aurally from within the performance. If the mass has a distinct sonic preference this can be difficult to manipulate, though alterations to suit the lead's preference do occur. These changes show an assumption that the lead singer has the right to direct the performance.

Volume levels can vary greatly within individual events, and even within the same piece, ranging from quiet solo singing to loud massed ensemble singing. A number of other factors affect the volume of singing.

The number of people present at a particular singing event can affect the volume level of individual events. The night I recorded Raise the Roof was particularly well attended, and the chorus singing was considerably louder than on regular or 'quiet' nights (i.e. those with fewer than usual in attendance). Correspondingly, when there are relatively few people in attendance, the sound level generated can be lower. Singing in quiet environments was described as less satisfying and more of the event may be given over to talking than usual (D~Ann).

Loud volumes are not purely dependant on numbers and individual approaches to singing also have influence. Four people singing strongly can give a 'bigger' sound than 10 or so less confident singers singing reservedly. In turn, this core of volume can aid others' participation:

> We are confident when we deliver stuff and I think that's what people respond to. So certainly with the singing session people respond quite strongly, will join in more strongly maybe more than other singers that are there. And that is a confidence thing if we're singing and belting it out that is different than if someone's tentatively starting. (I~Jess)

Tentative singing or having too few people to generate a full enough sound can create an uncomfortable singing environment and make joining in a stressful experience as individuals feel more exposed.

People also sing louder later in the event, when they have relaxed and have bonded socially as a group. Caroline Bithell suggest that the controlled use of alcohol may play a part in this through its ability to 'enhance emotional experience and facilitate social interaction' (2007:77). Whether or not individuals are directly physically affected by alcohol, the camaraderie that develops due to its consumption by some throughout the event enables everyone to feel more comfortable and sing louder. Along with feeling comfortable in the context, having confidence in the act of singing also enables people to sing louder. Songs that are well known are sung louder than those that are new.

A secondary finding from Georgia A. Green's study (previously mentioned in relation to pitch) was that the children were more likely to sing louder when they were singing together with the entire group than when they were singing alone (1994:112). This is similarly noted with the groups I observed. Individual singers increase their volume levels when other people are singing loudly. The presence of massed voices offers support to individuals who feel at liberty to increase the volume of their individual performance within the group. However, I also noted the reverse trend and individuals who project loudly when singing in a lead capacity may reduce their volume when joining in with a group who are singing more reservedly on another piece. This suggests that individuals moderate their behaviour to

suit the group norm rather than purely aiming to achieve an individual sound ideal.

Many of these factors point toward a conclusion that high volume is desirable. However, when leading songs, some individuals commented that they found it 'difficult to get the volume sometimes' (D~Carol). Those who felt they had quiet voices often described problems with projection and singing in noisy environments. Issues resulting from trying to project in noisy environments included physical discomfort and an alteration on the tone of the voice, both of which were seen as negative for these singers (D~Bob; D~Carol). These singers value other qualities in their singing experiences, preferring attentive audiences focusing on the intimacy of performance, and do not enjoy competing in volume with other singers or talkative audiences. This demonstrates a different aesthetic rather than solely an inferior ability in terms of projection.

While it appears that loudness needs confidence, confidence does not necessarily have to be loud. The word 'power' was used in relation to voices, which may better describe the quality desired rather than pure volume (D~Raymond). The power a singer holds over a group does not necessarily correlate with volume. This can be linked to the approaches observed by Ginette Dunn (1980) in her study of singers from a local Suffolk community. Dunn notes that 'a relaxed strength of voice is a recognised quality' (ibid.:212):

> The ideal combination is strength of voice yoked with sympathetic feeling and a kind of power (associated with masculinity) held in restraint yet produced in a relaxed way. (ibid.:214)

This quality of strength rather than volume is endemic in participants' comments about their own and others' performances. However, I maintain that much group chorus singing is generally perceived as better when it is louder, assuming other stylistic factors, such as adherence to pitch and rhythm are not disregarded in the process.

Attitudes towards instrumentation during singing sessions are varied and often strongly felt. While the majority of events discussed in this thesis feature predominantly unaccompanied singing, many diary participants

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attended sessions and clubs that include a higher level of instrumentation. Guitars are the most common accompanying instrument and other stringed instruments such as acoustic bass and mandolins also feature. Concertinas and piano accordions are also frequently used to provide backing for singing. Fiddles, melodeons and whistles or flutes, though widely considered to be 'folk' instruments, are rarer. When they are employed, it is often to augment other instruments rather than to provide the main form of accompaniment. Perhaps due to the dominance of guitars in this context a variety of instrumentation was celebrated at some events (D~Chas; D~Pete).

Unlike folk music sessions, instrumental accompaniment in folk singing contexts is usually only contributed by those who have rehearsed outside the event. Although I did observe some instrumental improvisation, this is less prevalent than vocal embellishments, even where other players are in the room. This level of rehearsal changes the mode of performance from participatory group improvisation, to presentation of arrangements.

These arrangements commonly contain intros, instrumental breaks and outros. Within singing contexts where instrumental accompaniment is the norm, these practices can feature highly. However, as the three events observed in detail for this study are predominantly a cappella, comments such as 'no guitar strumming tonight!' (D~Carol) are indicative of the general attitude towards instrumentation. Where instrumental accompaniment is utilised in these contexts, the players attempt to minimise the impact through not including instrumental breaks, keeping their singing as the focus of the performance. They may begin the song from a period of tuning up (guitar) or fiddling with keys (concertina) rather than having a clean break before starting the intro as might be expected where instrumental accompaniment holds a higher level of credence (Track 6). This is reminiscent of the humming to singing graduation as described earlier.

Some people who use instrumental accompaniment describe the effects of particular instruments on their singing. Taking the bouzouki means that Marjorie Palmer can only sing the repertoire she knows on that instrument and Raymond Greenoaken found 'all three songs I would have preferred doing in a higher key, but the Anglo [concertina] pretty much chooses the key for you' (D~Raymond). This provides a further distinction

between the perceived naturalness of vocal performance and the artificiality provided by the use of instrumentation.

When asked how it feels to be one of the few singers who use accompaniment at Raise the Roof, Raymond comments:

> My long term aim is to dispense with the honkophone
> entirely, but at present it's my life-support system.
> Certainly no-one has made an issue of it, except for Oliver
> Blensdorf, who complains (quite reasonably) that I don't
> sing loud enough to cut through its irksome drone.
> (PC~Raymond)

In some singing contexts it is appropriate to accompany with instrumentation, in others it is not encouraged. I noticed at Kelham Island singing session one week a young couple entered the room with a guitar and sat at a table at the back. While nobody said they should not play, they must have felt the inappropriateness in a non-verbal way, perhaps noticing it conflicted with the norms of performance. They left early without participating, either musically or socially (FN~24 February 2008). When I questioned a regular attendee about this, he said:

> the guy obviously realised that his repertoire wouldn't fit in
> with what the gathering wanted to do. I did suggest he try
> a song but the couple left after an hour or so. I didn't
> detect any discouragement from anybody. But perhaps
> no-one else was actively encouraging either. (PC~Bob)

While the regulars understand this session is unaccompanied, nothing is explicitly displayed to say so, and so novices can easily attend with the intention of performing material that does not fit the established sound ideal.

On the reverse, Chas Smith sings unaccompanied in a mainly accompanied environment and feels that his 'songs would sound better with accompaniment' though he is unable to provide it himself (D~Chas). Although Chas attends with his wife (whose performances closely adhere to the event's sound ideal) and enjoys the social elements, he recognises a conflict between attending an event that has a majority of one kind of material, and performing in a different style.

This discussion has so far focused upon the intentional musical activities of participants, however, along with the explicitly musical outputs, the soundscape is also affected by the event environment. Some venues

were described as being good to sing in and both the naturally occurring and electronically enhanced acoustics were frequently remarked upon (see further discussion on the use of PAs in section 4.2). Objects found within environment can be manipulated to contribute to the sonic structure. For example, glasses or tables are occasionally tapped during rhythmical songs as a casual form of accompaniment.

The level of background noise also contributes to the sonic envelope of individual events and the balance between talking and singing is managed differently within different events. In a folk club setting, the audience are expected to be quiet before a song begins whereas singing in informal sessions often arises from a murmur of chatting. Once the song has begun, talking is expected to quieten down.

The singers involved in this study hold differing attitudes towards background noise. Some prefer to sing in quiet surroundings and find it difficult to project over background noise or find that the noise distracts them from concentrating on their singing (D~Bob; D~Carol). Others enjoy the informal atmosphere created by a low level of social interaction during performances (PC~Jon).

The differing approaches to background noise affect the inclusion of wider participants into the singing community. Those who desire quiet surroundings exclude those who are not actively attending (through holding events in back room for example), creating a relatively closed community, while singing in more public spaces widens the scope of those attending, if not musically participating, through their presence in the bar. This is not always complementary to the musical event, and as Helen O'Shea points out, in Irish sessions, which are idealised as having an element of friendly chatter, the noise from non-musical 'punters' can inhibit rather than fuel the music (2006:3-4).

Folk singers' attention to pitching and volume and their uses of harmony and instrumentation demonstrate that there are various aesthetic criteria associated with folk singing and that notions of good practice exist. Many features are widespread and provide an identifying 'sound' of folk music as a genre, however, many are variable and provide individual events

with their own sonic footprint. I now turn to the ways these sonic boundaries are maintained.

> The institutions of ethnic culture do not simply reaffirm
> tradition from within; they may also strengthen ethnicity by
> allowing and then controlling the mixture of a group's
> traditions with those of other groups and external society
> in general. (Bohlman 1988:66)

Contact with external influences at the boundaries has previously been thought to cause the erosion of characteristics of particular cultures, but Philip Bohlman prefers to view the negotiation of these external influences as a strengthening tool for the community, demonstrating the dialectic between core and boundary. While I am not suggesting that folk singers are an ethnic group, the processes by which they integrate and control influences from other sources subscribe to this model.

The folk singers involved in the diary study and focus group portray a wide variety of attitudes towards the incorporation of new material and performance styles. Some criticise an over 'purist' attitude while others dislike approaches they feel are excessively liberal, straying too far from what they perceive as 'folk'. Both extremes (and each increment in between) attract supporters and, at least within Sheffield, there is a wide breadth of folk singing experiences available to accommodate this variety of attitudes towards the stylistic production of folk song.

While there is a variety of experience to be had, there is also a lack of prior direction as to what kind of experience one might have. Whether or not a new singer's performance is sonically compatible with the existing group can only be ascertained through experiencing other singers in context. Due to the idiosyncrasies of each event, when a new attendee arrives there is a period of negotiation to discover whether their particular style is compatible with the existing ideals:

> We would not turn anybody away [but]… it soon becomes
> obvious to ourselves and the singer whether or not their
> style fits in with the club. (PC~Jenny)

New singers can then determine whether their current style is suitable, whether to adapt their performing style to meet the norms, or whether to

cease attendance. Although the pervasive inclusive ideology does not allow overt exclusion, sonic incompatibility can be used as a guide to appropriateness of attendance.

Despite the discussion of group repertoires in Section 3.2, much of the same song material is performed in a variety of contexts; the modes of performance provide a marker of compatibility. This occurs within the events discussed in this thesis, but can also be seen on a larger scale where choirs perform folk songs for example, or in pub folk rock covers bands. Ruth Finnegan notes how those who fall outside particular sound ideals are excluded from the conceptual folk scene. She shows how some performers are 'not folk enough for the folk clubs' and 'regarded as "fringe" by the more purist enthusiasts' (1989:69).

Along with incorporating (or excluding) new people into a musical event, the absorption of new material provides another potential avenue for cultural crossover. Millie Rahn (2001) observes how traditional performers during the American folk revival reinterpreted popular songs or appropriated songs from others' traditions and made them their own. Similarly, Carole Pegg describes how, for the Suffolk singer Fred 'Pip' Whiting, 'the type of song might vary from music hall or parlour ballad to broadside ballad, [but] they were performed in a manner which fitted the accepted sound ideal' (1984:58). Within the field under study here the performances at each event I recorded shared particular features of style, with the same format of lead/chorus singing, similarity of vocal delivery and a general lack of instrumentation.

While I have previously identified repertoires as markers of the group, this suggests that the style of performance also provides identification for communities within this genre. As Eric Clarke recognises for classical performances, which rely more heavily on scores:

> The score [or text] is of course not the music but simply one of a number of representations…and can be seen as something like a blueprint for a performance – and a rather sketchy one at that, which 'makes sense' only when understood within some cultural context. (2002:64)

The cultural context then, including the audience reaction to particular performances of material, determines the perceived correctness of its stylistic (re)production.

Stylistic difference also affects the ways individuals identify with their music. Songs in dialects other than the singer's own may be avoided, or adapted to fit their own vernacular:

> I am, however, very fussy about dialect and idiom: Tommy Armstrong and Rabbie Burns wrote powerful songs set in their own social framework and traditions, but if I can't sing a song in my own vernacular then I won't want to sing it. (PC~Bob)

This shows how choices are made within the framework of a particular sound ideal and how music from another milieu is avoided. Other singers adapt material from other contexts to suit localised sound ideals and they become acceptable to both the new singer and audiences. This illustrates what Bohlman terms 'cultural creativity' through crossing cultural boundaries and acts as a force for change within the tradition, while maintaining and indeed confirming the key characteristics of the particular tradition's music (1988:62).

Some diarists commented that everyone attending a particular folk singing event shares similar musical preferences. This similarity in musical taste contributes to the sense of belonging and community. Music has long been used to define oneself as belonging to a particular group or in establishing 'others' and in this way musical identity and social identity are inseparable. This contributes to the specific ways in which actively participating in the performance of a particular stylistic delivery of folk song, or sharing these stylistic preferences as an audience member, can create a sense of community distinct from those who do not share these ideals.

6.2   Issues of tolerance concerning ability and effort

While sonic ideals can be identified in folk singing contexts, it is germane to remember the ideological basis for this musical art form, with its fundamental premise of inclusion. As previously noted, Ginette Dunn identifies the defining quality of being a good singer as being one who actively sings:

> The life force of the tradition and the primary aesthetic
> emerged, that performance is good in itself. This is the
> first consideration, the platform for the ritual of contact, or
> continuance, of conservatism, of unity. After this, there
> are personal preferences, both for singers and songs, and
> for points of style and technique. However, any
> performance is accepted, and the social bias of the local
> aesthetic is underlined every time a singer stands to sing
> before his fellow men [sic]. (1980:205)

Tolerance of low-standard performers is widely found within the contemporary folk singing scene and wide participation remains a prominent goal rather than elitist targets of musical hierarchy. However, this is not a clear cut concept and through discussion of events such as 'forgetting the words' and 'practising' I explore a variety of positions in relation to vocal quality considering differences in attitude to the performances of others as well as the self.

Niall MacKinnon (1993) observes that the 1990s folk scene made a virtue out of a lack of musical polish and that breadth of repertoire is instead used as a marker of being a good musician. This has since been amended by Jonathan Stock's claim that it is a difference of emphasis rather than kind, as 'technical excellence is certainly celebrated in many areas of the tradition' (2004:46). This conflict can also be found in other musical spheres. From research into barbershop singing Robert Stebbins notes the issues implicit in 'whether everyone who likes to sing and can carry a tune should be admitted… or whether the chorus should be composed strictly of singers who know their art well?' (1992b:131). In a recent discussion on American community choirs, Cindy L Bell finds there is a decline in the 'come y'all choir' and that there are too few community choirs available to the general public of singers (2008:237).

Along with a general celebration of the inclusive elements found in folk singing events, the diary participants also complained about musical standards and the quality of singers at some events. My ethnological observations suggest that there are two distinct attitudes towards the phenomenon. I found a dichotomy within the folk scene illustrated by Carol Schofield's recognition of 'a conflict between those who demand a high

standard of singing in pubs (without words) and having sessions where people sing for the enjoyment regardless of ability or experience' (D~Carol).

Mackinnon argues that the inclusion of weaker performers within folk events serves as a contrast to the high points of the evening and stops the event becoming an adulation of talent. This, he feels, is 'not specifically because they are bad but because they represent inexperience, which accords with an ethos of encouraging participation and the nurturing of active musical involvement' (1993:89). This is supported within the contemporary folk scene with newcomers being encouraged and praised for their endeavours. If singers are in the process of improvement, weaker performances are accepted, even welcomed.

Less tolerance is shown towards habitually poor singers. Simon Heywood observes the 'notorious folk club problem of interminably awful floor singers who nobody seems able to get rid of' (2008:13). This demonstrates a notable difference between attitudes towards long-term weak singers and those who are actively learning and improving.

Along with inexperience, another tolerated weakening factor can be found in illness and other obstacles that impinge upon singers' abilities. After a decline in vocal quality, instead of retiring from singing, the relationships that have developed through regular meetings facilitate an understanding of poor technique and performances are enjoyed on other merits, such as an appreciation for continuing to support the event.

The inclusion of learners and those in decline demonstrates a sense of following people through their career as a singer. The singer does not become fully functional 'behind the scenes' to be presented to an audience, and then retire at the peak of their performing ability. Rather, in this context, the singer and the audience develop a relationship through the process of learning together. Through this process, the community actively contribute to the development of the singer through enabling performance.

While repeated poor performances from singers are viewed negatively, there is no mechanism in place to exclude them from proceedings and general etiquette dictates that everyone should be offered an opportunity to sing. Even showing personal emotional response to a poor performance is against protocol within these environments:

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There was one terrible performer…I felt sorry for the guitar and the abuse it had to suffer. It was an effort to keep a straight face (like you have to) and not laugh/cry. (D~Roy)

Personal perception of one's own ability also impacts upon performance. While in some contexts the MC has power to dictate who performs, singers themselves also make personal decisions as to whether or not to perform and I suggest that the emphasis on self-moderation in this context has the effect of filtering out certain character types from performing, rather than regulating quality levels.

Strategies were described, however, that enable the inclusion of poor quality singers to the satisfaction of others present:

There was one man in particular who was so out of tune that Dave would say to him sing…something that he knew but we all knew the words of so as soon as he started we would all join in, but that was fine, he'd had his go and everything. It distresses me a bit to hear people saying I don't want to sit through somebody who can't sing because for me that's what folk is, it's being tolerant of that. (FG~Judy)

The inclusion of weaker performers also helps others feel they can participate:

Initially it was how do you get the confidence to stand up and play and if you're confronted with a room full of people who are all virtuoso musicians you look back and say I'm not even going to try and you don't… And I think it takes a lot of confidence to get up and play or sing in front of people and if everybody that you see in front of you is absolutely spot on the money, come my turn I'm going to say pass but if somebody's there and they're obviously trying, they've obviously practiced but they're not actually spot on you think OK the standards… I can join in now; I'm not going to feel a complete fool. (FG~William)

Despite advocating inclusive policies, many club organisers emphasise the quality of their performers, running the risk of excluding singers who feel they don't match up to such abilities. This polarisation is one of the strengths and weakness of the folk scene allowing everyone to participate in a performance environment in which they feel comfortable. However, the musical quality of events may suffer in contexts that favour an

inclusive attitude and feelings of exclusion may be felt at events that emphasise musical ability. The values of quality and tolerance are difficult to balance within the folk singing community and the reputation of the genre as a whole can be brought down by some poor performances or unfriendly reactions in events that advocate differing value systems.

While there is a general atmosphere of tolerance towards others, individual singers can be judgemental about their own performances. Performing in public can place stresses on singers. Research has found that the full potential of the choir singing experience 'is inhibited by feelings of inadequacy and the pressure to perform within the parameters of "good musical practice"' (Bailey and Davidson 2005:298-9). In terms of stage fright, Elizabeth Valentine describes how it is not 'the fear of performance per se, it is the fear of public performance that is at issue, with the risk of negative evaluation and consequent loss of self-esteem' (2002:169). While these studies focus on classical music contexts, the issues also affect folk singers.

From this research, I found the three main markers in self-evaluation in order of importance to be:

1. how the performance matched up with their perceived potential ability
2. how they compared with other singers at the event
3. their ability compared with notions of general musical practice

The first element can be observed in participants' comments about their own performances in relation to how good a singer they felt they were, or how well they performed on a particular night.

> I felt my voice was a bit weaker than usual (D~Marjorie)
> Could do better, but I do my best (D~Janet)
> Although I enjoyed it, I know I can sing and play better
> (D~William)

In these instances, self-evaluation is structured around singers' perceived self-potential, and the quality of the other singers is relegated to a side issue. However, along with the singer-audience structure of folk singing events, the group also functions as peers. John Kelly finds that 'when young men and women assess their competence and skill acquisition as inadequate or below group norms they are most likely to withdraw' (1983:50). Very few singers

are wholly content with their ability and do not desire improvement, yet they are generally content with their singing performance, showing a disjunction between their desired ability and the level they feel is required to perform well within this environment. Whatever criteria are being used, participants find their overall enjoyment of an event is increased when they feel they have sung well.

This impetus towards good performances, and perhaps more importantly good receptions, can lead to 'showing off', a problematic notion in the communal context. This functions on differing levels for individual singers and while some do not prioritise such practices, others profess to treat audiences as 'cabbages on seats' to witness their performance (FG~Claire). This opens up a question around the difference between performing and singing, a blurred distinction within the folk scene. Jerry Simon notes how he feels about his own performances:

> I realised when filling in the previous boxes that I do have a lot of anxiety around solo performance, and that I often sing as if I have something to prove, NOT just singing from sheer delight in singing - which is how I would best like to do it. (D~Jerry)

This shows an idealised attitude towards performance versus the reality of performing. For those who do not like to 'perform', the structure of the folk scene provides a number of participatory levels in which individuals can engage; self-doubt as a lead or solo singer does not preclude involvement as a chorus singer. This enables people with a broad range of abilities and preferences to contribute to the construction of the musical event.

Due to a personally felt pressure to perform well, there was widespread evidence from the diary project that nerves played a large part in singers' preparations to perform and their general experience of folk singing. Singers often felt nervous if they were attending an event they had not been to before, were singing a song they were unfamiliar with, or were singing in front of people they perceived to be better than themselves. Where singers felt comfortable and sang repertoire they knew well nerves were rarely mentioned, or comments were made that they did not feel particularly

nervous in that environment. However, as Marjorie Palmer explains, 'familiarity can be relaxing but also boring so a less frequent event can be more nerve-wracking but also more satisfying' (PC~Marjorie).

Robert Stebbins claims that, for barbershop singers, the negative experience of stage fright is replaced by 'eager anticipation' (1992b:130). A certain amount of tension is present in most solo folk singing situations with a build-up of tension before leading a song. This could be in waiting for the turn of singers to progress to oneself in the singaround format, or in building up the necessary courage to launch into song of one's own accord. Indeed, for some singers, this nervous anticipation plays a large part in the amount of satisfaction they gain from singing, and enhances their experience of the performance:

> Occasionally my enjoyment of the evening, up until the point I've sung, will have been affected by nerves (but it's worth it for the satisfaction if I've gone down really well). (D~Bob)

Overcoming nerves creates a sense of accomplishment for many singers and this achievement provides a 'kick from being on stage' (D~Marjorie). Although an edge of nerves may improve singers' performance, singers also equate confidence with success and feel they perform better if they are feeling confident; poor performances are most highly associated with not feeling well enough prepared.

Preparation comes in a variety of forms including warming up the voice, feeling 'psyched up for singing' (PC~Jon) and thoroughly knowing the material. Despite a large amount of preparation being undertaken by many folk singers involved in the dairy study, a number of musical errors occur during performance, most notably, forgetting the words.

When memory fails, a number of techniques are employed to bridge the gap within performances. As Marjorie puts it: it doesn't matter what you do wrong, it's how you handle it' (D~Marjorie). Some singers insert verbal asides that highlight the error, such as 'well, I'll just fast forward then' (FN~28 February 2008), restarting at a point in the song they can remember. Others may pause until they have remembered the line or a prompt is provided. There is a general tendency to try to maintain continuity of performance,

through either maintaining the storyline (through verbal catch-up sentences) or maintaining the atmosphere of the piece through retaining rhythm continuity or avoiding a change in mood. During some pauses, humorous comments may be made if this is in keeping with the tone of the song.

During breaks of memory, others within the group may prompt the lead singer, demonstrating how support is provided through the group's communal knowledge. However, the lead singer is accountable to accommodate the suggestions into their own performance, and if they are unable to pick the song up satisfactorily, the performance will cease. Individual ownership over specific performances remains, and, even if another member of the group could complete a version of the song, this is not attempted. Communal knowledge only serves to support another singer, rather than the communal achievement of completing the song.

Another method used to limit disruption through forgetting the words is the use of printed lyrics.[30] However, this is a contentious subject for many folk singers. Unlike the general tolerance shown towards forgetting the words, Carol Schofield feels the use of written prompt sheets 'is frowned upon in folk circles' (D~Carol). This is further demonstrated by singers who

Figure 6:5 Carol Schofield using printed lyrics as a prompt at the Kelham Island Singing Session, 24 February 2008.

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[30] Musical notation is rarely used within folk singing events, and it is the texts of songs that are more commonly employed in physical form.

occasionally use sheets to remind them of little known songs commenting negatively on the practice (FN~28 February 2008). A mid ground is provided in the case of Eric Lane, who uses small cracker-joke sized pieces of paper with the first lines of each verse written upon then as a prompt.

The negative response to the use of printed lyrics can lead to feelings of exclusion for some singers who find it difficult to remember words demonstrating a hierarchical difference between singers of poor technical ability and singers with poor memories. Not learning the words is seen as non-committed behaviour, whereas having a poor vocal quality is seen as natural and outside the power of the singer to alter.

This returns the discussion to the amount of effort assumed to have taken place on the part of the singer to rate their performance. The community as a whole experience individual performances and there is an understanding that individuals have a responsibility for the group's enjoyment. Accordingly, listeners forgive mistakes more readily from those they judged to have good voices while mediocre singers are expected to show they have made an effort to deliver a good performance.

Although the ideology of the folk scene dictates that the quality of performances is technically a non-issue it is nevertheless a subject folk singers feel the need to talk about. This research shows how a musical scene that purports to be open and inclusive of all abilities retains notions of musicality, hierarchical levels of perceived quality and exclusion due to personal conceptions of ability. Despite this, folk singing contexts retain the ability to accommodate singers with low levels of musical ability through the systems of encouraging new performers, experimentation to enable improvement and through not requesting that poor performers cease performing. As Raymond Greenoaken's comment that his reason for attendance was that 'they allow me to sing' demonstrates, in this environment, those who do not feel they have the strongest voices can freely participate in an activity they enjoy. The strength of feeling demonstrated by some for their desire to sing shows provision of this kind of environment is welcomed by many for the inclusive element and participatory opportunities it provides.

6.3   Methods of learning

In Section 3.2 I introduce the idea of individuals' repertoires and the sound ideals discussed in Section 6.1 outline details of the composition of sound within folk singing contexts. Here I expand these discussions to explore the techniques employed by singers to learn their craft both from the perspective of learning material and ways of performing.

I highlight several features that contribute to the ways singers learn which are of particular interest from the field of folk singing and that particularly show how a sense of community is enacted, or created, through the management of sound. This begins with a discussion of the two approaches of how folk singers learn: firstly, away from the event including rehearsal techniques and the external media they employ, and secondly their practices within the performance environment, describing how lead singers direct others during performance. How song structures and performance norms facilitate participation is then explored with particular attention to the impacts of the repetition of musical material.

6.3.1   Learning away from the event and in situ

Formal teaching situations are not common within the folk scene. Where opportunities do exist, they are commonly provided in the form of 1-2 hour long workshops typically at folk festivals, where experienced musicians teach one off lessons. These provide a forum for musical knowledge exchange, however, unlike the provision of instrumental workshops which often address stylistic and repertoire issues, vocal workshops tend to be structured around the community choir format with the teaching of prearranged parts (usually by the workshop leader). Tuition in individual singing styles and performance techniques are rare. Coupled with the lack of direct feedback by peers, as described earlier, this places the onus of learning and critical thinking about performance upon the individual singer. I suggest that learning takes place through directed action on the part of the singer (most often away from performance events) and through the process of enculturation (usually within singing events).

Beginning with how singers actively learn their craft, here is an account of how Bob Butler approaches learning songs:

> In the first couple of years I learned from commercial recordings, or more often from taped radio shows. Then I started to search for songs completely new to me, in books. I would be able to slowly pick out the score on a tin whistle to learn the tune, but sometimes I'd have to transpose the score in pencil into a key I could read and play quickly enough. This was all revolutionised when I got a little sequencer program about ten years ago. I can very easily key a folk melody into it from the book, transpose it into a comfortable scale, work out the mode if it's not a major key, try out different speeds. To learn the text I write it on a slip of paper which I then carry around and look at for a prompt when necessary. I tend to learn the first and last verses, or another important verse, first; then fill in the gaps from the front. I won't remember the tune properly until I've learned a verse to hang it on; I have great difficulty in memorising tunes without words, which is one reason why I've never learned to play an instrument… Nowadays, unless I learn a (possibly already collated) version from a book, I won't sing a song until I've heard/seen at least two versions. I prefer to combine sources until I have what seems to be the perfect combination of words. Then I'll learn how to perform it. The tune will vary a bit with each verse. (D~Bob)

This raises a number of issues within folk learning discourse. For folk singers the learning process involved selecting a song to learn, devising a personalised version, learning the musical and lyrical elements and absorbing it into their repertoire. For many folk singers, learning vocal techniques and stylistic features is less active than material acquisition. Some singers consider how they will deliver a song, with particular reference to ornamentation and dynamics, but for many participants, learning a song involves the fundamentals of remembering the lyrics and melody rather than rehearsing stylistic or other additional performance features.

Orality has historically been a key defining feature of folk musics and an argument about the use of written material within folk singing contexts has been on-going since the early collectors (for a full discussion see Atkinson 2004). Very few lead singers learn through wholly aural methods. Singers will often research a song they have heard performed, to gather a complete text or look for other versions. Even if the source of a song is solely in aural

form, singers frequently speak of writing out the words as a learning mechanism.

When in the process of learning a song, some participants describe carrying song texts around during their everyday lives and using them to learn the song. This text can also be used during performances in the early stages of a song's incorporation into their repertoire as prompt sheets; others continue to use the words throughout the period the song is in their repertoire (see Section 6.2).

While singers do not learn through wholly aural methods, neither do the majority learn through wholly printed methods either. Although many folk song materials are found in manuscript form, and many singers have (at least) a rudimentary knowledge of musical notation, it is usual for singers to learn their material, at least in part, from the singing of others, whether in live settings or from recordings.

A development from the text versus aural transmission argument can be seen in the contention both within the folk scene itself and within ethnomusicological discourse about learning from recorded versions as opposed to within live performance settings. Philip Bohlman describes how critics have blamed technology for transforming active folk music traditions into passive ones, however, he finds that recordings 'play a vital role in the technologizing of oral tradition: musicians commonly learn new pieces directly from a record or tape cassette' (1988:66). While this is now more likely to come from CDs or the internet, many singers within my study named recordings as their main source of new material. This shows similarities to the ways in which popular musicians learn and is becoming recognised, at least in these academic circles, as a valid form of learning. Lucy Green (2001) recognises the difference between *purposive*, *attentive* and *distracted* forms of listening, noting how musicians use recordings differently at different times to facilitate learning.

These active forms of musical appropriation are not necessarily valued in folk studies, however, and there are issues around preservation and modes of regeneration. Millie Rahn suggests that technological advance often 'prompts cultural revivals rather than preserving the culture that is perceived to be under threat' (2001). This has resulted in a limited

number of professional singers' styles dominating general stylistic features within the folk scene. Jonathan Stock notes that 'many musicians claim to be primarily self-taught. By this they mean that learning is individually directed' (2004:45). Stock continues that the system of master teachers is not evident within this environment and that learning more typically occurs through a diffuse form during sessions. While this is true in part I find that, at least in the case of singers, as much learning takes place from recorded sources, and as an individual may have a preference for a particular recording artist, this could form a similar master teacher relationship although removed from actual physical contact.

References to singers performing in the style of famous folk artists (for example Nic Jones, Martin Carthy, or more recently for younger female singers, Kate Rusby) are not uncommon, and stylistic features from these recording artists can frequently be found within folk singing events.

Chou Chiener discusses learning songs from the Taiwanese nanguan tradition from a CD. She raises the issue of commercial limitation and everyone learning the same style, concluding that, as there are now more recording artists, it has become less of an issue (2002b:105-6). Despite widespread availability of folk music recordings, and their usage in learning material there remains an aversion towards such practices within the English folk singing scene. In a recent editorial in *Stirrings* appeared the following statement:

> There is a community from which to learn songs and give
> a sense of place and ownership that no CD collection can
> create, and a craft full of tricks, techniques (and yes, short
> cuts) that can only ever be learned from real people.
> (Davenport 2008)

While the objection to limited stylistic inputs may be decreasing through wider accessibility, this introduces another issue inherent in learning from recorded sources that are less easy to dissipate. Caroline Bithell observes how:

> Many young singers now learn their repertoire from CDs,
> where an interpretation sounds exactly alike each time the
> track is replayed, so that they often begin by reproducing
> every nuance of someone else's performance. Even
> when they come to elaborate their own interpretation, they

> will not necessarily be able to distinguish intuitively
> between those fixtures that should be fixed and those that
> are flexible, nor will they automatically have an 'ear' for
> what does or does not work. (2007:65)

This proposes a distinct mode of learning that can only be provided within performance environments. While this is valued for the performances of lead singers it is integral to the ways massed singers learn.

For massed singers the lack of external rehearsal means the majority of their learning takes place in situ. For singers in this capacity, material is either recalled from previous experience or learnt through the duration of performance. General practice dictates that the same piece should not be sung twice during any event and, as rehearsal does not occur during folk events, a number of techniques are employed to facilitate immediate participation through learning within the performance environment. These can be through mechanisms inherent in material and delivery style or due to more direct action by other singers.

Group participation sections may only appear two or three times during some songs, so gaining knowledge of the piece quickly is essential if a singer is going to participate in the performance. Where material has never been heard before this has to be improvised: 'I joined in some choruses (mostly picking them up on the hoof)' (D~Philip). When describing how I found joining in with a song I had never heard before, I wrote the following in my fieldnotes:

> The words are easy to pick up – mostly 'Green Man'.
> Having said that, I still don't know what one of the little
> words is. I didn't notice this at the time of singing, and
> must have been singing phonetically – the sense didn't
> specifically matter. (FN~13 March 2008)

Further evidence for the emphasis of sonic participation over complete lyrical knowledge is supplied in an event I observed at Folk at Home. When the lead singer forgot the words (during the massed singing section), no one was in a position to prompt him even though there had been a loud mass of people singing at the point of memory loss. The group were singing each syllable as he sang it rather than holding personal knowledge of the lyrics (FN~28 February 2008).

This highlights a difference between performing a song as a lead singer and singing as a mass of people. When learning in this context, the sense of the song does not necessarily matter if the singer is enjoying the sensation of singing with other people; the sense of material is of more importance for solo singers.

It also demonstrates how people learn through this setting. Joining in is the first consideration and making audible tuneful sounds is a primary step towards learning the piece; the melodic material comes first and the accuracy of words is secondary. This is in direct contrast to how solo singers describe learning through writing down the lyrics then using these to learn the tune.

The relationships between performers and the particular tools used to learn through this process, however, have been little investigated in any musical genre. Eric Clarke notes that 'despite the obvious importance of listening and awareness of each other's breathing, bodily movement, facial gesture etc. as channels of communication, the role of auditory and visual feedback in this whole process remains almost completely uninvestigated' (2002:61).

Without the use of external instructions, such as a score, overriding instrumental accompaniment or conductor, folk singers must look to each other during performance for guidance. In relation to instrumental folk music sessions Jonathan Stock highlights the value of group consensus over individual accuracy noting how 'participants attend particularly actively to one another and that musical cues take precedence over counting' (2004:59). This can include audio signals and physical gestures.

Experienced folk singers adjust their performance to take account of the musical cues of most notably the lead singer, but also of others within the massed chorus. This shows similarities with the Fijian a cappella congregations as described by Joan Russell:

> Having no keyboard instrument to guide the singers (or accompany them, or cover their voices depending upon where you stand) means that the choir and congregation must learn their parts by listening closely to one another, by remembering melodic and harmonic patterns, and by transferring their understanding of voice-leading. (1997:103)

Seating arrangements have been shown to facilitate sound lines, and singers frequently mentioned the benefit of being able to hear others during performance, and the ways it affected their singing. Along with listening to learn parts, visual cues are equally important. Caroline Bithell (2007) notes that for a cappella singers, bodily freedom from instruments requiring space, and eyes not needing to be trained on the score or conductor allows singers to be entirely focused on one another. These include physical signs such as when a breath is taken, facial changes (especially around the mouth and eyes), the position of the head, eye contact and foot, or other body part tapping, swaying or otherwise marking a pulse. Through these almost imperceptible signals, 'in performance you are able to anticipate the moves of your fellow singers' (ibid:64).

Within the form of duo or small group singing close attention to each other's singing is evident. Paul and Liz Davenport sense when one of them is going to forget the words and slow the pace down to enable time before the next verse. Facing each other and watching each other's facial gestures and mouth movements also play a large part in their performance (FN~24 February 2008). This level of attention to each other's performance results in equality of responsibility. It is not a case of one singer following the other, but compromise and variation to ensure a balanced and coherent performance.

These observational techniques are also employed between the lead singer and massed chorus singers. While the chorus singers may look to the lead singer for guidance, there is also an element of the lead singer observing the actions of the group and altering their performance to suit the other participants. This can be in the form of slowing the tempo or waiting until a chorus has ended before commencing the next solo verse.

Either the lead singer or the massed singers can provide audio cues. The lead singer can often be heard singing at a louder volume than normal to generate a line which can be followed by others. This may be emphasised if the lead singer wants to speed up the pace of the song, stress certain rhythms or features of the tune which are being sung erroneously (in the eyes of the lead singer at least), or unclearly, by the other participants. If the

strong lead vocal drops out this can cause confusion for those joining in resulting in reduced volume and coherence and demonstrates how it functions as a leading device.

Other techniques employed by lead singers include emphasising the beginning of a lead verse to indicate the end of a massed chorus and signalling the end of a song, the latter is particularly important to direct where applause should begin. This is achieved through slowing down, singing a variation on the melody line or decreasing or increasing volume. A singer may also hold the last note loud and clear over the sound of the massed singers which has the effect of reaffirming the position of lead singer as well as signalling the end of the song (FN~13 March 2008; Track 6).

Alongside these performance gestures, a number of more deliberate actions are also employed. Lead singers can make physical signs to indicate certain expectations from the massed singers. The most common is a general upward, or encircling hand movement to invite everyone to participate. This is usually done shortly before a chorus or refrain section and acts as a signal for others to join in.

Another more complex signal involves a hand being raised and a finger circled. This usually occurs towards the end of the last chorus or refrain to signal that the section will be repeated (i.e. there will be two choruses sung at the end of the song). This signals to the singers that something out of the normal song structure is about to occur. The effect of this physical signal can be quite marked. Where the device is employed, the massed singers can sing with more gusto than other choruses as they are aware it is the last time through and they are confident in knowing what is expected of them. If it is not utilised it can have a negative impact upon the group sound:

> Vikki didn't make any physical signal that the chorus
> would repeat at the end of the song and those previously
> joining in stopped singing as they were expecting another
> verse, but picked up on the fact after a few words then
> joined in again. This created a break in the chorus singing
> not found when Jess or others did the hand signal.
> (FN~24 February 2008)

Another hand signal was employed by Liz Davenport placing her palm facing outwards to indicate the singers should stop singing. In this case, the lyrics to the final chorus altered from the ones that had been previously sung and this movement alerted singers to the change from the norm (FN~24 February 2008).

Although these hand signals may seem self-explanatory, their specific meanings have to be learnt within the context. The gestures themselves, however, are relatively common throughout the folk singing events I have attended. Groups of strangers coming together at a festival singing session, for example, are able to communicate through these actions enabling swift cohesion and participation. Learning the codes of behaviour in one event can provide assistance when attending another folk event that follows similar principles. The gestures enable singers to communicate their own particular version of a song to the group who may have other perceptions of how it should be performed. These methods of peer learning are explored by Lucy Green (2001) in her work on how popular musicians learn and are similarly a highly valuable resource for folk singers.

In a study of the ways folk fiddle players learn, Peter Cope (2002:103) speculates that learning within performance environments provides participants with a different learning experience to practising or training away from the event. He illustrates this as learning conversational language rather than learning grammatical systems. Similarly, in his theory of *communities of practice*, Etienne Wenger describes learning as a part of everyday experience, rather than at defined times as a fundamental part of the phenomenon of learning:

> For individuals it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. For communities it means that learning is an issue of refining their practices and ensuring new generations of members. (1998:7)

This is echoed in the system of *enculturation* which refers to the processes though which an individual acquires the beliefs, knowledge and patterns of behaviour to function as a member of a culture. This mode of learning provides singers with a broader knowledge of what is acceptable

within their social environment than how to technically perform individual pieces. Socialisation into the norms of performance within the community is more important than having a thorough knowledge of a particular song with detailed ornamentation techniques. In this way, singers are empowered to make their own editorial choices with regard to performance within learnt norms of musical behaviour.

6.3.2   Repetition: prediction, memorisation and meaning

The previous section outlined some of the ways in which performances can be directed in situ, however, the most significant learning mechanism in this context is repetition.   Repetition aids memorisation, a key factor within folk singing expectations as described in section 6.2, and an element of prediction can be employed due to repetitive patterns of behaviour. The practice of repetition within folk art forms has been suggested to enhance the participant experience:

> The repetition of figures in dance reinforces the association between feeling and movement, causing the experience of dance to live more strongly in the body itself. (Sachs Norris 2001:117)

Here I explore the phenomenon on a number of levels, from within the structure of material form to repeated performances.

The form of folk song material helps singers participate through patterns of repetition. Figure 6:6 shows five repetition systems commonly found within the lyrics of songs sung at folk events. This list is not exhaustive, and variations are frequently found, however, much participatory material adheres to similar patterns. Example 1 shows a common verse-chorus structure with four lines being repeated by the group at the end of each distinct verse sung by the lead. Example 2 has a similar structure, but with a higher level of repetition within the chorus section. A variation of this is provided by example 3, where the chorus is constructed from the concluding line of the preceding verse. As this is a well-known song within this context, the group also sang the last line of the verse as they pre-empt the usual chorus section. Examples 4 and 5 are more usually termed 'refrains' within the folk scene and consist of smaller sections of repetition,

1	2	3	4	5
Watch the Wall	Drill ye Tarriers Drill	Pleasant and Delightful	Forward My Brave Boys	The Cutty Wren
a	a	a	a	**a**
b	b	b	b	**b**
c	c	**c**	**c**	**c**
d	d	**d**	**d**	**c**
e	**e**	**d1**	e	a1
f	**e**	**d**	f	**b**
g	**f**		**c**	c1
d	**g**	e	**d**	**c1**
	e	f		
h	**h**	g	g	a2
i		**h**	h	**b**
j	i		**c**	c2
k	j	**h1**	**d**	**c2**
		h		
e	l		i	a3
f		i	j	**b1**
g	**e**	j	**c**	c3
d	**e**	k	**d**	**c3**
	f	**l**		
l	**g**		**a**	a4
m	**e**	**l1**	**b**	**b**
n	**h**	**l**	**c**	c4
o			**d**	**c4**
	m	m		
e	n	n		a3
f	o	o		**b1**
g	p	**p**		c5
d				**c5**
	e	**p1**		
p	**e**	**p**		a5
q	**f**			**b**
r	**g**			c6
s	**e**			**c6**
	h			
e				a3
f	q			**b1**
g	r			c7
d	s			**c7**
	t			
t				a6
u	**e**			**b**
v	**e**			c8
w	**f**			**c8**
	g			
e	**e**			
f	**h**			
g				
d				
x				
y				
z				
aa				
e				
f				
g				
d				

Figure 6:6 Five examples of lyric repetition (group participation shown in bold type).

usually perceived to be integrated into the verse rather than a distinct section. Example 4 also shows the practice of repeating the first verse at the end of a song for additional group participation, providing variation from the previous participatory structure which was (for most singers) confined to the refrain lines. Example 5 has a large amount of repetition and many lines are built from variations on previous material.

While participation is a key element of folk singing practices, there are implicit rules governing where people join in. There is an appreciation for the lead singer's priority over a piece, and even if others in the room may know the whole song, they do not join in during all the parts they are able. Participation is restricted to complementing the lead singer's performance rather than what could be a true facilitation of group singing.

These rules can vary between different events as I found when I joined in inappropriately during Jess Arrowsmith's performance of 'The Cutty Wren':

> I am used to joining in on all the repeated bits from singing
> it in Oxford, but here everyone waited and came in later.
> This really threw me because I thought I knew it – the
> words and tune were identical, but the places for joining in
> were different. It made it feel like a totally different song.
> (FN~24 February 2008)

Figure 6:7 shows solo lines (plain text) the parts I joined in erroneously (underlined) and the massed singing sections (**bold**). As an informal experiment, I continued to join in at the same point throughout the song to assess the reaction from other singers. I would normally have adapted my behaviour to fit the norm, but as I was evidently not going to do this, others joined in my practice so that there would be massed singing rather than a solo voice joining in 'out of place'. This regulated the piece somewhat to remain close to the desired sound ideal. I felt I could undertake this small experiment as errors of judgement on a small scale such as this are usually accepted, but an individual who sang along through the whole of another performer's lead song would be in breach of the general etiquette found within the folk scene.

<div align="center">

Oh how will you shoot her <u>said Milder to Moulder</u>

Oh we may not tell you said Festel to Fose

With bows and arrows <u>said John the Red Nose</u>

With bows and with arrows said John the Red nose

</div>

Figure 6:7 Errors in group participation during 'The Cutty Wren' as sung by Jess Arrowsmith at Kelham Island Singing Session, 24 February 2008.

The strength of this can be heard on track 14 where the song's repeated section is found at the end of the piece, in the form of a repeated first verse:

> The audience can be heard humming along and almost physically bursting to join in on this well-known number. There is a palpable effort not to join in during the solo sections. (FN~28 February 2008)

Along with lyrical repetition melodic repetition similarly aids participation. Figure 6:8 provides an example of typical melodic repetition within a song. The first line of the chorus is repeated at a different position on the scale for line 2. Line 3 provides a contrasting melody and the original phrase is returned to for line 4, with a one-note variation to signal that this is the closing phrase. This high level of repetition reduces the amount of musical material singers need to learn for each song, speeding up the process of learning sections of songs due to repeated musical material.


Figure 6:8 Lyrical and musical repetition in 'The Little Tailor' as sung by Jeff (surname unknown) at Raise the Roof, 13 March 2008.

Whether repetition occurs through lyrical or melodic material, in phrase length sections or larger verse/chorus sections, the practice of repeating exact, or similar, material enables people to learn throughout the course of the performance and become more proficient as the piece progresses. Figure 6:9 shows this phenomenon. The first verse (re)informs singers of the structure and throughout the piece the level of confidence in participation (and consequently volume) can be heard to increase. Along with an increase in volume people join in with more musicality and complex dynamics as they pick up the form.

While familiarisation with repetitive structures commonly occurs during the performance of a piece, a more active approach can be taken:

> After the first time through the chorus comes, Paul says 'let's just rehearse that one again' and they sing the chorus again. More people join in this time and it makes quite a difference to the level of joining in. (FN~24 February 2008)

This provision of a chance to practice the chorus at the start of the song helps singers who are not familiar with the song (which was the majority in this case) to be able to participate more fully earlier in the performance.
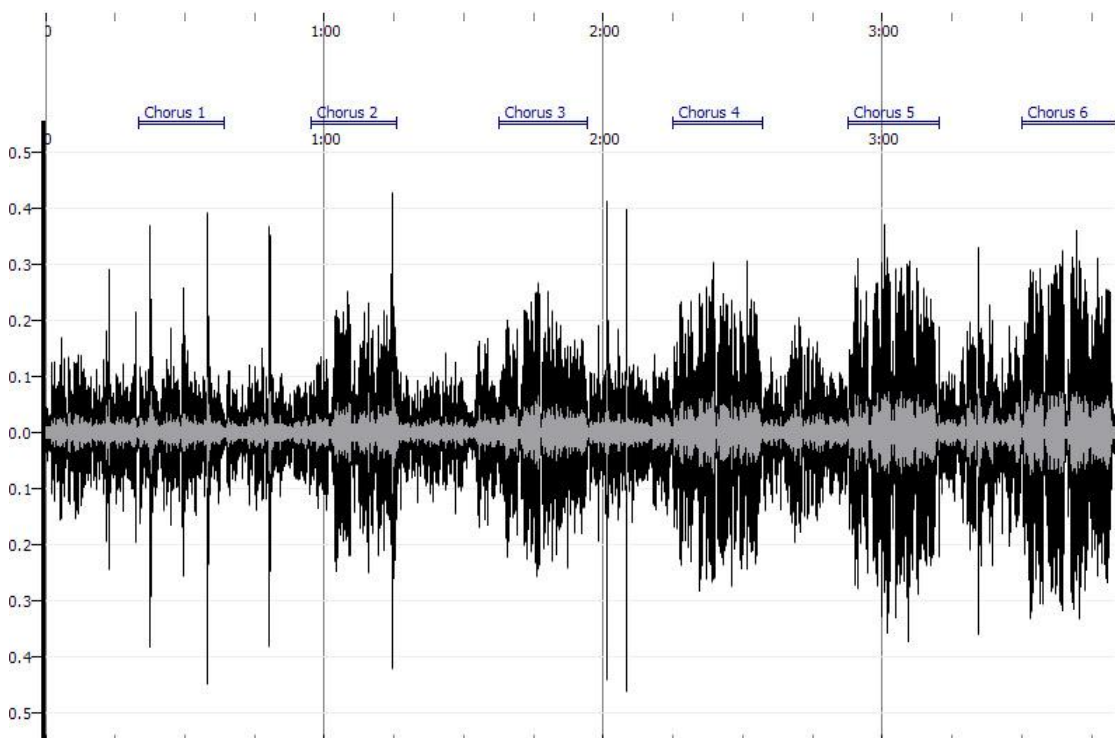
Figure 6:9 A sonographic representation of the effects of chorus repetition on volume on 'Watch the War' as sung by Jess Arrowsmith at Kelham Island Singing Session 24 February 2008.

This is towards the more formal end of teaching found within folk singing contexts and such direction can be seen as being too invasive on the preferences of individuals to direct their own participation. While this practice seems sensible in terms of enabling participation, its unusualness highlights the scarcity of overt direction provided during folk singing experiences. It is most commonly found in guest artist performances where there is already an established power differential.

Despite the high incidence of repeated musical material in this genre, the repetition of musical lines is rarely exact. Each phrase provides variation in the melodic material in particular ways. This is achieved through moulding the melody to accommodate lyrical lines of differing syllabic length or emphasis. Where exact lyrical and melodic material is provided, ornamentation and dynamics are placed in different parts of the tune to provide variation. This shows a process where 'complex, minutely inflected, often improvised variation is combined with a formulaic recursive framework' (Middleton 1983:239), demonstrating a potentially contentious relationship between formulaic form and individual interpretation.

A level of variation is also expected within multiple performances of the same musical piece. While it would be unusual to repeat the same version of a song during one event, frequent performances of a song over a series of events is acceptable. For Corsican polyphonic singers, Caroline Bithell finds that: 'There is an expectation that each performance should be unique, affected by the occasion, the mood and energy levels of the singers, the temperature and other factors' (2007:64). The same can be witnessed within English folk singing events, and the relationship between the lead singers and the chorus singers or audience provides a marker of difference between the different performances.

Repeating material over a series of events also has the benefit of providing a learning experience. As Bob Butler says 'nobody minds if the same good songs get trotted out each month, as it helps people to learn the chorus and play with harmonies' (D~Bob). With repetitive performance of

the same material (either within one event series or more widely throughout the folk scene) there is the potential to have previous experience of material prior to the specific performance and recalling past performances can aid participation.

This provides the potential for singers to establish norms of contribution within this apparent improvisatory practice. As Jonathan Stock observes within a folk tune session, the sets that 'are the best known at the Red House are also those for which we have developed the more complex musical treatments' (2004:58). This can be witnessed in hearing the rendition of 'Rolling Home' as performed as an anthemic song, at the end of each meeting of Raise the Roof (track 18). Although parts may be improvised or adapted, stable parts have developed over repeated performances. Through this process of repetition, improvisation has become a relatively fixed medium and could be viewed more as a method of composition.

Widening the lens from individual song pieces, there is a large amount of material structure, melodic patterns and lyrical content shared between songs within the folk song repertoire. Theodore Adorno (1941) terms this *standardisation*, suggesting a lack of imagination or creativity on the part of popular music composers. However, the practice has specific benefits for learning and participation.

Having an understanding of common elements means that general assumptions can be made by experienced singers as to the development of the piece and participation can occur even though the singer may not know an individual piece. Familiarity with material can generate a feeling of connectedness, though not necessarily a strong or personal one, with the material providing an escape from complexity and difficulty and a degree of comfort provided by familiarity and understanding.

When material deviates from expected norms it can cause confusion within the group. For example, Carol Schofield sang a self-written piece that did not follow a 'normal' pattern between verses and choruses; as it was a new piece, the group had not learnt the specific song structure previously:

> Joining in with this song was difficult for the group as they did not know when to come in. There were several times

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when people joined in at the wrong time. When they realised they reduced the volume to a hum, and then usually dropped out completely. The song ended on a verse, rather than a chorus as would be the norm. Following existing norms of practice, the other singers were expecting to sing another chorus and so there was a stilted break before the applause. The sense of confusion and unrest due to the lack of following protocol was palpable; this was possibly designed to complement the 'ghostly' theme of the song. (FN~24 February 2008)

The prevalence of this process in facilitating participation suggests that singers who have a frame of understanding based on existing knowledge of folk song repertoires can assimilate and learn new material easier than a novice may. This structure of implicit codes has led to the criticism that '[t]he arrangements at work in performance and participation…continue to reveal 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' (Brocken 2003:121). Indeed, newcomers to this repertoire and performance practice may find it difficult to participate using these mechanisms. However, the system can also support newcomers. Learning the framework within which to operate, rather than the breadth of individual songs that could be performed at any individual event, speeds up assimilation into the performing community expanding the possibility of wider participation. While this process invariably occurs, the mode of 'learning' is less active than found in the previous description of how lead singers approach learning material and provides a further example of *enculturation*.

Moving beyond the aids to participation provided through various levels of repetition, the practice also affects the meanings derived from songs and performances. Foley's concept of *traditional referentiality* as explored in Section 3.3 also has relevance within this discussion of melodic and lyrical repetition. David Atkinson (2002) demonstrates how the practice of reusing and sharing melodic and lyrical material creates connections between individual pieces and the broader repertoire, generating meanings larger than can be contained within the lyrical or musical excerpts as they stand alone. The practice of re-cycling materials is evident in folk song

material with 'floating verses' or motifs being shared between songs. These use repetition to build an association between the particular material and the broader context of the song that can be drawn upon, providing detail for subsequent uses of the material.

This relies on a stability of meaning but other forms of repetition use the existence of previous knowledge to comment upon the new context. This process can be aligned with Henry Gates' theory of Signifyin(g), summarised by Richard Middleton as 'operating through manipulation of a "changing same" by constant variation of a given material, disrupting the signifying chain in the interests of semiotic play' (2003:259).

The most explicit example of this within folk singing contexts can be found in the parody form. Referring to a specific singer, Ian Russell states that:

> the singer encodes the parody…His audience decode the piece: the success of the message will depend on whether or not they recognise the form as parody, and whether or not they are able to appreciate the component parts. (1987:98)

One example of the form was sung by Vikki Fielden (FN~24 February 2008). She sang a self-constructed parody of Cyril Tawney's 'The Grey Funnel Line' (Track 17). The original describes working in the British Merchant Navy and hardships of being long at sea, Vikki's version, 'the Grey Flannel Line', was about wearing flannel trousers and wishing she had finer material. This was the final song of the evening and seemed to signal the end of serious singing activity. Not all folk singing events welcome humorous songs or parodies, but they are a common enough form within the scene to be widely recognised within the folk song repertoire.

As parodies are humorous comments on traditional material, another purpose is to allow the group to exhibit a communal sense of humour. As described earlier, the folk singing community often strives to be open and inclusive and demonstrating that they are comfortable with self-mockery (albeit within tightly controlled frames as discussed in chapter 5) is one means of asserting this. Paradoxically since the humour of the parody is intrinsically linked to an understanding of the tradition, it is for the most part

for the benefit of those already aware rather than newcomers to the scene. This alienating function of the parody form is a side effect of the display of existing knowledge of tradition, something that is valued highly by folk singers and used as a marker of success.

Systems of leadership, repetition and code awareness provide a distinct learning system from that of memorisation, which, while integral to the performances of lead singers, is not as widespread for group singing. Here direction from others present during performances and drawing from previous experience play a larger part in facilitating participation.

The ability to sing well contributes to the individual's feelings of success in their chosen activity and in order to achieve this, singers must not only have technical ability but learn how to participate appropriately. For folk singers, this is achieved through a number of processes practised both outside and within the performance environment. Active learning is generally focused around lyric and melodic material rather than stylistic features or ornaments. Sources are most usually found in text and recorded form though these have various ideological constraints. Through this process, learning is intimately related to musical repertoires; the material is the method of instruction rather than technique as is more commonly found in classical music education. Stylistic details are more likely to be appropriated through more passive learning styles, either from recorded sources or through the live performance context.

I find that meanings and associations generated through repeated performance are similar for those who have shared similar experiences through participation in the social construction of the folk scene, enabling this particular social group to experience the structures of folk songs in this particular way.

Folk singers become good participants by becoming members of the performance group in a social sense, and not simply by learning individual musical features. Holding knowledge of how to employ stylistic features is as important as having the technical ability. Enculturation seems a particularly suited notion to the ways folk singers learn as it covers both their musical and social practices, both of which need to be addressed if a singer is to be accepted into the folk singing community.

6.4   The individual and the group

> [W]here folklorists once spoke of call and response, they
> now speak of co-performance. Where once there used to
> be tellers of tales and listeners, everyone involved in a
> folklore event these days seems to have equal value to,
> and responsibility for, the success of the performance.
> (Harris 1995)

This observation is notably true of the folk singing events under study here where the configuration of participation often incorporates active audience involvement. The events discussed in this study range from group sings where everyone present is expected to participate to concert-type events where audiences join in less. The majority of events, however, contain individual-led songs with periods of mass participation. This creates a number of singing roles participants may occupy: some lead songs and join in with others, some do not lead, but join in choruses, and others choose not to sing at all.

In this section, I discuss some findings relating to the various states of singing (solo, duo/small group and massed singing).[31] This is followed by a comparison of the impacts of various activities (including passive audience involvement) focusing on how each contributes to the sense of being in community.

Depending on the format of the event and the type of material favoured (see the discussion on group repertoire in Section 3.1.2), there is usually an opportunity for individual singers to choose to perform solo, or lead a song that contains sections for audience involvement. Despite the mass participation element in this later type, the leaders of chorus songs can be categorised along with solo singers for the purposes of this discussion as an individual selects and leads the song, usually singing a considerable part of the piece alone.

Solo, or lead, singers prepare away from the event in terms of selecting, learning, adapting and practicing material and hold the highest responsibility for the performance of their song during the event. Lead

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[31] I use the term 'massed' to describe group singing as 'chorus' is used by participants to describe song's musical structure rather than group of people. It also suggests a distinct, ordered group which is misleading within this context.

singing is the state most singers refer to when they talk about their 'singing' or themselves as a 'singer'. Performance anxiety was associated with this state above others, however, although singers found lead singing demanding, it was also felt to be rewarding.

Performances by duos or small group-led songs are accepted modes of performing within folk events. Guest acts are frequently duos or small groups, though this formulation is not widely employed within singing sessions, where the majority of singers lead songs solo. Some singers always sing with an instrumental accompanist or another singer, others either sing solo or with others. This format is similar to the solo singer, described above, with some form of rehearsal taking place outside the event and the leads sing the sections of a song usually performed by an individual singer.

Some people described using the folk club environment to rehearse bands that were going to perform in other, more concert-style events (D~Marjorie). Whether or not these groups performed as acts elsewhere, the overall presentation of prearranged and multiple vocal lines gives duos and small group performers a more complex sound. Whereas solo singers have more flexibility to adapt to the particular performance environment, the pre-rehearsed nature of these ensembles dictates the harmonic and temporal structure presenting a formalised musical piece. This state tends towards presenting material as a concert-style performance creating a more notable distinction between the performers who know the sonic formulation of the material and those who do not. For this reason, one singer said she would not sing group arranged material in a session environment as she felt it might be 'excluding the people you're in the session with' (D~Jess).

A final form of singing participation is massed singing where audience members are encouraged to join in the song during choruses and other participatory sections. This group singing activity is given less consideration in terms of technicality and personal pride, though other forms of satisfaction were felt from group performance. This massed singing has no outside event rehearsal and can be seen as semi-improvisational in nature. Mass participation is a central feature of the folk scene and often described as

enhancing the individual or group's performance; individual highlights were given as 'everyone joining in on the choruses' (D~Oli).

Whilst this is a common form of musical arrangement in folk singing contexts it is not widely found in other amateur musical genres and solo performers may be unused to this seemingly impromptu participation practice. One singer new to this kind of singing environment commented on how he found it difficult to concentrate on his own performance as 'it was a bit of a challenge getting used to people just harmonising as you sing' (D~Philip).

While many people who lead songs also join in with others' choruses, there are people who do not lead songs and chorus singing is their sole form of singing participation. This can occur during club guest nights or concerts where there is limited availability of 'floor spots', or due to personal choice in singaround or session contexts. Despite aspirations towards an open and encouraging environment, some individuals who enjoy singing as part of a group do not enjoy singing solo. At some events, there is an assumption that everyone should attempt to lead a song and new singers who do not feel able to perform in this capacity can feel a negative response. However, once a non-singer role is established, long term attendees are included within the social group (as described in section 5.1.2).

Participants gave a variety of reasons for not leading a song including not feeling they had a strong enough voice (D~Pauline) or that they lacked sufficient knowledge of the repertoire (I~Helena). Participation in the form of chorus singing by non-lead singers should not be undervalued and many people who solely join in the choruses feel they have something to offer to the group sound in a way that they are unable to contribute as a solo singer. They can also feel a personal benefit:

> I'm not a singer, I'm not a performer in terms of singing, and I firmly believe that it's this community of people that I sing with that enables me to sing and I strongly believe that singing is everybody's right and that's the place I can sing and I feel comfortable singing. (FG~Trish)

Choral singing has been found to provide singers with a number of psychological benefits. Stephen Clift and Grenville Hancox (2001) found that

93% of participants in a choral society found that singing makes their mood more positive. They also found that members perceived that choral singing was conducive to emotional, social, spiritual and physical health. In a later study they found that benefits to mental wellbeing were more strongly felt by women than men (2010). This is provisionally attributed to why more women are involved in choral societies than men. The gender balance is tipped towards males within folk singing contexts so a study based on their method within this context could yield interesting results.

The value of group singing has also been noted by Betty Bailey and Jane Davidson (2005) in their study on marginalised and middle class choirs. They found that the group structure 'provides a safe haven in which to experience the singing voice while concealing one's individual sound within the confines of the group' (2005:293). Helen O'Shea similarly suggests that for instrumental session players this form of group performance enables individuals to be 'temporarily elevated to the status of "musician" that they would be less likely to earn by their individual performances' (2006:11). Regardless of an individual's musical ability, and their other musical roles, making a contribution to the group sound creates a sense of pride in singers and enables a musical output no individual would be able to create alone. This highlights a benefit of active musical participation. In a study on the social impacts of participation by non-professionals in the arts,[32] Francois Matarasso finds that:

> there is an important difference between the experiences
> of participants in the arts and those of audiences… This
> distinction is significant because participation is the main
> interface between the arts, volunteering and community
> activism. Some… of the social impacts [identified in this
> study]… arise as much from people taking an active part
> in their own development, and in the lives of their
> communities, as from the arts themselves. (1997:79)

Diary participants made many comments about the expected practice of singing from all those that attend, such as 'everyone must sing – no space

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[32] Matarasso's study does not provide a definition of what he terms 'the arts'. The case studies focus on events with links to larger bodies (such as councils or regional arts boards) with little reference to the type of independent contexts described here. Therefore, I have made minimal reference to this work, though this point seems valid in its transferral.

for an audience' or 'everyone sings (or attempts to)' (D~Bob). However, whether participants sing or attend solely in an audience capacity does not affect their sense of involvement in events. Diary participants included their audience experiences in their records of folk singing activity indicating that merely attending a folk singing event is enough to warrant entry as participation. This could be explained within the specific context of folk singing by the extensive social relationships and responsibilities and the club-like status commonly found. Being an audience member holds more meaning for participants within this community than perhaps for the more transient arts audiences discussed by Matarasso.

The specificity of this phenomenon can be related to the establishment of the folk genre and its central organising concept that there is no distinction between folk artists and folk audiences. This point remains central to A.L. Lloyd's post war definition of folk: 'the main thing is that the songs are made by men [sic] who are identical with their audience in standing, in occupation, in attitude to life, and daily experience' (1975:345). While contemporary folk communities are more diverse in their constitution and may include participants from varying stations in life, the ethos of equality and shared ownership of events appears to have remained.

In another study comparing the activity of singing against that of listening, Gunter Kreutz et al found that 'significant negative changes of mean cortisol levels were induced by listening, suggesting a general decrease of levels of stress in this condition, whereas no such decrease was observed in the singing condition' (2003:218). In addition, some interesting patterns of changes of emotional state emerged. In particular, singing produced increased positive affect, and decreases of negative affect and was found to be emotionally rewarding, mentally refreshing and supported self-awareness in various ways (idem). My findings support this and lead singing provides singers with these sorts of benefits, whilst also proving to be a source of stress. Audience members did not report such feelings. Participating in singing, therefore, may affect the ways people experience the folk singing event without necessarily affecting their sense of community engagement. However, differences between the forms of singing deserve

further exploration as these findings are not consistent between the differing practices of lead or massed singing.

In a study on the effects of solo singing, singing in groups and swimming on mood and physiological indices, differences between the two singing states were not found to be significant, as opposed to those found between singers (of either category) and swimmers (Valentine and Evans 2001). However, within folk singing environments distinctions between the effects of massed and solo singing are clearly present and the experience of singing in a lead capacity was described as totally different to other forms of mass participation (D~Ron).

When describing how they felt about solo singing, participants talk of how well they feel they performed technically whereas the values placed on singing en masse are more generally concerned with the emotional affects of how it feels to sing, especially with others, and the quality of the event in general.

Pauline is a confident member of the Sheffield Folk Chorale and participates in chorus singing at folk events, yet she feels unable to perform solo in these same folk singing contexts:

> I don't lead songs at R-the-R [Raise the Roof] because nerves make my voice a lot less than 100% its normal quality when I sing in the choir. I know we're only amateurs but having sat through some fairly awful singarounds I would hate to be the person singing when everyone wants to go to the bar! (PC~Pauline)

Although Pauline says she would like to 'have the courage to perform' herself, she provides an example of someone who veers away from the stressful and exposing elements of lead singing, but who benefits socially and emotionally from the group singing element (D~Pauline).

Within performance, these two states do not function independently, however, and the majority of folk song performance contains alternation between periods of individual lead and massed singing. This enables cross over between the states. In Jerry Simon's rendition of 'Old Carpenters Song' (Track 8) the chorus is sung by both himself and massed singers. Once the group appear confident with the chorus, Jerry cuts his last word short and

begins the next verse over the sonic trail of the chorus held by the group (see figure 6:10).

This practice would not be possible by an individual singer, and demonstrates how, as well as boosting the volume of the chorus section; Jerry uses the chorus singers to add a particular stylistic feature to the piece. The individual and the group work together here to produce a piece of music neither could perform alone, showing the relationship of the individual to the group and how individuals can manipulate or direct the performances of others to produce a particular piece of music.

Mary McGann (2004) provides an account of an African American Catholic parish gospel singing group describing how the relationship between the soloist and the chorus interact embodying the diversity and uniqueness of every voice and every experience in an ever increasing polyphony of sound. McGann suggests that these musical experiences are not 'enacting' community values, rather that these values are generated through the ritual act of singing and embodied through practice. For McGann, this is not necessarily the basis, but the outcome of community and

Figure 6:10 An example of lead singer and massed singer overlaps on 'Old Carpenter's Song' as sung by Jerry Simon at Raise the Roof, 13 March 2008.

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community is not an underlying reality but is constructed in actual processes of mobilisation. This shows connections with my earlier discussion on communication communities, where here participants are communicating through their musical activity.

Joan Russell has noted that part-singing requires more of the singer than merely producing a part while avoiding being distracted by the other parts that are being sung. Group singing requires an integration of the individual part into the overall fabric of the piece:

> As the song unfolds, each singer makes continuous
> adjustments in volume, pitch and duration, striving not
> only for the faithful reproduction of prescribed syntactical
> elements, but also for consensus with respect to
> precision, tempo, balance, intonation, phrasing and style.
> (Russell 1997:98)

This observation is made in relation to pre-composed choral singing experiences, but it holds particular relevance for folk singing contexts where individuals' parts are not based upon written scores and are often in a process of improvisation. Such integration requires an awareness of what one is doing in relation to what others are doing and of the performance that is resulting from the culmination of the singers' efforts as a group.

While this process is instantaneous during each performance, the existing knowledge regarding sound ideals and norms facilitates the process. Robert Shaw, an American choral conductor, remarked on 'the ability of Mennonites to come together from across the continent and blend almost instantly as if they had been rehearsing for weeks; describing it as 'a bunch of cousins getting together to sing' (cited in Berg 2006:70). Wesley Berg suggests that this could be explained through their shared use of source material (Liederperlen) and their approach to singing style stemming from an individual teaching activist, Kornelius Gerhard Neufeld.

The familiarity with certain repertoires and approach to performance style fulfils a similar function within folk singing contexts. At folk festivals, a number of singers come together who may not have previously met yet they are able to participate in each other's songs. This is because much of the material and style of delivery are familiar and shared by many folk singers. The shared knowledge spanning the genre enables these singers to quickly

join as a sonic community enhancing previously felt connections as a large social group of 'folkies' (see discussion in section 5.1.3).

Kathleen Manning finds that the act of reciting words in unison and performing actions en masse during ceremonies significantly adds to the collective experience (2000:47). Gage Averill (2003) takes this concept into the realms of music making suggesting that the physical vibrations of closely harmonised singing can create a close musical and personal connection between participants. He describes how:

> the relationship of internalising and externalising of the self and of others in collective musical encounters encourages the production of a powerful, transformative experience of the self as a participant in community, resulting in a greater sense of solidarity and unity. (ibid:178)

Performing together in groups has been widely shown to affect people in similar ways. Within the music literature a variety of terms have been applied to the phenomenon: 'keeping together in time' (McNeill 1995); 'group experience of the one' (Kapferer 1986); 'inner time' (Schutz 1962; Schutz 1964); 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1975); 'groove' (Keil 1994); 'lift-up-over-sounding' (Feld 1990). These relate to the sense of 'synchrony and an overall feeling of togetherness, of consistently cohesive part coordination in sonic motion and participatory experience' (Thram 2002:134-5). These approaches tend to suggest that everyone who participates in an activity undergoes the same experience and the sense of togetherness is found throughout the community. As previously noted with regard to achieving the state of *communitas* this is not necessarily the case and others within the group may not achieve such a state. Additionally, instead of the proposed complete loss of self and being subsumed in the group, as is frequently described. I prefer to view this sensation as experienced on an individual level (albeit in relation to the group) as there remains an awareness of the self's contribution to the activity as a whole.

This perspective is explored through Richard Middleton's (1983) discussion on the ways *jouissance* and *plaisir* interact. For Middleton, *jouissance* is about losing yourself in the moment of the music, the sound of the harmony and the totality of the event whereas *plaisir* draws connections

between the experience and the self, recognising one's own place in connection with other things and appreciating it in relation to the ego. While these states may appear to be at opposite ends of a dialectical relationship, Middleton suggests that:

> *all* activities represent a complex mixture of forces, and any attempt to an either/or plaisir/jouissance dichotomy must be abandoned, in favour of a conception of tension, struggle, mediation, a pleasure-*field*… The production of musical syntaxes involves active choice, conflict, redefinition; at the same time, their understanding takes place in the theatre of self-definition, as part of the general struggle among listeners for control of meaning.
> (1983:266,268)

The editorial choices made when participating in folk singing activities described here are based on previously held ideals of sound construction and the immediate experience is connected to existing perceptions of these principles. When individuals feel subsumed into a whole, this operates within a system of existing signifiers that are negotiated on an individual basis. This can induce feelings of unity and connection for some who have developed deep understandings of the context, or alienation and rejection for others who do not experience the singing activity within a similar syntactical frame.

This draws the experience of the individual to the fore and I continue with a discussion of the ways individuality is enacted within community. Philip, a singer new to folk music, describes a situation in which he learnt a song from a printed source and went to sing it at a folk event. As he sang, the rest of the group joined in on the chorus, but instead of following Philip's rendition of the piece, they sang a version that is well known due to a commercial recording. This led to Philip feeling he was singing it wrong and he adapted his lead to fit the group norm. Although the song was an established part of the folk repertoire, his version was not learned from the same source as the wider group. In order to participate, the group overrode Philip's authority as lead singer and changed the version to fit their existing knowledge.

This displays a schism between the need for individual creativity and adhering to the expectations of the group. Unlike music with known authors

or scored compositions, folk singers have relative freedom to adapt and alter versions; however, this is done within parameters set by the cultural context in which the new version is sung and in potential friction with extant versions.

Shaffer proposes that expression in performance is concerned with the characterisation of a piece in performance, and that two performers with the same structural interpretation of a piece could conceivably give distinct performances based on how they characterise them (cited in Clarke 2002:68). While this applies to classical music, it is of high significance within folk singing where there is a sense that singers should interpret music to give individual performances. Although there are observable sound ideals within folk singing contexts, there is also a strong sense of the need for individuality, especially concerning vocal expression and adaptation of personal song 'versions' for lead singers.

While this notion is 'not a novel one as far as orally transmitted musics are concerned' (Bithell 2007:65) it contradicts another viewpoint prevalent in folk and traditional musics: that singers should subordinate musical concerns to the requirements of narrative performance and not allow stylistic embellishment to detract from the song (Dunn 1980:112). Conflict between these viewpoints is evident for contemporary folk singers and throughout the course of this research a number of participants displayed both perspectives at differing times.

There was a strong desire for participants to hear real, individual voices and issues of personal interpretation were frequently mentioned. Bob Butler tends to 'put songs away' after singing them out a few times in the hope that when he sings them again they will have undergone a process of internalisation and be sung in his own way with perhaps some slight changes in melodic phrasing or lyric formation reflecting his own speech habits (D~Bob). This results in the creation of an individual version of a particular song that may have undergone major alterations or at least varies in small ways from the original source.

In chapter 5, I discuss the necessity of balancing personal desires with actions necessary for the good of the group. Stressing dichotomous distinctions between the individual and the community, however, is not

wholly satisfactory and here I further explore the relationship between individuals and the community.

There is a widely held perception that individualism is detrimental to community and that the decline in community, as measured in civic pride, social capital and voluntarism, results from the pervasive spread of individualism. However, research on new social movements reveals that strong individualism is what sustains many kinds of collective action (Delanty 2003:120). Problematically, within academic discourse, there is as little clarity on what 'individualism' means as 'community' and viewpoints range from insular perspectives to more collective approaches.

From a liberal perspective, *moral individualism* views the individual as autonomous and detached from society, regarding the individual as a free agent and wholly responsible for their actions (Delanty 2003:126). *Individuation*, as presented by Anthony Giddens (1991) and Zygmunt Bauman (2001), views the changes in society as a product of the break up of traditional roles and the organisation of society around the individual who is becoming increasingly isolated from collective ties due to the amount of personal choice. These perspectives disregard the influence of contextualisation and I prefer to follow approaches that acknowledge the process of individuals' engagement within society. *Collective individualism* views the individual as shaped in participation in community (Taylor 1990) and *personalism* recognises how individuals maintain community due to a belief in collective responsibility (Lichterman 1996). From these perspectives, people from diverse backgrounds can come together in communal activism united by a common commitment and the solidarity that results from action. This moves beyond a dichotomous view of the individual and society as locked in conflict where a gain in one is a loss in the other, and presents individuals as being created through communal action and community as created through the acts of individuals.

This is a constructivist approach towards community, emphasising community as defined by practices rather than by structures or cultural values. From this viewpoint, communities are created rather than reproduced, and rather than being sustained by symbolic boundaries or a

stable point of reference, *communication communities* are open to variation and consist of the actions undertaken by the individuals involved.

6.5 Conclusions

This exploration of the sonic construction of folk singing has exposed a number of potential dichotomies: the identification of sound ideals versus the acceptance of performers who do not attain these, learning the art of singing versus how to participate within the singing environment and the prominence of individuality within a group context.

While the dominant ideology of folk singing is that all performance is good, this research has shown how tolerance is reserved for particular practices, and how others remain perceived as erroneous within this context. The social limitations on exclusion, however, dictate that overt recognition of these is not acceptable. The sound ideals that dominate individual events are maintained through a system of social acceptability and learned through active participation in the performance context. Individuals are responsible for adapting their performances to conform to group norms.

While singers closely adhere to established sound ideals, individuality remains a key factor within this environment. Singers are celebrated for retaining autonomy within the group context. This individuality is informed by the group, however, and while editorial decisions are what create the group sound these decisions are based upon learned behaviour through a process of enculturation, demonstrating the inextricable relationship between individuals and the group.

7 Conclusion: How contemporary English folk singers construct community

Throughout this thesis I acknowledge the conceptual or imagined dimensions of the construction of community. However, when the idea of community is not invested with social content it is difficult to account for the emotional attraction that is attributed to it. The emotive impact of community, the capacity for empathy and affinity, is not formed solely out of an imagined community, but through the dynamic interaction between that concept and the actual social practices through which it is realised.

English folk singing provides a context in which people can come together and participate in a shared music-making endeavour devoid of explicit rules of governance. Many singers enjoy this informal form of music making and value the performance context for its inclusive qualities. Through this thesis, however, I have shown that the norms of behaviour that have developed through this tightly bound group of practitioners provide a significant barrier to inclusion. Newcomers to folk singing are given the contradictory experience of being told they are welcome and invited to do whatever they like, then shunned for not conforming to established forms of conduct, either in terms of repertoire selection, social interaction or performance style. This makes it difficult for new members to join established groups, as integration depends upon a period of enculturation and newcomers may not persevere long enough to undertake this process.

Once enculturation has been achieved, however, a strong sense of group identity is evident on a number of levels and to varying degrees. Through participating in a shared practice folk singers conform to Wenger's concept of *Communities of Practice*. Sharing similar musical tastes creates affinity with others and, within this context, social and musical identities are inseparable. Where participants are seen to fit in musically and behaviourally, friendship is assumed. While I do not presume that common activity correlates with common ideals, unlike some other leisure forms where the activity can be distinct from

participants' wider lives, to participate well in folk singing activities participants are expected to interact on a personal level, discussing aspects of their time outside the singing context, along with providing musical contributions. This provides an environment particularly valued for its general friendliness and suitable to the development of relationships.

The lack of explicit guidance places the emphasis of governance upon individual singers themselves. This creates a strong sense of moral community within the group as the responsibility for maintaining group functioning is firmly held by participants. For highly committed folk singers this creates a sense of loyalty towards the events they attend and their fellow participants. Where these moral obligations of conforming to behavioural norms and cordial sociability are not met, participants are conceptually excluded from the group.

Contrary to many interpretations of community, folk singers also place particular significance on relationships held with others with whom they do not share a physical space. These can be other contemporary singers who undertake similar activities and contribute to the national folk scene (through the notion of 'folkies') or with past and future singers of folk song material. While these sorts of relationships are similarly displayed in other musical forms, the particular relationship between folk singing practices and the concept of tradition enforced through the ideologies surrounding material selection and the ethos of performance context present a particularly strong case for this form of community.

Along with other forms of musical participation, folk singing has been shown to provide singers with the capacity to feel a sense of unity through shared action, termed here as *communitas*. While this phenomenon is regularly described in momentary terms, I suggest that it is individually experienced and built upon established notions of good group functioning. In all these cases I recognise the pervading presence of the individual within concepts of the community and suggest that rather than trying to define limitations as to who conforms to the folk singing community, that community is a felt phenomenon experienced in relation to individual conceptions of the group.

The particular structure of the folk scene enables attendance patterns across a variety of events and through differing periods of participants' lives facilitating long term relationships to develop with both other folk singers, and with the genre itself. Once someone perceives themselves to be a folk singer, pauses in activity do not exclude them from the conceptual community. To be a folk singer is to understand what folk singing is, rather than to sing folk songs. This knowledge is gained through active participation within performance contexts, and once someone has undergone this experience lack of activity does not preclude association.

The boundaries of folk singing communities are not simple lines of demarcation but present a landscape of centres and peripheries built around individual perceptions of belonging. Singers hold individual conceptions of what is adequate behaviour for a folk singer. While I suggest that folk singers behave harmoniously rather than homogeneously in both their musical and social actions, within the contemporary English folk singing scene these behaviours have developed to a relatively stable level within established social groupings. This makes infiltration by newcomers a difficult task to undertake.

The various implicit social practices as described throughout this thesis can lead to feelings of exclusion for those without the knowledge needed to feel a sense of community. However, for those that have participated in the activities long enough to gain this knowledge their sense of community is particularly powerful precisely because it is difficult to achieve.

The issues explored through this thesis draw together various approaches to the theoretical term *community* demonstrating how, within a particular social-musical group, this phenomenon is performed. I have focused attention on a frequently used yet rarely explicitly presented term within ethnomusicology, highlighting the differences in applications and understandings of the term. This was achieved through the analysis of a particular social context, demonstrating the variety of examples of community within an empirical study.

The context discussed, the English folk scene, is in itself a little researched area, though the field is developing. Most recent research is concerned with instrumental activity in this genre; this work provides the first focused investigation on singing activities that I am aware of. This thesis is also rare in its approach to understanding the sounds of English folk singing as the majority of work in the area focuses upon the sociological elements of group functioning within folk music contexts.

Consulting interdisciplinary literature and adopting a multi-method approach has resulted in a patchwork of ideas and data woven together around the central principles of the Grounded Theory method. This approach has worked particularly well for this investigation conducted by this particular researcher. Having a wide scope of enquiry enabled the exploration of diverse approaches to the theoretical term under investigation shedding light upon its usage within my central methodological perspective – ethnomusicology.

The multi-method approach enabled me to generate a variety of data with differing levels of researcher input to satisfy myself that the work is sufficiently wide-ranging. The blending of sociological methods worked particularly well with ethnomusicological method in this context. However, these had to be carefully considered so as to not impinge upon the natural state of events. Folk singers were, in the main, very enthusiastic to contribute to this study and I was able to conduct a number of data retrieval systems away from singing environments. My focus on practicing performers as participants has limited the amount of data I could gather on barriers to contributing and the experiences of those who have not persevered in folk singing activities are absent. Further research into this demographic would be illuminating.

The level to which I included myself in the research was an on-going conflict. This wavered between writing in the first person about my personal musical experiences to removing myself from the text completely. The latter did not seem convincing, the former I found difficult to retain sufficient objectivity but is an approach I found interesting and a method which would be useful to explore further. It has particular relevance in this field where a number of researchers are active

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participants and would contribute to methodological discussion from the growing cases of research being conducted 'at home' more widely in ethnomusicology.

This work provides a description of the practice of folk singing in England and will be useful as comparative material for similar studies in other genres. It also contributes to the small amount of academic research in the field of English folk music utilised by the relatively new folk music degree courses in English universities and the increasing number of post graduate students working in the field. My survey of the literature has identified a number of gaps which could not be addressed thoroughly through the scope of this thesis. These include the notion of Nationalism in English folk music and more specifically political affiliations and the impact of a developing interest from the far right in the genre. The final chapter of my thesis discusses the production of sound within this musical genre, and although I address several of the associated subjects, some of these would benefit from a deeper examination. The ways folk singers learn their craft shares similarities with Lucy Green's (2001) work on popular musicians, however there are salient differences which would be pertinent to understand. Progressing from this, I feel an examination of the ways people approach the teaching folk music could be further explored, augmenting Simon Keegan-Phipps' (2007) work in this area.

More centrally, and intertwined with the learning and teaching of folk singing, I have found a chasm of knowledge concerning how the sound of folk singing is constructed. I have been unable to find work describing vocal skills, stylistic techniques, aesthetics of sound beyond rather simplistic viewpoints on the volume and strength of singing (Dunn 1980). There is an apparent folk singing style (though this is complicated by ideologies concerning individuality and tolerance of low ability) which is in dire need of further exploration. This could be achieved through an exploration of current folk singers, and an historical investigation into the development of this style.

Following the theoretical basis of the research and my focus on the creation of community, I would be interested to see experimental work

conducted to explore whether a sense of community can be generated by new events following this model.

The benefits felt by many of those who participate in folk singing are deeply felt and highly valued. This activity provides people with a sense of belonging, recognition of self-worth and an avenue for enjoyment in an often transient world of uncertainty and alienation. Whether through romantic associations with the past, connections with those in close proximity or bonds felt across the nation through sharing knowledge and practice, it is evident that a sense of community is strongly felt by folk singers. Through addressing some of the barriers to participation raised in this thesis, I hope the practice may long continue.

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Appendix 1 – Participants by data retrieval method

Diary

Kit Bailey

Chris Brown

Pauline Burnett

Bob Butler

Gavin Davenport

Jenny Day

Ron Day

Roy Derry

Raymond Greenoaken

Keith Gudgin

Freda Lee

Gerald Lee

William MacFarlane

David Moore

Marjorie Palmer

Benny Ross

Carol Schofield

Peter Shaw

Philip Shaw

Jerry Simon

Ann Smith

Chas Smith

Oli Summerling

Janet Taylor

Alec Thompson

Ian West

Judith Wilford

Focus Group

Trish Bater

Judy Cope

Paul Davenport

Liz Davenport

Jenny Day

Ronald Day

Geoff Deighton

Kath Deighton

Jean Ellison

John Humphreys

Adrian McNally

Bill Murray

Jenny Scott

Rachel Unthank

Claire (surname unknown)

Ann (surname unknown)

Interview

Jess Arrowsmith

Rich Arrowsmith

Jon Boden

Bob Butler

Gavin Davenport

Helena Davenport

Martin Simpson

Audio recording

Raise the Roof, 13 March 2008

Kelham Island Singing Session, 24 February 2008

Folk at Home, 28 February 2008

Appendix 2 – The diary model

Participants were asked to complete the following question set for each singing event they attended during the diary period (1st October-31st November 2007).

> Date
> Name and location of event
> How did you find out about this event?
> What motivated you to go?
> What other people attended this event?
> How were you involved with the singing?
> What did you sing?
> Did you do any preparation?
> How did you feel when you arrived?
> How did you choose the song/s?
> Did this visit match up to your expectations?
> What was the highlight of the event for you?
> How do you feel about your singing?
> What social interactions did you have?
> How did you feel after being at this event?
> If you could change one aspect of this event what would it be?
> Any other reflections?

Participants were asked to complete the following question set once at the end of their diary involvement.

> How do you find material to learn?
> How do you feel about your songs?
> How do you feel about your singing?
> Do your friends/family sing?
> How do you learn songs?
> What do other people think about your singing?
> What part does singing play in your life?
> What activities do you do that don't involve singing?
> Any other reflections?

NB: Following the grounded theory approach, this diary model was constructed to elicit generic detail about participation in folk singing before a specific focus on how community is enacted within this context had been developed.

Appendix 3 – The interview frame

The interviews were semi-structured in nature and the actual questions asked each participant varied.

How did you become involved in folk music?
When were you first paid to perform?
Would you call yourself a professional musician now?
What events do you go to that you're not paid to be at?
Has this activity changed since you started being paid?
What's different about performing on stage and in an informal setting?
Do you perform the same material in both settings?
How do people receive your music compared with that of non-professionals?
How do people react to you socially in informal sessions?
How are you received when you attend a new session?
Have your relationships changed as a result of your professionalism?
Is fame ever a problem?
Is there anything else I've missed?

NB: This interview series was specifically designed for a paper on professionalism in folk music, delivered at SEMPRE conference on *Musical Participation* October 2008.

Appendix 4 – The focus group model

Stage 1

Please reflect on your most positive and negative memories with respect to your folk singing experiences and write down key words or phrases.

Stage 2

Please reflect on your experience of how folk singing communities function and write down key words or phrases under the following headings:

Performer/audience relationship

Social interactions

Organisation of events

How singing affects life

Stage 3

How do you think folk singing communities are important to contemporary society? Any other reflections?

Appendix 5 – Event repertoire lists

Songs performed at Kelham Island on 24th February 2008

Paul Davenport, 'Forward my Brave Boys'.

Jon Boden, 'The Banks of Claudy'.

Jess Arrowsmith, 'Drive Dull Cares away'.

Vikki Fielden, 'True Simplicity' (to the tune of 'Lord of the Dance').

Carol Schofield, 'Polish Pilot' (Carol Schofield).

Fay Hield, 'The Grey Goose and Gander'.

Bob Butler, 'Our Jack's come Home Today'.

Dave (surname unknown), 'Ranso, Ranso'; 'Bring 'em down'.

Paul and Liz Davenport, 'One for the Rook' (Mike Barber).

Rich Arrowsmith, 'Oh Good Ale'.

Neill Schofield, 'Wait 'til the Clouds Roll By'.

Jon Boden, 'Cholera Camp' (Kipling/Bellamy).

Paul and Liz Davenport, 'The House that Jack Built' (Paul Davenport).

Bob Butler, 'No mi Love, not I'.

Dave (surname unknown), 'Orphan Child'.

Jess Arrowsmith, 'The Cutty Wren'.

Dave (surname unknown), 'All the Good Times are Passed and Gone'.

Jemma Gurney, 'Sprig of Thyme'.

Dave Staves, 'Byker Hill'.

Jon Boden, 'The Charlady Song'.

Vikki Fielden, 'Hang Down your Head and Cry'.

Dave (surname unknown), 'Coal Mining song'.

Jess Arrowsmith, 'Watch the Wall my Darling'.

Carol Schofield, 'Wind to Turn the Mill'.

Fay Hield, 'Two Brothers'.

Jess Arrowsmith, 'Bright Morning Star'.

Vikki Fielden, 'Henry my Boy'.

Dave (Surname Unknown), related to above - snippet.

Dave (surname unknown), snippet related to conversation.

Bob Butler, 'Master of the Sheepfold Bin'.

Jon Boden, 'Blackfriars Ferry'.

Dave Staves, 'The Rose of York'.

Vikki Fielden, 'The Grey Flannel Line'.

Songs performed at Folk at Home on 28 February 2008

Peter Burnett, 'The Immigrant'.

Julie Fotheringham, 'Still I go with Him'.

Oliver Blensdorf, 'I Dream and Dream'.

Fay Hield, 'Young Hunting'.

Eric Lane, 'The Grey Hawk'.

Bob Butler, 'Go to Sea No More'.

Nicola Freeman, 'Peggy Todd'.

Jerry Simon, 'The Derby Tup'.

Betty Hemmings, 'Barbara Allen'.

Gordon Hoyland, 'Pride of Kildare'.

Rob Pagett, 'Lakes of Shylin'.

Vikki Fielden, 'John Henry'.

Roy Bunting, 'Bedlam City'.

Interval

Peter Burnett, 'Polly on the Shore' (Leister Simpson).

Roy Bunting, 'No Sir No'.

Julie Fotheringham, 'Ca' the ewes'.

Oliver Blensdorf, 'Bay of Biscay'.

Betty Hemmings, 'Fair are the Flowers in the Valley'.

Gordon Hoyland, 'A few Jovial Sportsmen'.

Nicola Freeman, 'As Sylvie Went a Walking'.

Eric Lane, 'Sweep Chimney Sweep' (The Copper Family).

Bob Butler, 'Fare Thee Well'.

Jerry Simon, 'Ranso'.

Vikki Fielden, 'Drill ye Tanners Drill'.

Rob Pagett, 'Hand Loom Weaver'.

Fay Hield, 'The Shepherds Daughter'.

Songs performed at Raise the Roof on 13 March 2008

Vikki Fielden, 'We Can Sing this Song'.

Cliff (surname unknown), 'Pibroch'.

(singer unknown), 'The Ballad of Arthur Creek'.

Betty Hemmings, 'High Germany'.

Bob Butler, 'Get up Jack John Sit Down'.

Carol Schofield, 'Sheep upon the mountain'.

Peter Burnett, 'Green Man'.

Pete Garratt and Ken Atkinson, 'The Gay Fusilier', with guitar.

Alan (surname unknown), 'A pint of Old Peculiar'.

Harvey (surname unknown), 'Going Doon ta Steelos' (John Tamms).

Ron Day, Jenny Day, Chris (surname unknown), 'Johnny has gone for a soldier'.

Oliver Blensdorf, 'Waley Waley'.

Rob Slow and his dad, 'Just to keep life in'.

David Kidman, 'The life of a man'.

Jeff (surname unknown), 'The Little Tailor'.

Gordon Hoyland, 'A Few Jovial Sportsmen'.

Eric Lane, 'The Last of England'.

Raymond Greenoaken, 'Poor Old Horse', with concertina.

Gavin Davenport, 'Deep Blue Sea' (The Spinners).

Jerry Simon, 'Old Carpenters Song'.

Fay Hield. 'The Grey Goose and Gander'.

Interval

Vikki Fielden, 'Never turning Back'.

Cliff (surname unknown), 'The Bonny Lads of Elgertae'.

Bob Butler, 'Maggie May'.

Carol Schofield, 'Winds of Change'.

Pete Burnett, 'Custard Pie song'.

Pete Garratt and Ken Atkinson, 'You are the Night and I am the Day', with guitar.

Alan (surname unknown), 'Streets of Evangeline'.

Raymond Greenoaken, 'How do you know' (Tucker Zimmerman), with concertina.

Gavin Davenport, 'While the Gamekeepers were sleeping'.

Harvey (surname unknown), 'The Cutty Wren'.

Ron Day, Jenny Day and Chris (surname unknown), 'Blessed Quietness'.

Rob Slow and his dad, 'Byker Hill'.

Oliver Blensdorf, 'The Oggy Man'.

David Kidman, 'Bright Morning Stars'..

Jeff (surname unknown), 'The Lish Young Byre broom'.

Gordon Hoyland, 'Ann McKelvie'.

Eric Lane, 'Ned on the Hill'.

Jerry Simon, 'Pleasant and Delightful'.

Fay Hield, 'The Keeper'.

Ron Day and Jenny Day, 'Rolling Home'.

Songs performed at Royal Folk on 7th February 2010[33]

Roy Derry, 'As I roved Out', with guitar.

Ann Smith, 'Leaving Behind Nadine' (J. McCarthy), with guitar.

Chas Smith, 'Ladies Go Dancing at Whitsun' (A. J. Marshall).

Dave Markham, 'She's like a Swallow', with guitar.

Mike Lydiat, 'When I'm 64' (John Lennon and Paul McCartney), with guitar.

Josette Knowles, 'Mull of Bloody Kintyre' (Paul McCartney), with guitar.

Ken Sanderson, 'Rare Old Times', with guitar.

Ken Knowles, 'Amid the New Mown Hay', descant recorder - instrumental only.

Mike Richards and Judy Clifford, 'Down in the Broom', with guitar.

Mike Richards and Judy Clifford, 'I Hear Them All' (Dave Rawlins), with two guitars.

Steve Moxon, 'Hints of Love' (Steve Moxon), with guitar.

Roy Derry, 'Cruel Sister', with guitar.

Lou Marriott, 'In the Summertime' (Bob Dylan), with guitar.

Ann Smith, 'This Love Will Carry' (Dougie MacLean), with guitar.

Chas Smith, 'The Herring is the King of the Sea'.

Dave Markham, 'Raggle Taggle Gypsies', with guitar.

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[33] As recorded by Roy Derry.

Mike Lydiat, 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square' (Maschwitz/Sherwin), with guitar.

Jim Marshall, 'I Shall be Released' (Bob Dylan), with guitar.

Josette Knowles, 'I Still Miss Someone' (Johnny Cash), with guitar.

Ken Sanderson, 'Nancy of Spain' (B. Rush via Christy Moore), with guitar.

Ken Knowles, 'Men of Wode'.

Interval

Mike Richards and Judy Clifford, 'Passionate Kisses' (Lucinda Williams), with guitar.

Mike Richards and Judy Clifford, 'LVA' (Connor Oberst), with guitar.

Steve Moxon, 'Chimera' (Steve Moxon), with guitar.

Roy Derry, 'Jollity Farm' (Bonzo Dog Band), with guitar.

Lou Marriott, 'Billy' (Bob Dylan), with guitar.

Chris Marriott, 'Let no Man Steal Away your Thyme'.

Ann Smith, 'Da Do Ron Ron' (Crystals), with guitar.

Chas Smith, 'Forest Lawn' (Tom Paxton).

Dave Markham, 'White Cockade medley' 'Pin Ball Wizard', 'Long Distance Information Give Me Memphis Tennessee', 'My Old Man's a Dustman' to the traditional tune of 'White Cockade' (The Who, Chuck Berry, Lonnie Donegan), with guitar.

Mike Lydiat, 'Eleanor Plunkett' (O'Carolan), guitar – instrumental only.

Jin Marshall, 'Slip Jigs and Reels' (Steve Tilston), with guitar.

Josette Knowles, 'You're my Best Friend', with guitar.

Ken Sanderson, 'Home Boys Home', with guitar.

Steve Moxon, 'Trying to Fool Myself' (Steve Moxon), with guitar.

Lou Marriott, 'Make you Feel my Love' (Bob Dylan), with guitar.

Roy Derry, 'Dimming of the Day' (Richard Thompson), with guitar.