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BABY BOOMERS AND BACKSTREET BOYS:
WHAT'S THE FASCINATION?

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Communication

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

By

Catherine A. Woells

May, 2003

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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BABY BOOMERS AND BACKSTREET BOYS:
WHAT'S THE FASCINATION?

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University of Nebraska, 2003

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This study focused on why a small segment of baby boomer women were fans of the Backstreet Boys. Current literature uses both male and female adolescents as their sample when studying music fandom. There are a few studies using both male and female college students when studying music fandom. This study focused solely on a certain group of baby boomer women as music fans.

The reasons for this group of baby boomer women being fans of the Backstreet Boys corresponded with the three main reasons as most fans. Those reasons fall under three broad headings: emotional, cognitive and social. The age of the participants broadened the scope and added new meaning to some of the reasons for music fandom.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This researcher is a baby boomer woman. For purposes of this study, baby boomer is defined as a person born between the years 1946 through 1964.

This researcher is also a fan of an all-male singing group called Backstreet Boys. Along with many other baby boomer fans of the Backstreet Boys, the author has also withstood the taunts, jeers and snide remarks from family, friends and peers as a result of this fandom. The extreme actions of some of these baby boomer fans of Backstreet Boys, as well as some of the extreme reactions of the critics of these baby boomer fans caused this researcher to undertake this study. The purpose of this study is to try and find out why this group of baby boomer women are fans of Backstreet Boys.

In order to try and understand this fandom, the researcher will attempt to locate some of these fans through a fan website on the Internet. A certain website frequently visited by the researcher will be used. By asking these baby boomer women why they are a fan of Backstreet Boys,

it is anticipated that these women will share their fandom stories. The following is a compilation of the experiences of the author and other baby boomer fans of Backstreet Boys.

They arrived at 7 a.m. on an unusually mild and sunny December morning to capture their positions in line. They brought reading material while they waited, not wanting to waste precious minutes. It was three hours before tickets would go on sale. They chose what they hoped was an obscure ticket outlet location in a grocery store. They were elated when they observed they had secured first place.

They were not your typical teen music fans. These fans were different. Their briefcases replaced backpacks. Their suits replaced shorts. Their styled hair replaced stringy hair. These fans were businesswomen and mothers. These not-so-typical fans withstand the taunts of their friends, the disbelieving headshakes of their spouses or boyfriends and the thumbs-up approval of their teenage daughters in their pursuit of the group known as Backstreet Boys. They weren't in

line to purchase opera tickets or theater tickets, but tickets to "Into the Millennium" tour of Backstreet Boys.

The clerk looked up and with a grin and a head nod. This acknowledgment confirmed their mission. They are told they must wait until 10 a.m. "No problem," they responded and giggled. They knew they would have a long wait.

Time seemed to crawl as minutes seemed like hours and hours seemed like days. They spied a near-by magazine rack and asked for a volunteer for sentry duty to maintain their position. They then wandered to the rack and huddled closely. They furiously turned pages of the first magazine. A collective sigh was expelled when they located their favored subject. Emanating from the huddle, the other members of the queue could hear "A.J., Nick, Kevin, Brian and Howie." There was talk of lap dancing, crackers and ooooooh, the wonders of the tongue tracing A.J.'s

"It's 10 o'clock!" the sentry shouted. They replaced the magazine and rushed to their secured position. "I'm so sorry," the clerk said with

empathy in her voice and a look of helplessness on her face that only a computer can cause. "There's a 15-minute block on sales for you," she said.

Their hearts raced furiously as they loudly exhaled and with slumped shoulders, helplessly retreated.

They must stand aside and let others go before them.

One of the fans in line had a friend on the computer at home. She raced to dial the number on her cell phone. "Oh my God!" she shrieked as she misdialed. Every second was as important to them as it was to an ambulance driver. She redialed quickly and connected with the voice at the computer and waited, tapping her foot impatiently. "Four on the floor!" she screamed in wide-eyed amazement, "Get 'em, she screamed!" Four more tickets were needed. There was a flurry of dialogue and more waiting. They waited as anxiously as parents at the birth of their first child.

The clock above the clerk's register then read 10:13. They cautioned other purchasers to stand aside. At 10:15 the clerk was theirs. The

mysterious voice on the cell phone then proclaimed, "Row S, lower concourse, Section 116!" They quickly scanned their map of the arena. "Yes!" they whooped. This is A.J.'s side of the stage. After a furious exchange of cash, names and phone numbers, calm was restored when they exited the premises at 10:15 amid the head nods and smiles of other customers. Not a minute too soon either as they would find out later the first leg of this tour (765,000 seats) would sell out within the hour.

The peers, spouses and boyfriends of these unconventional baby boomer fans wonder what makes women like Adrienne of Encino, California take unpaid time off work to attend concerts six nights in one week - three concerts in Las Vegas and three concerts in North Carolina - consecutively. What motivates grown women to attend an annual convention in Orlando, the hometown of the Backstreet Boys? One of the attendees at this convention received the 'most mature' award - she was 54. Another attendee won the 'The Weary Traveler Award' - she traveled from Okinawa to

attend the convention. What motivates CAV (Internet name; also known as Chris) to travel 4,000 miles to attend one concert? What motivates ReginaforBrian (Internet name; also known as Regina) to pay \$750.00 for one concert ticket? What motivates Rokadorer26 (Internet name; also known as Dawn) to hang 300 posters/photos of this group in her home and/or office? Why oh why do these baby boomer fans assume Internet names such as AJLove, Rokadorer, Millenium Mom and maybe best of all, NicksNaughtyNurse?

What draws this group of baby boomer women together to form new friendships and life-long bonds? These baby boomer fans are from Arizona and Australia, Michigan and Malaysia, New Jersey and New Zealand, Ohio and Ottawa, Pomona and Paris and Texas and Thailand. What common interest can be shared by these baby boomer women from all over the world? An introduction to the group and its members is in order here.

THE BACKSTREET BOYS

Three of the group members are from Orlando, Florida (Nick, AJ, Howie D). These three started

competitive singing while still in elementary school. These boys met each other in local competitions. They happened to meet up with a producer, who found a Ninja Turtle at Disney World (Kevin). Kevin then brought his church-choir cousin from Kentucky (Brian). These five young men, through chance or destiny, came together to form a group called Backstreet Boys (Appendix "A").

The members of Backstreet Boys came up with the name for the group while they were eating dinner at a TGI Friday's where they looked out the window and saw the sign for Backstreet Market, an Orlando, Florida flea market (Johnson & Fantle, 2000).

During the formation of the group by Orlando businessman and entrepreneur Lou Pearlman and in order to get themselves heard, the group performed cover tunes [music by other artists] while in the process of giving voice to their own distinctive sound. After several years of working together, the group settled in the music style that would be theirs. "Their signature style includes heavenly five-part harmonies, a musical range that can

smoothly shift gears from silky ballads to throbbing dance rhythms, and one of the most intricately choreographed stage shows to tour the world" (Nichols, 1998, p. 5). The Boys began to develop a fan following with their powerful harmonies, groovy beats, dynamic stage presence and passionate ballads (Johnson & Fantle, 2000).

The group didn't start out at the top. In 1993, while the group was in the process of being finely tuned and carefully crafted by Lou Pearlman, they performed at high school assemblies, Sea World and family package tours. Backstreet Boy Kevin Richardson recalls the teenage crowd was a much tougher crowd than the bar crowd (Wild, 2000). Backstreet Boy Howie Dorough said in the high school auditorium circuit, the guys in the audience would heckle them (Dunn, 1999). The group also performed as the opening act for the better known music acts of Brandy, REO Speedwagon and The Village People. They would even go to the point of singing a capella in the foyers of record companies (Dunn, 1999; Johnson & Fantle). Howie said, "We'd sing anywhere for anybody" (Johnson & Fantle,

2000). In their early career, America was in grunge-mode for music. In 1993, the Backstreet Boys then went overseas where they conquered Europe. They had become moneymaking gods in Europe (Hedegaard, 2000). In 1997, upon the group's return to the United States, they released "Quit Playing Games With My Heart." With this song they entered the American music scene (Hedegaard, 2000).

The Backstreet Boys' Millenium CD debuted in May 1999. Millenium had the best sales week in the history of the recording industry. The CD sold 1.13 million copies in its first week in the stores. Millenium became the No. 1 album of 1999 with 9,445,732 copies sold. This sales record was the best possible headline for the music industry as a whole because it implemented a cultural shift to happy, positive music (Johnson & Fantle, 2000). The entire first leg (765,000 seats) of the "Into the Millenium" tour sold out in less than an hour after tickets went on sale (Johnson & Fantle, 2000).

THE BACKSTREET BOYS' SHOW

The 110-minute "Into The Millenium" show inspires fantasy with a sci-fi inspired set and kicks off with the Boys snowboarding on lighted boogie boards over the audience to the theme from "Star Wars" (Johnson & Fantle, 2000) leaving no doubt that everyone is in for a good time (Appendix "B").

A reviewer of the Washington, DC show stated that the opening portion of the concert featured "infectiously bouncy" dance-pop hits as well as "feisty" up-tempo ballads (Johnson & Fantle, 2000). The music range included up-tempo material ("Larger Than Life" and "Get Down") to romantic ("Spanish Eyes") to 'neo-doo-wop' ("I'll Never Break Your Heart") to the wounded ("Back to Your Heart") (Johnson & Fantle, 2000). Their vocal spirit, strong material and mature presence put them a cut above their peers, 'N Sync and 98 Degrees, said a Boston reviewer. (Johnson & Fantle, 2000). In addition, they demonstrated their spit-polish, split-second choreography and lush vocal harmonies

that, again, set them apart from the pack of music groups (Johnson & Fantle, 2000).

"One of the things that distinguishes Backstreet Boys from all other vocal groups is their live show. With choreography, costumes, lighting and special effects that would outshine the average Broadway musical, and exciting live renditions of the songs that fans want to hear most, it's a treat for ears and eyes alike" (Nichols, 1998). Their inventive choreography is displayed in the chair routine to the song "As Long As You Love Me" (Appendix "C"). They are known as the Hat Squad for their choreography during "All I Have to Give" where they wear, pass and flip their fedoras fluidly, in unison (Appendix "D") (Nichols, 1998).

Kevin says to see the reaction of the people while they are on stage is the greatest feeling of all. When seeing the reactions of the fans, Kevin says that reaffirms in them the reason why they are there (Nichols, 1998). Staying true to his humble self, Brian always asks himself, "Why are these people here?" (Nichols, 1998). Brian says never

in a million years did he think he'd be where he is today (Stoeltje, 2000). AJ says the Backstreet Boys are very proud of their performances as they try to give 100 percent of themselves, give their all towards creating a uniquely memorable concert experience, and give the people what they came to see (Nichols, 1998). Village Voice rock critic Robert Christgau admits he was converted to the Backstreet Boys. He says that the guys do righteous work and definitely don't suck (Saldana, 2000).

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

The individual members of the group are AJ McLean, Howie Dorough, Nick Carter, Brian Littrell and Kevin Richardson. AJ, Howie and Nick had all discovered, at a young age, that they wanted to be entertainers. Howie had done some acting on tv shows and films. AJ attended performing arts school where he learned dance, music and acting and had theatre stage and television experience. Nick was primarily a singer who appeared in musicals and had won several competitions while in elementary and junior high school (Nichols, 1998). By the

time they were all teens, they were frequent faces on the Orlando audition and talent competition scene. In addition, Howie and AJ shared the same voice coach (Nichols, 1998). As a youth and teen, Kevin had sung in his local church and was a keyboard player and vocalist in various cover bands. He had gone to Orlando with his dream of making it big (Nichols, 1998). Kevin had taken a job at Walt Disney World as a Ninja Turtle to pay the rent while waiting for his big break. He got his break while acting as an atmosphere dancer. He was at a convention, hyping the crowd, trying to get little old ladies to get up and dance. At that party he met a woman who directed him to the Backstreet Boys audition (Dunn, 1999). Kevin's cousin Brian, also from Kentucky, had also grown up singing in church and school talent shows. He was still in high school, working part-time at the local Long John Silver's and singing at funerals. He was planning to attend Cincinnati Bible College (Dunn, 1999; Nichols, 1998). He was pulled out of a high school history class to take the call from his cousin Kevin (Hedegaard, 2000).

The group's chemistry was immediate, "We got together and we worked on harmonies....When one person takes the lead, the other person takes their harmony" says Howie (Nichols, 1998, p.9). Nick says he believes one reason for their success is that each of them is extremely talented. Many groups may utilize one or two voices for the lead vocals. This group uses each member (Dunn, 1999).

The five different personalities came together to form a successful group. Nick is known as the blond-haired, blue-eyed heartthrob (Appendix "E"). He is also known as the "face" of Backstreet Boys (Nichols, 1998). Surprisingly though, he is the most shy of the group members (Dunn, 1999). He is a practical joker with an artistic eye and a lover of computer games (Nichols, 1998). He is also known as the blonde babe of the group and known for having the shortest attention span (Wild, 2000).

Brian is the one with the heavenly voice and a passion for music (Appendix "F"). He is known as the "soul" of the group. He is almost never to be found without a basketball. Brian has great strength to overcome life's ups and downs as

evidenced by his dealing with his heart problems (Nichols, 1998). He is also known as the singing Southern gentleman (Wild, 2000).

Howie is personable and confident. He is the most modest individual of the group (Appendix "G"). He is known as the "sweetness" of the group. Howie is an energetic dancer and has a talent and gift for taking the group's music to the next level by urging the group to take their music to new parts of the world, particularly Latin markets like South America (Nichols, 1998).

AJ is known as the romantic and unpredictable extrovert (Appendix "H"). He is known as the "showman" of the group and has an eye for outrageous clothes, tattoos and hair colors. AJ is not afraid to stand on his own (Nichols, 1998). He is also known as the tattooed, in-house rebel (Wild, 2000). His deep, rough-edged voice anchors the band's harmonies (Dunn, 1999).

Finally, Kevin is the oldest member (Appendix "I"). He is considered the older brother of the group that calls themselves brothers. He is known for his dogged professionalism and business-minded

attitude (Wild, 2000). He is ambitious and fearless in the pursuit of his dreams (Nichols, 1998). He is known as the most "classically handsome" member (Wild, 2000).

APPEAL

Part of the appeal and staying power of the Backstreet Boys is that they're bad, but not too bad, sexy but safe, wholly inoffensive and unabashedly reiterate that they love their moms (Handy & Roche, 1999; Johnson & Fantle, 2000). The Backstreet Boys' frothy pop and dreamy ballads tell girls the very words they can't extract from their boyfriends: "I'll never break your heart, I'll never make you cry" (Dunn, 1999).

Another reason they are appealing is the fact that they are what Motown once called the Sound of Young America (Wild, 2000). The Backstreet Boys have changed the turf of pop music in a positive way. With them, music has become an irony-free zone. This offers musicians a chance to join the machine rather than rage against it (Wild, 2000). The Backstreet Boys have lived past the life expectancy of youth-oriented bands. The life span

of these groups is not measured in years but in lunchbox seasons (Wild, 2000). Epic Records senior vice president Dave McPherson signed the Backstreet Boys in 1993 before they went off to tour Europe. He says that ultimately, the group is about quality. He believes the Backstreet Boys will be artists of the future. McPherson compared the Backstreet Boys to Madonna when she first entered the American music scene. He said people then didn't know she'd be around 20 years later. McPherson also says artists of the future will evolve if they're talented. Those that aren't talented fall by the wayside. He says the Backstreet Boys will do great things and change with the times and not remain stuck in the teen genre. He also said the Backstreet Boys' appeal extends beyond teens. McPherson says his mother is a fan. He says there are even 40-year-olds buying their records (Saldana, 2000).

Another reason they are so well liked is the fact that they are not about solely image. Backstreet Boy AJ McLean says it's about the music (Wild, 2000). Backstreet Boy Kevin Richardson says

they are a vocal group (Wild, 2000). In the beginning, the Backstreet Boys were compared to New Kids on the Block. The New Kids on the Block were considered entertaining. After surviving rejection, the Backstreet Boys have become known as a vocal group instead of just entertainers (Wild, 2000).

Another reason why some older fans might find this group appealing is their down-to-earth nature. All five Backstreet Boys were raised in modest circumstances. After their attainment of affluence and success, each has provided generous gifts to their families (Nichols, 1998). The Boys also try to maintain their roots in numerous ways. Nick will take his brother on tour with him. Howie will take his sister Polly Anna on tour. All the boys call home frequently to parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. Howie buys souvenirs for everyone in his family and flies his parents to concerts all over the world, as does Brian. AJ took time out from the tour to go home in 1996 to attend his high school graduation ceremony (Nichols, 1998). This down-to-earth, feet-on-the-

ground attitude in their personal lives carries over into their performing lives and treatment of their fans.

The appeal of Backstreet Boys can also be found in their approach to their music. Backstreet Boy Kevin Richardson says many artists try to preach or convert others to the artist's point of view or send forth political messages through their music. Richardson says the Backstreet Boys are about making music to which the couple in love can slow dance. He also says the Backstreet Boys want to make up-tempo music that makes people want to dance and mid-tempo music to take your attention away from a traffic jam (Wild, 2000). There are no warnings on Backstreet Boys CDs for parental guidance, lyrics or violence. Richardson says the group's goal is to make music fun (Wild, 2000). Backstreet Boy Brian Littrell says, "We're blessing people's lives with song" (Hedegaard, 2000).

Another dimension of their appeal is their honesty. They are five young men who remain true to themselves. The group was hand-crafted by Orlando businessman, Lou Pearlman and managed by

the Wright team. Backstreet Boy AJ McLean says they were treated like puppets (Wild, 2000). The group members were instructed not to have any facial hair, no earrings and most importantly, no girlfriends. If they did have a girlfriend, they were instructed to say they didn't (Wild, 2000). Kevin Richardson said Lou Pearlman was not pleased when he learned Kevin had his bellybutton pierced (Hedegaard, 2000). Concern on the part of the group members grew when Pearlman hand-crafted their competition, 'N Sync. Backstreet Boy Howie Dorough recalls receiving some advice from a member of the Temptations. Dorough recalls the Temptations member saying, "You've got to watch the business, because while you are on the show, somebody can be taking off with your business" (Wild, 2000, p. 45).

The group members recognized they were not being honest with themselves or with their fans if they were willing to be manipulated like puppets. Backstreet Boy Brian Littrell admits to starting the breaking away of the group from Lou Perlman and the management team (Wild, 2000). Littrell is of the belief that money makes people do strange

things (Wild, 2000). There was a point in the Backstreet Boys tour career that Littrell required open heart surgery, having already postponed it twice for tour reasons (Dunn, 1999). He said he recalls looking one of his managers in the face and asking, "Do you see me as a pile of money" (Wild, 2000, p. 45). The manager replied no but continued to schedule the Backstreet Boys tour venues and asking Littrell to postpone his heart surgery yet again. This was when Littrell says he had an epiphany about what is important in life. He realized that music was his love but it was also his job. He says time with your family and friends and to enjoy life are what is important (Dunn, 1999). Thus began the separation from Lou Pearlman and the Wright management team and Brian Littrell's heart surgery (Wild, 2000).

Today the group members are expressing their honesty with who they are. Kevin and AJ have facial hair. Four of the five members wear earrings. AJ and Nick openly show their tattoos. Three of the five members have girlfriends or are married. These are things Lou Perlman told them

they couldn't have. AJ McLean drinks, smokes and swears and openly admits to enjoying a romantic relationship (Hedegaard, 2000). In his Johnny No Name act, AJ McLean performs pelvic thrusts and floor humping that would make some Backstreet Boys fans blush (Hedegaard, 2000). Some individuals would say this is not wholesome. Other individuals would say that AJ is being honest with himself. In the December 21, 2000 "People of the Year" special issue of Rolling Stone, Kevin Richardson, Howie Dorough, Nick Carter and AJ McLean are pictured with 18 nude women, posed carefully. Brian Littrell is pictured in a separate picture on the opposite page (Appendix "J"). While realizing the photograph was art and that the group stands together, Brian said he couldn't disrespect himself and do the photo shoot (Hedegaard, 2000). All are remaining true to themselves. McLean says he thinks they actually gained more respect from the fans for being honest about who they are as individuals (Wild, 2000).

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEIR FANS

In the liner notes of their U.S. CD, Howie gives a long, heartfelt thank-you to their fans all over the world. He stresses the fact that the band couldn't have gotten where they are today without the support of their fans. Their thankfulness and appreciation of their fans are what makes them so special to the fans (Johnson & Fantle, 2000).

Brian adds, "What I want everyone to realize is that the fans always have been, and always will be the most important thing. After all, we'd be nothing without them" (Johnson & Fantle, 2000).

Brian wrote a sweetly sentimental ode to his mother for her unconditional love and support, "The Perfect Fan." The group sings this to their fans at each concert along with "Larger Than Life" to show their appreciation for fans.

"Every performer worth the price of a CD or a concert ticket has enough common sense to acknowledge their debt to their fans. But Backstreet Boys recognize it more than most" (Nichols, 1998, p. 24). The Backstreet Boys have their fans to thank for getting the mainstream

media to notice them. While popular in Europe, when they came to the United States, MTV dismissed them as too poppy and lightweight (Nichols, 1998).

When the Backstreet Boys speak of their fans, it is with love and gratitude. They call their most hardcore fans their 'dedicated fans' (Nichols, 1998). They say these are the fans that will fly halfway around the world to see them perform or just to watch them at a recording session (Nichols, 1998).

Why do five young men - Nick, age 23; Brian, age 28; Kevin, age 30; AJ, age 25 and Howie D, age 28, seem to impair all common sense in this segment of baby boomer women which makes them, or permits them, to act so deliriously? Knowing the upbringing of each group member is part of the answer to this question. Knowing and experiencing how they treat their fans is part of the answer to this question. Knowing their dedication to their craft is part of the answer to this question. A further understanding of fans in general and their personal reasons for being a fan will further answer this question.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The *Star Spangled Banner*, *Amazing Grace*, *Jump*, *I'll Never Break Your Heart* - these are songs that may communicate feelings of patriotism, religiousness, rebellion and romance to the music listener. Sometimes when people hear "Taps," they may feel intense sadness and pain. Sometimes when people hear the Northern India flute, they may be able to see in their mind's eye the asp rising from the basket. Sometimes when people hear the Moroccan finger cymbals while enjoying an evening at a Moroccan restaurant, they may become sensually aroused. Sometimes when people hear the song "YMCA" by The Village People, their arms reflexively go into the "Y" position. Music does not utilize visual images alone to convey its message. Music allows and encourages the listener to use her or his own imagination to realize the full benefit of music listening. Music inspires a myriad of experiences for its listeners.

Music audiences can range from the tens of thousands of fans who gather at a concert arena to attend a performance of their favorite singer or group to the lone individual listening to devotional music. Music audiences can range from the possible millions of fans receiving transmissions of music events via radio, television or the Internet to a bride and groom dancing their first dance in their new marriage. Music audiences can range from the hordes of shoppers listening to the piped-in mall music to the lone individual listening to her Walkman while exercising (Negus, 1996).

Music can be experienced in extremes. Music can be enjoyed in solitude or in a group of tens of thousands at a concert. Music can be used as background for a movie or a funeral. Music can be used for intense exercise, such as aerobics, or for inactive moments, such as falling asleep. Music can be a companion and serve as a soundtrack for the lives of people as they drive, meditate, study, clean house, exercise, socialize with friends or any of the many other activities in which they

participate. Music infiltrates the lives of people in their cars, in shopping malls, on the telephone as they hold, while they are on the go and at home (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). Radio audiences are biggest during the "drive time" when they are a captive audience (Piiro, 1994).

There are many forms of media that permeate our everyday lives. Audience members/fans describe their media experiences in functional terms; i.e., problem-solving or need-meeting (McQuail, 1994). Music has the distinct ability to influence the listener's mood and emotions to produce an affective response. Affective means the listener will describe how the music makes her or him feel. When individuals talk about music, it is predictable that they will mention how it makes them feel (Christenson & Roberts, 1998; Dominick, 1996).

FANS

The word "fan" is an accepted term in our present culture. One can be a fan of a television show, a restaurant chef, a television star or even a good sunset (Harris, 1998). Fandom can be a

spectrum of practices. Fans participate in these practices to develop a sense of personal control or influence over the object of fandom. The outcome of a fan's involvement is not as important as the involvement itself (Harris, 1998).

Internet fandom is a community, a social network of small groups and individuals scattered around the world. These groups are connected to each other through overlapping and complex ties to each other. Fan-type activities are the ties that bind the community together. Since these fans are often situated world wide, most of their activities are discursive. The most primal instinct a fan has with regard to her or his fandom is to talk to other fans about their interest (Clerc, 1996).

A study of sports fans reported that 'fan' is short for fanatic. The study went on further to compare spectator to fan. The authors reported that a spectator is simply at the event to fulfill the spectator's enjoyment by viewing the event. A spectator does not get caught up in the logistics of the event but is simply a watcher and observer. The authors also reported that most sport viewers

are more participant than observer. They are believers in the rituals of sports. The authors then stated that a fan is an 'enthusiastic devotee of a given diversion' (Krohn, Clarke, Preston, McDonald, and Preston, 1998). The typical viewer then will fall within the range from spectator [the observer] to fan [the participant] (Novak, 1996).

The music fans in this study are not, today, your typical, swooning, screaming teen fans. The fans in this study may have been, however, the typical, swooning, screaming teen fan of the Beatles, Motown favorites, Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, Beach Boys and other youthful bands of the 60s and 70s. Some of these music fans are bringing their musical preferences and attachments along in their lives. While their minds might be saying "no," there is a corner in almost every older rock fan's heart still yearning for "sex, drugs and rock and roll" (Star & Rosenberg, 1993). Three reasons for boomers' loyalty to the music of their teenage years are: (1) boomers have a clearer sense of generational identity than any other generation has had; (2) boomers refuse to let go of

childhood and youth, and (3) mass media encourages (1) and (2) through its advertising and marketing (Burns, 1996). Baby boomers are those people born in the years 1946 to 1964.

Many boomer women have done things differently than their predecessors. The attitudes and lifestyles of some of these baby boomer women are changing. They are redefining middle age (Lambeth, 1998). Some of these boomers, the women denying aging, are also stockpiling ammunition against aging, such as hair coloring, cosmetics, vitamins and a host of other items (Russell, 1995).

Some of the boomers today are some of the youth of yesterday who rebelled against their parents with their music and such events as Woodstock. Many boomers today actively participated in the formation and sustaining of what is called the generation gap. Some of these fans today are the fans of yesterday who trusted no one under 30. In the 60s and 70s, rock was to some youth as "The National Anthem" is to some United States citizens. Both older and younger

generations now share some of the same music (Cavicchi, 1998).

Radio audience profiles show that 25 years after Woodstock, some Americans still used popular music to choose their social groups (Piiro, 1994). As an example, Woodstock-era music is packaged and sold as Classic Rock to this group of music fans, the baby boomers. The music of the Beatles, Rolling Stones and the Who that once divided these fans from their parents now brings some of these baby boomers closer to their own children. Many of these Classic Rock listeners, some of whom are children of the baby boomers, seem nostalgic for an era they were not able to experience but are able to do so vicariously through their baby boomer parents (Piiro, 1994). Some boomer parents use their interest in rock and roll as a bridge to their children (Star & Rosenberg, 1993). Some boomer parents enjoy discussing their musical preferences with their children. The only interest some of the parents of the boomer children showed was asking why they had to play the music so loud.

Now, some boomer parents make concert attendance a family event (Star & Rosenberg, 1993).

The "Me" generation, as the baby boomers have been called, were one of the greatest consuming groups in history because they were born in such a time when their parents did not need them to go out and earn money with part-time jobs to help support the family. Some parents of baby boomer children did not need for the baby boomer children to stay home and work on the farm as their parents had to help support the family. This was a generation in which some were privileged to simply be paid to do simple chores around the house and earn an allowance. This allowance became a target for business, especially the music business.

Some members of this baby boomer generation who because they are turning 50, refuse to accept the traditional portrayal of 50-year-olds of their youth, the silver-haired, rocking chair, Geritol-consumer, constipated oldster (Weis, 1997). This is a generation who has band members still touring and working the industry with a vengeance such as Aerosmith, Rolling Stones, Kiss, Grateful Dead,

Springsteen and others. You will see many members of this baby boomer generation still attending these concerts and listening to the same music with which they grew up. These are the music fans who heard from their parents, "Turn down that noise!" but now listen to the same music as their children and maybe grandchildren. They're still wearing the same jeans, supporting the same types of movies, drinking the same beer and attending the same concerts as in their youth. The major difference between then and now is the amount of money they have to spend (Weis, 1997).

Advertisers are still targeting this boomer generation because many of its members are still indulging themselves as when they were young. Some of these boomer members are a young-at-heart group of people who like to have fun and think of themselves as full of life. Some of these boomers remember some of the goals they didn't accomplish the first time around and are doing their best to not miss out on their dreams this time. Some of these boomer women are women who may have experienced their fair share of daily tedium and

are looking for an escape from a humdrum existence (Russell, 1995). Psychologically, this is a group of people who have one last at bat before packing it in and they are swinging for the fence (Weis, 1997). Ed Bennett, former president of VH-1, said when planning the target audience for VH-1, that this generation had some members who were still growing up. It just so happens that the youthful spirit of rock and roll is now residing in an older body and anyone has the power to possess youth's spirit (Weinstein, 1999). Fun is something you do for yourself and it is in short supply for some of these baby boomer women (Russell, 1995).

Fans of any given pursuit are not necessarily limited to their fandom due to a team's location, attendance at an artist's concert in or near the city where the fan resides or the ability or inability of a fan to partake in their pursuit live and in person. With the development of transportation technology, satellites, cable and the Internet, individuals can choose to be a fan and achieve a whole new level of contact with their favorite team, favorite athlete or favorite artist,

regardless of the fan's location (Ben-Porat, 2000; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; and Lewis, 2001).

Offline fandom existed long before online fandom but both types of fandom will overlap and converge in the day of the Internet (Clerc, 1996). Fans, aided by present-day technology, are able to show their own particular brand of fandom online. Not only are the fans able to participate in chat rooms, send e-mails or post messages on electronic bulletin boards, but they also create and host their own fan websites. Some of these Backstreet Boys fan sites are hosted by fans in Singapore, France, Brazil, Canada, Spain, England, Poland and the United States, among others. Each site offers its own brand of fandom but the most important aspect about these sites, is that fans from different parts of the world are able to see and read what other fans in other countries are thinking, saying, experiencing and feeling about the Backstreet Boys (Johnson & Fantle, 2000).

Fans can be stereotyped in two groups - positive and negative (Cavicchi, 1998). Examples of negative fandom could be Mark Chapman and John

Hinkley, Jr. Examples of positive fandom can be those fans who dress like their favorite pop star, fans who camp out overnight for tickets and fans who join fan clubs (Cavicchi, 1998). Fans, for the most part, are people who attend media texts, stars, sports team or the sunset in greater than usual detail (MacDonald, 1998).

In pursuing this research of music fans, and fandom in general, three prominent reasons for being a fan were discovered. Fans of different pursuits are generally found to be fans for three main reasons: emotional, cognitive and social. The lines between these different reasons are not bold. There may be times when music experiences can overlap into two of the categories, or even all of them.

For purposes of this study, the term "fan," as applied to these particular respondents, will mean that they are active participants in their fandom. These fans are not simply observers and watchers of the Backstreet Boys.

EMOTIONAL REASONS

On some occasions, when fans listen to their favorite music, they may experience a personal 'high,' it may cause them to reminisce about a special moment or time period in their lives, or they may feel inclined to be romantic. Music listeners may also use music as an emotional release when they are experiencing troubles, experiencing empathy with problems of others, having a substitute for social contact, are bored, feel the need to be energized, want to feel excitement, are experiencing anxiety or they want to relax. This type of participation is called emotional participation (Dominick, 1996; Kivy, 1999; Lull, 1992; Madell, 1996; McQuail, 1994; and Wann, Schrader & Wilson, 1999).

Music has the power to provoke extreme emotions in music fans (Wells, 1990). Music fans will sometimes use not only the music, but also the lyrics, as a form of self-help psychotherapy (Wells, 1990). The music fan will find music with which they can identify and associate their own personal experiences and through the process of

free association, will attempt to solve their problems.

Mood manipulation is a very popular theme in research regarding the emotional use of music. Some studies report that music was primarily used to relieve boredom, ease tensions, fight loneliness (Gantz, Gartenberg, Pearson & Schiller, 1978) relax, get into the right mood, express how the listener felt (Rosenbaum & Prinsky, 1987) and shift mood (Melton & Galician, 1987).

One Bruce Springsteen fan recalls two ways in which he reminisces when hearing certain Springsteen music. While he was dating his high school sweetheart, he recalls two songs of Springsteen's, "Tougher Than the Rest" and "Tunnel of Love" as being especially passionate and beautiful. When the couple eventually broke up, the fan said he listened to the "Darkness" album continuously. The song "Badlands" helped him to be upset, enraged, consoled and saddened, all at the same time (Cavicchi, 1998).

Eventually the young man went on to college. There in his second semester he met a young lady.

At the time, he was focused on Springsteen's "The River" album, playing it over and over. While they only dated a few short months, this man enjoys "blasting out his car speakers" every Spring with "The River" (Cavicchi, 1998).

Another Springsteen fan found support in Springsteen's music while he was living through a difficult time in his life. He says the Springsteen music helped him endure (Cavicchi, 1998).

In their "Music in Daily Life" project, a team of researchers interviewed numerous music listeners to find out how or why these listeners listen to a certain type of music. There were music listeners of all ages that were interviewed (Crafts, Cavicchi & Keil, 1993).

One music listener reported using music as a release from the rat race and upon returning [to the rat race], felt relaxed and comfortable. Another music listener used music to enhance her mood. For instance, if she felt noble, she would play songs like "The Impossible Dream" or "Man From LaMancha." If this person was feeling depressed,

she would listen to classical music or country music. Another music listener told stories of how she and her sister would use music as a background while they cleaned house. If these sisters wanted a more subdued mood, they would put on easy listening music (Crafts, Cavicchi & Keil, 1993).

The emotion of love was analyzed in a study of college students (Wells, 1990). Love is widely acknowledged to be the most common and overwhelming component of western popular music (Wells, 1990). Using music to change one's mood, to lift one's spirits or to combat depression was also widely acknowledged in this study.

Many students, bored with the mundane chores of life, will use music for a variety of reasons. These reasons include when doing homework, doing assigned chores around the house or driving. Students will also use music to take their minds off of their troubles, or to get themselves or keep themselves in a certain mood (Gantz, Gartenberg, Pearson & Schiller, 1978).

A study was conducted by former high school teachers. They were trying to understand students'

fandom. They wanted to bring students' fandom into the classroom, across disciplines, to enhance and reinforce literacy. Here the researchers recount the fandom of a student named Max (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). Max enjoyed a certain form of instrumental music. It was a venue for him to experience pleasure. Through the instrumental texts, Max could experience deep emotional feelings for this music which he said had the capacity to help him fly or take him away.

Lest one believe that these emotional uses are confined to music listeners in the United States, there is a study that discovered when music is the focus, the mood management aspect takes precedence over routine time-filling and boredom relief. This was found in a study of Swedish adolescents (Roe, 1985).

In a study of sports fans of small college sports, researchers delineated the factors influencing fans' attendance at sporting events (Krohn, Clark, Preston, McDonald & Preston, 1998). One of these factors was the fans' emotional aspect that the researchers categorized as excitement.

One of the reasons for this need for excitement was the respective fan's need to take a break from the monotony of a repetitive job schedule (Krohn, et al, 1998). This study also reported that many of these same fans like to break up a monotonous work week by attending a sporting event and they found that for some of these fans the excitement factor coincided with the escape factor.

Not only do the fans accomplish the goal of breaking up a boring work week, but they also enjoy the risks that athletes take during a competition. The risks excite these fans because they are risks the everyday fan does not generally experience in her or his life on a daily basis. This nervousness excites the spectator and makes the experience all the more enjoyable because other forms of excitement and/or entertainment may not feature these risks (Koppett, 1981).

A study of World Wide Federation of Wrestling (WWF) fans found that fans became so emotionally involved in the event that they forgot it was staged. The fans saw the wrestler in the ring as a real person. These fans were unable to separate

the wrestling persona from the real life persona of the individual (Ball, 1990). A later study of WWF fans resulted in the authors finding that they believed the fans could discern the difference but chose to become emotionally involved in the wrestling spectacle anyway. These fans saw the wrestling event as a cartoon-type situation in which they [the fan] could participate as wrestling crowds do, by screaming, spitting, throwing M&Ms and booing the referees (Cruz, Hodgkinson, Hundley, Heller, Livingston, Obenaus & Trujillo, 2000).

Being comfortable as a fan leads to findings on female fans of wrestling. Some women became fans of wrestling in the 1940s and 1950s. These first female fans were women who were called out of their homes to work at jobs while men went to war. When the men returned, these women were reluctant to return to the home. Wrestling offered these WWII-era women a chance to rebel against the traditional definition of women at the time (Dell, 1998). These women who became fans of wrestling could attend wrestling matches, transcend behavioral expectations and engage in conduct that

was out of control. These female wrestling fans could abandon the demure and deferential roles they had been assigned by society at the time and act aggressively - both verbally and physically (Dell, 1998).

The banality of life as motivation was also addressed (Klapp, 1972). Banality is defined as "a restriction of awareness, a shallowness of meaning, or the feeling something is missing from a person's environment." "Boredom is the major cause of this deficiency and is created to deal with the problem of banality" (Klapp, 1972).

Another of the categories defined in the emotional needs of fans is inspirational (Krohn, Clarke, Preston, McDonald & Preston, 1998). This group of researchers reported that the fans in their study stated they followed a certain team or players because of the emotional stimulation they get from watching a particular player or team perform. Other fans reported their simple fascination of the atmosphere of the event.

Likewise, it comes about with the music fan. It is said most Springsteen fans are active rather

than passive at a concert. One fan says he becomes so exhausted that he's actually relieved after Springsteen is finished with the third or fourth encore. This fan says that all during the concert he is on his feet, yelling and screaming and applauding. At the conclusion of a Springsteen concert, this fan is just ready to sit down (Cavicchi, 1998).

In setting forth a description of the symbolism of football, liberation is the essence of football; i.e., the breaking away, running for daylight and escaping containment (Novak, 1994). As the defensive team tries to hold tight, the offensive team tries to break through. This struggle can be likened to dealing with frustrations in one's own life. The every day, common fan can identify with the emotions and struggles of the members of the football team (Novak, 1994).

The concept of struggle as regards sports and the sport fan has been discussed elsewhere. Sport draws people together to witness, identify with and participate in a contest where the predominant

perception is people struggling against one another, not unlike the every day world of the sport fan (Butt, 1987). As in the every day life of the sport fan, on the field there is also the struggle for superiority. There is a victor and the vanquished. Fans sometimes seek satisfaction as a sports fan because of their lack of success in their work or lack of fulfillment in their struggle for material gain, status or position.

Music is clearly an important element in the lives of listeners. From the literature reviewed here, it can be seen that listeners will discriminate between the danceability of music and music that contains deeper musical values, music that 'speaks' to them. This discriminating of music also takes place in the life of the artist. As an example, in her return to the music scene in April 2002, Celine Dion says her life has changed because of the birth of her baby boy. For instance, she once rejected a song written for her entitled "Goodbye's (the Saddest Word)." This is a song about motherhood and contains the lyrics, "There is no love like a mother's love for a

child." Dion said two years ago she couldn't sing it as she could not identify with motherhood. She said that since the writer saved the song and brought it back to her, now that she can identify as a mother, she is able to draw strength from this song and can sing it to her mother. Dion hopes that one day her son, too, will sing it to her (Morse, 2002).

Daniel Cavicchi had a similar experience with his Bruce Springsteen fandom. Not until after the birth of his first child did he develop a new appreciation for some Bruce Springsteen songs. Cavicchi stayed at home to care for his son. Only after this experience in his life was he able to truly appreciate Springsteen's take on family life in the songs "Human Touch" and "Lucky Town" (Cavicchi, 1998).

This does not mean that an artist must experience something personally in order to express it. There are many musicians that perform cover songs. There are many performers that portray a character that may be quite the opposite of the performer's persona. There are many actors that

portray Shakespearean characters certainly without having lived that life. The experiences of Celine Dion and Daniel Cavicchi were their personal awakenings.

COGNITIVE REASONS

When music fans listen to their favorite music, they may use it to process information, get information or advice, stimulate thought, contribute to their memory, frame their perception of a place and moment in time or society, gain insight into one's own life and self-concept, gain entry into an imaginary world as an escapist function when they are trying to forget about their problems, learn how to do things, or even to reflect on the meaning of social and romantic relationships. This type of participation is called cognitive participation (Christenson & Roberts, 1998; Dominick, 1996; Lull, 1992; Melton & Galician, 1987; McQuail, 1994; von Felitzen, 1976 and Wann, Schrader & Wilson, 1999).

A Springsteen fan told a story of how he reacted to Springsteen the performer. This man said he was at a concert and remembers being very

moved by Springsteen's performance. Even though the fan said he couldn't understand a word of what Springsteen was saying or singing, the fan admired Springsteen's energy, power, his music and the band. The fan said part of him wanted to be up there and be the star. This fan said Springsteen had a passion, was reaching out to people and communicating through that passion (Cavicchi, 1998). This is representative of a cognitive experience in that the Springsteen fan possibly wanted to enter the imaginary world and become the performer. Insofar as this fan believed Springsteen was communicating through the passion of his performance, it is possible this fan could reflect on the meaning of the social relationship between himself and Springsteen the artist.

There was a story told in a New York Post article of a fan named Liz (Root, 1986). Liz, while never having met the artist Linda Ronstadt, could identify closely with her, or at least the persona that Ronstadt was portraying when she sang her heart-break ballads. Liz had a boyfriend who had to move away and when Liz was feeling sad and

lonely, she would retreat into the Ronstadt song "Long, Long Time." When listening to this song, Liz would fantasize that she and Ronstadt were linked, that Ronstadt and she felt the same things. Through listening to Ronstadt's music, Liz could reflect on her prior relationship.

Another way to cognitively identify with the artist or the persona portrayed by the artist is with the artist's treatment of the theme or subject of the song (Root, 1986). The treatment of the concept of breaking up in a relationship was studied between two songs, "For the Good Times" by Kris Kristofferson and "If You Could Read My Mind" by Gordon Lightfoot (Root, 1986).

In Kristofferson's song, the emphasis is on the attitude of parting. Kristofferson's treatment of breaking up is a philosophical one, maybe something that's to be expected as part of a relationship. Sometimes breaking up is something that just happens and neither party is at fault. While breaking up is a sad part of life, in this song no one is mistreated and the lyrics propose that life will go on for both parties (Root, 1986).

Lightfoot, on the other hand, presents a different version of breaking up. In his song, the male in the relationship feels trapped, imprisoned and doomed (Root, 1986). The male is ready to move on while the female is portrayed as a hanger-on, an anchor and someone who can't face reality. Lightfoot's treatment of breaking up has a sense of futility, confusion and even anger.

Thus, the different treatment by the two artists of a single concept allows audience members to identify with each concept. Kristofferson's song appeals to a more mature and understanding audience, i.e., those who may have experienced more of life, including breakups, and can see past the relationship (Root, 1986). No specific comments were made on the audience for Lightfoot's version of breaking up but it seems to imply a less mature audience, or at least those persons who have not had a great deal of relationship experience (Root, 1986).

Continuing in the same vein, the popular artist of the 60s or 70s was quite possibly someone with whom the young listener could meaningfully

identify (Goldberg, 1971). An example of a performance by the music group the Doors is studied. In a concert appearance, the lead singer of the group was arrested and taken off stage for an indecent and immoral exhibition and, in the process, resisted arrest. In the early 70s, this was a sign of rebellion and resistance for which younger fans then admired the artist. Instead of this being a career-ending event, this only enhanced the popularity of the Doors (Goldberg, 1971). This is an example of the fan again cognitively entering the imaginary world of the performer.

Intertwined with sports fans' excitement and escape function, there is also included in this category an example where fans could identify with their sports team or favorite player (Krohn, Clarke, Preston, McDonald & Preston, 1998). This is a cognitive application (Root, 1986). Fans reported that they consider such sports as football and hockey as being a difficult and brutal job for the player. The fans used this analogy to relate the constant struggle for position by the athlete

to the fan's constant struggles in their own daily lives (Butt, 1987).

Fan identification has also been cited as a motivation for sports fans (Krohn, Clarke, Preston, McDonald & Preston, 1998). Sports fans will identify with a sports team or player to feel a part of the world, to satisfy the fan's need to belong, because of the fan's feelings of simply being another cog in the machine (Beisser, 1967) and to emphasize their own individual uniqueness from other individuals around them (Ben-Porat, 2000; Lewis, 2001; and Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Fans will believe they are an integral part of the game and will even go so far as to experience some of the feelings they believe the players feel before a game, such as nervousness and increased heart rate. Some fans will actually go over game plans as if they are playing the game themselves (Beisser, 1967).

The Washington Redskins football team once had a famous and devoted fan. Then-president Richard Nixon desperately wanted to attend the 1973 Super bowl where the Redskins were playing the Miami

Dolphins. In order for Nixon to attend the game though, 100 fans would have been deprived of their seats. Nixon did not go to the game. To help satisfy his football craving, Nixon busied himself diagraming plays for his Redskins. He didn't dare pass these suggestions along to the coaching staff. He had done that once before. The use of one of Nixon's diagramed plays resulted in an interception of the Redskins (Roberts, 1976). Nixon's involvement with diagraming plays allowed him to possibly enter the imaginary world of coaching. He also learned how to do something by his involvement.

Fans and parents of wrestlers are instructed by coaches that in order to experience maximum enjoyment at a high school wrestling meet, the fan or parent should have a complete understanding of the sport. This understanding would include knowing how scoring takes place, how the rules and regulations apply and the attributes of a successful performer. This requires some studying of the sport before attending a meet (Niebel & Niebel, 1982). The more complete the fan's

understanding of the sport, the more appreciative the fan will be of a superlative performance (Niebel & Niebel, 1982). This is an example of learning how to do something or how something is achieved.

Fans also identify with a football player by bonding with that player and living vicariously through the player (Novak, 1994). The football player dons the uniform of the sacrificial lamb, much like a priest donning vestments and offering himself at mass. In the mind's eye of some fans, the football player represents that fan and suffers for that fan, physically, mentally and emotionally. To some fans, the player ceases to be a separate person. Again, in the mind's eye of some fans, the player's actions are the actions of that particular fan. Some fans believe that the player's success is their success, the player's pain is their pain, the player's triumph is their triumph (Novak, 1994). This is another example of gaining entry into an imaginary world.

This relative identification can sometimes border on co-dependency. If a particular fan has a

low self-worth and believes there is little if any value in this fan's life, this needy fan can become co-dependent on the player, depending on that player's success for any amount of success in the fan's life.

A crucial link between fan identity and fan support was found in further research (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). Fans can identify very easily with athletes not only because of the athlete's good record, but also because of the community service performed in their respective cities.

Hockey seems to be more cult than sport. Fans who love the game are fanatical about it. Hockey fans don't simply enjoy it, they clutch it. They seem to care more than fans of any other sport (Looney, 1999). An example of this are the fans of the hockey team in Nashville. Nashville ended its season with a 28-47-7 (wins-losses-ties) record. Nashville finished last in its division (Looney, 1999).

Some Canadian hockey fans were lamenting the loss of their city's hockey team in a study of fan allegiance (Lewis, 2001). One Winnipeg Jet fan,

whose team was moved to Arizona, thereby becoming the Phoenix Coyotes, was telling the story of when he and his dad would go to the arena on very, very cold nights. He didn't care who played, he said, just that his team won. The fan said that when the team needed the fans, the fans were there and when the team was moved, the fans felt they lost something important to them. Another Winnipeg fan has fond memories of his mother pulling them out of school to go watch the team practice. These are examples of a fan adding to his memory and framing his perception of a place and moment in time (Lewis, 2001).

Recalling the earlier study of former high school teachers in their attempt to bring students' fandom into the classroom, through interviews and e-mails with Max, they also discovered Max was a fan of punk music (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). Max used his interest in punk music to try and learn how to play and write this type of music thereby cognitively using music to learn how to do something new. Max also used his music to gain a sense of who he was as a person and a musician.

Similarly, a Springsteen fans uses Springsteen's music to see how she has grown or changed. This fan says she will notice something in a song that's been there all along but at a particular point in her life, the song takes on new meaning. This fan will also hear something in a song and remember what she was like at that particular time and how she is now. This fan says she can see personal change over time by using Springsteen's music as a gauge (Cavicchi, 1998).

SOCIAL REASONS

Another popular and frequent use of music is for social utility (Dominick, 1996). When music listeners use music to facilitate relationships with friends or significant others, joining others at a concert or using music as a basis for social contact, music is being used as a social lubricant that encourages interaction among listeners. When music listeners use music to establish a vicarious relationship with the music artist to compensate for isolation or loneliness, or to be a friend with the artist, music is being used for social utility. When music listeners use music to fantasize about a

possible wanted romantic relationship with the music artist, music is being used for social utility (Christenson & Roberts, 1998; Clarke, 1976; Dominick, 1996; Lull, 1992; McQuail, 1994; Palano, 1998; and Wann, Schrader & Wilson, 1999).

When people get together with music as their adhesive, a certain type of bonding will occur. An older Springsteen fan tells of her connecting with much younger Springsteen fans. Music can be a bridge in this instance. According to this Springsteen fan, music appeared to erase the generation gap and facilitated social relations when she and other younger Springsteen fans would discuss Springsteen music (Cavicchi, 1998).

The fan world structures itself around a series of conventions (Bacon-Smith, 1992). These conventions spatially organize the interaction between the community and potential new members. Conventions are not a new concept. The science fiction community held its first convention in 1936 (Bacon-Smith, 1992). Conventions also serve as formal meeting places for smaller groups of fans who follow a convention circuit (Bacon-Smith,

1992). Conventions are a chance for fans to meet face-to-face, possibly for the first time. Some of these fans communicate over the Internet or through print groups (newsletters). This may provide a reason for friends who live far apart to get together at least once a year (Clerc, 1996). In the new and expanding Internet culture, a virtual community will offer a sense of connectedness or belongingness to a fan of a given pursuit (Wakefield, 2001).

Conventions are also a chance for parents and children, siblings, spouses and friends to share a common interest. Jennifer is a fifteen-year-old high school student. Elizabeth, her mother, is an administrative assistant for a software company. They flew from Chicago to Los Angeles to attend a soap opera convention. A variety of fans attended this convention. For example, also in attendance were a retired couple in their seventies, a housewife from Des Moines, two sisters and a middle-aged corporate executive who is attending her ninth daytime luncheon (Harrington & Bielby, 1995).

For the fans, this convention is like attending an extended family reunion. These fans consider the soap opera stars and other fans as family. The participants are symbolically intimate with their fandom yet geographically distant. They come together on a Sunday afternoon to share a meal, exchange gossip, catch up on old times and take pictures. Afterwards, they part, exhausted, knowing the same thing will occur next year also (Harrington & Bielby, 1995).

Elvis fans also consider Elvis as family. Minnie Hamlett of Paris, Arkansas says that Elvis has always been an essential element of her life. She said she remembers when he was drafted, when his mom died and when he married. He was like a member of her family (Doss, 1999). Gloria Winters of Elizabethton, Tennessee said she cried for days when Elvis died. She said it was as though someone in her family had died (Doss, 1999).

Radio is classified as a personal medium because music is personal and the fan's choice of music on the radio can be an important part of a person's self-image or membership in a social group

(Piiro, 1994). Music is like a common language because people with common musical interests seem to have common social threads (Piiro, 1994).

A study of Israeli fans of English football revealed a substantial following of fans in Israel. These fans use this opportunity to get together and share their enthusiasm for the sport (Ben-Porat, 2000).

A study of male and female sports fans found that female sports fans classify themselves as sports fans for social purposes. They are primarily fans because they watch the event on television or attend the sporting event to be with friends and family (Dietz-Uehler, Harrick, End, and Jacquemotte, 2000).

A new trend in sports viewing is that of going to a sports bar to watch a sporting event. The sports fans patronizing these sports bars combined what they thought as the best of both worlds. The fans were able to watch the chosen sport via the convenience and cost-effectiveness of television. These fans were also able to socialize with a large

group of fans, thereby re-creating a live, sports arena setting (Eastman & Land, 1997).

Likewise, the world of comic book fandom also serves as a social lubricant. In discussing comic book fandom, not only do these fans congregate at their local comic book store but also at conventions (Brown, 1997). These conventions range in size from regional gatherings attracting a few hundred to a few thousand fans to a national convention, or Super Conventions, that last from two to fourteen days, attracting tens of thousands of fans from around the world (Brown, 1997). At these conventions, fans get a chance to get together with other fans and talk about comics. These fans also have a good opportunity to make new friends who have similar interests and with whom they can stay in touch after the convention.

Similarly, after the death of Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead, sociologist Rebecca Adams received 150 letters from Deadheads writing of their grieving experiences for their family member, their friend and a member of their close-knit community (Adams, 1998). At the time of Garcia's

death, Adams said she had received letters from children of Deadheads who were trying to understand their parents' grieving experiences. She has also assisted parents in trying to understand their Deadhead children and lawyers representing Deadhead clients. Adams, a Deadhead aficionado and Deadhead researcher, stays in touch with many Deadheads through Deadhead media, such as the Golden Road, Dead Head TV and the Unbroken Chain newsletter.

In a study of X-Files fans, the author found that the Internet fan club of Dana Scully, a female lead in the story, used the character of Dana Scully as a rallying point for members; i.e., a locus of female power (Wakefield, 2001). These women aren't passive participants of popular culture. They are taking popular culture and using it as the starting point of their community for women (Wakefield, 2001). They have utilized their fandom of Dana Scully not so much to start a fan club but to form new interpersonal relationships among themselves (Wakefield, 2001).

Likewise, the members of a Backstreet Boys fan club, Mature Fan Club, plan an annual convention held in July in Orlando, Florida, home of the Backstreet Boys. This is an opportunity for adult Backstreet Boys fans from around the world to attend a convention and to meet other Backstreet Boys fans of their age. They hand out awards to the "most mature fan" and "the weary traveler award." The most mature fan at the 2001 convention was 54 and the weary traveler flew from Okinawa to spend a few days in Orlando, Florida with Backstreet Boys fans her age.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Three prominent themes - emotional, cognitive and social - were found in the literature. Almost all research conducted regarding music fans pertains to adolescents and possibly college students. This research departs from the standard adolescent studies of music fans and examines adult, female music fans. These women were born in 1946 through 1964. A goal of the Backstreet Boys is that their music be for everyone and they continually strive to reach new people with their

music (Nichols, 1998). Backstreet Boy, AJ, says, "Music is the universal language....Our show is for everybody and our music is for everybody. Guys, girls young, old - it doesn't really matter."

(Nichols, p. 94). Focusing on these adult, female fans, the following question emerges:

Why are some baby boomer females, born during 1946 through 1964, fans of the Backstreet Boys?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

PROCEDURE

The World Wide Web provides researchers with numerous types of informational material that can be analyzed in many ways (Norris, Dollahite & Hawkins, 1999). Interviews can be conducted in chat rooms. A researcher can observe participants conversing in a chat room. A content analysis of messages posted on bulletin boards is also available as a research tool (Lewis, 2001). Additionally, a researcher is able to obtain responses from participants around the world by a posting on the World Wide Web. These can be very fruitful sources of information about a particular problem or interest because of the unfathomable amount of websites available.

This type of study examines the ordinary experiences of everyday people (Plummer, 1999). Researchers wanting to study the everyday person can now rely on films, photos, magazines, music and websites, to name but a few, as avenues for their

studies, thereby entering the world of that everyday person.

In order to answer the research question, the question, "Why are you a Backstreet Boys' fan?" will be posted on a website known as the Backstreet Boys Adult Connection (BSBAC) located at www.fly.to/bsbac. This site was started on April 5, 1999 by a young adult, female named Maria. This site has received awards as an adult site for the Backstreet Boys. This site has had 474,132 hits to date, for an average of 118,533 hits per year. This site is advertised as a haven for adult fans. BSBAC Adult Connection contains a bulletin board where fans can write in and post their Backstreet stories, hopes and dreams, concert experiences and meetings with the Backstreet Boys and other fans.

Maria has agreed to post the question, "Why are you a fan of Backstreet Boys?" Maria will set up a link in the center of the page, directly under her message. The link will be identified with "Please help another adult fan." The other adult fan is the author. Fans will have the option to access the link, read the posting (Appendix "K")

and respond to the researcher's e-mail address with their stories.

Almost all age groups studied in prior published research are adolescents. There are a limited number of studies using college students as the sample. Prior research has also used both males and females in the samples. This study will analyze comments of females only, born between the years of 1946 and 1964. This age group is known as the baby boomer cohort (Morgan, 1998).

This study uses baby boomer women only as respondents in order to discuss their fandom with a certain depth. This narrow sample also helps to avoid extremes in responses (Cavicchi, 1998).

This study also chose Backstreet Boys fans because they are a well-organized following for one of the major pop bands at the present time. At the time this study was undertaken, there were two competing pop bands consisting of young men of the same age range. The competing group also had an adult female following.

The everyday comments and stories of common, everyday women will be analyzed. The content

analysis of messages will be conducted by reading all responses received in answer to the posting. First, the entry will be included if the fan's age meets the criteria for this study. The fan responding must be born in the years 1946 to and including 1964. Next, the fan's story will be read to see if the message or story answers the posted question. The statements and stories will be analyzed to see if the messages received appear to develop common themes.

A list of key words has been developed from the literature review (Appendix "L"). The fan's story will be read to determine if it reflects any of these keywords or concepts. For example, if a fan states in her reply that one of the songs of the Backstreet Boys makes her think of a special time in her life or if listening to Backstreet Boys music helps provide a diversion or influences her mood, then these types of statements would be considered an emotional reason for the fan's Backstreet Boys fandom based on current literature. If for instance, a fan states in her reply that she remembers something from her past when listening to

Backstreet Boys music or proceeds to discuss her fantasies of the Backstreet Boys, then these types of statements would reflect a cognitive application of the Backstreet Boys music, based on current literature. Finally, if the fan replying talks about social gatherings because of Backstreet Boys music, or is talking about a concert attendance or has met with other fans at a convention or other organized gathering, these types of statements will reflect a social application of Backstreet Boys' music, based on current literature.

The analysis of messages will concentrate on those messages received from fans between the period June 24, 2002 to August 24, 2002. The messages will be printed, and then separated to see if they develop thematic patterns. Similar messages will be color-coded for ease in review. Examples will be used in the Results section as representative of the types of use or dialogue routinely used in the stories of these fans (Bielby, Harrington & Bielby, 1999).

An important area concerning the study of people is whether or not an author sought

permission to portray these people. When studying people, it is important to give them a chance to contribute their perspective to the research (Ellis, 2000). Permission to conduct this study has been obtained from the university's Internal Review Board (Appendix "M"). Additionally, all participants are adults and participate on a voluntary basis. Their perspective is what is being studied.

This researcher has attended Backstreet Boys concerts, has joined a couple of fan clubs and is on the mailing list to receive all of the updates to the BSBAC site. This researcher also e-mails other Backstreet Boys fans on a regular basis, both in the United States and Europe. Because of the researcher's Backstreet Boy fandom and practices, this provides a "safe" haven for the often-criticized adult, female fan to share her experiences. Through shared fandom, the respondents know that the researcher can appreciate and understand the fan's stories and language used.

In attending concerts, it is amazing to see the number of adult women, clearly over the age of

25, attending with their daughters and in groups of adult women only. This observation aroused curiosity as to why they, too, were fans of this group of young men. Attending concerts, visiting websites for updated information on the group, and e-mailing new-found friends has contributed to an enhanced curiosity and understanding of this fan base.

LIMITATIONS

There are some pitfalls to be avoided by the researcher in qualitative research. Some of the more common pitfalls are the "researcher's (a) projection, (b) sampling and (c) mood and style" (Boyatzis, 1998).

If the researcher is a participant in the topic she or he is researching, as is the case in this study, it is very common for the researcher to project her or his attitudes, beliefs and values upon the responses of the sample (Boyatzis, 1998). An example of this would be if the researcher believes there is a better way to state a response than the one supplied by the participant. The researcher in her or his I-would-have-said-it-this-

way state of mind, would then project her or his own thoughts when reporting a sample member's response. It is acceptable for the researcher to have experience with the topic of study. It is important that the researcher be careful in discerning between how she or he would prefer to present a statement and the temptation to fill in information. It is also important that the researcher is able to identify with how a respondent is thinking and understanding the respondent's language. The negative impacts of projection can be lessened if the researcher develops a code, utilizes consistency in judgment, uses others to encode the information and, stays as close as possible to the raw information when developing the themes and codes (Boyatzis, 1998). However, as other researchers of fan culture will reiterate, and the fans themselves will also state, it is difficult to put their fandom into words. It must truly be experienced to be understood (Wakefield, 2001).

The sample in a qualitative study is also deserving of scrutiny. The researcher, in seeking

information, must be confident that the sample will be able to provide the information sought. The researcher must be attentive to the sample in that one cannot over-generalize the attitudes, beliefs and values of the entire population. For example, in this study, the researcher wishes to ascertain the attitudes, beliefs and values of that section of baby boomer women who are fans of the Backstreet Boys. Thus, the researcher would not ask questions of all baby boomer women but would limit the sample to those baby boomer women who are fans of the Backstreet Boys and who went to the website, clicked on the link and responded to the author's posting. Conversely, the responses of this segment of baby boomer women cannot be reported such that a reader is led to believe that all baby boomer women are fans of the Backstreet Boys.

Lastly, the researcher must be cognizant of her or his state of mind when conducting research. The researcher needs to keep an open mind towards responses to allow for honesty in the study. States of mind or body, such as fatigue, impatience, boredom, preoccupied thoughts, among

others, can affect the integrity of the results.

Thus, the researcher must be attuned to her or his mood when researching (Boyatzis, 1998).

This work will analyze the messages of female baby boomer fans of the Backstreet Boys born between the years of 1946 and including 1964. This work will concentrate on messages received from some of these fans through one website only through which we may be able to observe fans from all over the world and experience the exponential impact of the Internet.

Through the use of the Internet, this researcher will post a question on a chosen webpage allowing voluntary participants to share their stories of Backstreet Boys fandom. The stories of these fans will be analyzed to determine if any themes develop. This research will also report some of the stories as examples in developing themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The baby boomer fans responding to the research question listed many reasons for being a fan of the Backstreet Boys. Interestingly, responses ranged in length from one sentence from one fan to a litany of reasons covering several pages from another. Many of the reasons listed by the respondents for being a fan followed current literature because they are reflective of the three main reasons for being a fan. The three main reasons for being a fan fall under three themes: emotional, cognitive and social. There were other reasons listed that did not seem to fall into these three themes. There were also other reasons listed that added a new dimension to the understanding of the current literature reviewed in this study.

There were 33 baby boomer fans responding to the research questions. These 33 fans shared 89 reasons why they were fans. These 89 reasons were then printed and key words highlighted and reviewed for

this study. All responses were dated between the period of June 24, 2002 to August 24, 2002.

EMOTIONAL REASONS

Ten of the respondents in this study, or one-third of the total, stated emotional reasons for being a fan of Backstreet Boys. The respondents here share some of their moments when they will play Backstreet Boys music for emotional reasons.

There are times when people feel fatigued or stressed from a hectic day at work. One of the ways in which the respondents of this study coped with this fatigue and stress was to play Backstreet Boys music. One fan in particular has a favorite song she plays after her stressful day at work. Hiedi says when she gets home she'll put on "I'll Never Break Your Heart." At that point, she says, all is right again in the world for her.

Many individuals, after enduring that stressful day at work, walk out to their cars for another leg in the journey of the day. They have a commute. Teresa brings her friends, the Backstreet Boys, along with her for the commute. Listening to their music on the commute home enables Teresa to return to

happiness. She says, "If it makes me happy, it's a good thing."

Chandra also has a 40-minute commute. She said she's a channel surfer during her commute as she likes to listen to just about every form of music. She said during her routine 'hunt,' she heard the Backstreet Boys singing "Everybody." She said she liked it because it was pure sugary bubble gum pop with two hooks in it about a mile wide.

In these times of turmoil, emotional upset and uncertainty after the events of September 11, 2001, people sometimes will look to music for answers or stability. The fans here believe that Backstreet Boys music answers their questions. These fans believe that Backstreet Boys music is soothing and helps them in these relatively troubling times. Others believe that Backstreet Boys music is important because the music has messages of love and romance. Yoshie believes this type of music is a very important factor in these difficult-to-live times.

Some individuals will find themselves mostly listening to talk radio and news shows. They say

this enables them to keep current with present world events. They believe this also enables them to be well informed. However, they also say this does not enable them to balance their respective lives.

Backstreet Boys fan Pat said this was her life. She said while she certainly believes she is well informed, she really wasn't relaxing and enjoying life. She found that the Backstreet Boys music brought her back to listening to enjoyable music. She said she is more able to relax with their music and truly enjoy life.

It seems as if many people have serious emotional overload in their lives. Some of the events of their lives are more troubling than others. During these times, people will sometimes latch onto music to help them through. Backstreet Boys fan Ria found this to be so in her life. She and her children had traversed the path of divorce and endured the deaths of a parent and friends. Ria said she and her children could truly connect with the Backstreet Boys song, "Show Me The Meaning (of Being Lonely)." This was a song written by the Backstreet Boys in honor of their friend and frequent

collaborator, Dennis Popz. Dennis Popz died of cancer. Ria said she and her children found this song of great comfort in being able to use it as a vehicle for grieving and emotional release. This song turned out to be their self-help psychotherapy.

Chandra also told a story of how she faced some difficult times in her life in addition to a personal tragedy in her family. Chandra said that being able to lose herself in their [Backstreet Boys] world helped her survive the turmoil.

Sometimes people will find a hobby in life to help them relax, retreat from boredom or energize them. Music, as it turns out, can also be a hobby for some people. Liz is a fan of the Backstreet Boys and their music because she says, it is to her like golf is to a golfer. It is her hobby.

Liz also told a story of how Backstreet Boys music makes her sad. The group has said they want to make music for romance. Liz says that some of their music really touches her inside and makes her sad because it's about a life that she doesn't have.

Some respondents also said they just get an overwhelming good feeling when listening to their

Backstreet Boys CDs. Some said the music to them is simply soothing and helps reduce the rough edges of the day.

COGNITIVE REASONS

Eleven of the fans, or thirty-three percent, responded with statements that they are fans of Backstreet Boys that are reflective of cognitive reasons. Most of these fans stated that the charity work of the Backstreet Boys is important to them as a fan.

There is a question in society, "Does television mimic life, or does life mimic television?" Either way, television has its fans. Sometimes people will become a fan of a particular television show because they can gain insight into their own lives or learn how to do something. Yoshie tells of a television series about three young ladies and their struggles in every day life of which she is a fan. Backstreet Boys music is played in the most important scene of each week's story, she says. The song is "Show Me The Meaning [of Being Lonely]." The Backstreet Boys music enabled Yoshie to relate the challenges of the characters in the television program to the

challenges she undertakes in her life using the Backstreet Boys music as a vehicle.

Some people will use music as a vehicle to escape a situation or a mind set. Referring back to Ria and her children who endured much upset and tragedy in one year of their lives, Ria said the Backstreet Boys music was a great comfort to her also because it would take her away to better places when she was down.

Chandrah, too, said she was able to lose herself in the Backstreet world when her family was experiencing difficulties. She says it was no small miracle that the family remained intact through those troubled times. She attributes her success of survival by being able to escape to another place. Chandrah calls it a "Backstreet place."

There may be times in the lives of individuals when they seem to be on eternal hold, just dangling and stagnating, going nowhere. They ponder the meaning of life. They may ask the question, "What is the purpose of life?" or "Why am I here?" Numerous fans here looked to and admired the Backstreet Boys in helping them with purpose and determination

through the charity work of each member of the Backstreet Boys.

Each group member has established a charitable foundation. Each Backstreet Boy is emotionally connected to his foundation. Some of the Backstreet Boys have personal and highly intimate connections to their foundation. One thing about the band members and their foundations specifically mentioned by the fans was that each band member gave a great deal of their own time to assist with fundraising for these foundations. Some of the fans responding here said that some stars will lend their name to a cause but these young men seem to give entirely of themselves for their causes.

The fans responding were impressed by the charity work of each individual member of the group. Beth calls this her "adult reason" for being a fan of the Backstreet Boys. Hiedi is impressed by the fact that each of these young men desires to make a difference in the world beyond their music.

Sometimes the band members risk extreme emotional pain in trying to make a difference. An example is Howie Dorough's foundation, the Caroline

Dorough Lupus Foundation. Howie's sister Caroline died as a result of lupus. The Dorough family shares their pain openly to help others. Wendy can identify with Howie's charity work because she has a friend who has lupus. Several fans believe the work that these young men do with their free time shows that they are caring individuals wanting to do what they can to make the world a better place.

SOCIAL REASONS

Twenty-seven fans responding here, representing 82% of all fans responding, shared stories of their fandom that are representative of the social reasons for being a fan. The majority of these responses share concert experiences as well as improved relationships with the fan's child.

The female baby boomer fans responding to the research question grew up in a time during which they may have experienced some differences with their parents over the music they played. These baby boomer fans may have heard from their parents, "Turn down that music!" or "What kind of music is that?" Would it have even been a remote possibility that some of these baby boomer music fans could have

convinced their parents to attend a concert with them? These baby boomer fans have chosen to take a different approach with their children, and even grandchildren, regarding music. Some of them may have even vowed to have better relationships with their children.

Some of the fans responding to the research question are fans of the Backstreet Boys with their children. Pat is one of those fans. Pat's children convinced her to take them to a Backstreet Boys concert. That in and of itself may not be monumental. The fact that Pat took her children from Ontario, Canada to Florida for a concert is monumental to some. Pat and her daughters have attended a total of 12 concerts. Pat said from the moment of that first concert she has never looked back. She believes she is a bigger fan of the Backstreet Boys than her daughters are.

Darlene was just doing her granddaughters a favor by taping a Backstreet Boys concert for them. Darlene ended up watching that tape five times by herself. She and her granddaughters went to three concerts that summer.

Dru is another fan who was doing a favor for her children by renting a pay-per-view concert for her son and daughter. She ended up watching that concert with her children. She and her daughter have been to five Backstreet Boys concerts. By doing this, Dru said the bond between she and her daughter has grown much stronger. Dru believes the common interest in the Backstreet Boys are the reason she and her daughter are such good friends.

Many of the fans here said their fandom was enhanced by being able to attend a concert of the Backstreet Boys. Some of the fans had opportunities to attend multiple concerts. One fan, Lee Ann, was able to attend two concerts. That may not seem like a lot to some fans. Consider this, for her first concert she traveled from her home in Spirit Lake, Idaho to Los Angeles. This was a round trip of 3,400 miles. She said even though she had the worst seats in the house, she felt absolutely refreshed when the concert was finished. Lee Ann's next concert experience was somewhat closer to home. The second concert was only a ten-hour drive where she had fifth row seats.

Fans do not always have the opportunity to attend a concert of their favorite singing group. That doesn't necessarily stop them from becoming a fan or maintaining their fandom. It is easy to maintain a high level of intensity in one's fandom, mainly because of the Internet. Through experiencing the Internet, individuals are able to meet people with similar interests from around the world. Chandrah has met other adult fans through her writing of fan fiction. Darlene has also met other baby boomer fans of Backstreet Boys. Darlene says she recruits new fans to the Backstreet Boys. Darlene also says that these new fans are her age.

Liz has also met new friends because of her Backstreet Boys fandom. She said they travel together to see "their boys." She calls it her "girls' weekend out." Liz is pleased with this development in her life because she normally has a tendency just to stay by herself. This shared interest in Backstreet Boys has provided a new social interaction for her that she enjoys.

Pat, who took her daughters from Ontario to Florida for a concert, has also met up with her on-

line "adult" Backstreet Boys friend for concerts. They have traveled to Washington, D.C., Lexington, Kentucky and Toronto for concerts.

ADDITIONAL REASONS

Accessibility to Fans

Seven of the responding fans, or twenty-two percent, said part of the reason they were a fan of Backstreet Boys was because the group made themselves easily accessible to their fans. Some fans, when they go to a concert, are just glad to be able to get a ticket to be in the building. Some fans, when they go to a concert, are able to purchase excellent seats, close to the stage, to see the performers "up close and personal." Some fans, when they go to a concert, are able to make the big score - the artist's autograph. Some Backstreet Boys fans do even better. The fans that do their research and are persistent, are able to find the hotel where the group is staying. These fans will stake out the hotel for a possible glimpse of the group. Hopefully they will be able to get an autograph or two.

The fans that responded here were not only able to catch a glimpse of one or all of the Backstreet

Boys, but these fans actually had the opportunity to visit extensively with the band members themselves and sometimes their family members. The group members also willingly pose for photos with these fans. Some of these fans have met their favorite member of the group multiple times. One fan, Norma, says that it appears that they truly care a great deal about their fans. They also seem to appreciate the role the fans play in their lives and their success. She also says that she believes they appeal to the "older" members of their fan base because of their sound values [as perceived by the fans] and demonstration of their spirituality. Darlene says that for a group that is internationally known, they are very accessible to their fans.

The group has dedicated two songs to its fans on their "Into the Millenium" CD. The first song, "Larger Than Life," is an acknowledgment of and thank you to the fans for their continued support. The group acknowledges in the lyrics that the fans' adoration and love affect the identity of the group. When the Backstreet Boys seem to get caught up in the confusion of life, they say it's the fans who bring

them back to reality. That, to the Backstreet Boys, is what make their fans larger than life.

The second fan song is called "The Perfect Fan." This was written by Backstreet Boy Brian Littrell as an ode to his mother. In this song, Brian thanks his mother for all that she has done in guiding him through life. Brian also acknowledges that God has been good to him by blessing him with a supportive family. The lyrics say he hopes to give back to his family by being the perfect son for them. This is another reason why this group appeals to the older fan base. Many members of the older fan base are mothers themselves.

Voices/Harmonies

Fourteen of the fans here, or 42%, responded that they were fans of the Backstreet Boys because of their voices. Sometimes a fan will follow a certain performer or group because of their sound. This stands true for the Backstreet Boys. Many respondents here said they were fans, in part, because of the voices of the group members. There were many adjectives used to describe the singing voices of the Backstreet Boys. Some of the

descriptions stated here included fantastic, beyond wonderful, angelic, gentle and heartwarming. Ria describes Brian's voice as creamy, Kevin's voice as seductive and AJ's voice as being like black velvet.

Teresa said one reason she is a fan is because of their five-part harmonies while Christine believes the group's ballads show off their harmonies. Micki went so far as to say that "their harmony is so pure, it grips your soul and doesn't let go." Some fans believe the individual talents of the Backstreet Boys blend into one to create a sound not heard since the 1950s.

Many of these fans responding here suffer ridicule and teasing, to some degree, from their friends and families. Liz says her friends and family ask her all the time why she is a fan. She answers simply, "I just do because I can."

Some of these fans made reference in their responses that they understand the Backstreet Boys are not perfect people. Rio may sum it up best when she says the Backstreet Boys are 'perfect in their imperfection.'

The baby boomer women responding here seem to have brought some of their feisty fandom with them from their teen years. Before, it was possibly their parents giving them grief for listening to a certain type of music. Today, it is possibly their spouses, boyfriends and/or children giving them grief for their Backstreet Boys fandom. These fans seem to transcend the ridicule and keep on keepin' on with their love of Backstreet Boys music.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The reasons given by fans for being a fan of the Backstreet Boys followed the current literature by corresponding with the three prominent reasons of fandom: emotional, cognitive and social. Some fans responding here said that Backstreet Boys music made them feel a certain way. This goes along with a major theme of music fandom, mood manipulation. Some fans responding here said Backstreet Boys music helped them escape to another place. This goes along with a major theme of fandom, escapist functions. Some fans responding here said they were fans for social reasons. This goes along with another major theme of music fandom, music acting as a social lubricant.

EMOTIONAL REASONS

The emotional reasons stated for being a Backstreet Boys fans are reflective of current literature emphasizing mood manipulation. These fans said when they were down, they'd put on their favorite Backstreet Boys song. Some said they would

play Backstreet Boys music during their commutes, to and from work. This would help lift them up after a particularly stressful day at work.

COGNITIVE REASONS

Some of the cognitive reasons stated for being a Backstreet Boys fan are reflective of current literature emphasizing escapist functions. The current literature is reflective of girlfriend/boyfriend problems and one or the other would use their music fandom as an escapist function. A few of the situations presented here where the families underwent the pains of divorce and death reinforced the escapist function.

Another cognitive function of music fandom is where an individual can gain insight into their own life and self-concept. Some of the fans here gained insight into their life because of the Backstreet Boys dedication to their individual charity work. Brief mention was made in the current literature that fans also admired a fan figure's charity work or the work the fan figure does in her or his community. Many fans here spoke to a great extent of their admiration for the dedication of each Backstreet Boy

to his charity work. These findings may have helped to expand this aspect of cognitive reasons for being a fan.

SOCIAL REASONS

One of the social reasons for fandom reported here, facilitation of relationships, may have taken on a new meaning with this group of respondents. In the current literature, facilitation of relationships generally referred to female/male relationships. Those relationships could include friendship, dating, and intimacy. One of the reasons reported here for fandom was that Backstreet Boys music gave these fans and their children, generally female children, a common interest to aid them in forming tighter bonds. These fans are from the generation where, quite possibly, they and their parents disagreed on music preferences. These fans, quite possibly, could have been participants in what was to become known as the generation gap. It is interesting then that these fans may be trying to close that generation gap now with their own children. Whereas before, neither they nor their parents could meet in the middle on

music preferences, some of these fans may now share the same music preferences with their children.

Another social reason, music acting as a social lubricant, may also have taken on a new meaning. The current literature states that people like to gather to listen to their favorite music, sometimes in a concert setting. Again, current literature was referring to teenage music fans. These adult fans reported attending several concerts. Sometimes these fans would attend with their children. Other times these fans would attend with another group of adults. This fandom seemed to facilitate other adult female relationships with Backstreet Boys being the common interest.

Sometimes, these new-found friends were from other parts of the world. They met on the Internet only because of their common interest, the Backstreet Boys. These new friends would then meet at concerts in various locations. Sometimes, though, these friendships would remain only Internet friendships. These new friends would not necessarily meet face-to-face. They could still share their friendship and

fandom on the Internet. This may be a new dimension of music acting as a social lubricant.

LIMITATIONS

One important discovery in this work was that fans are highly unpredictable. An earlier study was conducted by this author along the same lines, in the same format of posing a question on a web site. In a two month period, over 200 responses were received from around the world. When conducting this study, 33 responses were received in a three month period. The difference between the two studies was that during the first study, the Backstreet Boys were on their "Into The Millenium" tour and the fans were maniacal. During this study, the group is in the studio cutting another album. When the group takes downtime, it appears the fans do also.

Internet research proved to be a challenging undertaking. On one hand, there appears to be unlimited volumes of information. On the other hand, the Internet is not considered by some a credible source for material. In an attempt to obtain citeable source material from the charities of the Backstreet Boys, one charity responded with

information, three did not respond at all and one referred me to the web site for information. While the Internet serves the world, the people hosting web sites seem to be overly-cautious and skeptical when asked to share information.

Another challenging aspect of using the Internet for research purposes is that the web sites on the Internet can change within a day. One site originally planned for use in this study shut down for reconstruction. This site returned in three weeks in a new format. This new format did not allow access to the original information as planned for this study. When using the Internet for research of humans, a researcher must act without hesitation for tomorrow the information may be gone.

The Internet may not yet be a frequently used avenue for research. Site owners of web sites hesitate in cooperating. This could possibly be a result of hoaxes and spam (junk mail) flooding the Internet.

Another limitation of this study is the limited size of the sample. A larger sample, especially world wide, would provide more depth. Another

limitation is the inability to use web sites as credible sources. Some businesses and charities use the world wide web as a cost-effective alternative to advertising. Some of these businesses and charities are unwilling to respond by sending information in the mail as they say it is too costly.

Another limitation is the reliance on fan magazines as sources for personal information regarding group members. Some of the special edition fan books provide what seem to be straight forward stories regarding the group members. One of the charities referred the researcher to teen magazines for information. By inference and history, teen magazines would not appear to be a credible source.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should include a study with a larger sample. Another study along the same lines could be undertaken, either quantitatively or qualitatively, possibly using questionnaires and/or face-to-face interviews. These questionnaires and/or interviews could be constructed to draw forth more specific detail as to fandom, specifically, the true depth of the fandom of some fans. For example, a

researcher could discover how many pictures or posters a fan possesses. One could also find out how many concerts a fan attends within a one, two or three year period. One could also find out how far fans have traveled to concerts, how much money fans are willing to spend on tickets and travel accommodations to attend a concert and the socioeconomic background of the fan.

Another area of research that may be interesting is if these baby boomer women allow their fandom to cross cultures and genres. Also of interest would be whether or not these baby boomer mothers attend concerts with their children of rap artists, punk groups or heavy metal, as examples.

Another area that could be explored is whether or not there are heterosexual male fans of the Backstreet Boys. There is fan group of gay men that are also fans of Backstreet Boys. This could possibly be explored more in depth.

One additional aspect that might possibly be of interest in fan research would be to obtain the elusive interview with the artist or artists. Published literature on music fans generally states

it would be beneficial to hear what the artist has to add to fandom research.

STRENGTHS OF STUDY

One of the strengths of this study is that it furthers research in that it studied a group not found in the current literature reported here. Music studies generally focus on much younger fans, adolescents up to college students, both male and female. This study focused solely on adult, female fans referred to as baby boomers. Many of these fans have children who influenced and/or share their fandom of the Backstreet Boys. This fandom by these adult women may have made gains in closing the generation gap. This fandom may also affect the image of aging for some parts of society.

An additional strength of this study is that it resulted in some new and interesting dimensions of reasons why some people are fans of a certain type of music. This provided some new and legitimate discovery to the study of music fans and popular culture.

A not-so-obvious strength of the study was transcending the setback of having a small sample.

While the sample was small in size, the participants still provided a fair share of statements to be reviewed. The number of statements were helpful in adding to the legitimacy of the study.

Yet another relative strength of this study was using the Internet as a channel for research. By using the Internet, this allowed participants from around the world to participate. These participants most likely would not have been able to respond to the author's research with the use of other methodologies or avenues, i.e., snowball, word-of-mouth or the author's personally handing out surveys.

Be careful not to judge a book by its cover. The "older" woman, the mom or the grandmother, standing next to you may be very youthful at heart. She just may be "Larger Than Life." To the Backstreet Boys fans reading this work, KTBSPA.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



Rolling Stone Cover
2001

AJ, Nick, Kevin,
Brian & Howie



AJ, Howie, Kevin, Nick & Brian



Howie, Brian, AJ & Kevin
Nick

APPENDIX B



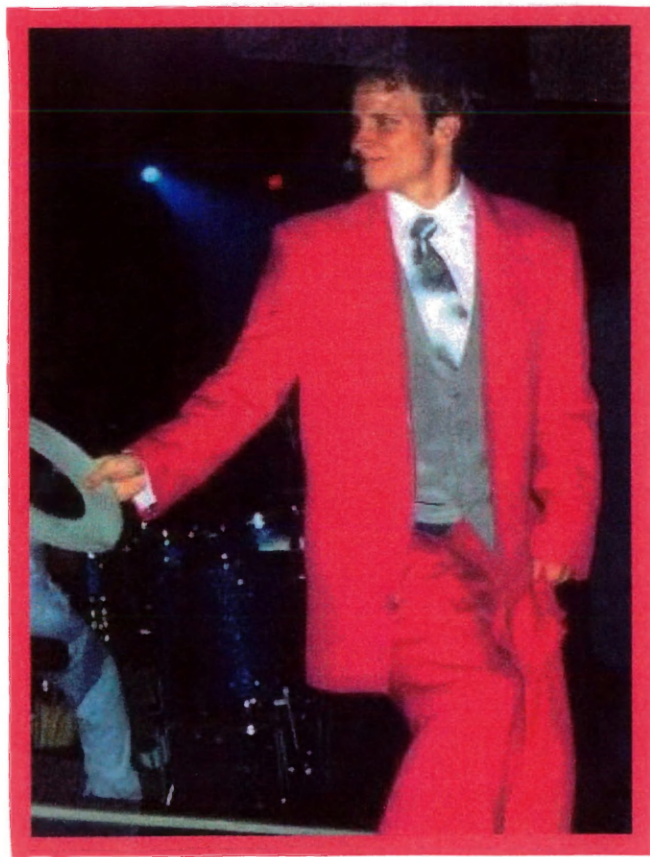
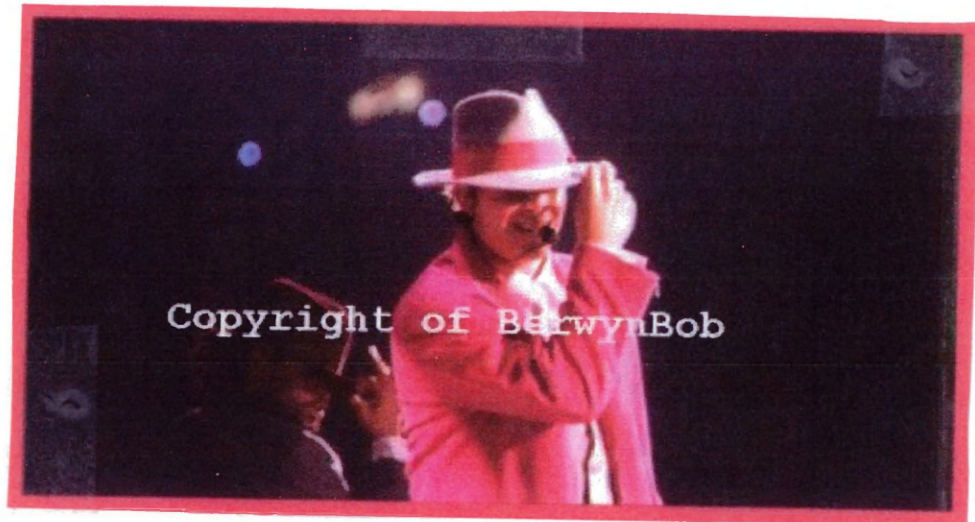
Entrance to "Into the Millenium"
Concert - Nick on lighted boogie board

APPENDIX C



Nick as part of the chair routine

APPENDIX D



Brian as part of the Hat Squad

APPENDIX E

Nick in opening song on
"Into the Millenium" Tour



NICK

Scanned by Marina
BSB Adult Connection

APPENDIX F



Brian in opening song on
"Into the Millenium" Tour

<http://fly.to/bsbac>
Loreto C.



BRIAN

APPENDIX G

Loreto C. <http://fly.to/bsbac>



Howie in opening song on
"Into the Millenium" Tour

Scanned by Marina
for BSBAC

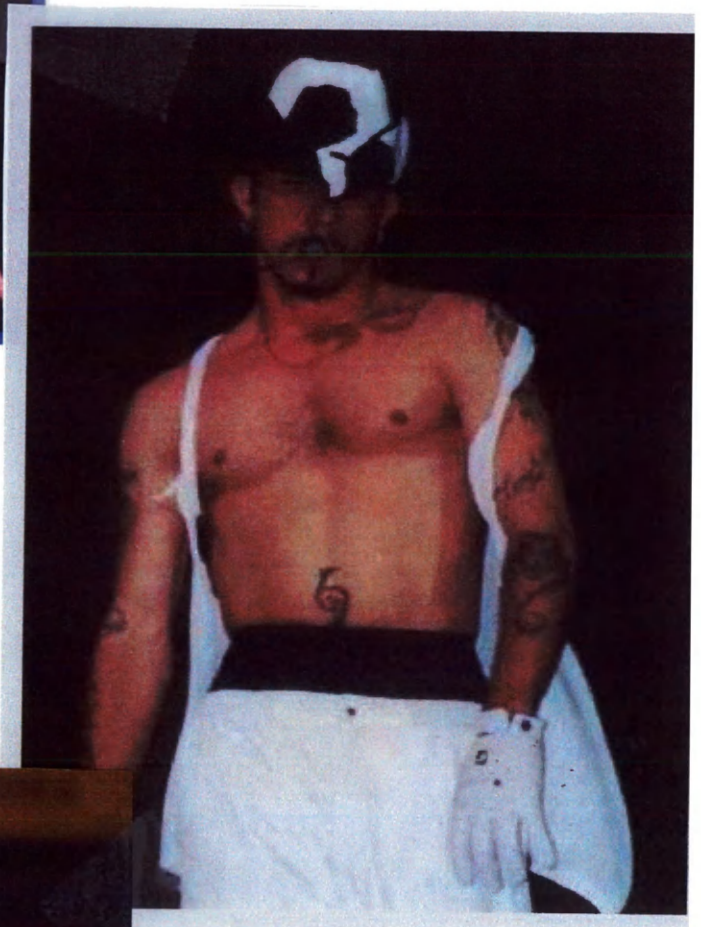


HOWIE



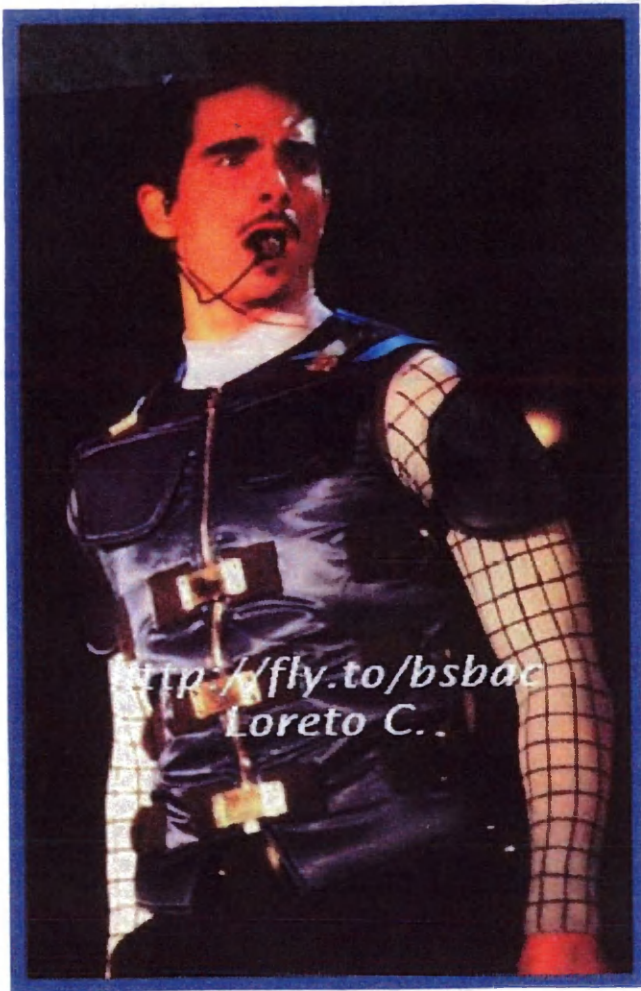
APPENDIX H

AJ in opening song on
"Into the Millenium" Tour



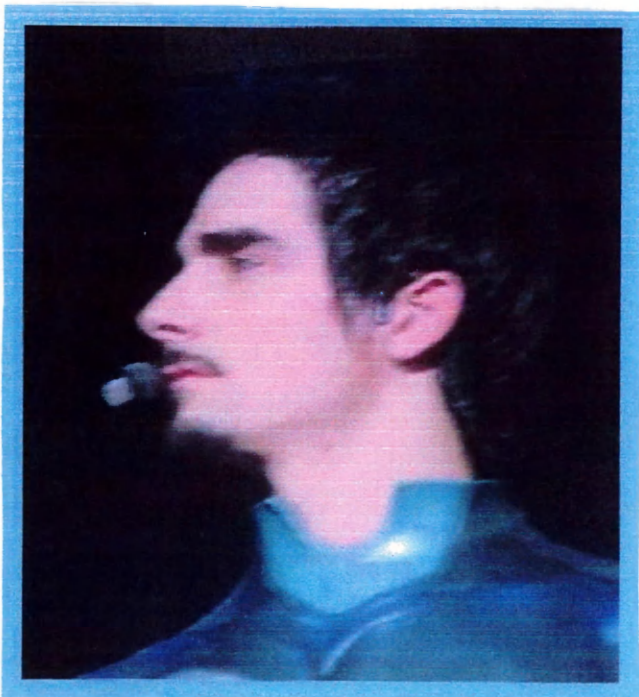
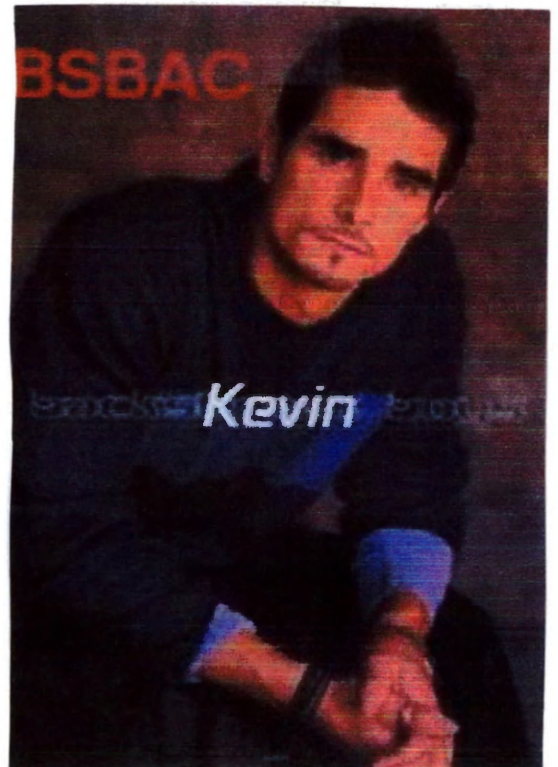
AJ

APPENDIX I



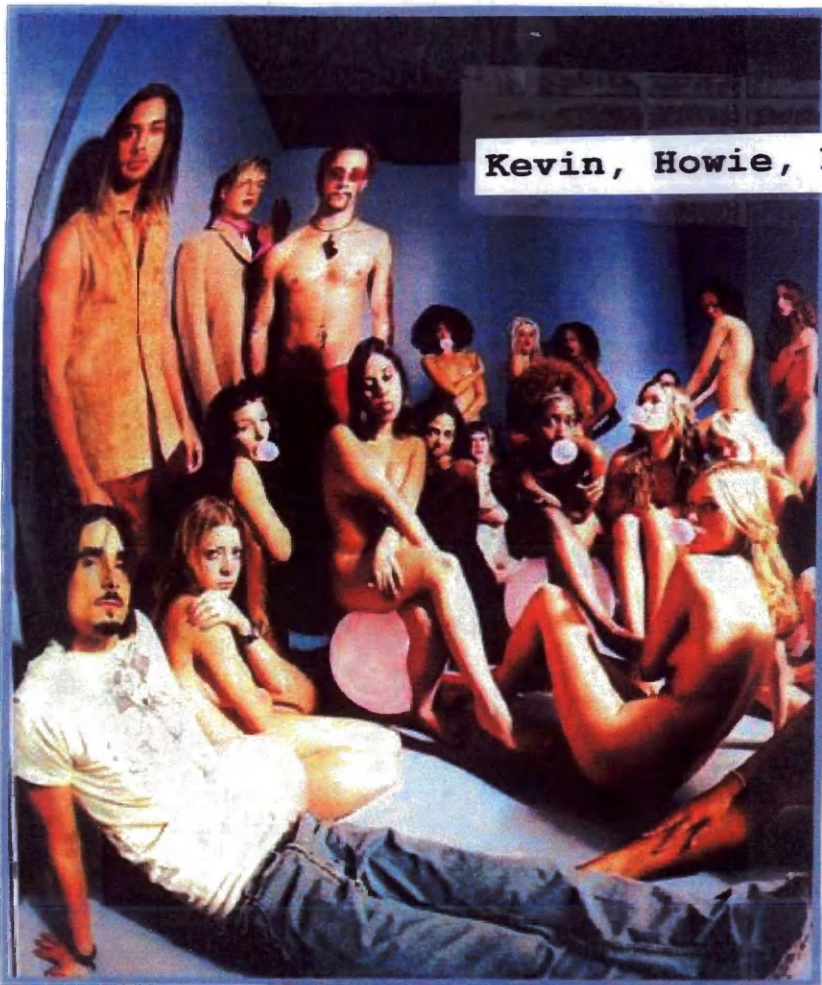
Kevin in opening song on
"Into the Millenium" Tour

<http://fly.to/bsbac>
Loreto C..



KEVIN

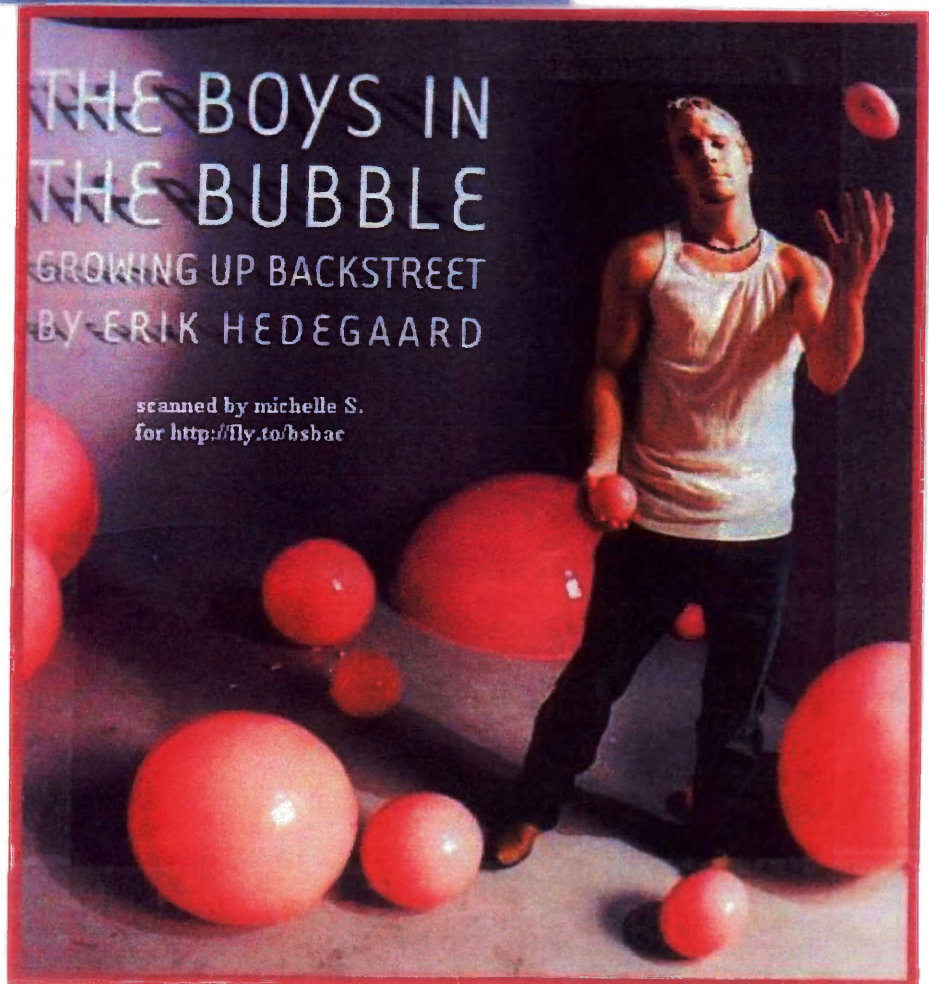
APPENDIX J



Kevin, Howie, Nick & AJ

THE BOYS IN
THE BUBBLE
GROWING UP BACKSTREET
BY ERIK HEDEGAARD

scanned by michelle S.
for <http://fly.to/bshac>



BRIAN

APPENDIX K

Dear Backstreet Boys Fans:

First, I would like to express my appreciation to Maria for her help and support in this endeavor.

My name is Cathi Woells and I am working on my thesis for a Master of Arts degree at a midwestern university. Some of you may recognize my name and/or work as I have posted on here before asking why many of you are Backstreet Boys fans for an earlier class paper. I am back to ask, yet again, why you are fans. Since my earlier work in 2000, my university has changed its policy regarding research of human subjects and I have had to obtain its approval before beginning this research. My thesis is the study of baby boomer women as fans of Backstreet Boys.

I am asking that all baby boomer women, those women born during 1946 and up to and including 1964, wishing to participate in this work, respond to the question below and answering a few demographic questions. You may respond directly by clicking on my e-mail address. If you are not a baby boomer, your assistance is still greatly appreciated if you do know a baby boomer fan and if you would refer her to this website. Your individual story may be a part of this thesis and you may be quoted, but you will remain anonymous by use of first names only.

Question: Why are you a fan of Backstreet Boys?

Demographic Information: First name: _____; Date of birth: _____; city, state and/or country of residence: _____.

Thank you for your participation.

Cathi Woells
cwoells@yahoo.com

APPENDIX L

KEYWORDS

Emotional Reasons

personal high/inspired
reminisce
romantic
emotional release
empathy with others
substitute for social contact
bored/lonely
energized
feel excitement/anxiety/tension/nervousness/
rebellious
want to relax
self-help psychotherapy/difficult times in life
enhance mood

Cognitive Reasons

process information
get information/advice
stimulate thought
contribute to memory
frame perception of time and place/self-concept
enter imaginary world
escape/diversion
learn to do things
reflect on relationships
identify with object of fandom
live vicariously through object of fandom

Social Reasons

facilitate relationships
going to concerts/conventions
establish vicarious relationship with object of
fandom
fantasize
common interests/common social threads

APPENDIX M

May 7, 2002

Catherine Woells
Communication
UNO - VIA COURIER

IRB#: 151-02-EX

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: Baby Boomers and Backstreet Boys

Dear Ms. Woells:

The IRB has reviewed your Exemption Form for the above-titled research project. According to the information provided, this project is exempt under 45 CFR 46:101b, category 2. You are therefore authorized to begin the research.

It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines. It is also understood that the IRB will be immediately notified of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project.

Please be advised that the IRB has a maximum protocol approval period of three years from the original date of approval and release. If this study continues beyond the three year approval period, the project must be resubmitted in order to maintain an active approval status.

Sincerely,

Ernest D. Prentice, PhD/MD

Ernest D. Prentice, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, IRB

EDP/gdk