Why narratives are better than chronicles of achievement in musicians' biographies

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Abstract
Drawing on Frith's theory that music appreciation involves identification with broader cultural narratives and Bruner's theory that identities are narratively constructed, a hypothesis is developed to argue that band bios containing narrative features are superior to those that merely chronicle bands' achievements. Such bios can facilitate perceptions of authenticity and thereby improve listeners' aesthetic experience of the music and increase the likelihood of them becoming fans.

Keywords: Music marketing, narrative, biography, authenticity identity, fandom

1   Introduction

Short band biographies, or 'bios', can be found in many places, including official band websites, unofficial fan websites, Facebook pages, press kits etc. To some extent, the bio has become the successor to the liner notes that used to appear on the sleeves of 12-inch vinyl records and CDs. However, unlike liner notes, which traditionally took the form of thoughtfully penned essays and were not necessarily oriented towards marketing a band (Biron 2011), bios have become a key component in marketing strategies for bands and individual musicians[2] alike. Despite its importance, the band bio remains an un-researched literary genre. To begin to address this gap, in this article two contrasting bios are analysed with particular attention given to their narrative qualities. It is argued that due to their capacity to create perceptions of authenticity among listeners, bios that report the intentions of their protagonists are superior to those that do not.

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[2] Henceforth, for the sake of convenience, I will mainly refer to 'band' bios. Nevertheless, everything I say applies equally to the bios of individual artists.

The basis on which certain bios are judged to be better than others is ultimately a utilitarian one, meaning good bios are those that perform the function of a bio effectively; but what is that function? According to two professional publicists interviewed by McGee (2013), its chief function is to convert new listeners into fans by giving them more to like about a band than just their music. From a marketing perspective, it may therefore be said that a good bio is one that increases new listeners' liking for a band to the extent that they become fans. Contained within this seemingly straightforward criterion, however, are two constructs that require some explication: namely, the condition of 'fandom' and what it means to 'like' a band.

A useful cue for understanding both these ideas comes from the world of cult television programs, where fans are distinguished from mere followers on the basis of the larger social identity that they claim when they consume such programs (Tulloch & Jenkins 1995). We find a similar idea applied in the world of music by Frith (1996: 121), who, in an explanation of how popular music is enjoyed, writes:

"The experience of pop music is an experience of identity: in responding to a song, we are drawn, haphazardly, into emotional alliances with the performers and with the performers' other fans."

In fact, Frith goes so far as to assert that all experiences of liking music involve the assumption of both a subjective and collective identity. This idea of taking on identities is one that will be revisited in more detail below, but the pertinent point to note here is that, by Tulloch and Jenkins' distinction, Frith's aesthetic theory would imply that anyone who likes a given piece is also in some sense a fan.

Fortunately, some clarification can be achieved by recognising two aspects. The first is that a popular music fan's object of attention typically includes not just the music but the performer as well. That is, a single act of liking a piece of music can involve being a fan of two or more different things at the same time. Just as a one can be a football fan, for example, whilst simultaneously being the fan of certain players or a particular club, one might also be a fan of K-pop while simultaneously being

a fan of the band Big Bang and its lead singer G-Dragon. This distinction between liking a band and liking a piece of music highlights the fact that the identities into which we are drawn as we listen to music may be quite diverse.

The second aspect is that we need not limit ourselves to a psychological perspective, where the distinctions between liking music as a casual listener and liking it as a fan can be unclear. It is also possible, and often useful, to adopt a commercial point of view, whereby fans play a more participatory role than casual listeners. For example, they may contribute directly to a band's income when they attend concerts, buy music and merchandise, or support crowdfunding campaigns. Alternatively, they may add cultural value to a band's music in their role as 'prosumers', i.e., listeners who do more than merely consume music passively—they become 'value creation partners' through activities such as compiling playlists on streaming services, sharing them on social media, commenting about the music on blogs, and so on (Winter 2012). In other words, fans' liking for a band goes beyond the emotional solidarity that they, and even casual listeners, experience when they enjoy the band's music. From a commercial standpoint, fans' liking for a band is also something that is manifest through activities that support the band financially, both directly and indirectly.

In short, the argument that some bios are better than others rests on the premise that good bios are those that help draw casual listeners into an experience that involves identification with broader narratives associated with both the band and their music. In addition, fans may also be identified as those listeners who participate in activities that generate revenue for a band and/or add value to their music.

So far, the term 'identity', a familiar, yet multivalent concept that psychologists, philosophers and sociologists often define in different ways, has been used without much explanation. Whichever way the term is used, it is essentially the idea of different things sharing some kind of underlying unity. In the case of a band, this underlying unity might encompass a diverse range of elements: the band's origins, their musical style, the instruments they play, their distinctive sound, their

influences, lyrics, stage performances, album art, fashion sense, public statements, collaborative works, and just about every choice they make as a band. Ideally, what we think of as their identity will bring a certain coherence and unity to these aspects, even though they may not be obviously related. Yet, just as an individual's diverse behaviours may appear senseless to some observers, to friends who know the individual well, his or her seemingly random behaviour can be easily understood and explained. Similarly, perceiving coherence in a band's diverse creative outputs activities can be thought of in terms of knowing the answer to the question of whom they are. Notably, this very question of 'who someone is' is the point of departure in Vignoles et al. (2011) project of integrating several definitions of identity.

Conceiving identity in this way means that a band's identity becomes more than a distinctive name and logo. While such signs do, in a sense, serve to identify a band, they only do so in a contextual way, for they have no intrinsic relationship with their referents. Names and logos ultimately can only tell us what something is not; by themselves, they do not tell us what something is. To illustrate, take my own band 'Gray Day' as an example, which I am sure most readers of this article will not have heard of. Merely knowing our name tells you almost nothing about who we are. It reveals little about our vision, values, or music. All you can be sure of is that we are not any other band that you know of.

Given then, that names and logos cannot by themselves identify a band, I would like now to consider a quite different approach to identity; one does not see words and symbols as representative of any distinguishing property or quality, but instead sees identity as something to be constructed. *Narrative* identity is an idea that has its roots in the philosophy of Ricoeur (1980) and later became popular among psychologists, most notably Bruner (1991, 1987) who saw it as important for bringing coherence, unity, and sense to events in a single human life. McAdams (2011: 100) expresses the idea succinctly when he writes: *"If one were able to 'see' [a person's] identity ... it would look like a story"*.

If we take this idea of a narratively constructed personal identity and apply it to band, it may initially appear to some that a band's story

exists naturally, just waiting, as it were, to be told. Indeed, one popular blogger seems to take this view when he advises up-and-coming musicians that *"everyone has a great story"* and that there is nothing more to do than simply tell it (Herstand 2014). However, a closer analysis reveals that a band's story does not exist naturally. While bands do of course have many experiences and things that have happened to them, they are not in themselves a story. They are what the philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe would call 'brute facts' (Anscombe 1958) that stand in need of human interpretation to make sense of them so that they become meaningful events that are related to other meaningful events. In other words, stories do not exist naturally; they are the result of the human interpretation of events and experiences. For this reason narratives should not be thought of as *representing* identities (in the way that names and logos may be thought of), but as *constructing* them.

Narrative is not, however, the only basis on which identity may be constructed. For example, Belk's (1988) theory of material identity has proven useful in understanding how fans get to know a performer through visiting museums that exhibit his or her personal possessions (Gilks 2016). Bamberg et al. (2011) theory of an interactively constructed identity is also useful when studying how speakers variously position themselves according to different situations. For the present investigation into band bios, however, the theory of the narratively constructed identity is deemed to be the most appropriate.

2   Narrative in marketing

The flow of human experience is unstructured, yet to make sense of it and to communicate our sense making to others we need to impose order and organisation onto our experiences. One of the oldest ways, if not the oldest, is through stories. It also appears to be one of the most basic; young children are able to understand stories before they can follow logical arguments, which led Polkinghorne (1988) to speculate that the human brain is hard-wired to 'realise' (in both the senses of 'to understand' and 'to cause to become real') the world narratively in much

the same way as we are hard-wired to learn grammar. Turner (1996) similarly argued that narratives are the central principle of our experience and knowledge, while Bruner (1985) saw narrative thought as but one of two powerful ways of structuring experiences; the other being logico-scientific, or 'paradigmatic' thought. Notably, however, since narrative thought and paradigmatic thought are so fundamentally different, neither one, he argues, can be reduced to the other.

More recently, marketers and popular writers have also developed an interest in narrative. Pink (2006), for example, proclaimed that we are on the cusp of a new era (he calls it the 'Conceptual Age') that will favour storytellers. The reason for this was that information had become a commodity whose value had dropped significantly and what mattered more was *"the ability to place facts into context and to deliver them with emotional impact"* (Pink 2006: 103). This highlights the value of stories; since they can have an emotional impact, the messages they convey are said to be more memorable. Jensen (1999) cited research suggesting that a major part of the growth in consumption in the future will be non-material in nature, and that stories will be particularly effective in adding value to everyday material products. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in an experiment undertaken by Walker & Glenn (2016). These two researchers spent $128.74 on a collection of yard-sale junk and then hired professional writers to write interesting stories about each item. By posting the items together with the interesting stories on eBay, they were able to sell the junk for a total of $3,613.

It is also claimed that storytelling is a means for conferring authenticity on products and organisations. Denning (2005), for example, provides practical guidance to business leaders on how to craft a story in order to effectively convey messages of a company's brand and values. Strong empirical evidence to support such an approach comes from a study of 12,000 people in key markets around the world that found that *"having an engaging and authentic story"* was one of seven key concepts associated with brand authenticity (Beattie 2014). Elsewhere, in a mainly theoretical article, Lounsbury & Glynn (2001) explained how entrepreneurial stories facilitate not just the creation of a business's identi-

ty, but also a *"touchstone upon which legitimacy may be conferred by investors, competitors, and consumers"*, while Boje & Khan (2009) similarly claimed that storytelling is the primary way entrepreneurs maintain the currency of their reputation. In addition, Lewis & Bridger (2000) explained how stories could add value to products through investing authenticity into those products.

Given the importance attached to narrative in the social sciences and marketing, it is not surprising to find a number of books and blogs offering DIY indie musicians advice on how to write a bio in a story format, e.g., Cannon & Thomas (2015), Gallant (2014), James (2011), Rankin (2013) and Robley (2014a, 2014b). One particular blog worth mentioning provided the initial impetus for this article. In 2014, the popular blogger Ari Herstand posted a short piece provocatively titled "Why no one cares about your music", in which he boldly told artists that their music "*doesn't matter*". What they must understand is that "*people need a story*" (Herstand 2014). True to his claim, Herstand's own bio, which appears on his website and was presumably written by Herstand himself, is virtually free of any descriptions of his music and is almost entirely devoted to the story of his artistic journey. Here is an extract:

"After nearly three non-stop years on the road, Herstand needed a change. 'I think it was loading into the Varsity in February during a blizzard that I officially made up my mind. No more winter,' he remembers. The song "Minnie and Me" on the new album, "Brave Enough", is about falling out of love with Minneapolis.

Herstand moved to Los Angeles in the summer of 2010 to begin the next phase of his artistic journey (and get away from the cold). He quickly found a home at the popular Hollywood music venue, The Hotel Cafe. He continued touring extensively, but after returning from an extended run in the summer of 2012, he realized he needed to take some time off the road and explore what LA had to offer.

On a whim, he sent out headshots to acting agents. He hadn't actually acted since he played Peter in Jesus Christ Superstar in a Madison,

Wisconsin community theatre production the summer after high school. The day after the headshots went out, he got 7 calls. He took some meetings and signed with an agent ... ". (Herstand n.d.).

Is it a good story? Is it a narrative? Is it a good bio? Is it likely to turn casual listeners into fans? To help answer these questions we may begin by comparing Herstand's bio against some of the professionally written bios that are reproduced all over the internet on fan sites, music download sites and streaming sites.

An informal survey of such bios reveals that one of their functions appears to be providing readers with evidence of a band's success. In fact, it is not uncommon to find a large portion of many bios devoted to lists of achievements—album releases, hit singles, awards, world tours, and so on. Clearly, Herstand's bio is quite different in this respect. While it does record his album releases, such news occupies only a small part of the bio. Whether this difference is attributable the editorial policies that professional writers must follow or has something to do with the level of success that has already been achieve by the time their bio is written by a professional publicist is perhaps the subject of a separate study.

What the comparison does reveal, however, is that many professionally written bios are little more than chronicles of achievement. While they may count as 'stories' in a rudimentary sense, but they are not, I contend, true narratives. This is because they merely describe a series of *events* rather than *actions* performed by protagonists with intentions and responsibilities. As a result, capacity to establish a rich and coherent identity for a band is limited. To illustrate this point further, the bios of two well-known stars, Justin Bieber and Iggy Pop, will now be contrasted. Both come from the All Music website, a site with a policy that all bios must be written by in-house staff in accordance with certain editorial guidelines and which services such as iTunes and Spotify source as bios for their own sites (Stenhouse 2013).

3   Chronicles of achievement

Collar's (2016) Justin Bieber bio can be summarised as follows:

Overview (1st paragraph)

His first album, "My World", was a huge international success, particularly for someone of such a young age. Over the next couple of years, his popularity grew with the release of more material. Then his musical activity decreased while public interest in his personal life increased. Eventually, however, he rebounded from this situation with the release of a popular new album.

Chronology (remainder of the bio)

2007   Bieber is placed second in a singing contest.

2008   Videos posted on YouTube catch the attention of recording industry professionals, who sign him up, even though he is just 15 years old.

2009   His first single is released; it goes platinum.

His first album is released; it reaches no. 6 on Billboard.

Part two of his first album is released; it tops Billboard album charts.

2010   An acoustic version of previously released material is released.

A documentary is released.

An album featuring collaborations with famous artists is released

2011   A holiday-themed album is released

2012   His new album, "Believe", is released.

A series of hit singles is released.

2013   An acoustic version of Believe is released.

More hit singles are released.

Another documentary released, but it performs poorly at the box office.

2014   There is only one successful single for the year

Bieber is arrested and charged with vandalism, assault, and reckless driving.

2015   Two hit singles are released.

A third album is released; it debuts at the top of the Billboard charts.

Clearly, Bieber's bio seems more like a discography in prose form than a narrative, though it does contain a simple plot in its first paragraph that is then fleshed out in the subsequent paragraphs. A plot, which is one of the ingredients of a narrative, has been defined as *"the passage from initial state of equilibrium through a state of disequilibrium to a new state of equilibrium"* (Todorov 1971/1977, cit. in Czarniawska 2004: 19). Using less technical terminology, we may speak of a plot's 'beginning' (initial equilibrium), 'middle' (disequilibrium) and 'end' (second equilibrium). In the Bieber bio, these three stages may refer respectively to his initial popularity, a period when his musical output was low, finally and his renewed success; though other interpretations are also possible.

4   Intentional states

Since the Bieber bio does contain a basic plot, it may be seen as conforming to the aforementioned advice prevalent in the music blogosphere that bios should tell a story. But Bieber's bio is not a narrative, for narratives also require the existence of actors that have intentional states. This is made explicit in Fludernik's (2006: 6) definition of narrative, which she characterises as:

"A representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense [and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions].*"*

The presence of anthropomorphic protagonists who perform *"goal-directed actions"* is what would exclude, say, a description of a chemical reaction or biological process from being a narrative, though it may have a 'plot' in the sense of there being an initial equilibrium, disequilibrium, and second equilibrium. Several other leading scholars of narrative also emphasise the importance of goal-directed actions and intentional states. Bruner (1991: 7), for example, writes:

"Narratives are about people acting in a setting, and the happenings that befall them must be relevant to their intentional states while so engaged—to their beliefs, desires, theories, values, and so on."

Similarly, McAdams (2001: 103) states:

"In virtually, all intelligible stories, humans or humanlike characters act to accomplish intentions … Human intentionality is at the heart of narrative, and therefore the development of intentionality in humans is of prime importance in establishing the mental conditions necessary for storytelling and story comprehension."

While band bios obviously deal with anthropomorphic protagonists who possess human intentions, readers will often search in vain for any explicit articulation of those intentions. There is no mention in the Bieber bio of verbs that express its subject's hopes, wants, or thoughts.

When one reads the bios of other well-known musicians on the All Music website such as US pop artists like Miley Cyrus and Beyoncé, or K-pop bands like Girls Generation, Super Junior and Big Bang, one discovers that the absence of such verbs is common. In this regard, there is in fact little to distinguish their bios from that of the non-human (though admittedly anthropomorphic) Japanese hologram pop star, Hatsune Miku.

But not all bios lack references to their protagonists' intentional states. A paragraph-by-paragraph analysis of Prato's (2016) bio of Iggy Pop, also on the All Music website, reveals many verbs that express intentional states. For example, we read about him 'deciding', 'trying', 'taking inspiration', 'hoping', 'wanting', being 'intrigued', being 'convinced', 'discovering', 'experimenting', 'sharing his musical vision', 'striking out on his own', 'planning', 'pursuing', 'pledging', 'looking back', 'trying his hand', and 'setting out'.

While verbs such as these may give readers some insight into Pop's thoughts, their other important function is to drive the narrative forward. Instead of a simple chronicle like the Bieber bio, the events of which could be assigned different dates and re-ordered without impacting significantly on the coherence of the story, we see in Iggy Pop's bio a series of actions that the he and other actors perform as a result of certain stated intentions. This by no means applies to every event recounted in the narrative, but it is fair to say that the plot is sufficiently intention-driven that its events could not be easily re-ordered without affecting the coherence of the story. Consider, for example, the following extract:

"Born on April 21, 1947, in Muskegon, Michigan, James Newell Osterberg was raised by his parents in a trailer park close to Ann Arbor, in nearby Ypsilanti. Intrigued by rock & roll (as well as such non-musical, monotonous, and mechanical sounds as his father's electric razor and the local automobile assembly plants in Detroit), Osterberg began playing drums and formed his first band, the Iguanas, in the early '60s. Via the Rolling Stones, Osterberg discovered the blues and formed a similarly styled outfit, called the Prime Movers, upon graduating from high school in 1965. When a brief stint at the University of Michigan didn't work out,

he moved to Chicago instead, where he played drums alongside the city's bluesmen."

"His heart remained with rock & roll, however, and shortly after returning to Ann Arbor, Osterberg decided to form a rock band. This time, he would leave the drums behind and be the frontman, taking inspiration from the likes of the Velvet Underground's Lou Reed and the Doors' Jim Morrison. He tried to find musicians who shared his musical vision: to create a band whose music would be primordial, sexually charged, aggressive, and repetitive (using his early electric razor/car plant memories for reference) ... ". (Prato 2016).

Why did Pop start out playing blues? Because he had discovered the blues via the Rolling Stones. Why did he turn to rock? Because he had been intrigued by rock and roll from a young age. Why did he become a frontman instead of playing the drums? Because he took inspiration from Jim Morrison and others. Why did he desire to create music that was primordial and repetitive? Because of his early memories of the sounds of automobile plants. Clearly, there is a degree of causal coherence here that connects events and determines their order in a way that mere list of achievements does not.

There is also a sense in which the events of Pop's life are unified by the bio's broader cultural narrative involving changes in American popular music tastes. From a state of initial equilibrium in the 1960s when there was a somewhat narrow definition of what is acceptable in American popular music, a state of disequilibrium occurs when Iggy Pop tries to expand this definition in various ways. The second equilibrium occurs in the 1990s when he becomes a model for many new bands. Thus, the bigger picture shows that although Pop experienced many failures in his career, his story is ultimately a tale of success, or as McAdams would say, a sequence of redemption. More importantly, however, his story constructs his identity and provides readers with a sense of who he is. That said it would be an overstatement to claim Pop's bio contains a clear narrative that relates every episode to every other episode or that it articulates a coherent vision throughout. Nevertheless, unlike the

Bieber bio, there is an attempt to weave together the complex world of Pop's intentions so as to give meaning to his actions.

5   Authenticity

Up to this point, it has been argued that narrative properties in a bio are important on account of their capacity to construct an identity for their subject. But the role that identity plays in converting casual listeners into fans has not yet been spelled out. An explanation of the process begins by recognising that, as a commodity, music is nothing if not an experience. The importance of this fact is highlighted by the advent of what Pine and Gilmore (1999) term 'The Experience Economy', in which experiences are considered as important to consumers as goods and services. Pine and Gilmore argue that the dominant consumer sensibility with respect to experiences is authenticity, and that it has overtaken quality as a prevailing purchasing criterion (Gilmore & Pine 2007).

Of course, authenticity is not a particularly new purchasing criterion in the world of popular music. In their history of authenticity (or lack thereof) in 20th century American popular music, Barker & Taylor (2012) distinguish several different ways in which music was perceived as authentic. Crucially the rise of singer/songwriters such as the Beatles and Bob Dylan in the 1960s led to 'personal authenticity' becoming particularly important. This form of authenticity, in which singers are seen as expressing their inner feelings in songs about their own lives, is often equated by Barker & Taylor with 'sincerity'. Yet is worth noting that this is not quite the same thing as Trilling's (1972: 2) description of sincerity as *"a congruence between avowal and actual feeling"* since the musician is not necessarily fulfilling any public role. That is to say, for musicians perceived as authentic in the personal sense, the gap between public and private personas is often seen as closed.

While much has been written about the concept of authenticity in popular music, particularly with regard to the difference between genres such pop on the one hand and rock and folk on the other, which are often seen as 'commercial' and 'authentic' respectively, it is a distinction

that scholars now generally consider illusory (Moore 2000). In fact, many among the post-modern school may be reluctant to apply the term to music and performers without enclosing it in quotation marks, yet it is also an inescapable concept when dealing with popular music (Pattie 2007).

Moore (2002) has provided a framework for the scholarly discussion of authenticity in music by shifting the focus of attention to how the *experience* of listening to music can *authenticate* three different things. The first is when the emotions expressed by a performer are perceived by the listener to sincerely be the performer's own. The second is when the listener perceives that his or her own experiences are shared and validated through the music. And the third occurs when the ideas of a third party are perceived to be accurately represented. Moore labels these the first, second and third person authenticities respectively.

We are now in a position to see how narrative bios like those of Iggy Pop and Ari Herstand offer something that bios like Justin Bieber's do not. Intuitively, the first and second of Moore's authenticative experiences, the perceptions that a performer is sincerely expressing their own feelings through music and that the listener and performer share certain feelings, rely on a degree of knowledge of the performer's identity by the listener. Clearly, a narrative bio would be an excellent source of such knowledge. Additionally, according to Frith's (1996) aesthetic theory, since music listening experiences also involve the listener identifying themselves with broader narratives, having such narratives provided for them (e.g. Iggy Pop's redemption story) would be an advantage. Finally, since, according to Gilmore and Pine, listeners will place high value on experiences of authenticity, it is hypothesized that their aesthetic experiences will cause them to like the music to the extent that they become fans of the performer.

Much of the above argument, however, depends on listeners accepting the veracity of a bio. As Frith (1996: 121) points out, quests for authenticity can involve listeners getting *"bogged down in the search for the 'real' artist"* when forming a judgement regarding the truth of the feelings that he or she expresses. Admittedly, the veracity of an identity

is only as true as the narrative through which it is constructed, but it worth recalling here Bruner's (1985) aforementioned classification of two distinct modes of thought: paradigmatic and narrative. The former is concerned with logical arguments that rely on objective truths and categorizations of the world. The latter, on the other hand, is concerned with ascribing meaning to experiences through stories whose power to persuade and convince derives from their verisimilitude of certain inter- pretations of experience. The problem of getting 'bogged down' in searches for an artist's true identity is more characteristic of paradig- matic modes of thinking that value objectivity. Within narrative modes of thought, however, an artists' identity may be seen as more or less real depending on how they are perceived in the light of the viewer's own individual experiences.

6   Conclusion

It was claimed in the introduction that effective bios convert new listen- ers into fans by giving them more to like about a band than just their music. In addition, the opinions of several marketing experts and even some results from empirical research were cited to show that a good story is important for adding value to brands. By substituting 'identity' for 'brand', is has been argued that bands can increase their appeal, and as a result, their fan-base by means of a bio that contains some of the key properties of narrative such as intentional states and causal con- nectedness. The way this works is based on Frith's (1996) aesthetic theo- ry, in which liking, or even being a fan of something or someone involves taking on a broader identity associated with the object of one's liking. Drawing on Moore (2002), a listener's experience can also feel authentic or inauthentic depending on whether the performer is seen as express- ing a genuine sentiment. The problem of getting bogged down in deter- mining what is or is not a genuine sentiment can to some extent be avoided through adopting a narrative, rather than paradigmatic, mode of thinking in which the verisimilitude of a story is the main criterion for being convincing.

Although it is common to see music marketers stress the importance of stories in band bios, few really explain what makes a good story. Some speak as if a band's story already exists, just waiting to be told, e.g., *"Everyone has a great story, but most just don't realize it yet"* (Herstand 2014). However, it would be more accurate to say that everyone has *material* for a great *narrative* though they may not realise it. In the case of musicians, they have written songs, exerted influence and been influenced, experimented, envisaged a future, made good choices, committed mistakes, and learned from those mistakes. Every musician has experiences like these that can be woven into a narrative that gives structure and unity to their identity.

There is still much more research that can be undertaken into the short band bio. The idea that the narrative properties of bios are effective in converting casual listeners into fans is long on theory and short on empirical evidence, and the next step would be to conduct an experiment to determine whether different types of bios have any impact on levels of liking for a band. Additionally, research that has already been conducted on how young people socialise themselves through their consumption of popular music (Arnett 1995, Schwartz & Fouts 2003) could be extended to include their consumption of band narratives.

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