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The Alternative/Indie Archetype: Piercings

David Bachofer, Volunteer Reporter

While I may not have a Ph.D. in Alternative (Alt)/ Indie studies, I do enjoy a great deal of people watching. As I peoplewatch, I have a tendency to assign people to fit certain societal archetypes, one of which is the Alt/Indie person. I have also traveled through many social circles, which provides me with references for different people and various social archetypes. Of these, the most common archetype I encounter in today's culture is that of Alternative or Indie.

There is a difference between Alternative and Indie, but due to the overwhelming amount of times they are referred to interchangeably, I will also colloquially refer to them as the same. But how can I be sure of this? What allows me to define

people or the whole groups I have interacted with in the past as Alternative or Indie? Alternative and Indie people are not inherently a single demographic. They do not all listen to Grouplove or even The Backseat Lovers (I would wager that a decent amount does though).

Today, I am here to propose a way for identifying Alternative and Indie folk in the wild. What characteristics or loose associations allow us to identify them? I'll tell you. The assignment of an archetypal role such as this can be pinpointed by a few specific factors.

Piercings are the easiest qualification to meet in looking for the Alt/Indie title we all so desperately crave. Easiest to notice, most piercings can be spotted on the people you meet on the street corner, in the park and at the grocery store. We find smart little archetypes for all of these people to fill. Their archetypes are determined by a single characteristic that we are able to identify. This does not mean that they can only be defined by this single characteristic, but that you would trust this person as the utmost authority about that characteristic. These characteristics can range from physical studs of jewelry on their being, skills of theirs or aspects of their personality.

With piercings as socially acceptable as they are, from ten year-olds to teenagers, many get ear piercings with their legal parent/guardian standing by, of course. Some cases may allow for individuals to receive piercings even before they are ten, although this is only typically a lobe piercing. The earlobe is the most basic piercing, but a piercing nonetheless. After eighteen, legal action can be seized by any willing body, should they want to pierce that body. I would never have dreamed of getting my nose pierced growing up, but here I am, an adult with six piercings, one of which is the nostril.

Piercings help define Alt/Indie kids because of the multiplicity of options. The breadth of bodily space which piercings can occupy allows them to remain intriguing on any individual. Is it the sheer number of piercings which stands out about the person? Or is it a simple septum that calls attention? Make no mistake, the category of piercings is not only available for those willing to get piercings. You could simply be knowledgeable or interested in people who have piercings.



Networking and knowing the right people will also increase your status as Alt/Indie. There is a manner of increasing one's status without being yourself the most certified Alt/Indie person in your circles. Having an increased status may make you a more likely candidate to be picked by someone you know as the most Alt/Indie person they know. It is important to remember that these categories we are placed into are relative. I may judge someone to be Alt/Indie, but my friend might not. This is because we choose those who we trust to be more knowledgeable than us based purely on a specific identifier. This can also determine the degree to which someone is an Alt/Indie person.

Aside from the physical hole in one's body, the variation in jewelry that exists allows the wearer to express themselves in many different ways. If I put in my crescent moon lobe jewelry, which are roughly half dollar coin-sized in diameter, I would be embodying more of an Alt/Indie persona. The more one embellishes upon their characteristics, the higher the degree of an Alt/Indie person they become. The more personal, strange or intriguing the jewelry, the more qualification one garners in their social role.

The piercing will always be first and foremost in the process. It is the simplest to achieve, making it the first step into Alt/Indie culture. If someone you know appears in your brain with this manner of intensity when I talk about piercings, then they're certainly qualified as an Alt/Indie person in your life.

Contact me about an Alt/Indie person with piercings that you love! What did I forget to mention that you think of? Next week we turn to the tarot cards as a way of looking at the future(!) and for describing Indie/Alt folks further! Any questions, comments, concerns, or existential crises can be sent to dbach.magiccows@gmail.com. As an English (and maybe eventually Philosophy) major, I love to write and trade theories of the universe with others.