

**Cultural Fusion in the Digital Age: Rock Music Scenes and its
Subcultural Community in Contemporary China**

By

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Abstract

This PhD thesis is concerned with understanding the social, political, and economic transformations within China and their impact upon Chinese popular music and youth culture in terms of ‘cultural fusion’. The study employs an interdisciplinary approach combining the academic fields: popular music studies, media and cultural studies, sociology, youth studies and social geography. The PhD addresses Simon Frith’s (Frith 1978, 1996) positioning of rock as an umbrella term, inclusive of a variety of music genres such as post-punk, alternative, indie, and post-rock. Through the notion of cultural fusion, the study seeks to illuminate the rise and decline of Chinese rock in the contexts of marketisation, globalisation and the rise of new media. It also explores how rock’s revival through social media shapes urban Chinese youth identities through these changes.

Ethnographic and textual research techniques are used in the thesis alongside autoethnography defining my research position as both a critical outsider and an insider of Chinese popular music. The data sets include analysis of rock magazines, documentaries, lyrics, interviews and observations with 80 research participants, who are musicians, critics, audiences and fans. In addition, the study employs content analysis and semiotics. Data has been collected in Beijing, Shanghai, Qingdao and Zibo. These research sites represent cultural diversity from different tiers of economically diverse cities in China. Data has also been collected in London, which is identified as a location offering cultural fusion as part of the music scene in Europe.

The thesis explores how rock music has become an expressive tool for Chinese youth to carve out space from realities and controls. It focuses on Chinese youth from a middle-class background and those who migrate to study in the UK. These Chinese youths participate in Western music scenes and bridge popular cultural exchange between the East and the West. The PhD also examines marginal voices and positions within Chinese rock subcultural communities. It suggests rock music articulates subcultural resistance to the structural inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity. The ethnographic data indicates a cultural fusion phenomenon between the East and the West within the music scene, characterised by dynamics and complexities. It symbolises struggles and conflicts for Chinese youth, who face an increasing commercialised and globalised Chinese society.

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Notes on Romanisation

The thesis uses Hanyu Pinyin system of Romanisation for Chinese names and phrases, except in instances that a Chinese online user's name includes a mixture of symbols, Chinese characteristics and English (see empirical chapters), or those who prefers alternative spellings, such as an English nickname with Chinese surname.

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Introduction

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study located in media and cultural studies, sociology, popular music studies, youth studies and social geography. The PhD employs ‘rock’ as a shorthand umbrella term for the diverse music genres, consisting of a hybrid of music traditions, styles and influences (Shuker, 1994: 10). I shall adapt Simon Frith’s (1978: 11) sociological definition of rock as ‘a mass-produced music that carries a critique of its own means of production, and a mass-consumed music that constructs its own ‘authentic’ audience.’ A variety of rock sub-genres are addressed in this PhD, including classical-rock, punk-rock, indie-rock, alternative-rock, post-rock and folk-rock.

A key feature of the thesis is to assess a cultural fusion phenomenon between the East and the West within Chinese rock music scenes, which has been found within the ethnographic data. I shall use ‘cultural fusion’ as a conceptual device to illuminate the dynamic and complex relationship between China’s popular culture and rock music. Cultural fusion was theorised by Croucher and Kramer (2017: 1) as the process that ‘newcomers acculturate into the dominant culture and maintain elements of their minority identity to function in the dominant culture, while at the same time the dominant or host culture also fuses aspects of the newcomer’s culture into the dominant culture to create a fused intercultural identity.’ Rock music came as a newcomer to China: it was itself a ‘foreign import’ from the West, it was primarily associated with Beijing, and also it ‘lent a degree of credibility to the nascent local bands’ (Baranovitch, 1995 and 2003). Western rock music has a continuous influence on Chinese rock in the context of increasing globalisation and cultural exchange between the East and the West.

The thesis explores cultural fusion in the digital age by looking at how rock music transforms Chinese popular culture in the context of increasing commercialisation, globalisation and the rise of new media. At the same time, the PhD also presents analysis of urban young Chinese’ identities through the struggles they face: the impact of one-child policy, the rise of the middle-class, ethnic and gender inequality. These macro aspects add tacit complexities and dynamics to Chinese rock music scenes and its subcultural communities. The PhD presents data derived from qualitative research strategies incorporating ethnographic and textual approaches. Textual data was collected through content analysis and semiotics from rock music publication, specifically the magazine ‘So Rock! Magazine’ (*Woai yaogunyue*) (2009-2013). There will also be analysis of online content, documentaries, and lyrics. In terms of

ethnographic methods, I specifically employed autobiography throughout the thesis in terms of my position as both an inside participant of Chinese music scenes, a D.I.Y. musician and also a critical researcher. Intensive fieldwork was undertaken during 2014-2017, at gigs and music festivals through participant observations with conversational interviews amongst audiences and event organisers, musicians, critics, music fans and industrial staff. Research locations include Beijing, Shanghai, Qingdao and Zibo. These research sites represent cultural diversity from different tiers of economical diverse cities in China. Further data has also been collected in London, which was identified as a location offering cultural fusion as part of the music scene in Europe. The total number of research participants was 80.

Setting the scene: popular music, subculture and scene

In this section, key terms and concepts will be addressed from disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, including a focus on research positionality and an outline of the thesis.

Popular music: Popular music is a subject area which contains a variety of approaches, literatures and disciplines, such as: the musicological approach, focusing on ‘musical characteristics’ of popular music, including musical styles, vocal styles and lyrics; the commercialised approach, addressing ‘the commercial nature of popular music’, quantified through charts, sales and airplay; the sociocultural approach, emphasizing the popularity of genres (Gammond 1991, Williams 1983), as well as socio-economic and technologic-economic approaches, addressing popular music’s ‘mass production’ disseminated by ‘mass media’ for a dominantly youth market (Birrer 1985: 104, Middleton, 1990: 4, Shuker, 2016: 5). However, a singular approach would be detrimental to define popular music, neither a positivist/populist approach as noted by Frith (1996) that measures quantitative sales and profit, nor a sociological essentialism approach as explained by Middleton (1990: 6) that underlies ‘qualitative shifts in cultural relations’ is sufficient for understanding the complexities of popular music. As Middleton suggests, all these approaches ‘divide up the musical field in a particular way – between this and that, better or worse, elite and mass, higher and lower, aristocratic and plebeian and so on.’ Therefore, it is crucial to understand popular music ‘within the context of the whole musical field’ (Middleton, 1990: 7), and to historically locate the meanings of popular music. Drawing on China’s geographical,

political, social, and economic context, as well as its contemporary cultural transformations, the thesis employs ‘popular music’ as an inclusive umbrella term that contains ‘a hybrid of musical traditions, styles and influences’ (Shuker, 1994: 7). ‘Popular music’ here not only refers to rock, pop, hip-hop, dance from Anglo-Saxon’s perspectives, but also includes Sino popular music genres such as mandarin-pop, Cantonese and Taiwanese pop, prison songs (*qiuge*), northwest winds (*xibei feng*), and agricultural metal (*nongye jinshu*), which has fused both Chinese and western musical elements, creating cultural fusion.

Accordingly, rock, as an aspect of pop, is also used as an umbrella term in this thesis, which consist of a diversity of rock music genres, such as post-punk, alternative, indie, post-rock, etc. The study adopts Frith’s (1978: 11) positioning of rock in terms of an opposition between mass consumed music against the authentic consumption of different rock genres. Frith argues that rock has been defined through multiple approaches across literatures, including the sociological approach, addressing its commercial nature; the musicological approach, defining rock as a pop genre, and also as an ‘ideological suffix’ of musical descriptions (Frith, 1978: 11). Since music critics and scholars often neglect rock’s musical meanings by overly focusing on its sociological and cultural implications, it is necessary to encompass both musical and socio-economic definitions rather than a singular definition. It is argued that a key feature to distinguish rock from pop is that while pop promotes commitment to an audience but exploits its audience at the same time, rock carries freedom, resistance and non-commercial authenticity (Frith, 1978). The thesis seeks to explore the meaning, norms and motives behind Chinese youth’ consumption and participation of rock music, and argues that rock has become an expressive tool for Chinese youth to distinguish their identities from mainstream culture. Rock not only serves as a medium for resistance against parent culture, carving out space for Chinese youth from realities and controls, it also symbolises middle-class youth differentiating their identities through tastes and cultural consumptions in an increasing commercialised and globalised Chinese society.

Subculture: the PhD seeks to analyse China’s rock music scenes and youth cultural phenomenon using a revised notion of subcultural theory, while the concept has been shaped across different disciplines including sociology, psychology, criminology, and anthropology (Blackman, 2014). It has been traditionally associated with the Chicago School (Whyte 1943; Gordon 1947; A. Cohen 1955; Becker 1963; Irwin 1970) and Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), addressing collectiveness and social settings in which youth culture take place (Hall and Jefferson 1975). The concept was latterly criticised by postmodern

theorists for overly focusing on class and neglecting the ‘instabilities and temporariness’ of collectiveness (Hesmondhalgh, 2007:25). The postmodern approaches, such as neo-tribes (Bennett 1999; Maffesoli 1996; Bauman 1992a, 1992b), lifestyles (Jenkins 1983; Chaney 1996), and postmodern subculture (Muggleton 2000) provide valuable insights in terms of ‘individual meaning of subcultural practices’ but also neglect the subcultural significance of social structures and collective practices in shaping youth identities (Blackman 2005). Thus, the thesis adopts a critical theoretical position using the CCCS concept of subculture as ‘collective social formations within wider social, political and historical moments, in response to their material experiences and understood as representing a creative challenge to bourgeois order through forms of resistance’ (Blackman 2014: 508). This theoretical position is central for this study, as it is unilateral to understand Chinese popular music as a complex culture without a penetrating analysis of the social, political, economic and historical situations of China. The thesis suggests that Chinese youth identities are shaped through what Blackman (2014: 507) argued as ‘material and social conditions’, and through the rise of social media which was significant in facilitating online subcultural communities in relation to increased rock music participation, knowledge sharing, and social networking in China (Hodkinson 2008, Williams 2011).

Scene: scene is used as an inclusive descriptive term that depicts a variety of musical practices, styles and genres. It is an everyday descriptor used by music fans, journalists and critics for various manifestations. It was explained by Bennett and Christopher (2015: 100) as ‘a form of collective association and a means through which individuals with different relationships to a specific genre of music produced in a particular space articulate a sense of collective identity and belonging’. Scene has been increasingly used as a theoretical framework in popular music studies, including the influential work by Shank (1994) and Straw (1991): Shank (1994) addresses the ‘positive transformative aspects of rock scenes’ (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 27), based on his empirical study in Austin, Texas. Straw’s (1991: 495) theory of scene takes a Bourdieu-ian perspective, taking account of the notion of ‘field’ of cultural practices. Scene is then examined as a ‘local, trans-local and virtual socio-cultural phenomena’ (Bennett and Driver 2015: 100), which is insightful to this PhD, as the thesis seeks to explore cultural fusion phenomenon from a local and trans-local and global level, and addresses the role of social media in facilitating (sub)cultural communication, participation and consumption from both domestic and cosmopolitan perspectives. However, the theoretical usage of scene has been accused of ‘very ambitious’ and ‘downright

confusing’ (Hesmondhalgh 2007:29) for its holistic inclusiveness of musical practices. As Hesmondhalgh (2007: 29) argued, ‘there is a danger...that researchers might use the term merely to denote the musical practices in any genre within a particular town or city... meanwhile, other writers use the term to denote a cultural space that transcends locality.’ Thus, the thesis employs the notion of subculture as a central theoretical framework to study youth cultural phenomenon in the contextualisation of China, where scene is useful to illuminate collective musical practices within given geographical locations and venues.

Chinese city tier system

In the process of increasing urbanisation, Chinese cities have been evaluated and ranked each year in terms of their integrated economic power, cultural influence, education, and industrialisation and then categorised into different tiers of cities. Cities in different tiers reflect ‘differences in consumer behaviour, income level, population size, consumer sophistication, infrastructure, talent pool, and business opportunity’ (Bo 2017, see Xinhuanet). Though the conception of ‘tiers’ is not academically defined and officially recognised by Chinese government, the ‘Chinese city tier system’ is a hierarchy of Chinese cities that have been frequently used by various medias to refer to a city’s prosperity and capability. Chinese cities have been through rapid developments, resulting in an ever-changing dynamic among cities leading to different media organisations possessing various standards in terms of ranking and evaluating a city’s power. Such as, the most acknowledged first tier cities are Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. They are the economically most developed regions that have an international outlook. Many coastal cities and provincial capitals have been categorised as second tier cities or the ‘new first tier cities’ for their economic prosperity and potential: Qingdao has been ranked as an ‘upper second tier city’ or the ‘new first tier’, whereas Zibo has been ranked as a ‘third tier’ or a ‘lower second tier’ city as it’s less developed than Qingdao (Sun 2017).

The hierarchy of Chinese cities is valuable for this PhD, as through identifying socio-economic differences and cultural heritage within different tiers of cities, it helps to illuminate the relationship between music and place (Cohen 1991): music scene within first tier cities of Beijing and Shanghai are different from local music scene in lower tier cities of Qingdao and Zibo in Shandong province. The PhD seeks to examine local music scene’s

relationship with its urban characteristics, which plays an important role in understanding the diversity of urban musical practices.

Outlining the Elements of this thesis

This section introduces each chapter and outlines the structure of the thesis. The thesis consists of six chapters in total.

Chapter 1: is a *literature review* chapter, it examines existing literatures and theories that relevant to my research objects. Since the research is interdisciplinary, the literature review is located across different disciplines including popular music studies, media and cultural studies, sociology, youth studies and Chinese studies. The aim of this chapter is to examine existent theoretical concepts and the various approaches to study popular music, in order to identify ‘gaps’ contained in literatures, and to contribute new knowledge to fill these ‘gaps’. The first part of the chapter addresses western scholarships in relation to popular music studies, subcultural theories, and sociological studies. The second part focuses on existent studies on Chinese youth culture, social transformation, and popular music.

Chapter 2: is a *methodology* chapter, it presents methodological strategies, research design and research legitimacy. The thesis employs qualitative research strategies incorporating both a textual and a ‘multi-method ethnographic approach’ (Hodkinson 2002: 4), including participant observation, in-depth interviews, autoethnography, qualitative content analysis and semiotics of music magazines, lyrics, online contents and documentaries. While the majority of data has been collected in China, additional data has also been collected in London, which acts as a cultural fusion location for studying rock music communities among diasporic Chinese youth overseas. Nearly all data was collected in Chinese and translated to English. In this chapter, my autoethnographic position as both a researcher and also a critical insider, who’s a ‘long-term genuine participant’ of rock music scenes, enhances the quality of my findings and the research process (Hodkinson 2002: 4). In addition, the chapter also adopts an ‘ethnographic mosaic’ strategy (Blackman 2010), where diverse voices and positions have been accessed from the fieldwork, it generates a ‘thick description’, in which the development of grounded theory analysis takes place on the basis of empirical data (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 begin the analysis of extensive empirical data. Where each chapter locates a particular theme in relation to unboxing the notion of cultural fusion emerged from ethnographic, autoethnographic and textual data from a multi-level perspective. These chapters are structurally interconnected and present arguments and issues leading to final findings and conclusions. **Chapter 3** focuses on the broader social, political, economic and cultural contexts of Chinese popular music and youth culture. **Chapter 4** analyses working-class youth identities and subcultures through their music participation, creation and consumption in the digital age. **Chapter 5** examines the formation and characteristics of cultural fusion phenomenon within local, translocal and global rock music scenes, where cosmopolitan and Chinese culture interact, contradict and hybridise.

Chapter 3: *Mapping out China's Popular Music and Youth Culture through Social Change* illustrates the evolvement of Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture tracing back to the 80s generation since Deng's economic reforms. Through the analysis of Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture evolvement in the context of social, political, economic and cultural transitions, the chapter seeks to map out the Chinese musical and cultural landscape in which cultural fusion phenomenon locates. The chapter seeks to examine how multiple forces of cultural policy, technological evolvement, commercialisation, and globalisation shape and influence rock music practices, and suggests that rock as a transformative sound participate in negotiating cultural hegemony both from the state and towards Westernisation.

Chapter 4: *Subaltern Sound and Disadvantaged Youth within Chinese Rock Music Communities* explores youth's motives, norms and attitudes towards rock music participation, creation and consumption. The chapter focuses on subaltern positions and marginal voices within Chinese rock music communities and seeks to explore how structural inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity facilitate cultural meanings to Chinese rock music practices. In particular, a new genre of Chinese rock music 'agriculture metal' was created by working-class youth as a resistant tool towards authority controls and diverse social problems. They take up creative strategies to negotiate unequal socio-economic realities in the process of commercialisation and cultural fusion between the East and the West.

Chapter 5: *Cultural fusion in the Digital Age: Local, Translocal and Global* examines the characteristics of cultural fusion phenomenon from local, translocal and global rock perspectives. The chapter seeks to explore local music scenes in relation to their urban

characteristics and cultural heritage within the lower tier cities of Qingdao and Zibo, whose music scenes are in relation to, but also contradict by their Westernised or traditional urban outlook. The chapter analyses translocal participation, consumption and dissemination of rock cultures within Shandong province, and addresses the role of translocal fandoms and cultural artefacts in facilitating subcultural interactions and cultural fusion. In addition, diasporic middle-class Chinese youth in the UK facilitate cultural fusion between the East and the West as an interactive process, but during which, re-articulation of diasporic identities leads to contrasting approaches taken by educated young Chinese individuals to counter, negotiate, obey and compromise Chinese social institutional controls and globalisation.

Chapter 6: *Conclusions* summarises the findings of the thesis relating to rock music scenes and youth culture under the unifying notion of cultural fusion and re-emphasises wider methodological and theoretical significance. The chapter discusses the impact of social, political, economic and cultural transitions on rock music scenes and youth subcultures; struggles and conflicts faced by Chinese youth in increasing commercialised and globalised Chinese society, with regard to inequalities and cultural hegemonies; and how youth identities are shaped in the process of cultural fusion between the East and the West. Geopolitics is addressed to understand relationship between music and place. It seeks to illustrate the complexities, dynamics and contradictions involved in cultural fusion at the digital age.

Chapter 1: Literature Review: Studying Popular Music

Introduction

The literature review chapter draws up a literature ‘map’ of the research (Creswell 2009: 36), which helps to locate the thesis into the ‘larger, ongoing dialogue’ in relevant academic debates (Cooper 2010; Marshall and Rossman 2011). By reviewing a broad range of theoretical approaches, arguments and interdisciplinary debates, including popular music studies, youth studies, media and cultural studies, sociology and Chinese studies, the chapter seeks to identify and fill gaps in existent literatures, and to extend prior studies on popular music (Cooper 2010; Creswell 2009; Marshall and Rossman 2011). By presenting the selection of literature and setting up theoretical positions, the chapter explores research agency, which is significant in relation to data interpretation and analysis in the empirical chapters.

The chapter consists of two sections: the first part of the literature focuses on the Western academic debates of popular music studies, media and cultural studies, and sociology. Exploring issues such as the legitimacy of popular music as a field of study, subcultural theory, music’s authenticity and commerciality, taste and class, the politics of identity and the notion of cultural fusion theory. The second section of this chapter incorporates both Chinese and Western literature on Chinese popular music studies and youth culture, which addresses Chinese social, political, economic and cultural contexts in which popular music and youth culture are located, and the implication and significance of rock in contemporary China.

1.1. Debates in studying popular music

1.1.1. Popular music studies

This section focuses on the emergence and characteristics of popular music studies, including its analytical approaches and key themes of discussion within this discipline that is relevant to the thesis.

The study of popular music is an interdisciplinary area of research, drawing contributions and influences from musicology, ethnomusicology, media and cultural studies, sociology, cultural geography, folkloristics, psychology and social history (Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002: 1). It is suggested that popular music is widely perceived as not only a cultural product, which can be accessed as a form of commodity, but also as a set of cultural practices which have the potential to enrich people's everyday life and generate self and collective identities (Hemondhalgh 2013). To understand popular music, there have been various approaches and perspectives across literature and disciplines. However, it is almost impossible to define popular music coherently and comprehensively, due to 'the diversity of what popular music has to incorporate' (Beard and Gloag 2005: 133), and the many conflicting meanings it involves (Hemondhalgh and Negus 2002: 1).

It is suggested that a singular and fixed approach to defining popular music is inadequate, as popular music is seen as a 'changing music landscape' that is characterised with fluidity, dynamics and diversity. For example, in defining popular music, the musicological approach focuses on musical meaning. The commercial approach defines popular music by emphasising its quantitative features, and the socio-economic approach delineates popular music through its mass production for a dominantly youth market (Birrer 1985: 104, Middleton, 1990: 4, Shuker, 2016: 5, respectively). While each approach is insightful in defining the notion of popular music from a specific perspective, a restricted definition of popular music is detrimental (Frith 1996; Beard and Gloag 2005: 134). As Beard and Gloag (2005: 133) argue, popular music has 'a powerful potential to change as part of a drive towards diversification within an on-going interaction of musical, social and economic discourses'. Thus, the thesis employs a flexible and holistic approach in analysing popular music, which regards popular music as an umbrella generalisation that encompasses a hybrid of musical styles, traditions and practices within a commercially driven and entertainment-

based industry (Shuker 1994: 7; Beard and Gloag 2005: 133). Within the broad spectrum of popular music, multiple genres are interpreted as components of the holistic category of popular music, such as rock, pop, hip-hop, and dance, but excluding of folk, classical music and academic ‘niche’ music (Bennett 2006; Shuker 2013). It is important to note that though popular music can be generated in shape and form in different regions and nations (Beard and Gloag 2005), the term has become primarily associated with Anglo-American pop/rock music from the West. Therefore, in order to study popular music in a non-Western setting comprehensively, it is necessary to analyse popular music ‘within the context of the whole musical field’ (Middleton 1990: 7), and to locate the meanings of popular music historically. In this thesis, *popular music* is adopted as an inclusive term that contains both Western and Eastern genres; not only including rock, pop, hip-hop, dance from Anglo-American’s perspectives, but also Sino popular music genres such as mandarin-pop, Cantonese and Taiwanese pop, prison songs (*qiuge*), northwest winds (*xibei feng*), and agricultural metal (*nongye jinshu*), which has fused both Chinese and Western musical and cultural elements.

Popular music studies is a relatively new approach to the study of popular music. Bennett (2006) suggests, popular music was often placed at a marginalised position by many academics in the social sciences and humanities whom associated the notion of culture only with elite art and ‘high culture’. It was until 1980s that popular music become a recognisable academic discipline, which is distinct from ‘classical’ or ‘non-Western’ music or jazz, and being taught in institutions at undergraduate levels (Moore 2003: 1). Some of the key advocates who contribute significantly to popular music studies include Simon Frith (1990), David Hesmondhalgh (2002), Sheila Whiteley (2013) and Andy Bennett (2006), to name a few. For example, Frith and Goodwin’s (1990) *On Record: rock, pop and the written word* provides a leading theoretical guide of studying pop, which covers themes of subcultural studies, music industry, the production of pop, and the semiotic interpretation of pop and rock. Bennett’s (2006) *The Popular Studies Reader* focuses on the undergoing change of contemporary popular music landscape and its impact on popular music research, addressing issues such as fragmentation of markets, styles and constituencies, globalisation, and economic factors (Bennett, 2006: 1-5). Hesmondhalgh and Negus (2002) edited *Popular Music Studies*, which outlines the development of popular music studies as an academic discipline and explores key themes and institutions such as musical meaning, popular music audiences, the music industries, and the power of place. For the variety of themes and analytical tools covered in the field of popular music studies, it is suggested that the study of

popular music is a globally established field (Bennett 2006: 5), which was ‘in search of a set of theoretical paradigms that allowing interdisciplinary dialogue’ (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002: 4).

The field of popular music studies was traditionally constituted by musicology, ethnomusicology and sociology, but it is noted that musicology and ethnomusicology almost ignored popular music entirely (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002: 3). On one hand, conventional musicology has been criticised for its inability to evaluate popular music as an analytical tool. As Tagg (2012) suggests, while conventional musicology focuses on institutional euro-classical, and often influenced by the notion of ‘absolute music’, ‘music is so qualified that it is not related to any social connotations’ (Tagg 2012: 91). Popular music addresses its social connotations as it is regarded as an economic product that was mass-produced for ‘sociocultural heterogeneous groups of listeners’ (Tagg 1982; Shuker 1994). Laing also questioned the efficiency of musicology as a tool in analysing popular music in his conversation with Tagg in 2002. As he suggests, there are several distinctive differences between popular music and conventional musicology: musicology was primarily associated with reading and analysing notations on page; popular music is disseminated through records, film, tapes, or digital forms and played rather than purely delineated through notation. Popular music also encompasses both ‘intentional and extensional values’, since it is so much about ‘style and clothes and a way of life’ rather than the musical text itself (Tagg 2012: 107). Conventional musicology is criticised for its inability to deal with the relations between musical text and context to the studies of popular music.

Ethnomusicology, or the anthropology of music, on the other hand, flourished through the popularity of sound recording in Europe and North America from around 1900, according to the first popular music paper *Melody Maker* (1926). Rather than notated music traditions, ethnomusicology focuses on collecting and interpreting ‘folk’ and ‘other’ non-Western foreign music through recording, taking account to its social contexts and ethnicity. This approach has been influential in providing analytical cognition in studying popular music as it focuses on the cultural and society aspects of the music. In particular, both participant observations and fieldwork derived from studying ethnomusicology are employed as effective tools in studying cultures of popular music. But its principal focus on non-Western music and lack of semiology focus in relation to the wider culture of the music make it an inadequate tool in the holistic analysis of popular music.

The sociology of music emerged around 1921 (Melody Maker 1926, see Figure 1.1) with the invention of new media of moving coil microphone and broadcasting boom. This approach developed under a background of social and political change, such as the rising influence of working-class organisations and the side effects of capitalism. It has been argued by Tagg (2012: 137) that the mass distribution of music through new media has made different forms of music, no matter how 'high' or 'low', available to listeners. The sociological approach also highlights different musical habits and tastes between social classes. Amongst the most seminal academic work in relation to popular music studies is the work of the Frankfurt School and Adorno Theodor's *On Popular Music* (1941) and his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (Adorno 1962), within which he discusses issues such as the relationship between popular music and serious music, the characteristics of the music industry and the notion of authenticity versus commerciality.

Negus and Hesmondhalgh (2002) also suggest that writers from the main disciplines that constitute popular music studies were also 'reacting against' certain analytical approaches within their own disciplines historically, which contributes to the pluralists and interdisciplinary of popular music studies. They argue that in musicology, writers were reacting against formalism (2002: 4). In ethnomusicology, scholars tried to avoid functionalism in which non-Western settings became the focus for ethnomusical research, as well as the assumption that the role of music lay predominantly in maintaining the cohesion of societies. In sociology, academics tended to contest both behaviourism and the structuralism-functionalist approaches, which advocates the notion that 'phenomena contributing to the maintenance of the social system as a whole were generally positive' (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002: 5).

All these 'reactions' against analytical traditions within the disciplines of musicology, ethnomusicology and sociology paved the way for an approach that analysed popular music from multiple perspectives (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002: 4). For example, by turning against formalism, musicologists focused on analysing the relationships between social power and music; in ethnomusicology, scholars addressed the social contexts for studying popular music; and in sociology, academics turned their attention to Marxism and youth subcultures in the 1980s. The highly influential Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) reacted against the notion that 'social phenomena contributing to the maintenance of the social system as a whole were generally positive' (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002: 5). In addition, much attention was also given on studying the contradictions of rock (Frith 1981),

instead of focusing the ‘optimistic picture’ of the music industry (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002: 5). Thus, it is suggested that a key feature of popular music studies that distinguishes it from other disciplines is that it ‘addresses the relationships between musical meaning, social power and cultural value’ (Negus and Hemondhalgh 2002: 7). It is also a ‘multitextual cultural phenomenon’ (Born, 1995: 16-28) that produces complex social meanings, and which can be studied in a variety of ‘textual and technological forms’ (Negus and Hemondhalgh 2002: 7). The significance of popular music studies is that it fills the missing link between musicology and popular music by drawing from sociological research to enrich its analytical perspective (Tagg 1982: 40).

Seeking to affirm the legitimacy and recognition of popular music as a field of study, it is significant to note that key organisations and publishers have aligned themselves with the discipline. Popular music was taken seriously as a field of study for its growing social and historical significances when a variety of popular music discourses proliferated in the US and the UK, to include the production and consumption of fan magazines, films, biographies, autobiographies, journalism and emerging academic analysis. Among the most notably popular music newspapers and magazines, there was *Billboard* (est. 1894) and *Rolling Stone* (est. 1967) in the US, and *NME* (est. 1952) and *Melody Maker* (est. 1926) in the UK. Popular music was then recognised as a field of academic study with the establishment of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) and the launch of *Popular Music*, an academic journal, in 1987 (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002: 3).

Academics such as Tagg (1985); Whiteley, Bennett and Hawkins (2004) highlight the contributions of IASPM in developing popular music studies, as it encourages international dialogue and debates among researchers in an interdisciplinary and interprofessional space. The association is independent of governmental and commercial interests and is regarded as one of the most important platforms for academic communication (IASPM 2017 Whiteley, Bennett and Hawkins 2004). Negus and Hesmondhalgh (2002) points out that a diverse range of other peer-reviewed journals have also acted to consolidate the field of popular music studies, which include: *Popular Music and Society*; *Cultural Studies*; *Media Culture and Society*; and *Black Music Research Journal*.

In the late 90s and early millennium, series of academic books and ‘readers’ specializing in popular music studies have also outlined key themes of debates and have constructed a rich body of critical literatures. Relevant publications include *Understanding Popular Music*

Culture (Shuker 1994), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* (Frith, Straw and Street 2001), *Popular Music Studies* (Negus and Hesmondhalgh 2002), *The Popular Music Studies Reader* (Bennett, Shank, and Toynbee 2006), and *The SAGE Handbook of Popular Music* (Bennett and Waksman 2015), to name a few. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives of media and cultural studies and sociology, key themes of discussion involve musical meaning in relation to politics (Street 2012) and social life (Turino 2008), the relationship between class, tastes and musical habits (Adorno 1976; Bourdieu 1984), the tension between authenticity and commercialisation (Adorno 1976), the politics of identity (Frith 1978: 2004a) and the power of place and space (Straw 1991; Bennett and Peterson 2004), amongst others. These key themes of discussion also provide insightful guidelines for constructing a body of relevant literatures for doctoral students and researchers alike.

Although the field of popular music studies has now gained significant recognition, scholars have also criticised the discipline's limitations. Tagg (2012: 5) noted that the majority of scholars who study popular music tend to have 'non-musco humanities' backgrounds and lack professional or formal training in music. This has led to epistemological limitations, as non-musical researchers tend to avoid studying the 'music' in popular music. Laing (1969) also points out the importance of a semiotic approach to study popular music, as it fills the epistemological gap that popular music is pre-dominated by cultural studies (Bennett 2008: 430). Bates (2013) investigated problems and issues within the field and suggested that there are several aspects that popular music studies and IASPM need to build strengths on. In his paper 'Popular Music Studies and the Problems of Sound, Society and Method', he identified the lack non-Anglophone citations in popular music studies despite the growing academic work that studies music and musical communities in the non-Western world. From this, he suggested that a 'West-focus and hegemonic tendencies' (Bates 2013: 16) existed within popular music studies. He also noted that this contradicts the original IASPM values – to facilitate an inclusive, interactive and nuanced international dialogue rather than rigidifying and generalising the field.

In addition, Bates (2013) further questioned the 'true' multidisciplinary of popular music by identifying the lack of analysis of social and cultural contexts within Anglophone popular music studies in the US, the UK and Canada (Bates 2013: 18-21). As both Bates (2013) and Cohen (1993: 123) argue, popular music studies tends to neglect the role that music plays in everyday life, and relies heavily on either musicological traditions or textual sources and analysis, rather than empirical ethnography studies. In addition, Bennett (2008: 430) also

argues that studies of popular music *cultures* have been conventionally dominated by cultural studies, drawing in particular on themes and perspectives drawn from the CCCS, but lacks a detailed understanding of cultural sociology. However, even the work of the few academic theorists who do adopt cultural sociology for studying popular music, such as Bennett (2000), DeNora (2000), Martin (1995), cannot be read in a coherent manner as a recognised conceptual approach to the sociological study of popular music (Bennett, 2008: 419). Thus, Bennett suggests that there is a growing need to engage sociological work in relation to popular music with the analysis of audiences, text and its related resources within the production of musical meanings (Bennett 2008).

By reviewing the trajectory and development of the field of popular music studies, I have approached this study mindful of both the breadth of analytical approaches and issues that lie within popular music studies. The thesis seeks to construct a body of literature with the awareness of both Anglophone literatures and non-Anglophone literatures, combining cultural and sociological approaches. My research addresses the significance of social and cultural contexts in analysing Chinese popular music, which will be discussed in the section of literatures on Chinese popular music. In addition, the study incorporates both a textual and an ethnographic approach for data collection. Particularly, my position as a researcher, a critical insider of Chinese rock music scene, a classical-trained pianist from the age of 6 until 14, and latterly a creative synthesiser who has played in bands both in China and in the UK, adds multiple perspectives and insights to this research. I am not only from a ‘non-musco’ humanity background but also equipped with musical knowledge. My multiple identities in relation to the research position will be addressed in detail in the later methodology chapter.

1.1.2. Cultural studies of popular music: Subcultures and post-subcultures

This section sets out a cultural approach to study popular music and its related cultural scenes. Therefore, this part of the chapter reviews academic debates in relation to subcultural theories (including the work of the Chicago School and the CCCS), neo-tribalism, lifestyle, postmodern subculture, music scene and social milieu. Through a review of this literature this section sets up my theoretical position in order to frame rock culture in terms of subculture.

Popular music and its related cultural scenes have been the key focus of studies in its relevant disciplines of sociology and media and cultural studies since the late 1960s (Bennett 2001: 2).

The studies of popular music have been significantly influenced by theoretical positions and critical conceptions in cultural studies, in particular subcultural theory which is associated with the work of the CCCS. The notion of subculture was originally used as a frame through which to understand post-war youth culture and has been theorised as ‘not merely distinct from, but also in relation to’ the dominant culture (Blackman 2005: 2). This suggests that a subculture is a social group that possesses norms and behaviours different from, or in opposition to, mainstream population. The theory of subculture explores the relationship between youth, identity, musical taste and style, and has been applied across a range of different disciplines, to include sociology, psychology, criminology, and anthropology. According to Bell (2010: 153) and Blackman (2014: 496), the interdisciplinary outlook has made *subculture* not only a ‘hotly contested’ analytical tool in academic debates, but also a ‘chameleon theory’, which can adapt to different sociological paradigms.

Tracing back to the development of the theory, it is important to note that the notion of subculture emerged through academic debates in the U.S. and the UK, in particular through the work of what became known as the Chicago School (Palmer, 1928; Whyte, 1943; Gordon, 1947; A. Cohen, 1955; Becker, 1963; Irwin, 1970) and Birmingham University’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). While both the American approach and the British approach study subculture by drawing from biology and psychology to define deviant behaviour in their early stage of theoretical development, the Chicago School approach focuses on young people’s deviant behaviours that emerge in response to normal conditions of urban social life (Downes and Rock 1982: 66, Blackman 2005: 3). This work was based upon ethnographic research in cultural and community settings. Subcultures were seen as a cultural phenomenon that counters anomie, and within which ‘symbols, rituals, and meaning promote social cohesion’ (Blackman 2010b: 202).

Blackman (2014: 498) notes that theorists like Thrasher (1927), Shaw and McKay (1927) and Shaw (1930) address the normality of deviant behaviours grounded in ‘the social and economic contexts of everyday life within the locality’ instead of seeing it as sympathy and a pathological condition. Other researchers have called on different theoretical heritage for their understanding of the term. For Hodkinson, *subculture* owes much to the work of Becker (1963), Young (1971) and Cohen (1972), which identified boundaries and polarisation between subculture and dominant culture. As Hodkinson (2002: 10) states:

Acquisition of status within the subculture entailed being labelled and, hence, excluded from the rest of the society, something the group would respond to through its own hostility to outsiders, to the extent that non-conformity with dominant norms often became virtuous. As the subculture became more substantive, distinctive and independent, members would become increasingly dependent on each other for social contact and validation of their beliefs and way of life

Hodkinson's argument is valuable for this thesis as it identifies distinct identity, attitude, social contact, and beliefs shared by 'inside' members within a Goth subculture community, which is differentiated from the 'outside' mainstream culture. Through his intensive ethnographic studies on the cities of Birmingham, Plymouth and Leeds in Britain, his research position of being both a genuine inside participant of the Goth music scene and also a critical 'outside' researcher is relevant to my own research. My own multi-method ethnographic research strategy and similar research position as Hodkinson enhance the in-depth quality of my findings and the criticality of the thesis.

The British theorisation of subculture emerged in the 1920s with a different understanding of subculture from the Chicago School. As Blackman (2014: 498-499) notes, American and British approaches were influenced by psychological and pathological positions. The early British subcultural theories emphasised the abnormality of youth behaviour in opposition to normality from the Chicago School, and regarded it as part of societal problems within the civilised society. It was until 1960s, and prominently in the 70s and 80s, that the notion of deviance, youth and subculture was reworked by academics such as those associated with the Centre for Contemporary Studies (CCCS). Hebdige (1979) and Cohen (1972) focused on the issues of class and style-centred youth cultures since the post war through teenage music communities such as skinheads, mods, punks, teddy boys and so on. The influential thinker Stuart Hall and his colleagues from CCCS explained in the seminal edited collection, *Resistance Through Rituals* (1975), the notion of subculture incorporating both social and cultural theories and placing subculture in relation to Gramsci's (1971) explanations of hegemony. They also drew on a distinctly Marxist base and superstructure problematic building on Levi-Strauss' (1966) theories on structuralism, in addition to Barthes' (1979) semiological analysis of cultural activities of everyday life (see, for example Hall 1980: 27–28; Blackman 2014: 502; and Kidd and Teagle 2012: 135-136).

Subcultures were seen as working-class youth' collective reactions in struggles and resistance against structural change in post-war Britain. As stated by Blackman (2014: 501), 'subcultures are no longer pathological', but were seen as a creative construction of ensemble, which aim to solve contradictory societal status between 'traditional working-class parent culture and a modern hegemonic culture of mass consumption dominated, by media and commerce' (Hodkinson 2002: 10). It is important to note that popular music was placed at the centre as a platform for youth to express identities and to perform 'multiple narratives of bricolages (styles) taking a 'do-it-yourself (DIY) approach' (Blackman 2014: 502; Hebdige 1979).

Though the Chicago School and (particularly) the CCCS approach, youth cultures and collective activity were considered within the social settings in which they take place (Hall and Jefferson 1975). However, traditional subcultural theories have also received numerous criticisms by scholars, in particular by postmodern theorists. The main criticisms from postmodernists suggest that traditional subcultural approaches focus too heavily on class as a factor, and as such they are restricted within a 'Marxist' theoretical framework (Muggelton 1997: 200; Blackman 2014: 505) and therefore rely too heavily on a 'rigid hegemony model', ignoring the pleasurable aspects of the music (de Kloet 2010: 39). The theories are also critiqued for merely focusing on 'working-class membership' (Muggelton 1997: 200; Blackman 2014: 505), neglecting 'instabilities and temporariness' of collectiveness (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 25), and ignoring the role of bodies and individual agency (Bennett and Driver 2015).

Blackman (2014: 503) further elaborates upon the insufficiency of the CCCS approach by considering the lack of studies on gender, races and sexuality: in particular the CCCS lacked a focus on female subcultures and non-Anglophone subcultures. For de Kloet (2010: 39) and Hesmondhalgh (2005), while the term subculture associates with and privileges young people's consumptions of popular music, the link between rock music and young people can no longer be assumed, in either China and in the West. For Hodkinson (2002: 11), his summaries of the insufficiency of the Chicago School and the Birmingham School approaches include:

'Through their theoretical emphasis on the solving of status problems in one case, and on symbolic structural resistance in the other, both traditions present an overly simplistic opposition between subculture and dominant culture. There is a

relative neglect of features such as integral diversity, external overlaps, individual movement between subcultures, the inability of the groups themselves and the large numbers of relatively uncommitted 'hangers-on' (G. Clarke 1981:82-83)

In approaching my own study, I am aware of the insufficiency of traditional subculture theories, in particular, as Hodkinson (2002) argues, participations from a subculture community may come from different class positions, and they may react differently to ascribed societal conditions, rather than simultaneously reacting to structural contradictions in the same way. There are also factors that influence rock music participations, such as individual agency, taste, as well as media and commerce, rather than merely a preoccupied binary opposition of working-class resistance and cultural hegemony. In the context of rock subcultures in China, there are rock music participants coming from different class positions, including a combination of middle-class and working-class Chinese youth. The shifting socio-cultural conditions in which rock music cultures develop, the influence of media and commerce, and Chinese youth' individual life experiences, social relationships, emotions and leisure are all essential aspects to analyse in Chinese rock music cultures as a complex culture.

With the critiques of traditional subcultural theories, a series of new terms which employing post-modern approaches emerged, aimed at replacing or updating the notion of subculture. These new terms include *tribes* or *neo-tribes* (Bennett 1999; Maffesoli 1996; Bauman 1992a, 1992b), *lifestyles* (Jenkins 1983; Chaney 1996), *clubcultures* (Thornton 1996; Redhead 1997), *scenes* (Will 1991) and *postmodern subculture* (Muggleton 2000). As noted by Hodkinson (2002), one of the most popular term to replace subculture is the notion of *neo-tribe*, which was theorised by Maffesoli (1996) as a 'consumer group identity through rituals' and 'a source of emotional attachment' where individuals have a degree of autonomy over forces of normalisation such as the media, the fashion industry and fast-food chains (Hodkinson 2002: 21). In more recent work, Bennett (1999: 602; 2001: 21) developed the notion of *neo-tribe* derived from Maffesoli's theory, alongside comments of British sociologist Hetherington (1992, 1998) and Canadian geographer Shield (1992).

Bennett advocated the replacement of the term subculture with *neo-tribe* by stating traditional subculture theories' overestimation of fixity of youth groups and its inability to depict the complexed relationship between individual's taste and identity. Bennett (1999) adopted Hetherington's (1992, 1998) and Shields' (1992) viewpoints, which addresses the temporality

and fluidity of youth groups, and the individualisation of the modern forms of identity (Bennett 1999: 606). For Bennett, young people's identities are self-constructed through post-war consumerism rather than class-based conditions. Class was explained by Bennett (1999: 602; 2001: 21) as a way of 'articulating youth' attachment to commodities', which is detached from social constraints. However, it is notable that although Bennett's notion of 'neo-tribalism' is an attempt in offering a more precise framework to analyse the cultural relationship between youth, music and style, his focus on instability and temporality of group affiliation has also received criticism. As argued by Hesmondhalgh (2007: 24), Bennett's criticism towards traditional subculture centres on a Marxism perspective of fixity and rigidity, and whilst traditional subcultural theories overestimated the fixity and rigidity of group affiliations, a neo-tribalism approach is 'too polarised a presentation of the alternative' (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 24). To 'simply to offer instability and temporariness as alternatives does not get us very far' (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 24). Furthermore, it is suggested by Hesmondhalgh (2007: 38; 1995) that Bennett does not explain how boundaries are constituted nor consider how identities are maintained over time. For Hesmondhalgh, Bennett's employment of the term *neo-tribe* is problematic as it not only carries 'pre-modern symbols onto putatively new phenomenon' – the dance music culture, but it also carries 'the kind of fixity and rigidity' which Bennett is troubled by (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 38).

For other postmodernists who advocate the replacement of *subculture* by such terms as *lifestyle*, *clubcultures*, *post-subculture* and *scene*, Jenkins (1983) and Chaney (1996) adopted *lifestyle* as a descriptive term to indicate 'activities and affiliations of youth groups, which allows differences and commonalities, recognition of change as well as stability' (Jenkins 1983: 41-2). Chaney (1996) addresses the 'importance of shared sensibilities' consumed and chosen by youth groups as 'a distinctive form of cultural affiliation' (Jenkins, 1983: 129). The idea of *lifestyle* has been argued to identify the overlaps and instabilities of youth groupings, which is seen as an accusation of traditional subcultural theories who imply a simplistic opposition to dominant culture. Redhead (1997: x) adopts the conception of *clubcultures* as a supplement of subculture through his chronologic historical account from subculture to club cultures. For Redhead (1997), subculture is outdated in explaining 'the way young people perceive the relationship between music taste and visual style' (Williams 2011: 32). He argues that *clubcultures* mark the global youth formation with the rise of DJ or producer, which characterised with hedonism and consumer choice. Thornton (1996) originally coined the term *clubculture* by updating the notion of subculture by taking a

Bourdieu-ian perspective of ‘distinction’ (Bourdieu 1979), which focuses on the relationship between taste and subcultural capital. Based on her ‘insider’ position studying the rave culture in Britain, Thornton addressed the role of media in forming youth identities by providing visual and ideological resources. She argued that traditional subcultural theories ignore the media’s influence on young people’s identities (Thornton 1995: 119).

Muggelton (1997) proposed the notion of *post-subculture* in *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style*. He argues that while the CCCS approach maintained an intellectual hegemony within cultural studies of youth culture, it is no longer adequate to assess the degree to which subcultures have become ‘postmodern’ (Muggelton 1997: 4). Muggelton’s notion of *post-subculture* develops from neo-Weberian’s qualitative sociology, which advocates understanding the subjective meaning, values and motives of social factors (Hodkinson 2002). At the centre of Muggelton’s arguments is a detachment from the subcultures of class-based youth identity, but has a focus on individualism, fragmentation and fluidity. As Blackman (2014: 506-507) argued, subcultural styles ‘are interpreted by Muggelton (1997) as a symptom of postmodern hyper individualism’ rather than a cultural phenomenon that is attached to social constraints.

Within the sphere of popular music studies, *scene* has become an increasingly prevalent term in describing collective musical practices associated with a particular music genre. It was first commonly used by music fans and journalists as a vernacular, everyday descriptor for various manifestations associated with music in a particular urban setting (Peterson and Bennett 2004). The term was then developed in versions of popular music studies with influences from cultural studies and cultural geography. Among the well-known theorists who widely use the term *scene* are Straw (1991) and Shank (1988). Shank uses the notion of *scene* to frame his ethnographic studies on rock and roll music scene in Austin, Texas. For Shank, scene is ‘an overproductive signifying community’, which produces ‘momentary transformations within dominant cultural meanings’ (Shank 1994: 122). For Hesmondhalgh (2007: 27), Shank produces a theory of the ‘positively transformative aspects of rock scenes’, where ‘individual subjects attempt to achieve wholeness, mastery and plenitude, but constantly fail to do so’, and hence musicians and fans are unified by ‘an intensity of commitment driven by anxiety’ (Shank, 1994: 122-136).

Shank’s theory focuses on the category of adolescence instead of youth, as he addresses young people’s psychological condition constructed by social factors ranging from the onset

of puberty to adulthood. His work derives from Freud's (1959) study of group psychology, Lacan's (1977) account of subject production, and Jacqueline Rose's cinematic explanations of imaginary identifications drawing from the conceptions of 'the ideal ego and the ego ideal' (Shank, 1994: 132). To summarise, Shank's notion of scene celebrates Lacanian theory of subjectivity, within which participants in the rock and roll music scene are driven by narcissistic desire. As Shank suggests, participants search for momentary satisfaction of pleasure and identification within a symbolically constituted culture (Shank 1994: 131). As Hesmondhalgh (2007:28) points out, Shank's theory of scene is heavily influenced by cultural studies (specifically the screen theory derives from film studies), which sees sub (culture) as useful. Hesmondhalgh argues that Shank's theoretical framework draws a contrast between the dominant culture and the 'interrogated, transgressed or transformative' processes within rock music scene that are associated with what Shank called 'libidinal excess' (2007: 28). It is worth noting that the influence of subcultural studies on Shank's theory of scene can also be traced from Bennett and Driver's (2015) argument, that Shank's theoretical framework draws a contrast between 'these transformative practices and the dominant or mainstream culture'.

Straw (1991) developed the notion of *scene* from Shank's work, and defines it as 'a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilisation.' (Straw 1991: 52). For Straw, the distinct notion of scene links with the older notion of musical community: where the notion of musical community consists of a stable population group, and their involvements in music is rooted in geographical historical heritage. Equally, the notion of scene is explained as musical practices and alliances, which are cosmopolitanised within an urban setting (Straw, 1991: 373). It is suggested that although a *scene* can produce 'a sense of community' that is 'meaningful, arousing, exciting and authenticating' (Futrell, Simi and Gottschalk 2006: 278), the level of commitment and participation within music scenes is fluid rather than fixed. As suggested by Harris (2000: 25) and Hodkinson (2002: 22), participants within a music scene have a diverse degree of commitment, as they may range from 'tight-knit local music communities' to 'isolated musicians and occasional fans': they all contribute to 'larger spaces of musical practice' (Hodkinson 2002:22).

Hesmondhalgh (2007: 27) examined Straw's notion of scene in his paper "Subcultures, scenes or tribes? None of the above", and demonstrates the differences between Shank's and

Straw's approach. Whilst Straw focuses on the spatial dynamics of popular music, especially by addressing the transcending effect and evolving nature of electronic dance music, Shank's approach is rooted in local community that specifically celebrates rock and roll. Straw takes account of 'processes of historical change occurring within a larger international music culture' (Straw 1991: 373), which suggests a variety of 'local' or 'regional styles' are encompassed in the electronic music scene beyond the limitation of locality. Shank's notion of scene focuses on the relationships of diverse music scenes within a given location, which is seen by Straw as 'static and lacking in innovation' (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 28). For Bennett and Driver (2015), Straw's work on scene is valuable as it fills the gap in which popular music studies lacks, offering a focus on dynamics of spatiality without a reliance upon on *subculture* and *community* as a conventional framework.

In the paper *Music Scenes, Space and the Body*, Bennett and Driver (2015) understand music scene as a socio-cultural phenomenon and deploy a 'three tier model of the music scene', drawing from Straw's arguments on local and translocal aspects of music scenes, and applying Bennett and Peterson's (2004) discussions on virtualisation of music scenes. The 'three tier model' addresses scene as a local, translocal and virtual phenomenon. For Bennett et al. (2005: 96) *scene* covers an even broader spectrum, which not only includes 'performance, production, marketing, promotion and distribution' (Bennett et al., 2005: 96), but also virtual and non-virtual activities. Through this application, local scenes involve musical practices, cultural signs and lifestyles associated with a specific genre within a given geographic area. Translocal scene is explained as 'widely scattered local scenes that are drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and life-style (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 6), such as 'temporary communities of music festivals' and 'travelling music caravans' (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 9; Kruse 1993). Virtual scenes utilise internet communication technology to create a new sphere, which enables geographically dispersed music fans and musical activities around a particular genre to connect, exchange and interact with each other (Bennett and Peterson 2004).

In summary, in the application of the term *scene*, different approaches and theoretical frameworks have been developed within popular music studies, and the term has been widely adopted beyond the work of Shank and Straw. Shank's approach is insightful for it focuses on social constructions of identities driven by psychological desire and addresses the transformative aspect of music scene with in a given metropolitan setting. But this approach is remains preoccupied by subcultural influences (as argued by Hesmondhalgh in earlier

section) and does not take into consideration the dimensions of social class among participants (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 30). Straw's approach to scene, and Bennett and Peterson's proposition of the three tier model of scene, both provide valuable inspirations for looking at popular music from multiple perspectives and interpret the musical and cultural alliances with a focus on spatiality. But the adoption of *scene*, as suggested by Hesmondhalgh (2007: 29) has been 'very ambiguous' and 'downright confusing'. As Hesmondhalgh (2007: 29) argues, not only has the term been used imprecisely by different researchers to merely imply musical practices associated with 'any genre within a particular locality' without considering the 'politics of cosmopolitanism' involved in the concept, but also, for the holistic inclusivity of the term (as used by Harris (2000) in studying extreme metal) is confusing in its similarity to the term *genre*.

In Hesmondhalgh's words, Harris (2000) points to the term scene as a 'vernacular' term, which adds more complexity to the already 'overly polysemic' scene. In addition, Hesmondhalgh further observes the inefficiency of the term scene in response to Straw's defences: where Straw emphasises the flexibility and holism of the term by addressing the 'invisible and hazy' boundaries of cultural alliances, it is seen by Hesmondhalgh as an 'evasive' excuse, as the 'elasticity' of the term leads to imprecise definition (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 29-30). In my view, I agree with Hesmondhalgh that the term scene has become over-ambiguous and over-inclusive. Similarly, Bennett's celebration of a variety of post-modern terms, such as neo-tribe, lifestyle, and scene, seems to be tangled, as he has to hover between different conceptions and relates them to particular circumstances. According to Bennett and Driver (2014: 113):

While Bennett uses both 'scene' and 'neo-tribe' in his formulation of a counterapproach to subcultural theory, it is important to note that following the publication of this study a bifurcation occurred in the way that scene and neo-tribe were subsequently deployed in what came to be known as post-subcultural theory (see Bennett, 2011).

Thus, scene is used in this PhD as an inclusive descriptive term that focuses on the diverse relationship between music and spatiality in the context of cultural fusion between the East and the West at the digital age. This term covers a broad range of virtual, non-virtual musical practices including production, distribution, performance, participation, consumption and promotion at local, translocal and global level.

To conclude, both the notion of scene and other post-modern approaches neglect the role of social class in differentiating identities, cultural signs and musical practices. For Pilkington, criticisms of the CCCS work on subcultures became fashionable within academia (Pilkington 1997: 25) with the CCCS approach ironically positioned as the ‘mainstream’ and ‘intellectual hegemony’ in the field (Muggelton 2002: 4, Beezer 1992: 115). The postmodern arguments, indeed, offer a different understanding of cultural identity and individual choice through consumerism. Bennett has also critically pointed out that the wide application of *subculture* has sometimes become a convenient ‘catch-all’ phrase, which includes ‘any aspects of social life in which young people, style and music intersect’ (Bennett 1999: 599; also noted in Shildrick and MacDonald 2006: 134). Yet, as Shildrick and Macdonald (2006) and Blackman (2014) note, the postmodernists reject the significance of class-based subcultures and the theory’s neglect of inequality and social divisions of class, gender and race. The postmodern approaches focus on the subjective meaning of youth cultural practices, but do not pay attention to collective practices in shaping youth identities (Blackman 2005). For Blackman (2014: 508) ‘the major impact of the post-subcultural turn has been a constructive critical re-evaluation of the epistemological and methodological basis to the theory of subculture in sociology and criminology.’

It has been suggested that some postmodernists also neglect the aspects of social life that some of the earlier CCCS works continue to explain (see for example Carrington and Wilson 2004: 65; Shildrick and MacDonald 2006: 135). In particular, in *Resistance through Rituals*, Clarke et al. (1976) illustrates the relationship between individual identities and collective structures and cultures with further scope and developments, which is seen by Shildrick and MacDonald as valuable for studying youth in contemporary settings. According to Clarke et al. (1976: 57):

Biographies are the ‘careers’ of particular individuals through these structures and cultures — the means by which individual identities and life histories are constructed out of collective experiences. Biographies recognise the element of individuation in the paths, which individual lives take through collective structures and cultures, but they must not be conceived as either wholly individual or free-floating. Biographies cut paths in and through the determined spaces of structures and cultures in which individuals are located.

Shildrick and Macdonald (2006: 136) further argue that post-subcultural studies tend to overemphasise the ‘spectacular’ music and ignore youth culture of disadvantaged youth. This is evidential as a number of theorists highlight that ‘not all young people share equally in a new, postmodern, global youth culture (MacDonald et al. 2001; Hollands 1995 and 2002; Pilkington 2004; Bose 2003; Shildrick 2006). Specifically, in Bose’s studies of Manchester nightlife, she identifies that not all young people want to access or choose to participate in leisure experiences. As Bose observes, black and Asian youth from disadvantaged communities in Manchester encounter racism and were rejected from entering some clubs and venues. Thus, their shared ‘all dressed up and nowhere to go’ issue has forged special collective identities. In Bose’s words, their choices can be understood as a ‘heightened sensitivity towards aspects of exclusion’ (Bose 2003: 175) and typify the case of ‘excluded’ youth who cannot be fully interpreted through post-subcultural approaches.

In the case of non-Western contexts for conducting youth cultural research, Pilkington (2004: 16) also observes the ‘social cleavages’ within Russian youth culture: where the mainstream youth see themselves as ordinary, indifferent and localised, their counterpart subculturalists are more globalised, Westernised, and fashionable. For MacDonald and Shildrick (2006: 132-133), the Russian youth cultural phenomenon ‘echoed exactly divisions that have long been apparent among British youth’, where young people ‘culturally differentiated themselves’. Therefore, it is suggested that the ‘fleeting, fragmented, and free-floating nature’ (ibid 2006: 126) of postmodern youth culture has become ‘difficult to sustain’ (ibid 2006: 126). Post-subculturalists’ lack of focus on inequality and the ‘political, resistant, subcultural character’ (Blackman 2005; Shidrick and Macdonald 2006: 136) of the subject make it inadequate to serve as a theoretical framework to study Chinese youth culture.

In an attempt to situate popular music beyond the framework of subculture, Webb (2007) theorised the notion of *social milieu* based on his ethnographic study of the Bristol Sound. Through his study of networked popular music, he conceptualises *social milieu* as an alternative replacement of ‘subculture’ and music ‘scene’, which combines both structure and individual agency. Webb’s theory took a Bourdieu-ian perspective of cultural field to contextualizing certain types of popular music in relation to their environments and ‘the dynamics of the relational situation of actors’ (Webb 2007: 3). As Kahn-Harris (2010) summarises, Webb explores three levels of milieu, including how individual actors interact within the milieu, how milieu interact within the broader context of cultural field, and the ‘dialectical relationship between the field and other milieus, fields, and structures’ (Kahn-

Harris 2010: 137). Webb's approach is valuable in addressing the need to consider ethnographic narratives in the cultural studies of popular music (Barker 2010) and opens up a space for 'new and environmental specific knowledge' (Draganova 2015: 27, Webb and Lynch 2010:315). However, as Kahn-Harris (2010: 137) notes, Webb's theorisation is too dense and sophisticated. Not only the 'culture' concept lack examination, but also the term 'scene' repeatedly appears in his empirical chapters. His cross-cultural analysis is criticised by Barker (2010) as it at times reaches beyond 'the depth and scope of his empirical data'. Webb's focus on interpreting popular music through its production also neglects popular music audiences and consumptions (Kahn-Harris 2010).

Thus, the subcultural approaches still remain relevant and helpful to describe young people's social life and cultural experiences. It serves as a useful theoretical framework to explain relationships between youth identity, social class, musical style and locality. For an updated version of subculture theory, Hodkinson critically revisited the traditional subculture theory and postmodern approaches and conceptualised a subcultural theory with 'four indicative criteria: *identity*, *commitment*, *consistent distinctiveness*, and *autonomy*' (Hodkinson 2002: 29). For Hodkinson, his revision neither implies the postmodernists' 'subversion of consumer culture', nor does it suggest that the traditional totality of subculture works as a 'problem-solving' tool for all the Goth participants (Hodkinson 2002: 29). But at its core, his updates still sit within the subcultural foundation instead of postmodern approaches, which overly focuses on fluidity, diversity and instability, and as such are seen as a 'binary opposition' against the notion of subculture (Hodkinson 2002: 29). Similarly, Williams (1997; 2011) revised and developed a symbolic interactionist theory of subculture, addressing the role of media and communication in forming collective identities. For Williams, subcultural theory is a valuable tool in understanding disadvantaged youth groups. As Blackman argued, both Hodkinson and Williams see contemporary social media as a platform for increased subcultural communication, knowledge exchange, and collective identity formation, instead of evidence through which to support postmodern theoretical positions (Blackman 2014: 507).

Within this PhD, my focus is Chinese rock music culture, which emerged and constantly developed in post-reform China. China's different and shifting socio, political and economic context is in stark comparison to the West, such as the UK and the U.S.A. China transformed from a socialist economy to a market economy and this resulted in wider gaps between the rich and the poor over the last thirty years (Goodman 2014). Chinese rock, as a Western-imported product, has always faced challenges from Western media who call for reassurance

in relation to its authenticity. Equally, Chinese rock has been labelled as a copycat (de Kloet 2010) and must also deal with the increasing global festivalisation and commercialisation of rock music that is said to demolish its counter-political aspect in comparison to its initial emergence stage (Steen 1996), but at the same time brings opportunities for rock musicians to survive (de Kloet 2010). All these debates have made the application of terms through which to describe Chinese rock music culture, either subcultural or post-subcultural, a more complex issue.

While scholars who study early generations of Chinese rock, including Jones (1992), Steen (1996), Baranovitch (2003), and Clarks (2012), focus on the counter-cultural and political aspects of Chinese rock within its wider socio-political environment, and advocate the term *subculture* as an explaining tool. De Kloet (2010: 39) and Zhang (2017) employ the term *scene* to denote Chinese rock music as a less political and less fixed means to describe a multi-vocal culture. De Kloet employs the term *scene* based on Straw's (1991) and Kahn-Harris (2007) notion as a cosmopolitan force and Shank's (1994) reading of *scene* as a spatial-bounded music collective practice. Chinese rock scenes are influenced by both local and global forces. De Kloet (2010: 41) argues that 'the global is so deeply implicated in the local', and the two forces feed into each other. In addition, based on Hemondhalgh's (2005) criticisms on the term *scene* as being used muddily by scholars, and preferring *genre* and *articulation* as a more precise term, de Kloet uses the term *scene* in combination with *genre* and *articulation*. *Scene* is therefore used as an inclusive term describes musical collective practices centring on particular genre, within which social identities are constructed.

In Zhang's (2017) recent article (published in Chinese) that describes the music scene within School Live Bar in Beijing, he notes that the venue was established by the members of the Chinese punk band Joyside. In relation to the bar's origins and the community that emerged within it, Zhang argues that *scene* is a more appropriate term to refer to producers, musicians, and music participants collectively exchanging and sharing their music tastes and distinguishing their identities from others within the given space. In doing so, he addresses the fluidity of the punk scene, and the shifting characteristics of individual's identity. A punk musician might as well be a music fan, a businessman operating a live bar, a band manager, and a profession working for a record label. He argues that through a do-it-yourself approach, participants within the punk scene develop fluid identities in order to engage in creative practices; it is notable that even participants' class, gender and ethnicity are fluid rather than fixed within Chinese punk music scene.

I argue that the work of de Kloet and Zhang offer an insightful frame through which to address the internal diversities within youth cultural affiliations. Their points of views are made in opposition to a CCCS centred subculture theory that derived from neo-Marxism perspective, and that neglect the reworked meaning of subculture as well as flexibilities and specifics in relation to explaining subculture. However, Zhang's paper lacks in-depth explanations of how class, ethnicity and gender generate different meanings in the processes of participating, producing and consuming punk culture within School Live Bar, though he does note that participants' different class, gender and ethnicity identity make studying punk scene a complex issue. His focus on the distinctiveness of identities within the scene, and the ways in which the punk scene is distinguished from mainstream culture using a D.I.Y approach to produce creative practices, also carries subcultural elements and degrees of fixity and collectiveness. De Kloet (2010: 39) argues that subculture carries oppositions to prescribed identity rather than 'conscious construction of an oppositional identity'. This is based upon Hebdige's (1988) argument that subculture is a solution facing different forms of surveillance of youth. De Kloet's criticisms of subculture revolve around its restricted in a hegemony model and neglect gender differences and the pleasurable aspects of music making.

To summarise, as Hodkinson (2015) argues, while there is ongoing debate between traditional subcultures and post-subcultures, many post-subcultural theorists focus on countering CCCS neo-Marxist perspective of subculture theory that emphasises structural determination and the fixity of group affiliations. In this critique of subcultural scholarship, the focus (and criticism) is focused on such work as Cohen (1972), Clarke et al's *Resistance Through Rituals* (1976) Hebdige's early work (1976; 1979), instead of paying attention to the various updated and theoretically developed notions of subculture (such as MacDonald 2001; Hodkinson 2002; Haenfler 2010; Williams, 2011; Hannerz 2015). Additionally, these critiques also neglect the 'complex, multifaceted history of subcultural theory' (Hodkinson 2015: 3; Blackman 2005; 2014). Thus, it reflects an 'unnecessarily narrow interpretation of subculture'. In addition, even defenders of post-subculturalists often pay attention to the legacy of the CCCS, but often neglect the specifics and different aspects of subcultural framework across a historical development, such as Jefferson and Hall (2006). Post-subculturalists tend to abandon both the CCCS subculture theory and the term subculture itself. They regard subculture as an inflexible term that 'any hint of diversity, change or individual movement between or within groups, then, became sufficient to warrant rejection of the term' (Laughey 2005: 50).

Thus, within this research, the notion of subculture is still employed as a major explanatory tool to describe Chinese rock music scene. Scene is used as a general descriptive tool to refer to the inclusiveness of musical practices in local, translocal and global settings, within a given geographical space or articulating a specific genre. As Hesmondhalgh (2005: 23) argues, the term scene lacks clarity; as it ‘suggests a bounded place but has also been used to suggest more complex spatial flows of musical affiliation’. Other post-subculture terms such as neo-tribe, lifestyle and postmodern subculture that emphasise ephemerality and porous boundaries possess an individualistic and narrowing understandings of youth cultural practices. I draw from Hodkinson’s (2015) argument that subculture continues to work as a useful theoretical framework drawing from its past and present, though post-subculture theorists may continue to counter this position. This study focuses on the distinctive characteristics of collective youth cultural practices that is different from mainstream culture, and which carries elements of resistance, distinction of identities, pleasures, commitments and autonomy. As Hodkinson (2015: 2) argues:

Emphasis on the importance of collective forms of identity within youth culture and their significance for young lives ought to represent a common endeavour between subcultural and post-subcultural theorists and I propose that continued, in particular, that developing emphasis on studying collective youth cultural practices in the context of broader individual biographies has the potential to accommodate calls for youth (sub) cultural studies to do more to connect youth cultures to other aspects of life, including structural position.

The PhD is aware of the broader socio-political context in which Chinese rock music and youth culture locates, as well as young people’s relationship with their material status and structural positions as participants. It is unilateral to understand Chinese popular music as a complex culture without a penetrating analysis of the social, political, economic and historical situations of China. The term subculture still possesses ‘explanatory potential to account for young people’s subcultural activities across different countries at different historical and political conjunctures’ (Blackman 2014: 508).

1.1.3. The sociology of popular music: The music industry and global homogenisation

This section adopts a sociological approach to the study of popular music. I shall address key concepts and critical analyses in relation to Theodor Adorno's theories of *culture industry*, which are seen as significant theoretical framework through which to understand the popular music industry. There will be a focus on issues of music's *standardisation*, the dichotomy between authenticity and commerce, as well as issues that revolve around global homogenisation and expansions of standardisation, which are relevant for the interpretation of Chinese popular music in my later empirical chapters.

At the emerging stage of popular music as a field of studies, popular music studies were significantly influenced by the theoretical positions of Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School was founded during the interwar period (1918–39) (Held, 1980: 14). This name refers to a group of German-American academics that developed the first accounts of critical theory and cultural Marxism that focused on the significance of mass culture and communication in social reproduction and domination. Adorno was an important member of Frankfurt School and also a composer, who developed theories of the *critical theory of society*, *standardisation*, *the regression of listening*, and the notion of *culture industry* (Adorno 1941). Adorno divided music spheres into two dimensions: namely the 'highbrow, complex, and sophisticated' serious music, and the 'lowbrow, simple, naïve' popular music (Adorno, 1941: 305). Adorno draws the differences between popular music and serious music based on their forms and structures. In particular, he addressed the standardisation characteristics of popular music, which covers not only 'the most general features' but also 'the most specific ones' (Adorno, 1941: 303). And hence, in Adorno's view, listeners develop emotional associations to a specific part of the song rather than the entire piece, which is in opposition to serious music, who emphasises the wholeness. As Adorno noted, for serious music, taken in isolation of (Adorno, 1941: 303) a theme would disrobe the whole piece to insignificance, yet it doesn't affect popular songs if any detail is 'taken out of the context' (ibid: 303). In summary, Adorno argues that popular music is standardised by the fact that its structure is already pre-planned.

Based on the standardised structure of popular music, Adorno further argued that the listening experience of popular music is a passive, manipulative, and mechanised process, which is perceived as 'standard reactions' (ibid: 303). The music listening process links to individuals' desire for relaxation and leisure, a release from work, which demands easy-listening and effortless cheap commercial pop, instead of high art that requires listeners' concentrations. And hence, popular music is commodified and standardised for benefit-driven commercial

purposes. It is suggested that not only is popular music industrialised through its promotion and distribution, but also the standardised nature of the production itself is seen as a 'handicraft' (Adorno 1941), which serves the needs of a competitive free market. On the other hand, Adorno conceptualised the notion of pseudo-individualisation, which refers to 'cultural mass production with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardisation itself' (ibid: 308). In Adorno's view, pseudo-individualisation is a type of standardisation characterised by individualised differentiation that meant listeners were made to forget the pre-planned nature of popular music. For instance, Adorno highlights the case of jazz improvisations and notes that popular music is 'carefully differentiated in production' (ibid: 309). Although, there is a certain degree of freedom in improvisation and differentiation, at the centre these 'differentiations' and 'improvisation' are still manipulated within a standard model of individualisation, which have delimited space for freedom and creativity (ibid: 308).

Adorno suggests that the role of popular music is largely 'a social cement' by illustrating two 'socio-psychological' types of mass behaviours towards popular music: the 'rhythmically obedient' type and the 'emotional' type. (ibid: 312). The rhythmically obedient type is constituted mainly of youth, who are driven by the beat patterns of the music. Adorno therefore concludes that they are more easily influenced by the process of 'masochistic adjustment to authoritarian collectivism' (ibid: 312) regardless of their political stances: the emotional type focuses on music's function for negative emotional release. Both of these behaviours in relation to music serve for social conciliation as 'receptacle', for individuals' institutionalised wants (ibid: 311).

Thus, for Adorno, popular culture is standardised and rigidised, it manipulates mass society into passivity, artificiality, and homogeneity (Max and Adorno 2002: 107, Hodgkinson 2002: 13). It is noted that, through mass production, consumers take a passive role in consuming whatever cultural products are delivered from the culture industry that characterised with homogeneity and minimal diversity. Consumptions of these 'easy and pleasurable' (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 107) cultural products make people content, satisfied and temporally forget about the hardship of their machinery work and low economic status. For Adorno, the notion of *mass culture* that Horkheimer and he proposed in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) is no longer applicable to describe the popular culture industry. The notion of mass culture refers to 'the culture arises spontaneously from the masses themselves',

whereas the concept of *culture industry* addresses ‘products are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less to the plan’ (Adorno 1991: 98). Therefore, for Adorno, the entire culture industry is commodified and driven by maximum profit, no matter whether it results in high art or low art. It is fused into customised cultural products, in which the value, creativity and autonomy of high art is destroyed to fit the commercial needs.

It is suggested that the rigid form of cultural products lead to popular culture lacking ‘diversity, fulfilment and intellectual’, but instead, it encourages senses of ‘passive, homogeneity and escapism’ (Hodkinson 2002: 13). From Adorno’s viewpoint, cultural products are seen as means to maintain societal order of capitalism, as tools to implant dominant ideologies. Authentic culture, on the other hand, is seen by Adorno as unique, independent and not driven by goals, which can foster the capacity of human imagination by presenting suggestions and possibilities, and as such cannot be forced into any pre-formed schemas (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997). To summarise, authenticity is seen as a symbolic opposition to artificially produced mass-cultural products

In relation to issues of authenticity in relation to music, we can also look to those studies that developed after the work of Adorno. Shuker (1998: 17) addresses both the musician’s role in creating the music and the commercial contexts that the music is being produced. Thornton (1995) emphasises on both the degree of originality and if the music is ‘natural to the community and organic to the subculture’ (Shuker 1998: 17). Moore (2002) addresses the reception of popular music and observes that authenticity is valued and constructed through listening. Meanwhile, it is also noted that authenticity may also be considered by cultural industry to incorporate into standardised cultural products for maximum sales (Dettmar and Richey 1999; Draganova 2015: 25).

Adorno’s critique of popular music remains significant in opening up a new way to address the social situation of popular music. For Denora (2003), Adorno constructs a solid foundation for theorizing the relationship between sounds, texts and recordings, and the social practices that create and consume cultural and musical materials. For Middleton (1990: 35, 61-62), Adorno’s approach is valuable for its focus on ‘critique rather than description’, and on the significance of the ‘systematic nature of the production processes. In my own work, I suggest that Adorno’s attention to the notions of authenticity versus commerce, the standardisation of culture industry, as well as the manipulation of popular class remain

insightful to the interpreting of popular music in China. But at the same time, I am also aware of the multiple criticisms of Adorno's theoretical approaches.

In a critique of Adorno's theories, Middleton argues that the cultural field should no longer be divided into "popular" and "serious", as both popular music and serious music should be considered as a whole. Adorno's position on popular music is also 'polemic and scathing', and according to Middleton (1990: 34), Adorno's theoretical examinations lack a focus on music's reception and function. For Middleton, Adorno's discussion of standardisation as a means for dominant social interest in an advanced capitalised society need to be examined from multiple aspects: that of musical production; musical form; and musical reception and function (ibid: 34). Adorno's theories should also be read in relation to his cultural and musical experience situated in the period of Fascism and Stalinism. For example, the political economy of Frankfurt School is too generalised for it locates its analysis only to the historical period of 1930s Germany (Middleton 1990:3 7). Thus, Adorno's studies relate to a specific historical time range and, for Middleton, is not adequate to explain the contemporary popular music industry where 'the entire musical production-consumption process become both more unified and independent and more "socialised"' (ibid: 61).

DeNora (2003) argues that Adorno's theories only serve as an inspirational beginning for the consideration of the relationship between the musical and the social. DeNora's reworking of music sociology addresses the multiplicity of contexts in which contemporary popular music locates, and the interactions between music and social relations. DeNora points to Adorno's excessive focus on 'macro cultural structures and power relations' instead of 'small-scale social practices of music' (Roy 2006: 112).

For Tagg (2013: 140-142), Adorno's studies on popular music lack empirical data drawing from ethnography and sociology. His background as a musicologist, a composer of serious music, and his unfamiliarity with the popular culture realities, make him replicate value judgments deprived from formalism, and conservative positions of art criticism and literary theory. In Tagg's words, Adorno's 'hierarchy of listening modes' of serious music and popular music, devalues music's 'somatic properties' (ibid: 139-140). It excludes theoretical developments in relation to the relationship between music, the body and emotions, and it also looks down on musical norms, motives and meanings of the popular class. This is further noted by Hodkinson (2002: 13), in his studies of Goth subculture:

There is little room in such notions of mass culture, whether from the Frankfurt School or from theorists from different traditions, for the kind of substantive or meaningful deviations or appropriations implied by subcultural theory. Such apparent instances of creativity or originality would surely have been regarded by Adorno not as symbolic resistance, but as a form of pseudo- or sensuous individuation- an ideological mask for the, in fact, superficial and standardised form of every facet of popular culture.

For Hodkinson, Adorno's theories are root in totality, and his passive implications of the culture industry underestimates creativity, delinquency and substantive aspects of subcultural musical styles. As Hodkinson argues, theorists who advocate Adorno's position of standardisation and pseudo-individualisation devalue the significance of the commercially targeted 'small-scale and specialist' markets and media outlets (Hodkinson 2002: 16; also noted by Curtin 1996; Atton 2002). For Hodkinson (2002: 16) and McRobbie (1989: 25; 1999: 10), the importance of DIY approaches within small-scale commerce stands against Adorno's notion of commerce and standardisation.

Hodkinson also points to notions of global homogenisation that derived from Adorno's notion of standardisation, which are advocated by theorists like Peet (1982, 1989), Schiller (1985, 1991, 1992), Wallis and Malm (1984, 1992), and Dirlik (1996). Global homogenisation advocates that the expansion of the key transnational music companies, such as Universal Music Group, Sony BMG Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group, EMI Group, BMG and Polygram (Negus 1999: 14-15), into new local markets across the globe destroy the distinctive, independent and creative natures of local cultures. Global capitalism is seen as a 'one-way flow' of Western commodified cultural products and ways of life, incorporating into local's social relations (Peet 1989: 193; Hodkinson 2002: 14). It is worth noting that by 2012 only three major transnational music companies based in the U.S. were left due to corporate merging of the same-type companies; a survival strategy within media and culture industry towards a more digitalised technology reformation. Thus, the leftover major transnational companies include Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group

In terms of theorisations of global hegemony, Manuel (1988) addresses the dominant and influential role of Western music on local culture and questioned whether the authenticity of local music is driven by commercial benefits or reflect actual cultural values. Hesmondhalgh

(2007a: 214-218) suggests that domestic cultures of the less-developed countries are affected by flows of Western cultural forms, texts and technologies. Wallis and Malm (1984: 299-303; 1992: 214) study the complex relationships between local and global popular music in terms of music technologies and styles. They identify ‘a set of hybrid culture’ (Hodkinson 2002: 14) that has been created in the ongoing dialogues and interactions between the local and the global, in which the hybrid culture fuses both the ‘universally accessible elements’ (Hodkinson 2002: 14) from global music styles and local features that feed back into the transculture. Similarly, Peet (1982, 1989) and Schiller (1985, 1991, 1992) suggest the newly fused transculture gradually loses its meaningfulness, depth and uniqueness in the process of interactions between the global and the local as local culture’s distinctiveness are appropriated by the global standard for maximum sales. Miyoshi’s study ‘From Colonialism to Transnationalism’ suggests that the transnationalisation of economy and politics makes local culture hard to survive, and the return to authentic cultures ‘is a closed route’ (Miyoshi 1993: 747). Dirlik (1996) observes that the global media and marketing tactics function to ‘appropriate, standardise, and mass-market elements of locally specific cultures’ (Dirlik 1996: 32). But Hodkinson notes that the totality and passivity implied by global hegemony derived from Adorno’s notion of culture industry is problematic, as a more ‘complex, active processes of negotiation’ have been observed in the process of cultural transformation (Hodkinson 2002: 15).

To summarise, awareness of the power relationships within the music industry facilitates understandings in relation to examining and interpreting Chinese popular music that are situated in a different societal context and a different socio-economic background. The notion of global hegemony also paves the way to gradually unpack the myth behind culture transformation between the East and the West, between the local and the global. However, it is crucial to consider the complicated and dynamic process of negotiation in the process of globalisation rather than a binary and arbitrary perspective. The sociological understandings of popular music within Western scholarship provide valuable insights to interpret Chinese rock music scenes and its subcultural communities in contemporary age of social media.

1.2. Popular Music and Youth Culture in China

1.2.1. Key themes and discussions on Chinese popular music and youth culture

This section sets out the overall landscape of Chinese popular music and youth culture, which includes the ways in which Western media portray Chinese rock music, and current academic literatures. I therefore examine literature from popular music studies, youth studies, cultural studies, and sociology in order to consider the breadth and depth of literatures and to identify contributions, gaps and key themes within Chinese popular music studies and youth culture studies.

There has been emerging research on Chinese popular music both in China and in the West, although the field of Chinese popular music studies remains fragmented and developing. Much media and academic attentions have been given to musical practices and youth culture associated with rock music. For instance, through conferences and networking during my PhD degree, it has been observed that studies on Chinese rock music and youth culture are the focus of a number of emerging young Chinese academics, such as PhD researcher Zhongwei Li from LSE, on *Tuning in with the Cut-out: Profane Music and Subcultural Politics in 1990s China*; Dr. Peng from University of Liverpool, on *Rock in China: protest and Consumption since the 1980s*; Dr. Jiang from University of Sheffield, who specialises in ethnomusicology, and produced conference papers on *Second-hand Rose, First-hand Rock: Problems of Authenticity in Chinese Rock Music* (2007), and *Rocking Space: The Reapplication of Social Space Theory in Chinese Rock Music* (2010), to name a few.

In addition, on Chinese social media Wechat, an official account of Chinese Popular Music Studies Group (*Zhongguo Liuxing Yinyue Xiaozu*) was established by a group of Chinese academics. This group aims to promote academic activities, provide a networking space for popular music scholars across the globe, and to ultimately contribute to the field of popular music studies and culture studies. The Chinese Popular Music Studies Group was founded by Yu Long, Liu Fei, and Wang Qian in Beijing in 2011. Its Wechat communication group reached a number of thirty-three members by October 2017. The establishment of Chinese Popular Music Studies Group has been significant in bridging dialogues between online and offline, between academic and non-academic, as well as linking Chinese popular music

studies with international associations of IASPM and IAPMS (Inter-Asia Popular Music Studies Group).

For Western media outlets, it has been observed that there was a range of views portraying China. However, Western media's negative views and biased reports on communism dominated countries are common, in addition to the proliferation of stereotypes relating to the less-developed third world countries. For instance, in relation to Chinese youth culture, Western media often portrays Chinese young adults as tasteless, wealthy consumers buying luxuries everywhere (Redefine 2013). They neglect the fact that those wealthy youth only represent a small segment of the population. In relation to popular music, for the handful of Chinese bands that were disproportionately reported in Western media the focus is not on how musically unique or accomplished the band is, but rather how strange it is to see a punk or alternative band that has developed in China (Feola 2013). This surface level but expected journalism only pays attention to limited numbers of Chinese bands but neglects the variety of Chinese rock music.

Another bias in Western media's portrayal of China's rock music scene is its tendency to view it as novelty, as the co-founder of Chinese indie label Maybe Mars, Pettis noted: 'We're very much in the beginning of getting people to know Beijing has a music scene, musicians know it and people in the music industry know it, but nobody else does' (in Sheehan 2014). Pettis' description is in accordance with my experience in Margate, the UK. When I attended a gig of the Japanese band Melt-banana in the summer of 2017, an English rock music fan I encountered curiously asked me if there's a metal music scene in China and what it is like. Even for the recent growing attentions in Western media, such as *the Guardian's* series of report *Inside China's Indie Music Scene* (published in 2014) mainly focus on specific locations in China, such as Changsha's and Wuhan's rock, punk, jazz and hip-hop scenes. Meanwhile, there are only occasional reports of Chinese rock music scenes on media platforms such as the BBC, *Hufflingpost*, *NME* as well as other alternative blogs and E-magazines. Thus, being aware of current bias and fragmentations in Western journalism, this thesis seeks to study Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture from a holistic perspective, which is not driven by commercial profits or political stances.

1.2.1.1. Outlining key academic discussions on Chinese popular music

In Chinese popular music studies, a chronological account of Chinese popular music genres and youth culture has been identified through academic discussions, such as the emergence of Westernised Chinese music in the early twentieth century and popular music *shidaiqu* (songs of the era) in the 1930s, Mao's revolutionary songs from 1966-1976, the return of Cantonese and Taiwanese pop under Deng's economic reform since late 70s, the proliferation of Northwest Wind (*xibeifeng*) and prison songs (*qiuge*) in the late 80s, and more recently the emergence of the rock generation of the 90s and 2000s.

There have been several key academic contributions to Chinese popular music studies. Manuel (1988) offered a seminal account of Westernisation and modernisation of Chinese popular music in the context of social change in his study *Popular Music of the Non-estern World*. Similarly, Chong's (1991) explorations of Chinese rock mega star Cui Jian highlighted the political nature of Jian's compositions. Jones' (1992) pioneering English-language work on Chinese contemporary popular music identifies the two broad music genres of *tongsu* and rock music (*yaogun*) and focuses on cultural hegemony of popular music enforced by the state. Steen (1996) set out the pioneering days of Chinese rock from 1984-1993 and Huot's (2000) accounts of Chinese rock from Mao's era until Nirvana offered detailed explorations of new Chinese cultural scenes. Efir's (2001) ethnographic study considered rock music and its urban space in the 90s Beijing, whilst Jones' (2001) work plotted the emergence of Chinese popular music, its media culture and colonial modernity in the Chinese jazz age (early twentieth century). Huang's (2001, 2003) studies of rock's meaning as cultural product from the late 80s until early 2000 focused on its authenticity and political implications. Baranovitch's (2003) analysis of popular music, ethnicity, gender, and politics from 'the Mao fad' until 'the rock fad' led the author to argue that rock music, Northwest Wind and Prison Songs represent new voices for Chinese youth and those under privileged facing state-controlled artistic discourses. Finally, Ho's (2006) research on social change and nationalism in Chinese popular songs from mass songs of the 1910s to popular songs in the 2000s addresses the tight connections between music and politics.

More recently, Moskowitz's (2010) studies on Mandarin-pop in both mainland China and Taiwan focus on the mid 1990s and challenge the notions of Mandarin pop being 'vapid, lacking in originality, and of being performed mostly by good-looking but unremarkable singers' (Guy 2012: 191). De Kloet (2010) has studied the illegally imported *dakou* cultural products in the mid-90s and cosmopolitan music scenes in the age of globalisation, and the Canadian journalist Campbell (2011) has written on the revolutionary aspects of Chinese rock

through his identity as an ‘insider’ Chinese rock musician. Groenewegen-Lau (2014) examines on how Chinese rock became state-sponsored and Chu’s (2017) study of Hong Kong Cantonese pop considers the music through a historical account, from 1950s to the new millennium.

While much academic attention has been on the earlier generation of Chinese rock in the period of the late 80s and early 90s (e.g. Chong’s 1991; Jones 1992, 1994; Steen 1996; Huot 2000; Efird 2003; Huang 2001, 2003; Baranovich 2003; Ho 2006; Moskowitz 2010; Campbell 2011), only a small portion of academic attention has been given on rock music scenes since late 1990s and in the new millennium (two examples are Groenewegen-Lau’s 2014 and de Kloet 2010). Furthermore, Chu (2017: 13) points to the current academic landscape that pays more attention to Chinese rock music, with a striking lack of studies on Mandarin-pop and Cantonese pop. In my own research, I observe that much of the studies on Chinese rock music focus on issues revolving around the dichotomy between rock music versus pop, such as authenticity versus cultural hegemony, and authenticity versus commercialisation.

1.2.2.2. Outlining key academic discussions on Chinese youth culture

In terms of academic discussions on Asia youth culture, Williams (2016) identifies current limitations within Asian youth subculture scholarship. He argues that Asian subculture literature remains very traditional and conservative, as scholars predominantly follow the traditional subcultural studies of the Chicago School and the CCCS. Both traditions employ external definitions and identities on their research subjects for their description of cultural phenomenon from a realist perspective. At the same time, Asian subculture literature tends to lack a level of reflexivity relating to the relationship between researchers and their research. Asian youth subculture scholarship also neglects recent theoretical updates on traditional subcultures, such as Hodkinson’s ‘insider’ perspective (2006), and critical evaluation of subculture that function as a counterweight to traditional scholarship (for instance, Bennett 2011 and Blackman 2014). As such, I am aware of current insufficiency within Asian subculture studies, and focus within my own research on criticality, depth and reflexivity in order to interpret Chinese subculture.

Within Chinese youth culture scholarship, de Kloet and Fung (2017: 22) identify a genealogy account of youth cultural transformations within scholarship, starting from Red Guards youth culture in the 1960s, into ‘political protesters in the 1980s’, towards contemporary youth culture linked up with the globe, which includes Clark’s (2012) *Youth Culture in China: From Red Guards to Netizens*; Cockain’s (2012) *Young Chinese in Urban China*; and Xu’s (2002) *Searching for Life’s Meaning: Changes and Tensions in the Worldviews of Chinese Youth in the 1980s*. Other relevant publications contributing to understand youth culture in China includes: Barmé’s (2000) *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture*; Chen’s (2001) *China Urban: Ethnographies of Contemporary Culture*; Moore’s (2005) *Generation Ku: Individualism and China’s Millennial Youth*; Xi, Sun, and Xiao’s (2006) *Chinese Youth in Transition*; Rosen (2009) *Contemporary Chinese Youth and the State*. Cockain’s (2012) *Young Chinese in Urban China*; and Steinfeld’s (2015) *Little Emperors and Material Girls: Sex and Youth in Modern China*. It is worth noting emerging contributions towards Chinese youth culture studies in China, especially the work of Professor Ma Zhonghong from Suzhou University, who edited *the Annual Report of Subcultural Studies in China* from 2012-2016. These pioneering studies in Mandarin document the latest Chinese youth cultural phenomenon that covers a wide spectrum of themes and issues, ranging from cyber youth culture to real-life youth culture, urban youth culture to rural youth culture, and subcultural comparisons between China and overseas. My own research focuses on a selection of recent work on Chinese youth culture since 2010 to draw up the urban youth cultural landscape, such as Clark’s (2012) *Youth Culture in China: From Red Guards to Netizens* and de Kloet and Fung’s (2016) *Youth Cultures in China*. This work provides a more up-to-date understanding of current generation of youth culture.

1.2.2. Theorizing Chinese youth

This section sets up the theoretical position of Chinese youth, with a major focus on the latest work by de Kloet and Fung’s (2017) *Youth culture in China*. By reviewing the notion of *youthscape*, the thesis draws partial theoretical perspectives from de Kloet and Fung’s arguments and addresses the resonance to adopt a subculture framework to interpret Chinese youth culture in relation to rock music scenes in the digital age.

To understand Chinese youth culture, de Kloet and Fung (2017: 10) adopt both a ‘sociological framework of generation’, in which a group ‘shares, incorporates, internalises, and realises a similar value system’ (drawing on the work of Mannheim 1952), and an anthropological approach that addresses the ‘diversity and multiplicity’ of youth culture. This anthropological element addresses the neglect of the cultural difference and economic inequality between rural youth and urban youth evident within the sociological definition. Based on Appadurai’s theoretical framework of ‘scapes’ to refer to ‘major social domains (De Kloet and Fung 2017: 11) and Maira and Soep’s notion of youth as an *social achievement* (Maira and Soep 2013: xviii), Kloet and Fung (2017: 11) proposed the notion of *youthscape* to emphasise the role of the state, society and different social institutions in which youth are being constituted and produced repeatedly through their daily participations and engagements that influenced by ‘historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors’ (Appadurai 1996: 33; de Kloet and Fung: 11). De Kloet and Fung argue that a bio-genealogical approach that addresses the fixity of Chinese youth according to age cohort – the post-80s (*balinghou*), post-90s (*jiulinghou*) and the millennium generation (*linglinghou*) – is unilateral, as it runs the danger of essentializing generations. At the same time, they try to avoid any generalised categorizing of Chinese youth, such as defining youth as a developmental and psychological stage as either ‘the hope of the future’ by the Communist Party, or seeing youth as ‘naïve, vulnerable, and a problem’ (de Kloet and Fung 2017: 13) as a result of having not yet established correct world-views and knowledge (Bakken 1994: 63).

De Kloet and Fung adopt a Foucauldian approach to argue that Chinese youth culture is characterised with complexities and contradictions that are driven by both the surveillance of the state, school and family, and the micro ‘individualised mode of biopower’ (which emerged in ‘discourses of neoliberalism that are mobilised by the nation-state’ (Ong 2006), through which youth search for *moments* to change and negotiate (de Kloet and Fung 2017: 11-12, 57). The centre of de Kloet and Fung’s theoretical interpretations is based on Michel Foucault’s theory of power and governmentality (Ling 2017: 2), in which power is exercised both through governmental control and ‘has mutated and intensified in multiple domains, mostly through the expressions of individuality and the articulation of subjectivity (Foucault 1980, 1984; de Kloet and Fung 2017: 198). My research suggests that de Kloet and Fung’s focus on middle-class educated youth ‘being fostered by the system and acquiring advantage in social resources’ (de Kloet and Fung 2017: 16), can be seen as an alternative approach to subculture theory, as de Kloet and Fung advance individualistic and subjective readings

through ‘thinking of youth as experimenting with different cultural repertoires’ rather than anti-hegemonic (ibid: 16). De Kloet and Fung argue for ‘alternatives’ approaches to understanding middle-class Chinese youth culture and note that these alternative spaces carved out by Chinese youth ‘might not severely undermine the state and the social institutions of school and family’ (2017: 54).

However, my own research suggests that their arguments against subcultural approach as anti-hegemony (2017: 16) are very narrow. On one hand, their approach neglects marginal youth and structural inequality in terms of ethnicity, gender and class, and on the other hand their criticisms against subculture also lacks in-depth theoretical review. De Kloet and Zhang primarily refer to Dick Hebdige’s notion of subculture – which addresses resistance and rebellion towards hegemony – but as the work of the CCCS demonstrates, subcultures are not solely focused on resistance and rebellion. They also neglect recent updates and critical analysis of subcultural theory, such as Hodkinson’s (2002) focus on the ‘distinctiveness, identity, commitment and autonomy’ of subculture and its membership to distinct insiders and outsiders, and Blackman’s (2014) critical assessment of the value of the CCCS subculture theory. Instead, de Kloet and Fung draw on the concept of youth as social achievement as developed through the work of Maria and Soep (2013: xviii):

A youth scape is not a unit of analysis, as in Appadurai’s framework of “scapes”, but an approach that potentially revitalises discussion about youth cultures and social movements while simultaneously theorizing the political and social uses of youth to maintain repressive system of social control... It might seem counterintuitive to evoke achievement with respect to a category so often associated with delinquency by mainstream scholars, resistance by progressive and radical thinkers, and failure by researchers alarmed by apparent patterns of academic and moral decline (McDermott 1987; Varenne and McDermott 1999). Achievement does not necessarily mean a positive outcome, but it does connote a condition that is produced, over and over again, by various parties and institutions participating.

I also build on the idea of *youthscape*, drawing from Maria and Soep’s theorising of *youthscape* as consisting of subversive youth cultural practices facing social institutional controls from the state, familism, partyism and education within Chinese wider social, political and historical context. This term helps to illuminate urban youth identities in China

in relation to their involvement of rock music subculture, and through which youth mobilise creative strategies to distinct their identities and carve out space to negotiate surveillance, pressure and control.

At the same time, Chinese youth' everyday engagement with the state, the social institutions and the media has also embedded Chinese youth culture with contradictions and dynamics. As de Kloet and Fung argue (2017: 53-54), alongside the internet censorship – the Great Firewall of China, there is also a “cultural firewall of China” derived from partyism – familism and the education system also filter external cultural influences and counter-hegemonic resources that emerge from ever-widening popular cultural resources that are available under intensified globalisation. However, this thesis argues that as middle-class youth growing up in Chinese social institution and value systems, many of them also receive higher education abroad and then return to China, continuing to bridge the cultural exchange between the East and the West through new media. In addition, through VPN technology that provides access state-banned foreign websites, the carved-out alternative space is larger than researchers have previously noted for socially advantaged youth. These struggles and resistance can therefore still be considered as risk-free ‘semiotic guerrilla warfare’ (Hebdige 1987: 91). This study addresses the contradictory and dynamic relationship between youth culture and the macro structural factors within a subcultural framework and emphasises middle-class Chinese youth as subcultural agencies within rock music scenes, actively negotiating macro cultural controls and hegemonies. From empirical data, I argue that within rock music communities, middle-class Chinese youth also mobilise taste as a marker of distinction (Bourdieu 1979) to express their identities as alternative and socially advantaged.

De Kloet and Fung's (2017) work sets up the cultural situation of the post-reform era that is so different from the China of the 1980s and the 1970s. They argue that the term *youth* is no longer as political as previous generations of Cultural Revolution in the 1970s and the Student Movement in the 1989. Instead, the term is increasingly linked to the post-reform contexts in which urban Chinese youth are involved in increasing economic prosperity, with many being labelled as ‘little emperors and materialistic girls’ (Steinfeld 2015), whilst at the same time there is a growing inequality gap between the rich and the poor, and between the rural and the urban (Wang 2003). The term *youth* thus links to the ideas of ‘fun and pleasure’ (Z. Zhang 2000) as a result of rising consumer culture and leisure activities (de Kloet 2010: 38-39). At the same time, de Kloet and Zhang also suggest that Chinese youth culture is a continuity of historical Confucius culture and Communist regime. Although this thesis does

not seek to provide a comprehensive analysis of historical Chinese youth culture, it is still essential to map out previous generations of youth culture that facilitates the emergence of rock music scenes and subculture. As Wang argues: ‘Without a penetrating analysis of the cultural situation of the previous generations, it is difficult to understand the economic, environmental, and political aspects of a complex culture’ (2003: 600).

1.2.3. Understanding urban youth culture and popular music through socio, economic and political change

This section reviews literatures on Chinese youth culture and popular music through the lens of its socio, economic, and political contexts. The Chinese Economic Reform led by Deng marks the historical turning point in terms of understanding popular music and popular culture, as it changes China’s national contexts profoundly from Mao’s era, the failure of Tiananmen student protest marks another turning point for youth culture development. Through primarily focusing on the work by Clark (2012) and Baranovitch (2003), the following section sets up the historical context from which I will interpret contemporary Chinese youth culture.

1.2.3.1. Mapping out Chinese youth cultural progression through three historical junctures

Clark (2012) argues Chinese youth culture is characterised by distinct generational differences in relation to collective identities for each specific historical period. He illuminates a clear youth cultural progression through his analysis of three historical junctures: the rebellious Red Guard youth culture during Mao’s Cultural Revolution since 1968; a complex underground youth culture influenced by global trend in 1988 with the growths of TV and film industry and the emergence of rock music scene; and a more commercialised and digital youth culture marked by 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. Clark (2012) locates his theoretical interpretations of Chinese youth culture in a subcultural framework and addresses the larger social processes that shape subculture. Clark (2012: 3) notes that the adoption of the term subculture (*yawenhua*) in Chinese academia was made almost a half century after its

association with the Chicago School, and more than twenty years since the seminal work of the CCCS. In China, the idea of subculture is relatively new in its historical and political contexts, as the Communist regime denies spaces for subcultural activities before the 80s. As a result, ‘the word for subculture only began to use fitfully by sociologists in the 1990s.’ (Clark 2012: 3)

While Chinese subcultures emerged publicly in the 1980s under Chinese Economic Reform and the ‘Open Door’ policy, Clark traces the root of subculture back to Mao’s revolutionary era (1966-1976) when Mao called for Red Guard youth rebel against intellectuals, parents, and the traditional Chinese establishment. For Clark (2012: 5), Chinese youth culture has its roots in the Cultural Revolution when the youth took up creative activities to promote Mao’s propaganda. At the same time, the ‘Down to the countryside’ movement in the late 1960s – declared by Mao and forcing millions of youth sent down to the countryside to learn from the poor peasants – also provided space for creative expressions, including frustrations, homesickness and aspirations (Clark 2012: 38). Some of the distinct popular culture created by the sent-down youth laid the groundwork for a flourishing of cultural innovation in the early 1980s’ under Deng’s economic reform, such as the circulation of hand copied novels at rural farms, the popularity of fiction, poetry and creative prose (*sanwen*) in the early 1970s, when some of the sent-down youth had an opportunity to return to cities (Clark 2012: 41- 42).

Clark makes a distinction between youth culture during the Cultural Revolution and youth culture created after the economic reform, as the different ‘national and social contexts’ since the economic reform produce ‘new and unimagined changes’ (Clark 2012: 52). Thus, Clark argues, distinctive youth cultures ‘got started only in the late 1960s in the PRC’. These youth cultures were not like Western subcultures that characterised with ‘oppositional, spectacular, transgressive, and anti-commercial’ when they first emerged. However, these Western traits of subculture were present and grew when youth culture further developed with economic growth, a widening of popular cultural resources and China’s increased opening up to the globe. However, capitalism has led to an emphasised interest amongst the youth in materialism and profit making. According to Kochhar (2011), a ‘consumerism fever’ spread everywhere by the end of 1990s. With the turn of the century, this was accompanied by a craze to learn English and to study in Western countries.

The year 2008 marks another significant historical moment for Chinese youth culture. A culture of consumerism has been developing since the economic reform, which has in turn

formed an even more explicitly consumer culture among Chinese youth, especially with the rise of middle class. There has been a growing interest in materialistic hedonism for Chinese youth, but the unequal access on materialistic spending has also engaged some young people's attentions. Internet and social media have become the platforms upon which Chinese youth express their views, frustrations and identities. The increasing consumerism and the growing gap between Chinese middle class and lower class embodies complexity and fluidity in Chinese youth culture. Yet equally, as most of the urban youth have been born under the one-child policy, the Internet has become the place where Chinese youth connect, entertain, and share alternative information with each other in everyday life. Social media and cyberspace have hence provided a broader space for Chinese youth engaging in expressions of fandom, idealism and frustrations, which serves as tools for escaping realities and controls (Graaf 2014, Wallis 2011). The Summer Olympic Games in Beijing also intensified these cultural exchanges between China and the West and increased opportunities for the continued development of consumer culture.

Clark's (2012) work is valuable as he mapped out Chinese youth culture by examining the 'social, political, and cultural contradictions of subcultural practice' (Blackman 2014: 503), which covers a variety of youth cultural forms marked by three historical points of interest and themed by spaces, bodies and rhythm. His work is also rich in the variety of data sources of photos, films, academic literatures and research reports used. But as noted by Vadrevu (2013), Clark's theoretical interpretations are not strong enough to support his ambition to fully interpret a range of complexed issues, in which he seeks to cover 'the continuities and discontinuities between Chinese youth and youth in the West, between youth and other demographic groups in China and between Chinese youth in the past and the present' (Vadrevu 2013: 277). According to Vadrevu (2013: 227), Clark's work on modern Chinese culture sets up loose connections with many disciplines, which provide him with the space to freely engage with the Chinese culture, that he is reassuringly familiar with. My own research identified key historical points during which changes, and new transformations of Chinese youth culture and popular music developed. These developments in Chinese youth culture and popular music are closely connected with state policy, cultural influence from the West and the social institutions that Chinese youth participate in during everyday life.

1.2.3.2. The significance of Deng's economic reform

According to Huang (2001) the 'Open Door' policy of 1978 – a central part of the Chinese Economic Reform led by Deng – was significant to the development of Chinese popular culture and rock music, as it 'opens the gates of communist China to previously forbidden foreign influences, both economic and cultural' (2001: 1). The Chinese Economic Reforms adopted market principles and privatisation and has transformed Chinese economy from highly centralised to individual responsibility. However, in relation to politics, Chinese economic policy remains embedded within Marxist-Leninist-Maoist concerns with maintaining political legitimacy. The shift of core political leadership from Mao to Deng, and the changes of party policies from the so-called 'Revolutionary China' to a 'Socialist Market Economy' (Kochhar 2011), has caused drastic changes in Chinese society. As Baranovitch (2003: 10) notes, the 'Open Door' policy marked the return of popular (*liuxing*) music in China. Before Mao's communist regime and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Western influenced popular music originally bloomed in Shanghai during 1911-1937, a period which has come to be known as Shanghai's Jazz Era (Moskowitz 2010: 16). This was labelled as 'Yellow Music', a term used to refer to pornographic cultural products (Ho, 2016: 84) that were associated with 'Western and Japanese imperialism, the Chinese bourgeois and the corrupted Nationalists' (Baranovitch 2002: 14).

As Baranovitch (2002: 14) suggests, popular music's (*liuxing*) soft and sweet musical elements suggest a feminine music, and it is said to function to 'soften people's heart and weaken their will for struggle and sacrifice' especially during Sino-Japanese war and Civil War period (Baranovitch 2002: 14). In Mao's era, Revolutionary Songs (1967-1976) that derived from Soviet Union, featuring a 'resolute, prescriptive, ordering tone' (Baranovitch 2003: 223), were the only acceptable musical format. It was broadcast on public speakers and radios. The government encouraged lower class peasants, factory workers, soldiers and students compose music (Ho 2006: 442). Revolutionary songs therefore served as a political tool to praise and share socialist idealism and communist values. Popular music and urban leisure culture of nightclubs and dance halls were banned in Mainland China, with their centres allocated Hong Kong and Taiwan (Baranovitch 2002: 14).

Baranovitch (2002: 14) notes that the proliferation of Cantonese pop and Taiwanese pop (*gangtai* music) in Mainland China marked the end of an era during which the Communist

Party had processed extremely tight control over Chinese society and culture. New technologies such as cassettes and tape recorders also played a decentralizing role, as people no longer need to totally depend on the central-controlled media to access cultural products. With growing interest in foreign cultures, overseas trade and investment under the Chinese Economic Reform, by the end of 1980s Chinese rock music, Northwest Wind music (*xibeifeng*), Prison Songs (*qiuge*), hooligan cultures, and other forms of popular cultures emerged and were popular amongst Chinese youth, especially among those marginal youth and urban youngsters who were suspicious of dominant cultures. According to Brace and Friedlander (1992), Huang (2001), Baranovitch (2003) and Ho (2006) there is a distinct chronological progression in Chinese popular music since the economic reform, which begins with Cantonese and Taiwanese pop (*gangtai* music), that derived from Western-influenced popular music that emerged in Shanghai during the 1920s (Baranovitch 2003: 11). In turn, Northwest Wind (*xibeifeng*) developed, itself derived from northwestern folk music and Prison Songs (*qiuge*), and from this mixture of musical influences rock music (*yaogun*), and China's first popular mega star Cui Jian, were formed. Foreign influences, started with the return of Cantonese and Taiwanese pop, facilitate the emergence and growth of Chinese rock music scenes (Ho, 2006: 444) and subcultural communities (Baranovitch 2003).

While the state-controlled Cantonese and Taiwanese pop features soft and sweet singing, with romantic themes and the expression of individual feelings, the Northwest wind (1980s – 1989) features northwest folk style with a Western-style strong and fast tempo and forceful voices, which delivers a sense of roughness, freedom and boldness. Its masculine expression reacted against Cantonese and Taiwanese's sweet feminine styles and reflects the hardships of everyday life in China. For Baranovitch (2003: 20), it represents a longing for the re-establishment of Mainland China's cultural hegemony over Taiwan and Hong Kong, as Northwest Wind represents a demand to reconnect with Chinese authentic and ancestral culture associated with Shanxi province, the birthplace of Han civilisation, which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and more recently swept over by foreign cultural products. At the same time, Northwest Wind music became a means of expression to mediate pressure and conflicts for young Chinese facing rapid social changes and value changes from the Cultural Revolution to the Economic Reform. The music therefore symbolises young Chinese' emotional release of oppression, dissatisfaction and desire for change and independence (Baranovitch 2003: 18-25).

Prison songs, emerged and became popular at the same time as Northwest Wind – from 1988 to 1989 – and were credited to Chi Zhiqiang; an actor who was jailed for his ‘bourgeois thoughts and life style problem’ and labelled as ‘hooligan and a rapist’ (Wen 2009, see Global Times). He set stories about his time as ex-convict in jails to folk melodies from the Northeast China, which articulate despair, cynicism, and dark-realism in slow and weepy tones (Zeng 1988, Baranovitch 2003: 26). According to Baranovitch (2003), Prison Songs symbolise a marginal culture, which is particularly popular amongst urban youth and private business owners (*getihu*), many of whom were dropouts, ex-criminals or ‘sent-down youth’ during Cultural Revolution. Prison Songs represent a non-mainstream subculture that articulates marginality, oppression and antagonistic towards official artistic discourse (Baranovitch 2003: 26).

1.2.3.3. The emergence of Chinese rock

Chinese rock first emerged in Beijing in the 1980s (Huang 2001: 3, Baranovitch 2003: 31; Eford 2003; Jones 1992) as a result of an increasing number of foreign students studying in Chinese universities and foreign professionals residing in the embassy region of the capital under the ‘Open Door’ policy (Zhou 1994: 10-11). Chinese rock retained its popularity by being underground and marginal at the same time and was adopted by university students and underground bohemian circles. It was introduced by mainly Western students sharing cassettes with their Chinese peers and their involvement in music production and live performances in small bars and hotels (Baranovitch 2003: 31). Several scholars trace back the earliest Chinese rock to Cui Jian. The first rock band in China was established by students from Beijing International Studies University, after Chinese University Exam (*gaokao*) in 1977 and during the end of Cultural Revolution. The band was named after the four band members’ surnames Wan Li Ma Wang, and mainly covered songs by The Beatles and Paul Simon. They mainly performed at universities in Beijing.

According to Baranovitch (2003), rock music is the root within Northwest Wind, with northern Shanxin folk song traditions combined with Western-style rough bass line and percussive musical elements. Amongst the most famous songs were “Have Nothing” (*yiwusuoyou*)’ by Chinese first rock star Cui Jian. With a number of scholars studying the early development of Chinese rock, Cui Jian’s music and lyrical content has become a major

focus for analysing early Chinese rock music (see Baranovitch 2003: 31-36; Huang 2001: 3-11; Huot 2000: 154-163; van Ziegert 2013: 201-207; Rea 2006: 100-116; Blum and Jensen 2002). For Baranovitch, Cui Jian's music is significant as it introduced a new set of values of 'individualism, non-conformism, personal freedom, authenticity, direct, bold expression, and protest and rebellion, in short, the essence of Western rock culture' to post-revolutionary China (Baranovitch 2003: 32). This set of values challenged the mainstream culture and state-dominant musical discourses that 'are expected to serve as the voice of the state or the people' (Baranovitch 2003: 32). This music symbolised a 'disillusioned' (Baranovitch, 2003: 33) generation of young intellectuals who expressed frustrations and a sense of loss, facing the constant change from the Cultural Revolution and the sudden flourish of Western culture in Mainland China. These young intellectuals were cynical about communism, and critical of Chinese traditional and contemporary culture.

For Baranovitch, the emergence of Chinese rock also indicates a viable subculture in China that demonstrates resistance towards authority, and a call for cosmopolitanism (Baranovitch 2003: 40-48). It differs from Western rock as it has never become part of mainstream Chinese culture, yet it still influences the mainstream Chinese culture by asserting Western values. Baranovitch's analysis of Chinese rock, Prison Song and Northwest wind accord with Clark's (2012) arguments that the post-reform subculture emerged in China were embedded with Western traits of subculture that articulates resistance, anti-commercial and spectacular. This is evident in Baranovitch's (2003: 40-45) arguments that Chinese rock subculture distinguishes itself through its fashion style of 'rock clothes' (*yaogun fuzhuang*) and rebellious 'rock spirit' (*yaogun jingshen*). Many rockers were also concerned about the 'victory of materialism' after the 'failure' of student protests in 1989. From empirical data, my own research suggests that Chinese subculture continues to embrace Western subcultural characteristics, but the power relationship between rock music, youth identities and the macro actors of the state, social class, the social institutions and the media were far more complex and dynamic than a binary oppositional relationship declaimed by many scholars. My data also opposes the suggestion that youth culture since the millennium are only associated with fun and pleasure (de Kloet and Fung 2017) in the context of increasing consumerism and globalisation.

Chinese rock reached its peak of its popularity and creativity between 1990 and 1993, marked by the 'failure' of the 1989 Tiananmen Student Movement and the official-permitted '1990 Modern Music Concert'. Although it entered public sphere, the scale of rock performances

and participation remained small. Rock music started to decline in late 1993 as a result of the state banning rock music on mainstream media and venues (Baranovitch 2003: 42). Alongside the banning of rock music, Prison Songs and the critical and idealistic content from Northwest disappeared as they articulated dissatisfaction towards dominant culture. As Baranovitch (2003: 44-45) notes, the ‘failure’ of 1989 Tiananmen Student Movement marks the narrowing of negotiated space between the state and marginal cultural discourses, as the state became intolerant to overt political oppositions. The ‘failure’ of student demonstrations also transformed youth values, showing a lack of interest in political engagements and idealisms and a shift of focus towards materialistic consumption.

Barne (1999: 129) argues that the emergence of rock subculture in the early 1990s also symbolised a clear division between ‘elite’ and ‘mass’ culture as it plays a deconstructive role towards dominant cultural discourses controlled by the state, which creates more possibilities for a discursive urban cultural landscape. It is suggested that Chinese rock music started to revive since the early 2000s with the disseminations of *dakou* cultural products (de Kloet 2010), the rise of the Internet and the festivalisation of rock music. Through my PhD, I focus on the rock revival period since 2000, when Chinese rock music negotiates controls through commercialisation. The socio-cultural impact of Chinese rock and how Chinese youth express their identities through rock participation, consumption and production will be analysed in detail in the empirical chapters that follow.

Baranovitch’s (2003) work is valuable as it provides an in-depth analysis of political implications of rock music in the reform era through his close readings of popular music contents. He locates his theoretical framework within the notion of subculture and focused on the dialectical and dynamic relationships between hegemony and resistance to interpret Chinese popular music in the period of reform. Baranovitch (2003: 222-223) developed his argument against Stuart Hall’s (1980) notion of hegemony and resistance as fixed and static, but focuses on the dialogical relationships between the two, in which ‘resistance may constantly influence and shape hegemony... or transformed into hegemony’ (Baranovitch 2003: 223). At the centre of Baranovitch’s argument is an opposition to binary theoretical positions that simply place popular culture as an oppositional force against the state. But as Wesoky (2005) suggests, Baranovitch focused more on interpreting the meanings of music rather than examining the politics of identity and the relationship of this with the state. In addition, de Kloet (2010: 18) also points to the insufficiency of Baranovitch’s work, as when Baranovitch argues rock becomes a fad in the early 1990s, Baranovitch overlooks the

popularity of rock and assumes its temporality, although de Kloet adopts Baranovitch's argument that rock's popularity at the early 1990s is a residue of the cultural spirit of the 1980s.

To summarise, both Clark and Baranovitch place Chinese rock music in a subcultural framework, and address the social, political, and economic context in which Chinese rock music evolved. The historical analysis and accounts relating to the politics of Chinese rock interprets the contradictions rooted within Chinese rock music. As Huang (2001: 3) argues, 'in a culture as rooted in history as China's, close familiarity with aspects of the past is necessary to comprehend details of the present.' Thus, as Baranovitch's work sets out the cultural situation during the emergence of Chinese rock as a subculture, this thesis moves on to explore key positions and oppositions within academic theorisations of Chinese rock in the post reform era.

1.2.4. Interpreting Chinese rock: positions and oppositions within academic debates

This section considers Western theoretical applications and interpretations on Chinese rock music from cultural studies, popular music studies and sociology in order to be aware of key themes of theoretical debates, contributions and limitations. As the previous section addresses key literature in relation to outline the evolution of Chinese popular music and youth culture through cultural, social, political and economic change, the focus here is the positions and oppositions within Chinese rock scholarship.

Looking at the theoretical applications of Western popular music studies, cultural studies and sociology on Chinese popular music, Jones' (1992) identifies two broadly defined Chinese music genre based on his two trips in China during 1988-89 and 1990s: the officially-sanctioned *tongsu* (music for the mass) popular music, approved by the state, promoting communism cultural hegemony; and the underground rock music (*yaogun*), which is seen as independently produced, standing for anti-feudalism and voicing for 'the people'. In terms of interpreting Chinese popular music, Jones draws upon theoretical debates concerning Adorno's notion of mass culture and subcultural positions derived from Stuart Hall and Dick Hebdige that suggest that the recontextualisation and appropriation of popular music represent a means through which to challenge hegemonic domination by British youth (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Jones 1992: 44). Jones' theoretical interpretation has its roots in Ray

Pratt's rework of Stuart Hall's notion of reception and retextualisation, which addresses the politics of popular music as hegemonic, negotiated and emancipatory.

Friedlander suggests that Jones' work also adopts theoretical positions from Simon Frith on 'the complex interplay of production, dissemination and creation in the light of audience use' (Friedlander 1994: 119). Jones argues that the officially approved *tongsu* music carries cultural hegemony that enforces controls over the subjectivity of *tongsu* musicians, their music and expressions. Rock music, on the other hand, implies 'authentic self-expression', 'rebellious sensibility' and 'emotional release' towards oppression and state control (Jones, 1992: 91). For modes of production and distribution, *tongsu* music is produced by state-controlled work units and disseminated through tightly controlled mainstream media platforms of films, radios and televisions. Rock is produced outside state work unit and disseminated to students and individual entrepreneurs (*getihu*) through independent distributors and unofficial channels (ibid: 118).

Although Jones' work is valuable for his pioneer analysis of popular music in the late 80s and early 90s by applying Western theories on Chinese cultural context, key criticisms of his work include the insufficiency of Jones' interpretation of the data and his inability to fully structure the theories (Friedlander 1994). Such as, Jones notes 'Chinese youth's recontextualisation and appropriation of popular songs in terms of their lives, desires and frustration do not necessarily need to be placed within the context of subcultural resistance' (Jones, 1992: 44-45). But in his later explanation of how rock carries rebelliousness towards dominant cultural and political oppression, he returns to the notion of 'subcultural milieu' (Jones, 1992: 91), which is contradictory to his arguments in earlier chapter. It is suggested that Jones fails to address the oppositions and marginality in music genres of northwest wind (*xibeifeng*) and prison songs (*qiuge*) by simply placing them into the broad *tongsu* music category (Friedlander 1994).

Steen (1996) considered 'the pioneering days' of Chinese rock from 1984-1993, with a focus on the influence of the most famous Chinese musician, Cui Jian. Steen emphasises the relationship between the constantly changing social landscape in China and the development of rock. He addresses the subversive and countercultural characteristics of Chinese rock, which is seen as a mean to be against political control (Chong 1997; de Kloet 1998). According to de Kloet (1998), Steen's work is insightful in relation to his extensive knowledge of Chinese musicians, their music and lyrics, as well as the richness of data.

Steen's work can be seen as a 'valuable encyclopaedia of the early days of Chinese rock (de Kloet 1998:148). And although Chong (1997: 211) highly praised Steen's research, De Kloet criticises Steen's work for falling into the trap of simply dichotomizing rock versus pop.

De Kloet (1998) notes Steen's work is rooted in the 'countercultural' aspect of Chinese rock, which replicates discourses of authenticity associated with rock, in particular placing rock in opposition to pop. Steen therefore failed to examine the complex meaning of pop and rock by ignoring the fragmentation of rock scenes in China, and by overlooking the subversive nature of Chinese pop as 'escapist and trivial'. De Kloet (1998: 148) criticises Steen's argument that commodification has diminished rock's authenticity and rebelliousness, suggesting that commercialisation might facilitate the development of Chinese rock and offer more opportunities for rock production, dissemination and participation. De Kloet's arguments on the commodification of rock is valuable to this thesis as my empirical data also suggests that the commercialisation of Chinese rock provides opportunities for its survival, negotiating tightly controlled cultural policy.

Huang (2001) re-examines the meaning of rock as a cultural product through his analysis of the cultural, political and social situations in the 80s and the 90s, which were marked by the economic reform and the failure of Tiananmen Student Movement. He draws from subcultural approach of the CCCS to examine the alternativeness and rebellion of Chinese rock towards mainstream CCP dominant ideology. While he addresses the rebellion and resistant aspects of rock music as a mean to negotiate state control before the student protests, he argues that the post-protest rock as a mean of political resistance is limited to what Hebdige (1979: 3) called 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' (Huang 2001: 9). It is expressed through 'risk-free' rebellious fashion and music rather than 'articulated opposition' (Brake 1985: 7). For Huang, the political crackdown of the student movement also led to most mainland rock musicians communicating less interest in political resistance as such a position would endanger the artists and their careers. In terms of authenticity of Chinese rock, Huang identifies that Chinese rock musicians have constructed their music identities self-consciously: on the one hand, some rockers focus on the Chineseness of rock music derived from northern Chinese as producing 'a robust, positive and socially progressive type' in contrast with Western rock's negativity and decadency (Barne 1996: 201; Huang 2001: 7). On the other hand, a number of rockers also attempt to be cosmopolitan and open to foreign cultural influences. According to Huang (2001: 7), an oppositional subculture defending against 'the

flood of Western-deprived pop music' emerged in the Mainland as a result of Chinese rockers who advocated a return to authentic traditional roots.

Huang's work is insightful as he identified the meaning of rock as a cultural product that is anti-hegemonic towards both the state and the Western cultural hegemony. But it is possible to question whether Huang's ideas were not sufficiently answered. For example, the reader is still left unsure as to whether rock music will regain its role as a site to negotiate mass culture identity. In addition, a more in-depth analysis of Chinese subcultures and the relations between Chinese rock and Western rock are needed. Huang further observes the existence of three major rock music scenes in the 2000: 'the old rock music 'mainstream' of Cui Jian, Tang Dynasty, and Dou Wei; the young punk scene consisting of young people in their twenties; and the underground/experimental scene which emerged in late 1990s with well-known band such as Cold-blooded Animals. This timeline is relevant to this thesis as it maps out a general landscape of music scenes around the new millennium.

One of the timely contributions to understand Chinese rock music and youth culture is de Kloet's (2010) *China with a Cut*. The work sets out the popular cultural landscape of rock/pop in the 1990s and 2000s and is particularly valuable as an update of academic discussion on earlier development of Chinese rock (such as Baranovitch (2003); Jones (1994); Steen (1996), to name a few). My own research suggests that the new generation of rock music, following the millennium, has largely not been discussed by popular music scholars. *Dakou* cultural products – illegally imported Western cassettes and CDs punched with cuts that emerged in underground markets in the mid-1990s – as de Kloet argues (2010: 19), mark the birth of a new generation of Chinese rock having been forced to remain underground from 1993. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, and collected data from media, magazines and surveys, de Kloet analyses Chinese rock/pop through a fluid and fragmented notion of music scene: the *hard scenes* consist of underground, heavy metal, punk, hip-hop, hardcore; the *hyphenated, less-hard scenes* include folk-rock, pop-rock, pop-punk and fashionable bands; and *subaltern sounds* including marginal voices, female bands and southern sounds.

De Kloet (2010: 26) proposed the term 'rock mythology' to refer to 'a set of narratives which produce rock as a distinct music world that is, first and foremost, authentic, but also subcultural, masculine, rebellious and (counter) political,' and is critical about the of the 'deparadoxicalisation' power of the rock mythology. At the centre of de Kloet's argument is an avoidance of any binary categories within academic attempts to interpret rock/pop music

as either this or that, such as ‘opposition and resistance, repression and freedom...morality and corruption, and so on,’ (Yurcha 2005: 5; de Kloet 2010: 200) but rather to study pop/rock in its full complexity. De Kloet focuses on the issue of authenticity as the basis of rock mythology and argues that while rock carries authentic values, such as ‘transgressive and meaningful’, pop music is seen as ‘inauthentic, co-opted and superficial’ by Chinese musicians, critics and fans (de Kloet 2010: 26). On the other hand, through his geographical account of Chinese rock, he observes that Chinese rock carries the burdens of being accused as copycat of Western rock and hence needs to illuminate its “Chineseness” in the face of Western cultural hegemony (ibid: 27-28).

To theorise cultures of rock/pop music, de Kloet employs the term ‘scene’ draw from Shank (1994), Straw (1997), Kahn-Harris’ (2007) work, and sees it as ‘a binding force’ of the rock mythology and speaks about ‘cultural domains’ (de Kloet 2010: 39) based on Appadurai’s (1996) work on globalisation and cultural flows. De Kloet is against a subcultural approach and draw ideas from Foucault’s (1983) understanding of power and surveillance to address youth subjectivities and the fluidity of youth culture. His criticisms of the subcultural framework include its rigidity as a hegemonic model, its preoccupation with difference and deviance in studying culture, and the lack of attention on studying women participants. In particular, de Kloet (2010: 39) draws on Hesmondhalgh’s (2005) paper and argued that the link between rock music and youth is not obvious anymore in the West or in China, which I suggest, is inaccurate. From empirical data and interviewees, it has been observed that rock music festivals and gigs in China are majorly attended and consumed by young people. This is also evidenced in Luan’s (2015: 34) paper, which offers an ethnographic survey at Shanghai Midi Music Festival and Xi’an Strawberry Music Festival 2000-2014, during which 72.5 percent of the participants were students.

De Kloet (2010: 40) uses the term ‘scene’ for its weaker political associations in comparison to subculture, so that he can freely classify music and cultures without separating them from dominant culture. But in his theorisation of rock mythology, he still maintains the subcultural and counter-political aspects of rock mythology. His adoption of globalisation theory, drawn from Appadurai (1996), also makes him lean towards the term scene, which is embedded within local and global implications (Straw 1991). He further supports his adoption of scene as a term in reference to the notion of genres and articulation advocated by Hesmondhalgh (2005). I argue that this understanding of the term is too ambitious and general, including all the musical collectives derived from music genres. In addition to de Kloet’s discussions on

music scenes, authenticity and globalisation, he also adopts Tia DeNora's (1999) idea that music is a technology of the self and Giddens's reflexive project of the self to analyse rock/pop music being used by Chinese youth in everyday life and discusses the relationship between the Chinese music industry and the state censorship. As Regev (2011) notes, Kloet's work is valuable in invoking a variety of issues on Chinese rock/pop and youth culture by inserting various cultural theoretical discussions, such as the significant work done by theorists such as Bakhtin, Deleuze, Foucault and Butler. However, his work needs a more encompassing theoretical framework to underpin his arguments: a macro-level theoretical framework within sociology would have helped to tighten his arguments.

Summary

This chapter has focused on the two broad discussions: the first part focused on theoretical positions and debates within popular music studies, cultural studies and sociology from a Western and global perspective; and the second part addresses popular music and youth culture in the social, cultural, and political context of China.

For literatures focused on studying popular music, it involves a variety of themes, theoretical and methodological approaches and disciplinary background. By reviewing theoretical debates on subculture, neo-tribalism, lifestyle, post-subcultures, scene, my own research addresses the resonance to adopt a subculture framework to illuminate Chinese rock music and youth culture through critical evaluations. By revisiting academic discussions surrounding Adorno's theory of cultural industry and standardisation, the thesis addresses the role of global hegemony on local culture, but with a more critical approach being aware of both the complicities and dynamics within this power relationship.

Literature dedicated to Chinese popular music and youth culture that the thesis has accessed is concerned with cultural, political, and social contexts and changes in China, as they are key to the interpretation of the social and political implications of rock music production, participation and consumption. While academic attentions on subculture in China continue to be conservative, subcultural theories still remains significant to understanding Chinese rock music and youth culture development as a complex culture (Jones 1994, Huang 2001; Baranovitch 2001; Clark 2012). Academic considerations of Chinese rock also focus on the complicated relationship between rock music, the state and global cultural hegemony. A consistent attempt to avoid any binary categories of understanding Chinese rock and youth culture is crucial. In addition, to interpret Chinese youth culture, it is important to understand Chinese youth identities and subcultural agencies through their daily engagement of the state, social institutions and the media.

Chapter 2: Methodologies: Fieldwork, data collection and interpretation

Introduction

This chapter consists of two sections, which includes a detailed explanation of my two methodological approaches. The first is a qualitative, ethnographic approach, consisting of participant observations, interviews, and autoethnography. The second a textual approach consists of content analysis and semiotics. The chapter will then focus on the process of data analysis and interpretation to explore the approach of grounded theory analysis and thick description.

The first section therefore maps out the research design, strategies and data collection with ethnographic and textual strategies. It addresses the strengths of each adopted research method and discusses a variety of issues in relation to the development of the research process from the first to the final stage of data collection. This includes the research questions, identifying research locations and potential interviewees, approaching the field, conducting participant observations, interviews and narrating the self through autoethnography. The study has adopted ethnographic strategies and principles derived from the work of urban sociologists from the Chicago School and address the ongoing reflexivity of the research (Bulmer 1984). By analysing different sources of data, the research addresses the multiple ‘voices’ that emerged from the studied field through the construction of an ‘ethnographic mosaic’ (Denzin 1997; Blackman 2010). In addition, a textual approach of content analysis and semiotics has been employed to analyse rock music publication, posters, documentaries, lyrics and social media post. In particular, a major focus of textual approach is through analysing twenty volumes of Chinese *So Rock! Magazine* (2009-2013).

The second section focuses on the analysis of different sets of data sources in which themes and understandings emerged from the collected data. In particular, the thesis has adopted a grounded theory approach to the data analysis and considers meaning through systematic empirical investigation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 21) to deliver an original and legitimate contribution to relevant academic areas (Glaser and Strauss 1967), in which ‘thick description’ was generated (Geertz 1973). The section also addresses issues of data interpretation in relation to the notion of ‘voicing’ the field.

2.1 Research design, strategies and data collection

2.1.1. Ethnographic traditions and influences

Within this research, I adopted a qualitative approach to address the ‘socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2008: 14). Employing a qualitative approach to study Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture, ethnography has been used as a key methodological approach in this thesis, as the approach concerned people and culture in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’, which captures the social meaning of those being studied through producing ‘situated knowledge’ (Taylor 2002: 3) and ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973), rather than the abstracting of detail of social life to produce reductive knowledge (Taylor 2002). Although ethnography has been defined through a range of understandings– as it develops over the course of time and has been employed by a variety of disciplinary contexts of anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, psychology and human geography and a range of theoretical ideas (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:2) – the method is valued and has made a significant contribution toward academic studies of culture and society. Within this research, I address the legitimacy and traditions of ethnography as a methodological strategy to study cultures of popular music in China.

Ethnography has its roots in nineteenth century Western anthropology and evolved into a methodological model within Western sociology during the twentieth century (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 1). One of the most significant and earliest ethnographic examples was Malinowski’s (1922) study of the everyday social life of a distinct ethnic group – the Trobriand islanders in the Pacific – with whom Malinowski lived and in doing so become empathetic with the culture that he studied. For Malinowski (1922), ‘immersion’ is essential for ethnographic research as he notes that the researcher must endeavour in the research site to move from a ‘stranger’ to become an ‘ordinary member’, and so the everyday routines of the studied people and culture are not disrupted by the presence of the researcher (Hart 2010: 20). In addition, he also emphasises the importance of the researcher’s understanding of the argot of the studied group, including the ‘language, terms and the protocol of the group’, as they are essential for introspection as a ‘semi-autonomous verification’ (Hart 2010: 21).

The study was based upon Malinowski's perspective, and addressed the role of immersion in fieldwork data collection. Applying Malinowski's arguments to the context of my own research, not only I am a Chinese native who can speak the language of the studied field, but I am also compatible with my studied subjects through my identity as middle-class, university educated urban youth born under Chinese 'One-child' policy with a constant passion for rock music since high school. Thus, my research position as an 'insider researcher' (Hodkinson 2005) enhanced the understandings of terms and the protocol of my studied group. During my intensive fieldwork from 2014-2017, I also lived in the field predominantly at Beijing, Shanghai and Shandong province, including Zibo and Qingdao, where I had face-to-face interactions with my research participants. My long-term residency in Southeast England also helped me to interact with middle-class Chinese youth who immigrated to London for a temporary period of higher education. Through ethnographic interviews and observations in London based gigs and music festivals, I explored the issue of 'cultural fusion' between the East and the West, the local and the global, in terms of youth participation and consumption of both Western rock and Chinese rock music.

According to Hart (2010: 21), although Malinowski's empirical and empathetic work was internationally influential and was propagated by the Chicago School as one of the original ethnographic influences, his work has been criticised for its insufficiency in overcoming philosophical problems addressed by Thomas and Zaniecki. Thomas and Zaniecki's (1918) *The Polish Peasants in Europe and America* takes a comparative approach to studying the Polish community in Chicago in relation to its origins in Europe. Within this study, they collect autobiographic life stories, documents of letter writing and correspondences to let 'people represent their own lives' (Stanley 2010; Park 2015: 47). The focus is on the subjective and lived experience of Polish peasants drawing from its broadest historical and geographical context. This contrasts with Malinowski's approach of documenting a snapshot of an isolated community, although Malinowski and Thomas and Zaniecki were in search of original meanings from its researched community (Buraway et al. 2000: 8). Thus, the Chicago school draws on Pragmatic Philosophy as their second methodological basis, which focuses on a 'theory of truth' and 'theory of method' (James 1907; Hart 2010: 23). Later, Park and Burgess (1925) critically evaluate and draw ideas from Malinoswski's work and James's Pragmatic Philosophy, incorporating Simmel's (1922) notion of a *verstehen* approach and Kantian forms, in which Park and Burgess (1925) argue that the domain of sociology is 'the investigation of the interactions of humans in their natural environment by

detailed observation' (Hart 2010: 26). Park and Burgess address observation technique to describe and explain the processes of social interaction and the places in which interaction happened and being controlled. Park and Burgess' approach is significant as they provide a rigorous ethnographic approach, in which 'in seemingly contradictory theories of culture and philosophies were incorporated into a framework for sociology' (Hart 2010: 30). In particular, the publication of *The Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Park and Burgess 1921) was a significant contribution to the academia, as it introduced the sociological methodological techniques of description, investigation and analysis to students.

However, the Chicago School approach has also received criticisms. Janowitz (1969) argues that the Chicago School neglects the macro structural factors of class, gender, and race. Blackman (2010: 196-200) acknowledges a number of scholars (for example Platt 1983, 1994, 1998; and Lee 1986, 1987) who question the originality of 'participant observation', and they argue that the term was not attributed to the Chicago School of Sociology. However, both Blackman (2010: 198) and Hart (2010: 33) defend the criticisms toward the Chicago School. For Hart (2010: 33), accusation of the Chicago School of Sociology as illogical and insufficient is 'ironic', as theorists such as Wright-Mills (1959) and Janowitz (1969) criticise the Chicago School approach from their own sociological and political stances, in which they employ 'an entirely different frame of reference' to look at the Chicago School Sociology. As Hart (ibid: 33) argues, at the centre of their criticism is a binary understanding of the Chicago School approach into either 'subjective and individualistic' or 'structural and objective'. Blackman (2010: 195) argues that Platt and Lee's criticisms of the Chicago School approach are very confusing as they focus on the originality of the term 'participant observation'. Platt (1983; 1994; 1998) and Lee (1986; 1987) argue that the application of participated observation technique by the Chicago School was different from the modern use of the technique. Platt (1983) and Harvey (1987) understand participant observation from a monological angle, as they regard it as a 'pure participant observation'. Blackman (2010: 198) argues that the Chicago School instead operated as a set of ethnographic strategies. Thus, for Blackman and Hart (2010), the Chicago School approach is still valuable as it seeks to understand and interpret culture holistically.

The thesis adopts Blackman (2010) and Ellen's (1984) argument that participant observation or ethnography includes a broad set of qualitative strategies of 'interviewing, observation, participant observation, personal documents, narrative and life history within the context of naturalistic settings' (Ellen, 1984: 19). Through critically reviewing Palmer, Shaw and

Thrasher's research methods in reflexive sociological interpretation, Blackman (2010: 195-212) sees the Chicago School approach as an 'ethnographic mosaic' from an interdisciplinary position that contains a set of different research techniques, in which multiple voices from the field are grasped.

This PhD employed a combination of ethnographic research tools to include participant observations, interviewing, and autobiography of life history and biographies. The research emphasises the naturalistic settings in which data were collected. Employing the ethnographic mosaic approach, sensitivity and empathy were essential in collecting and communicating multiple participants' 'voices' through the interactive dialogue between the researcher and participants. The study encouraged flexible and dynamic interactions during interviews, which allowed for the 'natural' emergence of new themes and discussions. Through fieldwork observations and interviews, detailed data was accessed by a focus on the multiple positions of research participants including musicians, audiences, music fans, and music industrial professionals, each sharing different roles in the participation, consumption and production of Chinese rock music scenes.

The validity of ethnographic research has also been addressed through my participation, production and consumption of rock music as an 'insider' audience, music fan, D.I.Y musician and a netizen who engages in the online virtual communities of rock music. My own narratives and life history of my participation, consumption and production of Chinese rock music before I came to study in the UK as an academic researcher also help to explore and interpret the cultural meanings of rock subculture, as well as the contexts in which Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture develop and transform under constant social change. Within my autoethnographic narratives, I document Chinese rock music scenes through my observations of and participation in of numerous gigs, music festivals and offline gatherings in Qingdao, Zibo, Beijing and Shanghai. My life history also reflects how Chinese youth identities are shaped by cultures of rock music and influenced by our daily engagements of Chinese social institutions of the school, family and Chinese media.

2.1.2. Reflexivity of the research

Atkinson (2006: 402) notes, the notion of 'ethnography' is a product of the interaction between the ethnographer and a social world, and the ethnographic interpretation of a cultural

phenomenon is ‘crafted through an ethnographic imagination’. For this PhD, the notion of reflexivity is a significant feature of social research, as the conception acknowledges the relationship between researchers and their socio-historical locations in which values and interests are conferred upon researchers (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 15).

Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid: 14-15) argue that naturalists researchers ‘surrender’ themselves into the culture they want to study (also noted by Wolff 1964; Jules- Rosette 1978a, 1978b) and positivists who address the ‘standardisation of research procedures’ fail to capture the relations between social researchers and the social world they study, as these positions turn the researcher into either an ‘automaton’ or into a ‘neutral vessel of cultural experience’. Both naturalism and positivism seek to isolate the data ‘uncontaminated’ by the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 15), in order to pursue the ‘pure objectivity and scientific’ derived from realism, the research addresses the influences of personal orientations and social processes on knowledge production. The thesis seeks to produce knowledge and contributions to current understandings of Chinese youth culture and rock music scenes in contemporary China, rather than taking a binary position on either totally rejecting all the ideas in relation to naturalism and positivism positions, in which the notion of realism is undermined, or arbitrarily portraying all research should serve political interests. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 15) note, being reflexive is to ‘undermine naïve forms of realism which assume that knowledge must be based on absolutely secure foundation’.

Tracing back the employment of reflexivity in academia, the significance of reflexivity is located in a rich history of sociological interpretations, such as Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology in qualitative research (Bourdieu 1992), Hodkinson’s reflexive approach on ‘insider research’ (Hodkinson, 2005), Hammersley and Atkinson’s call for increased reflexivity (2007:205), and Blackman and Commane’s notion of ‘double reflexivity’ (Blackman and Commane 2012 :241). Thus, acknowledgement of reflexivity is essential for researchers in the production of knowledge and in attempting to minimise the distortion of their findings through their own political interests and political stances. In particular, this research employs a non-absolute notion of ‘insider’ position to study Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture, thus, it is essential to address the reflexivity taking such a role.

According to Hodkinson (2005: 131), the employment of an ethnographic, ‘initial position of subjective proximity in relation to one’s respondents’ established by the Chicago School has

been prevalent in youth cultural studies, including his own research on Goth subculture (Hodkinson 2002). Similarly, Malbon's (1999) ethnographic study of dance culture in the U.K., Moore's (2003) research on drug consumption among young clubbers, and Khan-Harris' (2004) study on extreme metal subculture also engage with the insider perspective. This approach offers potential benefits in terms of both of the 'research process' and 'the types of understanding that might be generated' (Hodkinson 2005: 131), as non-insiders may be less capable of fully understanding the values and meaning of their studied subjects. But Bennett (2003: 186) points to the epistemological problematic within the body of researchers who share similar backgrounds with their studied youth cultural settings and latterly become 'fan-researchers'. For Bennett (2002; 2003: 186), the 'insider' empirical studies from youth cultural studies and popular music lack detailed reflexive analysis of the impacts of 'their own involvement in the subject of their work', in terms of both the fieldwork relations between the participants and the researchers, and the nature of the generated data. Bennett observes that researchers taking an 'insider' positions often neglect the criticality of 'insider' knowledge (Bennett 2002: 461). Instead, he suggests that postmodern approaches of studying youth culture and popular music, such as neo-tribalism (Bennett 1999) and scene (Straw 1991), 'highlight a value of more reflexive understanding of popular music's meanings' (Bennett 2002: 462).

But as Hodkinson (2005) argues, while a number of post-subculture theorists (for instance, Bennett 1999; Jenkins 1983; Chaney 1996; and Straw 1991) focus on the fluidity and diversity of youth cultural groupings, and criticise subculture theory for its fixity and emphasis on a distinctive youth cultural groupings differentiated by clear boundaries between 'us' and 'them', the post-subculture theorist' position on fluidity and diversity leads to a predictableness and variation of the proximity of researchers to their studied subjects. In contrast, although youth identities are characterised by their complexity and multiplicity, a level of proximity or distance between researcher and researched is particularly clear for youth who are united by 'strongly held attachments towards relatively distinct sets of tastes, values or activities' (Hodkinson 2005: 134). This collectively shared distinctiveness is particularly strong among marginalised youth groups in terms of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

Through a critical evaluation of the 'insider research' position, drawing from Gillespie's (1995) study on Asian youth in Southall and Song and Park's (1995) studies on British

Chinese youth, Hodkinson acknowledges that the notion of being either an insider or an outsider in an absolute sense fails to capture the complex relationships between researcher and their informants. The prominence of certain elements researcher's identity is unstable and might shift from one to another according to contexts and audience, and hence leads to the idea of the researcher being an 'insider' 'a little hazardous' (Hodkinson 2002: 4). Thus, being aware of the insufficiency of an absolute notion of either a pure 'outsider' or a pure 'insider' position, Hodkinson (2005: 131-149) argues that 'inside research' is still valuable as a 'non-absolute concept intended to designate a highly complex set of research relationships characterised by a significant degree of initial proximity between the sociocultural locations of researcher and researched' (ibid: 134). However, an 'insider' position acquires 'caution, awareness and on-going reflexivity' (Hodkinson 2005: 134-149) to realise its advantages and to avoid difficulties and challenges when undertaking such a role.

Therefore, being aware of the complex relationships between the researcher and the studied subjects, I have taken a similar research position to Paul Hodkinson in his study of Goth subculture (Hodkinson 2002: 4-6) as both a critical 'insider' of the studied music scenes and an 'outside' social researcher. The thesis suggests that a singular textual approach or isolated interviews are insufficient to understand cultural phenomenon of popular-music-related groupings comprehensively (Cohen 1993). At the same time, an absolute notion of 'outsider' position that purposely distances researchers from their studied field in order to pursue 'scientific' legitimacy in qualitative studies (Draganova 2015: 59) often neglect the nuances and intricacies of those being researched. Outsider or distanced researchers might process less understandings and experiences in comparison to a native, long-term, and genuine 'insider' who involved in the cultural phenomena being studied. The thesis acknowledges the advantages of 'insider' position alongside the 'outsider' position, which questions the insufficiency of being purely an 'insider'. In this role, I was critically aware that rock music participants have different understandings and experiences of Chinese rock music scenes, and the instability my own identity according to context and time adds tacit complexities to the relationship between researchers and researched.

In this research, my 'insider' position as a D.I.Y musician and a middle-class young adult who were brought up as the only child of my family in the city of Qingdao has added multiple perspectives and insights to this research. Not only I am able to speak the language of the field, but I also have developed a close understanding of the contexts in which my

studied subject locates. My engagement helped me to grasp the nuances of data and to identify myself with the subject of my work. In addition, the year I was born (1990) represents the second stage of Chinese economic reform, during which China's economy was increasingly capitalised and privatised, and was opened to Western popular culture and commercial cooperation. My life experience documents the rise and fall of Chinese rock after the 'failure' of the 1989 Tiananmen student demonstrations, to the emergence of *dakou* culture and transited to the rebirth of a new generation of Chinese rock under even more economic prosperity and globalisation. My identity as a classically-trained pianist from the age of 6 until 14, latterly a creative keyboard player who has played in bands both in China and in the UK, also enrich my academic perspectives, as not only I am from a 'non-musco' humanity background for academic studies but I am also equipped with musco knowledge from classical piano training. This fills the insufficiency highlighted by Tagg (2012) that researchers from humanities discipline of sociology and cultural studies often lack training of euro-classical, and hence has less understandings of musicology. My multi-method ethnographic research strategy and multi-identity research position draw influences from Hodkinson (2002) as both an 'insider' and 'outsider', and in doing so enhance the depth of my findings and the reflexivity of the thesis.

In the pre-fieldwork phase of this PhD research, I developed a series of research questions derived from initial insights to act as guidelines for this research, as it helps to lead the way to research aims and objectivities. The thesis focuses on producing descriptions and explanations of Chinese youth cultural phenomena related to rock music scenes. During the process of conducting the study, my research questions were adjusted and to speak more closely to the contexts of the research, my growing academic understandings and emerging findings. Ethnographic research requires a constant reflection on the relationship between research findings and proposed problems to enable research objectivity (Xiao 2015: 41). In addition, by proposing research questions, I identified 'gaps' and insufficiencies within the current field of study, where research contributions can be potentially located (White 2009). My research questions include:

- 1) *What are the norms, motives, meanings and implications of Chinese youth participation, production and consumption of rock music scenes?*
- 2) *How has China's constant socio-economic change affected Chinese rock music and youth culture?*

- 3) *What is the relationship between young Chinese identities and the rock music culture they participate?*
- 4) *What is the impact of global popular culture on Chinese local culture at the age of social media?*

2.1.3. Identifying research sites and locations for ethnography

Designing research data collection begins with mapping out the Chinese rock music landscape, by identifying a variety of record, labels, live houses, venues, music festivals, media platforms, and rock music magazines (see Appendix 1). Based on the rough ‘map’ of research sites, music events and ethnographic observations, a list of potential research participants has also been identified within Chinese rock music scenes, through social networking and offline gathering as my position being a long-term genuine participant of the rock music scenes.

The first stage of ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in China, with a major focus on locations of Beijing, Shanghai and Shandong provinces, including my university town Zibo and my hometown Qingdao, which represents different tiers of cities according to their GDP, political administration level and size of population. Where Beijing and Shanghai are first tier major cities, Qingdao is a second-tier coastal city and Zibo is a third-tier industrial city (Sohu 2014). The reason for choosing Beijing is because Beijing is the birthplace of Chinese rock (Baranovitch 2003) and articulates the authenticity of ‘Chineseness’ within Chinese rock music scenes (de Kloet 2010). Beijing is also the capital of China and the centre of politics, culture and economy. Shanghai is the birthplace of Chinese first popular music genre *shidaiqu* (era songs) that emerged in the jazz age (Jones 2011) and is also traditionally associated with trading with the West, colonisation and global influence. Thus, Shanghai has a more Western and fashionable scene in the context of economic prosperity and ‘linking up with the tracks of the world’ (*yu shijie jiegui*) (Z. Zhang 2000). Shandong is the province where Zibo and Qingdao are located and is geographically situated between the two first tier cities of Beijing and Shanghai. Qingdao and Zibo represent cultural differences across Chinese major cities (see Figure 2.1.). Ethnographic data was collected over three field trips to China between 2014 and 2016.

Additional data collection and fieldwork were carried out in London. This focused on Chinese popular music and the experiences of middle-class Chinese youth who temporally immigrate to Europe and America for higher education. With the dissemination of mobilised technologies, such as social media tools of Instagram, Wechat, Lofter and Douban, online communities of rock music discussion, participation and consumption also facilitate the offline cultural practices of rock music scenes. Thus, the middle-class Chinese youth who study abroad bridge the rock cultural exchange between the East and the West through online media platforms and offline gatherings both in the UK and in China when they return home for vacations and to develop their careers. Ethnographic data was collected through in-depth interviews with music fans studying in the UK (predominantly in London), participant observations at rock concerts in London, and attending an annual music festival organised by Chinese students at University College London.

A set of 80 interviews was conducted for this research. The majority of the interviews were semi-structured and in-depth, lasting from 40 minutes to more than an hour. The data set also includes short conversations with music participants at gigs and music festivals, which last from a few minutes to 20 minutes. Interviewees include musicians, music fans, audiences, critics, industrial professionals and even security guards in police uniforms who maintain the safety and organisation of music festivals (see Appendix 2 for a list of interviewees). Among the interviewees, there were approximately 45 male and 15 female research participants. Interviews were semi-structured and pre-themed to maintain flexibility and to allow me to pursue more in-depth data according to interviewees' responses. The interviews adopted ethnographic strategies: they sought to be fluid and to establish empathetic relationships between the researcher and the interviewees (Spradley 1979; Clifford 1983, 1983a). A strict and standardised set of structured questions limits the flexibility and deduct from the quality of the data, as there are multiple voices, which emerged from interviewees, who have similar yet different musical experiences and cultural practices.

2.1.4. Interviews

Ethnographic interviews have been a key method for gathering data in this research. During the fieldwork I have conducted approximately 60 face-to-face, semi-structured qualitative interviews (following ethnographic tradition) and a large number of opportunistic interviews

during ethnographic observations, during which informal and spontaneous questions were raised to ‘listen, hear, ask questions and glean information in many circumstances’ (O’Reilly 2012: 124;) during fieldwork. The research focused on the quality of the interview itself rather than on the number of interviews conducted. The more in-depth interview lasted variously from thirty minutes to an hour and a half and was arranged at friendly environments such as café and restaurants, as these environments created ‘an open, informal atmosphere, which considerably improved both the quantity, and the quality of the information provided.’ (de Kloet, 2010: 34) In addition, I was aware of ethical issues during my ethnographic interviews and observations, and I was sensitive to my participants’ positions and consents.

Opportunistic interviews involve informal conversations and casual questioning during participant observation at gigs and music festivals. In-depth and semi-structured interview contained elements of pre-structured themes and questions (see Appendix 3: Interview themes), but also encouraged free-flowing (O’Reilly 2005) and reflexive communication between the researcher and informants through open-ended questions, in which new themes emerged from the interviewing process, and more ideas were explored based on informants’ responses. As an ethnographer, I explored the perspectives of my research participants in order to learn their insider views, rather than imposing fixed and pre-determined questions on informants. For Whyte (1981: 35), ‘the whole point of not fixing an interview structure with pre-determined questions is that it permits freedom to introduce materials and questions previously unanticipated’. During interviews, I also focused on establishing rapport and trust with my interviewees employing conversational techniques and empathetic strategies, in order to get access to the original ‘voice’ of the field (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 97-100).

Moreover, in relation to ethical issues during my research, I protected the information my informants provided and assured confidentiality in relation to sensitive conversations, in particular those relating to Chinese politics. For example, when there was an interview conversation during which a participant discussed cannabis use, and my interviewee asked me to delete part of my audio recordings, which referred to drug consumptions in relation to rock music. Any consumptions and dealings with cannabis are illegal in China. Voice recording as an interview technique had the potentiality to place my interviewees in danger. Thus, considering my interviewees’ positions and consents, I did not include any data analysis in relation to cannabis in my thesis. ‘Full, informed and meaningful consents’ (O’Reilly 2012: 66) were gained and sustained verbally from my large number of research

participants. I established trust and friendship with my respondents during my empirical studies. In addition, during my ethnographic interviews and observations at Chinese music festivals, when I tried to have conversations with authoritative security personnel in military uniforms, they refused to talk to me about anything in relation to the music festival. Instead, they were suspicious of me and observed some of my fieldwork activities, which has made me feel uncomfortable. Similar things also happened when I tried to interview a male, Scottish music festival professional. He was under the impression that I might work for a competing music company searching for commercial and industrial secrets.

2.1.4.1. Identifying research participants

Before I conducted interviews, I identified research participants, and considered the reasoning behind these choices. At the early stage of my empirical research, research sampling started with ‘mapping out’ (Creswell 2009) Chinese rock music landscape, including music venues, record labels, media platforms such as social media websites, online forums, and music streaming and downloading websites, magazines, as well as music events. According to this Chinese rock music landscape I drew up (see Appendix 1), I generated a list of potential interviewees who participate, produce and consume Chinese rock music. These individuals were predominantly urban young Chinese, but also included experienced and well-established rock musicians, industry professionals and critics who were involved in early generations of Chinese rock music scenes.

For my position as an *insider researcher* (Hodkinson 2005: 136, who has participated in Chinese rock music scenes since a university student at the year 2008 as both a D.I.Y. musician and a rock music lover, my long-term participation within the rock music scene both online and offline helped me to establish a network of connections to include genuine music fans, underground musicians and music industrial professionals in Beijing, Shanghai Qingdao and Zibo. Qingdao is my hometown where I grew up, Zibo was my university town that I’ve lived for three years, and Beijing was where I often travelled to for attending gigs and music festivals and met up with rock music friends that I knew through attending gigs and music festivals. For Shanghai (which is in Southern China), I spent extra efforts to establish contacts and conduct fieldwork, as I was less familiar with Shanghai music scenes in comparison to Northern China – of Beijing, Qingdao and Shandong. Many of these rock

music participants – including music fans, music people, and musicians – were also connected to me within online youth cultural communities, predominantly on the social media site *Douban* in which a variety of virtual youth cultural communities were created by netizens to discuss different genres of music, films, celebrity gossips, literature, and Internet memes. These activities are also practiced on Chinese social media of Wechat, *Weibo*, *Xiaonei*, and latterly on Facebook and Instagram. Field relationships and friendships were maintained through our frequent interactions on social media platforms, in which we discussed, supported and shared rock music related posts of photos, microblogs, music and video clips.

2.1.4.2. Purposeful/ theoretical sampling

I initially selected my interviewees employing *purposeful sampling* (Patton, 1990), in which particular settings, persons, or activities were selected deliberately in order meet the need of the study (Morse 1991: 129). For Maxwell, (1996: 88) other similar terms include *purposefully selection* (Light et al., 1990: 53), *criterion-based selection* (LeCompte and Preissle 1993: 69); and what Weiss (1994: 17) views as *panels* employed by qualitative interviews in which ‘people who are uniquely able to be informative because they are experts in an area or were privileged witnesses to an event’ (Weiss, 1994:17). Thus, these purposefully selected settings and informants can provide the information to answer research questions.

In this case, my research criteria for participants were oriented to predominantly urban young Chinese, who were born under one-child policy, with a mixture of working-class and middle-class background involved in the production, consumption and participation of Chinese rock music scenes. In relation to ethnicity, my focus of research participants was predominately Han Chinese, which constitutes the major ethnic group within China and has the highest concentrations in the Eastern Provinces of China. But my sample also included Chinese ethnic minority musicians such as the band *Shanren* (Mountain Man) from Yunnan province in Southwest China who established themselves in Beijing and have since developed an international following. From the ethnographic data, their interview conversation helped me to explore the issue of ethnicity in terms of studying Chinese popular music. After entering the field, I also interviewed several young British men that I met in Chinese music festivals,

including audiences and festival staffs, as their commentaries offered valuable data in terms of their views and positions of Chinese rock music scenes in comparison to the West.

In addition, being a genuine ‘insider’ participant of Chinese rock music scenes, I was also able to identify key ‘experts’ and genuine, authentic participants within Chinese rock music scenes, who could provide rich data to my in-depth semi-structured long interviews. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 106) suggest,

‘The aim will often be to target the people who have the knowledge desired and who may be willing to divulge it to the ethnographer. Identifying such people requires that one draw on assumptions about the social distribution of knowledge and about the motives of those in different roles.’

While the list of interviewees that took part in the research ranges from musicians, critics, industrial people, and music fans, many of them shared multiple roles in relation to Chinese rock music. For example my interviewee Shao Zhuo was a genuine rock music fan when at university, but she is also a professional working in the Chinese popular music industry, both for *Douban* Music (*Douban* is a Chinese social networking service website allowing registered users to record information and create content related to film, books, music, recent events and activities in Chinese cities) and more recently for Baidu Music (a Chinese music streaming service by Baidu, which is also the largest searching engine in China) after graduating. At the same time, her life experience as a local in Beijing, a student in University of Sussex in Brighton, and then as a Beijing returnee following a job offer, added fluidity and tacit complexity to her role as a music participant representing a specific music scene bounded by geography. Therefore, as Hesmondhalgh (2012: 33) suggests, it would be impossible to define the ‘dominant’ role of interviewees, as they were often involved with more than one aspect to the researched field. Thus, for interviewing participants with multiple roles in relation to Chinese rock music scenes, I tried to extract maximum information and benefits from all aspects of their expertise. I also interviewed my expert participants several times to trace updates and discover further information (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 106).

All qualitative sampling can be encompassed under the broad umbrella of purposeful sampling (Patton 1990: 169) for ‘qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples selected purposefully’. Theoretical sampling is regarded as an interchangeable method to purposeful sampling in literature (Coyne 1997). The research sampling process is

guided by theoretical sampling influenced by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), in which the process of data collection is guided by emerging theories whether substantive or formal (Glaser 1978: 36). In particular, data was initially collected from the places and groups which maximise the possibilities of obtaining data and leads for more data on their questions. In addition, during my data collection process, the selection criteria of my research participants also changed according to the needs that take place in the process of an emerging theory, in which I constantly compared different sets of data gained through theoretical sampling in order to achieve a better understanding of the theory produced.

For example, although the majority of my research participants are predominantly urban young Chinese, I also purposely interviewed British young people in terms of their experience of attending Chinese music festivals and their opinions on the authenticity of Chinese bands as a comparative set of data, which is relevant to understanding Chinese rock music as a globalised sound. In addition, regarding the geopolitics of Chinese rock music that influenced by Western cultural hegemony, I interviewed British undergraduate Ross Hurley, for his opinions on Chinese rock and hip-hop bands Chinese Football and Higher Brothers, in terms of how he perceives the Chineseness of rock music as a transglobal sound at the age of digital media, as he listened to Chinese rock music on media platforms of Youtube and Spotify. By theoretically sampling my research participants, I was able to analyse multiple voices that emerged from the data, and I have achieved a better understanding in terms of the politics of cultural hegemony in relation to Chinese rock.

2.1.4.3. Snowball sampling

Based on my purposefully selected contacts, I also employed snowball sampling to ‘take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts’ (Atkinson and Flint 2001: 1). I was able to generate further contacts in a fast-flowing process based on my initial participations’ recommendations. Snowball sampling helped me to reach well-established rock musicians who were regarded as ‘celebrities’ in Chinese rock music scenes, and authorities from the music industry. For example, my initial interviewee Zhou Yi introduced me to interview Yang Haisong, the co-CEO of a Chinese independent record label Maybe Mars (bingmasi). Yang Haisong is also a poet, and the vocal lead and producer of a well-known Chinese post-

punk band, P.K. 14. Thus, through Zhou Yi's introduction, I was able to gain valuable data during the interview for his expertise within Chinese rock music scenes. From Yang Haisong, I gained access to more 'elite' contacts within Chinese rock industry, such as a couple of well-known Chinese bands who would have been impossible to reach by myself. These hard-to-reach band contacts included Helen Feng from Nova Heart, Lu Yan from AV Okubo, and Shi Lu from Hedgehog.

However, I also encountered challenges in relation to my role as a social researcher, and a less professional, D.I.Y. musician. I am an 'insider' rock music fan but somewhat distanced from a more established network of 'rock celebrities'. As Hodgkinson (2005: 133) argues, the notion of being an absolute insider or outsider is misleading but requires ongoing reflexivity and cautiousness to realise the benefits of 'insider researcher' and to avoid significant difficulties. In my case, although I achieved access to a variety of personal contacts of band members through Yang Haisong, including phone numbers, Wechat social media account and email addresses, I found that phone numbers and email addresses were less effective to access 'celebrity rockers' for interviews, as email address is not used by Chinese as often as the West, and phone contacts were too personal for 'rock celebrities' who have a large fandom in Chinese rock music scenes. Many of the 'rock stars' wouldn't respond to a stranger's text or phone call, even though I introduced myself through messages. Thus, in the end, I was only able to connect to Lu Yan from AV Okubo through adding him as a friend on social media Wechat.

The employment of snowball sampling contributed significantly to my interaction with the field, especially for reaching hard-to-access informants. As Atkinson and Flint (2001) suggest, while snowball strategies are valuable tools to accessing marginal, vulnerable or the deviant group who locate outside mainstream social research, they are also employed by scholars as an effective tool to study 'hard to reach' elite groups. However, there have also been criticisms of snowball sampling as a chain-referral approach. Key criticisms suggest that the initial selection of respondents that generate the 'snowball' might be subjective and biased, and hence do not represent the generality of the sample (Griffiths et al, 1993). The sample might also be biased towards more cooperative informants who agree to participate but neglecting those who are not involved in the network (van Meter, 1990). In addition, recommendation of further participants might be biased if participants intend to protect their friends, for privacy reasons (Atkinson and Flint 2001).

This study is therefore critical of adopting snowball strategies and employed it as an informal practical tool in addition to purposeful selection. As Atkinson and Flint (2001: 4) point out, snowball sampling provides ‘practical advantages’, if the aim of the study is primarily ‘explorative, qualitative and descriptive’ (Hendricks, Blanken and Adriaans, 1992). While there are many criticisms of snowball sampling as a quantitative enumeration, the research employed snowball strategies as a method of contact. The thesis argues that the employment of snowball sampling as a qualitative interview method is valuable for reaching hard-to-reach population in practical sense, especially for its efficiency and economy. In addition, my ‘insider’ knowledge also helped to identify initial respondents of the ‘snowball’ base, with the advantages of my ‘insider’ proximity within Chinese rock music communities. Therefore, it enhances the representatives of my sample rather than selecting a random and convenient group of research participants. Furthermore, interview participants were further directed by emerging themes from collected data, in which theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was employed to select interviewees who have been repeatedly pointed out by participants as key and experts within Chinese rock music scenes, and hence subsequently contacted and interviewed.

2.1.5. Participant observation

During my research fieldwork, another key strategy of data collection was ethnographic observation and participation, which I conducted at gigs; music festivals and rock related social gatherings. Participant observation was seen as the ‘foundation method of ethnographic fieldwork’ (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001: 2) that represents the ‘starting point of ethnographic research’ (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1991: 91). Through participant observation, I sought to understand the nature and social implications of studied cultural phenomena instead of assessing it through quantities and magnitudes. For Dewalt and Dewalt (2001: 2), participant observation is ‘a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of people being studied.’ Thus, both taking part in the cultural phenomenon to gain information and observing through recording and analysis are essential to my research fieldwork. Participant observation ‘combines two somewhat different processes’ (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001:21) rather than either a pure participation, in which researchers are removed from studied settings, behaviours, and

actions so that researchers are not able to influence their studied subjects (Alder and Alder 1994, Dewalt and Dewalt 200:21-22), or a pure observation – in which researcher adopts the identity of a full participant and abandons the role of investigator as what is being called ‘going native’ (Jorgensen 1989, Dewalt and Dewalt 2001: 21-22). Thus, it is crucial to be aware of the degree and balance between participation and observation when conducting fieldwork research.

Reflexivity is important in terms of my research position as an ethnographer, I draw on Spradely (1980) and Alder and Alder’s (1987) continuums to illuminate my degree of participation while I was conducting observation in my researched field. Spradely (1980: 58-62) develops a ‘continuum of participation’ typology to describe ethnographers’ involvement in their studied field, in which he proposes four levels of participation that include non-participation, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation. For Spradely, non-participation refers to gaining cultural knowledge through observations that take place outside the research setting, such as watching TV and reading newspapers. Passive participation is explained as a researcher conducting pure observation at the site but without interacting with people, and the role as a researcher is hidden from researched. Moderate participation means that the researcher is identifiable and present at the site, but only interacting occasionally with people in the scene. Active participation indicates that the researcher participates in almost every aspects of the studied group in order to seek for complete comprehension. Complete participation means the ethnographer becomes a member of the group being studied, such as an ethnographer who is both a jazz musician and studies jazz (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001: 24).

Similarly, Adler and Adler (1987) developed a scheme of ‘membership role’ to illuminate the degree of ethnographers’ engagement with their studied scene, which constitutes of *peripheral membership*, *active membership* and *full membership*. For *peripheral membership*, an ethnographer engages with the members frequently enough to be recognised as an insider, but the researcher remains far from central to the scene. For *active membership*, a researcher adopts some of or all of the roles of central members, such as a researcher takes the job the same as his studied subject. And for *full membership*, it requires an ethnographer to ‘become immersed’ in the group and ‘takes on an identity of the group’ (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001: 25).

In the case of my PhD, as a long-term genuine participant of Chinese rock music scenes and a D.I.Y. musician within the scene, the employment of participant observation places my

involvement in the researched field into ‘complete participation’ (Spradely 1980) or ‘full membership’ (Alder and Alder 1987). I share elements of my identity with many of my research participants, such as ‘one-child’, urban youth, well educated, middle-class in my role as a rock music fan and a D.I.Y. musician. Thus, this PhD becomes a study of rock music scenes conducted by a rock music fan and/or D.I.Y. rock musician. During my ethnographic fieldwork, participant observations took place at both large-scale music festival such as Modern Sky Music Festival in 2014 (October edition, in Beijing), Midi Electronic Music Festival in 2015 (Taihu, near Shanghai), and smaller musical events such as Jenova Music Festival in 2015 (organised by UCL Chinese students in London) and Cangmashan Music Festival in 2016 (in suburban area of Qingdao). Moreover, participant observations also took place at a variety of music venues such as Yuyintang live house in Shanghai, Mako live house in Beijing, and Xiuba in Zibo, to name a few.

The advantages of being involved in ‘active participation’ (Johnson, Avenarius and Weatherford 2006), which is similar to Spradely’s notion of complete participation and Alder and Alder’s notion of full membership, is that my insider status allows me to develop friendships and relationships with my research participants. When I conducted participant observation at gigs and music festivals accompanied by a group of friends who are a mixture of rock music fans, D.I.Y. musicians and music critics, I became immersed in the group. Furthermore, I was trusted by my research informants through building rapport and accessed in-depth data that my participants wouldn’t share with other ‘outsider’ researchers.

At the same time, I’m also aware of the potential challenges undertaking such a role, such as being an active participant may make my disengagement from the field a bit difficult, and it might also affect my analysis of the data to be subjective. Therefore, acknowledging of such disadvantages requires me to reflexively and objectively report my level of engagement within my researched group through documenting them in methodological notes and field notes. Furthermore, in order to critically evaluate the balance between my participation and observation, I draw on Hodkinson’s (2005:133) argument that ‘a highly complex set of research relationships’ exist between researchers and researched, in which the multiplicity and complexity of my identity distance my role from an ‘insider’ to become an ‘inside researcher’, and hence fluctuates my degree of participation according to context and audience.

For instance, although I am still a knowledgeable ‘insider’ of Chinese rock music scenes, my middle-class, well-educated and female background generated subtle distance in relation to some of my research participants who were working class, less well educated, and male. Thus, when I conducted participant observations and interviewed these respondents, I was more of a distanced learner, an observer and a ‘non-absolute insider’ (Hodkinson 2005) in terms of understanding their motives, norms and meanings behind rock music participation and production. This level of distance was clear when I observed, participated and interviewed informants who are strongly bounded by collective distinctive characteristics, such as those who are structurally marginalised in terms of class, gender and ethnicity. For example, there was a level of distance when I observed young working-class Chinese men participating in mosh pits during heavy-music concert. As a young female, I would not participate in such masculine activities, due to the potential danger and possible injury. There was also a level of distance between my informants and myself when I interviewed Chinese ‘Goths’ who only resemble Western goths visually but have limited knowledge about Goth music. Therefore, I argue that the level of participation during field research is characterised by a degree of fluidity according to audience and context, rather than my position being absolute or fixed. The complex research relationship, and the shifting role of researchers in different contexts are also illuminated by Gillespie’s (1995: 67-73) study on Asian young people in Southall. Though Gillespie obtains a degree of insider status as a local residence, the other aspects of her identities, such as her ethnicity, her age and her role as a teacher, created barriers between her and her informants. Therefore, as Hodkinson (2005: 135) suggests, despite ‘what at the outset appeared to be a significant degree of insider status in relation to respondents, their levels of proximity were in practice not a priori readily apparent or defined.

In addition, although I have been a long-term genuine participant of Chinese rock music scenes since attending university in China in 2009, I moved to the UK in 2011 for undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Thus, the geographical distance between China and the UK also enabled me to balance my degree of participation within Chinese rock music scenes and maintain my objectivity as a social researcher. During my intensive fieldtrips from 2014 to 2017, I tried to attend as many as rock music events I could, and each field trip lasts about one month. Meanwhile, I discovered that Chinese rock music communities were engaged by rock music fans, musicians and critics both online and offline, thus, even when I was abroad, I still actively engaged in Chinese rock online communities through social media. Additional data was also collected in London as I identified an emerging rock music

community of middle-class Chinese youth who migrate abroad temporarily for pursuing higher education. Furthermore, I came to realise that their participation in rock music scenes in London and online rock communities bridge cultural exchange and cultural fusion between China and the West.

During my participant observations, I recorded my observations, participations and informal interviews through taking field notes at gigs, music festivals and music venues (see Appendix 4 for examples) Writing field notes not only it documents simultaneously data and analysis, but also the process helps to ‘reconstruct the development of understandings’ and to reflexively evaluate the growing relationship between researcher and informants at the end of the fieldwork (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001: 159). The goal of my fieldwork was to participate naturally in events and to ‘exert minimal impact on the topic and the flow of interaction’ (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001: 137) between my informants and myself in order to clearly hear their voices. Photography was employed as a supplementary method in addition to writing field notes for its efficiency to capture non-verbal aspects of settings and interactions in the field (Bateson and Mead 1942) and to ‘initiate rapport with the natives’ (Jorgensen 1989: 103), as informants often like their photos to be taken. As O’Reilly (2005: 161) notes, one of the benefits of employing photography is that photographs render arguments more ‘forcefully and profoundly’.

Getting access to the research site and musical events was not difficult and was pre-planned by me based on my ethnographic mapping of gigs and music festivals. Thus, information and tickets of the gigs and music festivals I went to were pre-accessed online. After I entered the research field, the establishment of ‘rapport’ was not only a tool for conducting participant observation, but was also my goal during my research, in which ‘a state of interaction was achieved’ (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001: 47). In particular, I interacted with respondents by listening to their multiple ‘voices’ and being respectful and thoughtful to my informants and allow the informants to tell their stories. Before conversations and informal interviews with my respondents, I introduced my research aim, focus and my academic background, I also asked for their agreements, such as verbal consent that I would review their interviews in my thesis for ethical concerns.

2.1.6. Autoethnography

Autoethnography is another research strategy employed in this research that seeks to ‘describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)’ (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011:1; also discussed in Ellis 2004; Jones 2005). Autoethnography has been a controversial research methods as a number of researchers criticise it as a ‘narcissistic’ academic writing style (such as Atkinson 2006: 400-404 and Delamont 2009: 61-63), as an insufficiently rigorous method (see Ellis 2009; Hooks 1994; Keller 1995), and also as an implicit and supposedly biased source of data to the studied fields that reflects the researcher’s own subjectivities and values (Merrill and West 2009: 5). I argue that autoethnography is still a valuable tool to study Chinese youth culture and rock music scenes as it connects an autoethnographer’s stories to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings through displaying ‘multiple layers of consciousness’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 739).

Autoethnography grounded in biographical and feminist research (Cotterill and Gayle 1993) is associated with growing debate about ‘reflexivity and voice’ in social research (Wall, 2006: 146), which challenges the dominance of traditional scientific ways of doing research and representing others (Spry 2001). Thus, autoethnography acknowledges ‘subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher’s impact’ on research, rather than hiding these factors or denies their existences (Ellis et al. 2011). It also acknowledges the many possible ways to do research rather than strictly following a dominant positive paradigm. At the centre of the autoethnography method is the binary opposition of ‘the researcher and researched, objectivity and subjectivity, self and others, personal and political, process and product, art and science’ (Ellingson and Ellis 2008: 450-459). As Ellis et al. (2011: 1) argue, the assumptions that research can be done from a neutral, impersonal and objective stance (as made by Atkinson 1997; Buzard 2003; Delamont 2009) are untenable. Therefore, the study addresses the legitimacy of employing ethnography to study Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture, as it gives ‘voice to personal experience to advance sociological understanding.’ (Wall, 2008: 39) It also benefits the researcher to ‘gain a cultural understanding of self in relation to others, on which cross-cultural coalition can be built between self and others’ (Chang 2007: 11).

In the process of doing autoethnography, Ellis et al., (2011: 273) notes that this research method is both ‘a process and a product’, in which a researcher ‘uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography’. Thus, the process of doing autoethnography requires researchers to ‘retrospectively and selectively write about

‘epiphanies’ that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture, and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity’ (Ellis and Bochner 2011: 3). In the case of my study, I am a long-term, genuine participant of Chinese rock music scenes who takes the role of ‘insider researcher’ (see also Hodkinson 2002; 2005). I have been a rock music fan since my high school (2006-2008), a D.I.Y. rock musician since my undergraduate in Chinese university (2009-2013), and a classical-trained pianist since I was six. In addition, my educated, middle-class, urban raised one-child identities are also compatible with many of my research participants. My autobiographical narrations of my life experience documents transformations and development of rock music scenes and youth culture in the context of growing economic prosperity and the economic reform policies that opened China up to the West in the early nineties.

In particular, the year I was born (1990) was the year that followed the ‘failure’ of Students Demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Growing up in this particular social context, I experienced the popularity of Cantonese pop and Taiwanese pop when rock was banned and returned to underground in the early 90s, the emergence of *dakou* culture (illegally imported western cassettes punched with a cut), which facilitated the birth of a new generation of rock in the mid until late 90s, as well as the transformation of Chinese rock music scenes – from a hard scene to a more diverse and cosmopolitan music scene with the rise of social media and global popular culture. Thus, in the process of autoethnographic writing, I took up the cultural identity of my research participants to retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies.

Apart from writing the ‘epiphanies’, it is also essential to analyse these experiences through comparing personal experience against existing research and using methodological tools of interviewing, participant observations, and examining cultural artefacts to illuminate multiple facets of cultural experience (Ellis et al. 2011) and to gain validity of personal experience as a source of data. Thus, in the process of using autobiographical narratives, I also conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with my research participants to explore their identities through participating, consuming and producing Chinese rock. Therefore, in addition to analysing my autobiography against existing research on Chinese rock music, I compare and contrast personal experience against cultural members in order to illustrate ‘facts of cultural experience’ by considering ways other cultural insiders may experience similar ‘epiphanies’ (Ellis et al 2011: 3).

In the process of writing autoethnography, it has been suggested that autobiographers should make the writings evocative and aesthetic, in order to bring the readers into the author's thoughts, emotions and actions (Ellis et al. 2011). One of the key technique is 'showing' (Adams 2006; Lamott 1994) in order to allow the audience to 'experience the experience' and engage the readers into the scene (Ellis 1993: 711; Ellis and Bochner 2006), in which aesthetic and evocative 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973: 10) of personal and interpersonal experience were produced through discerning patterns of cultural experience that evidenced by field notes, interviews and artefacts and further described by facets of storytelling (Ellis et al. 2011). As Ducan (2004) argues, autoethnography needs multiple sources of 'hard' evidence to support personal narrations – the 'soft' impressions'. Thus, the thesis is aware of techniques in writing autoethnography and the importance to analyse autoethnography through multiple evidences, in which I collected through using the 'ethnographic mosaic' strategy (Blackman 2010). In order to maintain objectivity, I am fully aware of my role and my relationship to the researched, and not embracing an exclusive reliance on self through the neglect of other experience, as well as overly focusing on memory and recalling as a data source (Chang 2008: 54).

At the same time, I am also aware of ethical issues and potential challenges employing this method. In the process of writing autoethnography, I realise that my narration of my experience in relation to Chinese rock music scenes and youth cultures also involves implicating other cultural members. Thus, 'relational ethics' is concerned as a 'crucial dimension of inquiry' (Ellis 2007, 2011; Adams 2006). I am aware of protecting the privacy and safety of my autobiographical involvers, and I ensured this by altering identifiable characteristics of their name, place and appearances. Particularly, I protected my research participants who are involved in discussing sensitive political issues of China. I also sought for advice from my autobiographical participants (who I could still get in touch with) to ensure that they were happy with the way I represented them in my writings.

2.1.7. Textual approach of content analysis and semiotics

This thesis adopts a textual approach to analyse Chinese rock music magazines, posters, documentaries, lyrics and online media content. This research technique helps to explore informants' views of the world as expressed implicitly through things produced' (O'Reilly

2005: 162-163). O'Reilly (2005: 110) notes a wide spectrum of phenomenon are viewed as 'texts', ranging from images, films, content of newspapers and magazines to interview transcripts and social research. I analysed these texts using a variety of textual analysis methodologies, such as content analysis and semiotics. The legitimacy of employing content analysis and semiotics can be traced from the Glasgow University Group's (1976, 1980) study on the institutional bias on television news (Stokes 2012: 121), and Hebdige's (1979) semiotics study on punk subculture.

Content analysis has been widely applied for measuring codes and categories from a quantitative perspective, with a focus on identifying the frequency of used words, trends and patterns, and structures of communication (Mayring, 2000; Pope et al., 2006; Gbrich, 2007; Vaismoradi et al. 2013: 400). Meanwhile, it has also been used qualitatively with a focus on interpreting the meaning of texts (O'Reilly 2005). The notion of content analysis is regarded as a general term for a variety of strategies to analysing text (Powers and Knapp 2006) and a 'flexible' method (Cavanagh 1997) used by researchers for different theoretical interests and research problems (Weber, 1990; Hsieh and Shannon 2005: 1277). A major differentiation of employing this approach rests on whether it is being used qualitatively or quantitatively. Although Neuendorf (2002) and Berelson (1952: 18) argue that a quantitative approach of content analysis maintains the objectivity of the 'manifest content of communication', I argue that a quantitative approach of content analysis is insufficient to understand the cultural meaning of Chinese rock music. A quantitative attempt to measuring social impact through the frequency of codes neglects the context (Morgan 1993) and audiences' different subjective understanding of texts (Berger and Luckman 1967; 2005: 2). Also, it has been suggested that even social impact could be indicated through the frequency of codes and statistics; this method might reflect an individual's 'greater willingness or ability to talk at length about the topic' (Marks, Marks and Yardley 2004: 57).

A qualitative approach to content analysis focuses on the relationship between texts and their likely meaning to audiences and recognises the polysemic characteristics of the text itself (Macnamara 2005: 5). A qualitative content analysis approach requires an in-depth analysis of selected content in which the potential meanings for audiences, both manifest and latent, and the likely effects of texts are understood by researchers (Macnamara 2005: 14). As Macnamara (2005: 15) notes, although qualitative content analysis is an insightful approach, there has been lack of precisely defined methodological guidelines for qualitative textual analysis. Employing a qualitative content analysis not only needs to draw validity and

insights from a number of scholars (such as Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Hijams 1996; Mayring 2003; Patton 1990; 2002; Robson 1993; and Silverman 1993), but also, it is suggested that a semiotic approach must be applied in order to understand the meaning of texts through denotation and connotation (O'Reilly 2005: 172).

The notion of semiotics is concerned with a variety of materials that can be taken as signs (Eco 1976: 7), which includes 'images, words, sounds, gestures and objects' (Chandler 2007: 2). Semiotics address the 'interrelationship between the sign itself and the system within it gets its meaning' (Barthes 1972 and 1977; Saussure 1974; Chandler 2007), in which texts are analysed as 'structured wholes' and attention are given on its connotation (Chandler 2007: 222). Seminal thinker Roland Barthes understood 'texts' as 'the process of meaning making of reading' (Barthes 1975: 14), which is distinguished from the notion of 'work' that refers to 'the artefact, the fixed pattern of signifiers on pages' (Wodak and Busch 2004: 106). Barthes maintains that popular culture could be decoded through reading the signs within the texts. Thus, semiotics is a valuable tool for researchers aiming to interpret the meaning of texts for popular cultural studies. A major difference between content analysis and semiotics is that content analysis contains a quantitative approach of studying the manifest content of texts through frequency and size, whereas semiotics focuses on the latent implications. Its central concern for the investigation of meaning making and representation is advantageous as it addresses the fact that conventional academic disciplines tend to neglect the significance of interpreting signs as a source of data (Chandler 2007: 223).

Thus, through this research, I am aware of the importance of understanding the potential meanings of texts from a polysemic angle, with an emphasis on the production of text, the interpretation of audiences, and also its social contexts. In doing so, I sought to understand the different layers of cultural meaning of rock music and subculture by analysing texts from magazines, song lyrics, social media content, and videos of band interviews and gigs. In particular, a major focus is on analysing the content from 20 issues of *So Rock! Magazine*. I consider a sample of *So Rock! Magazine* from 2009 to 2013. The texts within *So Rock! Magazine* are characterised by resistance, sarcasm, and indicators of their non-mainstream identity. Additional data was accessed through Chinese social media platforms Douban, Wechat, Lofter and Weibo, in which young Chinese rock music communities participate virtually beyond the restriction of their locality. I also analysed online interviews and gig videos through media platforms such as YouTube, and cultural artefacts of posters and lyrics produced by Chinese rock musicians. By analysing a variety of semiotics from print, visual

and virtual mediums, this thesis recognises the worthiness of each medium instead of privileging one semiotic mode over another. As Chandler (2007: 224) suggests, it is necessary to ‘identify the constraints and affordances of different semiotic modes – visual, verbal, gestural and so on, as we live in an ever-changing semiotic ecology that both reflects and gives shape to our experience.’ In doing so, my research addresses multiple voices from the different roles of music journalists, critics, music fans and musicians, who were involved in producing cultural artefacts to illustrate multiple facets of culture experience (Ellis et al. 2011).

2.2. Data analysis and interpretation

This section focuses on the different stages of data analysis and interpretation. I employ a grounded theory approach to the data analysis. Using this approach of combining original findings and theoretical arguments collected from the data, the aim has been to create a thick description (Geertz 1973). Thick description is valuable in allowing the reader to ‘see below surface appearances by offering understanding of underlying patterns and context that give the information meaning’ (Leeds-Hurwitz 2015: 1).

The processes of data analysis and interpretation start with the collection of fieldwork data. This marks the starting point of researcher immersion within the studied field through participant observation and interviews, both methods are employed to gain in-depth understanding of researched. Then to ensure a reflex researcher position, I engaged with an autobiographical analysis in relation to my role as an ‘insider researcher’ (Hodkinson 2005). I also employed a semiotic interpretation of a variety of texts that were produced by Chinese youth involved in the production, participation and consumption of rock music. Analysis and interpretations of autobiographical and textual data contribute to ‘voicing’ the field from multiple perspectives and legitimising empirical authenticity (as noted by Clifford 1986: 22-26 and Dragonova 2015: 77). The bilingual characteristics of this research has also added tacit complexities to the process of data analysis and interpretation, as both interview data and semiotics are predominantly in Mandarin Chinese and have been fully translated into English. My reflexive engagements with both Chinese and British culture (and language) have assisted me in negotiating this.

2.2.1. Thick description

The notion of thick description is developed by the American anthropologist Geertz (1973) to consider the ways in which ethnographic research ‘discover[ed] and reveal[ed] the depth of meaning that human actors inscribe in their language and actions’ (Thompson 2001: 66). In the book *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Geertz employs this term to describe his ethnographic methods. Geertz popularises this term from Gilbert Ryle’s (1949) philosophical

discussion of interpretation from *The Thinking of Thoughts* (1968), in which thick description is in opposition to thin description to understand the complexities of illuminating human behaviours (Freeman 2014: 828).

Geertz (1973) notes that ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun’ (5-6). In this he means that culture can be understood as webs and that analysing culture requires ‘an interpretive [approach] in search of meaning’ rather than ‘an experimental science in search of law’ (Geertz 1973: 5-6; Sandy 1979: 533). In order to understand human behaviour, Geertz focuses on explaining the contexts in which a human behaviour take place. This allows the outsider to explore meaning and to develop an understanding of the behaviour based on its context. Therefore, thick description helps to trace ‘the many strands of a cultural web and its evolving meaning’ (Griffin 2014:2 91). Its focus on multiple factors in constructing the context, in which the studied phenomenon locates is also in accordance with Blackman’s (2010) ‘ethnographic mosaic’. An ethnographic mosaic uses a palette of tools to explore diverse positions and voices within the studied field, including those of musicians, music fans, critics, writers and industrial professionals. Thus, the ‘web of significance’ that Geertz addresses in terms of thick description is strongly related to the Chicago School approach of ethnography, in which the mosaic of meanings is central and diverse positions are valued.

Therefore, within this PhD, thick description is crucial to the employment of ‘ethnographic mosaic’ where multiplicities of complex data are collected, and conceptual structures mapped from the studied field. Interviews, observations, field notes and autoethnographic narratives are used ‘first to grasp and then to render’ (Geertz 1973: 10). In other words, through the process of analysing multi-method collected ethnographic data, I first ‘grasp’ the data by immersing myself in the process of transcribing and translating documents and data from Chinese to English, with a focus on the fieldwork context in order to ascertain its cultural meaning. Through the process of commenting and interpreting, I ‘render’ my data by plotting and analysing the emerged themes, extracting meaning and concepts derived from my systematic immersion.

2.2.2. Grounded theory analysis

In the process of analysing data, I employed a grounded theory approach to generate thick description from ethnographic data. As Charmaz (2003: 26) notes, the essential task of grounded theory analysis is ‘not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible’. Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s as a systematic methodology for qualitative research, and for the ‘discovery of theory from data’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 1). The theory was first developed at the University of California when Glaser and Strauss studied the interactions of hospital personnel with dying patients (Wells 1995: 34). It was further developed in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and latterly refined by themselves (Glaser 1978, 1992; Strauss 1987; Strauss & Corbin 1990) and their students (for instance, Charmaz 1983, 1990; Stern 1994).

Strauss and Corbin (1994: 278) note that grounded theory analysis means that the research results can always be traced from the data that gave rise to them, in which ‘researchers employ a set of procedures to code data in a series of passes (open, axial and selective)’ (Neff 1998: 125). Employing grounded theory analytical tools, Neff (1988: 125) explains the process of analysing data:

Data are examined for dimensions and properties, compared with similar phenomena, regrouped and reconceptualised until a provisional theory emerges inductively from the analysis and is further tested through theoretical sampling. Codes are recorded in code notes, integrative memos, visuals, and balancing matrices.

As summarised by Lingard, Albert and Levinson (2008: 459), the key features of grounded theory analysis include ‘its iterative study design, theoretical (purposive) sampling and system of analyses’. At the centre of grounded theory is a constant comparison between different set of data in which themes, categories and codes are developed iteratively, and new and existing data are integrated into a well-grounded theory. Purpose-driven theoretical sampling helps to facilitate iterations in the on-going process of comparing similarities and differences of data sets. And the process of data analysis needs imagination (Blackman and Commane 2012) and iteration, rather than a mechanical or routine-like approach. As Strauss and Corbin (1994: 282) note, grounded theory methodology emphasises that ‘no matter how general—how broad in scope or abstract—the theory, it should be developed in that back-and-forth interplay with data that is so central to this methodology’. The focus is therefore on producing richness in the process that emerging theoretical models are constantly being

refined through comparing ‘fresh’ examples from ongoing data collection (Lingard et al. 2008). All three features of grounded theory are essential in the process of data analysis and interpretation, as it allows the emergence of theoretical content.

In this PhD, data analysis and interpretation began as soon as the first bit of data was collected when entering the field. This initial data analysis then directed further interview themes and participant observations. The initial data interpretation also provided cues and raised issues for the next stage of data collection. For example, when I conducted my participant observations at Modern Sky Music Festival in Beijing, I observed and interviewed a group of Goth youth with the intention of becoming immersed in their subcultures. While my proposed research questions and applied theoretical models were more linked to subcultural resistance through exploring the meaning of styles – an initial theoretical frame that was informed and influenced by subculture literatures, after I collected the first wave of data, I realised that their unique gothic dressing style that looks like Western goths were merely mimicking the style rather than reflecting a wider similarity. The youth themselves did not have much knowledge about goth music and, unlike Western goths, they didn’t express a sense of resistance through style or through their participation and celebration of the music festival. Their superficial understandings and their representation of Goth rock inspired me to further investigate the authenticity behind Goth-rock music participation and consumption, and to reconsider how Chinese youth express identities through fusing Western cultural elements in relation to rock music.

Thus, I considered further refining my theoretical model based on my ‘fresh’ example that collected in the social, political and cultural context of urban China. Equally, initial analysis guided me to incorporate all the seemingly relevant issues into my next set of interviews and observations. Through systematically and sequentially carrying out the procedures of data analysis and interpretation, I expanded my research procedure in order to capture ‘all the possibly rewarding avenues towards understanding’ (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 419-420). Methodologically, in addition to the initial employed ethnographic method of interviewing and participant observation, I also used autoethnography in my position as an ‘insider researcher’ (Hodkinson 2005) to understand the cultural and social meaning of Chinese rock and youth culture. This was also a useful frame through which to undertake the textual analysis of lyrics and documentaries, semiotic analysis of posters and magazines. This multi-method ethnography (Hodkinson 2002) helps me to obtain multiple perspectives and different positions within the dataset through a palette of ethnographic methodological tools. I focused

on the richness of data collection and the multiplicity of ‘voices’ that emerged from the field. For Corbin and Strauss (1990: 420), the process of ongoing data collection and comparison is a ‘major source of the effectiveness’ of the grounded theory, which ‘ground the theory in reality’.

In the process of analysing and intercepting data, according to Corbin and Strauss (1990: 420), concepts must demonstrate their constant relevance to questions under researched through a repetition in interviews, observations, narratives and documents. This prevents researcher’s bias. The theorisation process allows themes and voices to emerge from ‘raw’ data rather than collecting materials in order to prove pre-crafted hypothesis. Concepts are considered as the basic unit of analysis and conception labels are attached to studied events or incidents, which can be named alike through comparisons. The conceptions that are linked to the same phenomenon are grouped under a more abstract heading to form categories. For Corbin and Strauss (1990: 420), categories must be related and developed to form theory through making comparisons of similarities and differences.

Employing this inductive approach for analysing data. I first grouped alike ideas from my interviews, documented observations and textual analysis, in which similarities and differences were compared through different datasets. Through these comparisons, emerging tendencies and contrasts were grasped, in which certain positions become prevalent and grouped to form categories to represent activities directed toward a similar process. The more abstract concepts were developed in terms of their ‘properties and dimensions, the conditions which give rise to it, the action/interaction by which it is expressed, and the consequences that result’ (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 420). Through this process, it is suggested that categories will become imbued with explanatory power, in which categories will become related to form a theory. In addition, theoretical sampling has been used as a valuable tool to achieve representativeness and consistency of concepts (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 420), as it focuses on simultaneously collecting, coding and analysing data in order to guide the next stage of data collection. I also made sure that I sampled incidents and events that engage with every aspect of the community under study and that might, therefore, have an impact on the studied phenomenon. This research seeks to explore the concept of cultural fusion that emerged from empirical data and textual data, rather than the theory driving the empirical data. Cultural fusion is a theory examined by Croucher and Kramer (2017) as an alternative to the concept ‘acculturation’, which focuses on mobility and immigrant experience. At the centre of this existing theory is the fused identity of an immigrant who acculturates into the

dominant culture and yet maintains aspects of their minority culture while having an impact on its host culture (2017: 97). Cultural fusion theory is valuable to the thesis as it helps to interpret translocal and transglobal cultural flows between the East and the West in the context of globalisation and Chinese reforms as an interactive process.

Furthermore, it is also significant to note that in addressing the empirical ‘groundedness’ embedded in employed methodology I do not devalue the relevant academic literature and theories in this PhD. Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2010: 188) note that although grounded theory analysis has the advantages of working with data inductively, in which theories are grounded in empirical data that can be traced between data, categories and theory. However, its reluctance to engage with existing theories, acting as ‘purely emergent procedure’ (Glaser 1992) regarding its completeness and sufficiency, has also become its weakness. This implies ‘an isolation of knowledge’. Thus, I adopt Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theoretical approach in which pre-existing theories can also be integrated and associated into new abstractions derived from the coding of new data, which provide inspiration and may also challenge some of the abstractions made. As Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2010) note, comparing empirical abstractions with existing theories also provide extra values and insights to the process of analysis, in which integration and synthesis of knowledge are valued. Such a position also helps the researcher to remain criticality in relation to their empirical data. It is important for researchers to maintain this criticality when considering the voices of interviewees and to examine the validity of interviewee’s interpretation, so that one can avoid the situation of being ‘slavery to the data’ (Goldkuhl and Cronholm 2010: 190)

2.2.3. From immersion to data transcription, translation and extraction

This section focuses on the practical and designated process of data analysis from its initial stage of immersion until its formal stage of data analysis and interpretation. This includes the process of immersion within the field, the employed ethnographic technique for interviewing, observation, the process of writing autoethnographic narratives, textual analysis of magazines, lyrics and documentaries, as well as transcription and translation of data and its final stage of extraction of saturated meanings and theoretical concepts. Although these processes vary for different methods of data collection and for different data sets, they have been guided by a

shared general structure allowing for the emergence of codes, themes, and categories employing thick description and grounded theory analysis.

2.2.3.1. Conducting and interpreting interviews

Many of my interviews took place in various cafes for in-depth, long conversation, as the café environments provide sociable, causal yet formal space for communication and interactions between researcher and interviewees. Some of the interviews were also held in restaurants. For instance, my interview with the band members of Shanren, who are all male members of a Chinese ethnical minority community from Yunnan province (Bai), took place in a Yunnan restaurant in Beijing. Interviewing them whilst sharing Yunnan cuisines helped me to become immersed within my research participants and to overcome shyness and embarrassment in relation to my position as a young, female and Han ethnicity researcher. This feeling of shyness was initially exacerbated by the fact that my research participants are well-known established older male musicians who have performed both on Chinese TV channels and on international stages. Other short and informal interviews also took place at gigs, music festivals and venues, as these places were the central locations of my research. In order to best capture the raw data and materials, I used professional recorder Zoom to record interviewees' conversations along with the surrounding ambient sound. The Zoom recorder was able to capture different levels of ambient sounds, which was useful regarding my interview contexts: many took place in noisy environments of gigs and music festivals. I was able to capture high-quality and clear responses from my interviewees by changing the settings of the recorder. For Hutchinson (1988), the recording of data is considered as a pre-analytic step of grounded theory analysis. I transcribed all interview audio recordings so that all the details can be recalled when analysing from the interview settings and scenarios.

As most of my interviewees were predominantly urban young Chinese, they spoke official Mandarin Chinese. They felt more comfortable, relaxed and open to talk to me in Mandarin Chinese rather than in English, although some of my interviewees were bilingual. In addition, amongst my 80 interviews, I also interviewed a few British youth as a comparative set of data in order to explore their opinions on Chinese rock music, and their experience of participating Chinese music festivals. When I interviewed them, I spoke English, as they felt more comfortable speaking their native language. My identity of being a urban raised one-child, a

well-educated D.I.Y. musician, and a researcher having studied in the UK since 2011, helped me to freely communicate with my research participants.

In the process of transcribing data, I translated the Chinese-language interviews into English. Although transcribing and translating were two long and laborious processes, these processes helped me to become immersed with my collected data. I was also able to add commentaries and interpretations during transcription and translation for potential data analysis. Direct transcription from original audio to written words helped me to prevent the risk of overlooking relevant materials. In addition, transcribing all audio interviews also prevented me from forgetting untranscribed audio, in comparison with only selectively transcribe/translate chosen raw data (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 149-150).

During the process of translation, I was aware of certain linguistic specifics and contexts of Chinese, which at times, could be difficult to translate from Chinese to English. For example, the Chinese phrase ‘related departments’ (youguan bumen) is a term often used by Chinese netizens, music fans and Chinese media to refer to governmental departments, who oversee relevant political events or supervision. As in Chinese news (Xinhuanet 2017) that is broadcasted by state-controlled medias, very often, the names of political departments are not mentioned by the news presenters. When Chinese netizens and music fans speak about ‘related department’ (youguan bumen), they also tend to have negative implications toward the governmental department’s policy. For instance, in Chinese rock music magazines, it has been found rock music journalists always refer to ‘related department’ (youguan bumen) when they wrote governmental censorship of Chinese popular culture. In this case, If youguan bumen was translated into English as ‘related department’ without explaining its linguistic context, the cultural meaning of this phrase will be lost.

During the interview process, I also conducted ethnographic observations with focuses on its setting, location, environment and any circumstances that have happened during the interviews. Observations of ethnographic interviews were significant to this PhD, as documentation of the setting, environment, location and circumstances of the interviews, helped to understand meanings that were embedded in the interactions between the researchers and researched. My relationship with my research interviewees, and how those environmental, interactive circumstances during the interview, affected the quality, depth and truthfulness of my data. I also attached a summary note of observations for each interview transcription, including presents of other people, location of the interview, and tunes of the

interview conversations (Hammersley and Antkinson 2007: 117-120). Furthermore, I also considered the occupation of my interviewees in addition to their professional positions in relation to this research.

In the process of interpreting interview data, I employed the grounded theory approach. Initially, interview data was broken down into sections and was analysed through line-by-line coding. Common properties of collected data were grouped under the same concept, with 'code' and descriptive name added to it. Through this microanalysis, I also used 'in vivo code' (Glaser & Strauss 1967), where codes were derived from the content, and memos to reflect and record meanings from the data. During the process of open coding, I thematically reorganised the trajectory of interview interactions, attaching an introduction to each interview transcript to summarise proposed arguments, issues and potential quotations to be used in this PhD based on emerging themes and categories. This helped me to compare different interviews (see Appendix 4). After concepts were categorised through open coding, I linked and organised themes and categories in terms of their relations through the process of axial coding, during which links between categories were identified and verified against the data through comparing sources (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Through constant comparison of sources, complex and multidimensional patterns were revealed in terms of participants' characters in a group portrait, instead of producing a two-dimensional illustration of the participants' realities. At the final stage, selective coding integrated the categories into a theme for the researched phenomenon.

2.2.3.2. Interpreting observational data

I conducted my observations at gigs, music festivals and music venues through field notes and diaries. I supported this data by taking photographs. I organised observational data based upon the different events that I attended and the themes that emerged. The process of analysing this observational data followed a similar process to the ethnographic interviews. The context of observations, with regards to location, date, participants and atmosphere were recorded in shorthand with keywords to extract key information. Although it is impossible for researchers to document everything in detail when participating in the fieldwork events, I documented what was considered 'significant' to this research, and these decisions were driven by the focus of my research and research questions, as well as guided by emerging

data. This also influenced my decisions regarding my next focus and identified important aspects for observations. This process of observation is also a form of codification and extraction of themes and meanings. In the analytical stage, observational data were used to support the arguments that emerged from ethnographic interviews, but they have also been used as a central source for arguments.

2.2.3.3. The process of interpreting textual and semiotics analysis

For textual and semiotics analysis of posters and magazines, data was primarily collected through a qualitative analysis of twenty volumes of Chinese rock magazine *So Rock!* Magazine I collected between the years 2009-2013. This data also consists of lyrics and documentaries of Chinese rock such as Nu Fang (2015) and Yaogun Duoduo (2006) and followed a similar process of interview data analysis, guided by grounded theory analysis. For example, although the magazines are predominantly written in Chinese, as a bilingual researcher with fluency in both Chinese and English, I was able to codify and extract themes and meanings through my immersion in Chinese textual data, and when I compared different themes and categories to sketch out dominating and less popular positions. The process of semiotics analysis of raw content and images materials focused on signs' latent implications within the texts (Barthes 1977), rather than studying the manifest content of texts measured by frequency, size and statistics. After selecting emerging codes and patterns, they were integrated into arguments and theories that were grounded in 'ethnographic content analysis' (Altheide 1987: 65-68). All quotations from the magazines were translated and I undertook a codification of magazine content in relation to the research questions.

2.3.3.4. Interpreting autoethnographic data

This section explored the interpretation of autoethnographic data that I collected through my own autobiographical narration of Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture. As argued in the previous section, my position as an 'inside researcher' (Hodkinson 2005) is crucial to my data analysis and interpretation, as it considers on my position as a genuine participant of Chinese rock music scenes. My insider cultural identities enabled me to easily access and become immersed in autoethnographic data in terms of the narrating of self. I also reflected upon my own subjectivities in relation to my research in order to prevent narcissistic and

biased narrations. Thus, by generating raw narrative data, I acknowledged my emotions and subjectivities reflectively rather than denying their existence (Ellis et al. 2011). For instance, in Chapter 3, when I wrote about my consumption experience of dakou (cut-out) cultural products, I acknowledged my excitement of approaching Western alternative music by blindly picking up cut-out products based on album covers. I also focused on the wider social context during that time, in which illegally imported cultural products were hidden by dealers from authoritative urban managers (chengguan) who work for the government's department of Urban Management Bureau.

In the process of interpreting autoethnographic data, I also followed a similar procedure to analyse interviews. I drafted a chapter of autobiographical data of around 10,000 words to illuminate youth identity and social change through narrating my personal relationship to the wider Chinese socio-economic context and cultural change, supported by photographs for validity. Then I codified and categorised autobiographical content for further comparisons. By comparing extracted autobiographical codes and themes with other data sources gained from interviews, observations, textual analysis and existing literatures, I was able to illuminate the multifaceted cultural experience (Ellis et al. 2011). Through constant comparisons, emerging extracted autoethnographic quotations were used in this PhD to support arguments.

Conclusion

Qualitative methodological strategies and designs are central to this study, from its initial stage of identification and entering the field, towards empirical data collection and the final stages of generating thick descriptions and interpreting collected data. During this process, reflexivity and criticality have been the central concerns that have been addressed in this study to attain methodological legitimacy.

The study has employed a 'multi-method' ethnographic approach including participant observations, interviews, autoethnography, textual approach of content analysis and semiotics towards the researched field, in which an 'ethnographic mosaic' (Blackman 2010) of detailed meanings were grasped through exploring multiple positions and voices of musicians, critics, audiences, music fans, and music industry professions. Data collection was carried out with empathy, in which the researcher has visited and lived in the researched fields of Beijing, Qingdao, Shanghai and Zibo, as well as London for additional data collection on middle-class Chinese youth who temporally migrate abroad for higher education and participate in rock music scene globally and virtually. During data collection, friendly fieldwork relations have been maintained between my participants and myself. Through snowball sampling and theoretical sampling, networks for accessing rich data have been established. In particular, my 'insider researcher' (Hodkinson 2005) position of a musician, music fan, one-child, urban raised and middle-class has facilitated criticality and provided insights into to the research by taking an autoethnographic approach to gain wider cultural and sociological understandings and by voicing the personal (Ellis et al. 2011). Autobiographical narrations gained validity through their combination with other data sources of qualitative content analysis, semiotics and ethnographic interviews and observations.

The PhD therefore presents thick descriptions that are derived from empirical data, which contains theoretical values to this study. The data analysis and interpretation process were facilitated by grounded theory analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967), in which data was codified, categorised and compared constantly for extraction of themes. Relevant literatures have also informed and influenced this research to remain criticality toward empirical data (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Goldhkuhl and Cronholm 2010). Through synthesis and integration, interpretation of data was grounded in empirical roots where multiple voices from the field emerged.

Chapter 3: Mapping out Chinese Rock Music Scenes and Youth Culture through Social Change

Introduction

This chapter places Chinese rock music scenes and youth culture within its broader historical context: the Chinese Economic Reform led by Deng (1978-1992) marking the return of popular music in the sociocultural circumstances of post-revolution. The shift to a market economy and the opening up to foreign influence have resulted in ‘the resurgence of social, cultural and even political diversity’, in which rock emerged as a subculture negotiating power and conflicts, as well as articulating different youth identities and values (Baranovitch 2003: 1). With the continuous shifting socio-cultural circumstances under the deepening of the reform, Chinese rock culture transforms to a site, in which ‘collective social understandings are created’ (Storey 1993: 5; Steen 2000: 1). Rock became a ‘negotiated compromise’ of multiple forces, including cultural policy, commercial interest, technology evolution and the consuming audiences (Steen 2000: 1-2).

Employing an ethnographic mosaic (Blackman 2010) including interviews, autoethnography, observations, textual analysis of lyrics and documentaries, the chapter focuses on the interactive and dialogue relationship between rock music and multiple forces involved in constructing the cultural meaning of Chinese rock. The chapter maps out both a geographical and chronological landscape of rock music, in order to understand Chinese rock as a complex culture and its generational differences. While the first part of the chapter describes Chinese rock music scenes from its emergence to its popularity and declines before the mid-90s, Chinese rock articulates subcultural politics and ‘rituals of resistance’ (Hall and Jefferson et al 1975) in the process of participating social change and protests in post-revolutionary China. The second part focuses on rock music returned to underground after the failure of the student demonstration and its rebirth under technological change, festivalisation and commercialisation with the continuing of the reform. The PhD suggests that though commercialisation and digitalisation have provided opportunities for rock music scenes to bloom and diversify, in which Chinese rock became less counter-hegemonic (Jones 1994), while rock still maintains its subcultural substances, as it negotiates power and control in the on-going process of economic bloom, urbanisation and globalisation.

3.1. Chinese rock in transition: The emergence and decline of Chinese rock music scenes – exploring the cultural meaning of Chinese rock, past and present

This section illuminates the emergence, popularity and decline of Chinese rock music scenes situating in its socio-economic circumstances of Chinese reforms led by Deng Xiaoping and will examine how multiple forces of Westernisation, modernisation, cultural policy and socio-economic change participate in the construction of cultural meaning of Chinese rock.

With the deepening of the reform and continuous shifting socio-cultural circumstances, Chinese rock music has been through different stages of emergence, development, repression, or even rebirth situating in its specific historical context. Such as, rock emerged as a western-imported culture and a novelty in the late 70s and 80s; it reached its popularity in 1989 and the early 90s, when student movement took place. It started to decline since 1993, as a result of state's harsh cultural policy, and the emergence of cut-out (*dakou*) culture in the late 90s marked the rebirth of Chinese rock (de Kloet 2010). Latterly, the festivalisation of rock with establishment of independent record labels in the millennium also resulted in Chinese rock characterised with commercialisation and articulated cosmopolitan aesthetics. Meanwhile, the rise of social media and digital media facilitated virtual rock music communities participated in by Chinese youth locally, translocally and globally. To illuminate the changing landscape of Chinese rock through past and present as an inside researcher (Hodkinson 2005), who grew up in the 90s as a middle-class one-child urban youth, my autobiography reflects the changes of Chinese rock,

Much has changed, I realised, when I first approached rock music through illegal cut-out cassettes in my hometown Qingdao, when my mum would bring me to a record store, with backdoor access to illegal imported musical products punched with cuts, I was able to listen to and get to know western rock music albums such as Radiohead, Oasis, Green Day and other indie bands through the black market in the early 2000s. I still remember the excitement to discover new music different from Cantonese and Taiwanese pop, and purchased CDs based on my preferences of CD covers but without knowing what the music would be like. The process of discovering new music was like an experiment. Later on, I attended my first music festival in life as an audience back in 2009 during May Day

holidays in Beijing, specifically for a Wuhan indie band called Silent-G. At that time, I was a university fresher in Zibo, Shandong, music festivals were new trendy things among artistic youth (*wenyi qingnian*). Until now 2018, I have been studied in the UK since 2011, and has attended various gigs and music festivals both in China and in Europe, where I discovered Chinese rock communities not only in China but also in London, participated in by well-educated, middle-class Chinese youth who study abroad.

While de Kloet argues that historicising Chinese rock (Jones 1992; Steen 1996; Huang 1997) easily falls to essentialising rock within fixed historical periods, and runs the danger of ‘silencing the older, still active, bands and musicians’ (de Kloet 2010:39). The PhD suggests that a chronological narration of Chinese rock music development is still essential as it illuminates the interactive relationship between the wider shifting macro social, political and economic environment, and the evolvement of Chinese rock music culture. A chronological analysis of Chinese rock does not mean the older, still active bands and musicians are neglected, they are still actively involved in both the past and current Chinese rock music scene, they are still significant to represent a unique voice within Chinese rock music communities.

The PhD seeks to avoid binary and narrowing understandings of Chinese rock music and youth culture, such as clear-cut dichotomies of hegemony versus resistance, official pop versus unofficial rock, but acknowledges internal complicities and overlaps within rock subcultures and hence encourages multiple voices to emerge from collected data. Through a multi-method ethnographic mosaic (Blackman 2010 and Hodkinson 2005) that include autoethnography, textual analysis of lyrics and documentaries, as well as ethnographic interviews, and observations, I argue that a chronological analysis of Chinese rock or popular music not only identifies generational differences (Clark 2012) of youth values, identities and changes of music scenes, but also places Chinese rock music within a sociological framework that address the wider socio, political and economic conditions.

3.1.1. Emergence: Social contexts and geographies of Chinese rock

In the late 70s in Guangzhou, which it is geographically next to Hong Kong, and shares the same Cantonese language, the first sign of rock bands was in relation to a cultural phenomenon called Music Tea culture (*yinyue chazuo*). People tasted teas in music café, accompanied with live music performed by bands for entertainment, among which was Purple Violet (*Ziluolan*), who was performing light music (*qingyinyue*) with electronic instruments. The band covered Cantonese and Taiwanese pop, and western pop at Oriental Hotel (*Dongfang binguan*). Later, the first Chinese rock music band *Wanlimawang* formed in 1979. It was a student rock band established in Beijing International Studies University (Steen 1996), two years after the recovery of Chinese National Higher Education Entrance Exam (*Gaokao*), since, *Gaokao* has been demolished for ten years during Mao's Cultural Revolution and the 'Down to the Countryside' Movement. The movement forced urban senior and junior secondary school graduates, the so-called "intellectual youths" to go to the countryside to do hard labour and be re-educated by farmers, in which Chinese youth can be transformed to socialist youth by learning from rural population and working class.

The recovery of *Gaokao* by Deng Xiaoping after Mao's death was significant to Chinese youth in the 70s and 80s, as it changed the situation that students could get into universities only through selection and recommendation by the people (*renmin*) based on their political virtue. In particular, those youth who came from family background of workers, peasants or military deemed the most 'virtuous', and were among the first to be recommended, but youth who came from a capitalist or a landlord family background were less recommend being in university. The reform of educational system by Deng Xiaoping was guided by the principles of 'Four Modernisation', which aimed at 'significant advances in the field of agriculture, industry, national defense, science and technology' (Feng 2005: 148). Deng's educational reform, along with economic reform of marketisation and the Open Door policy - 'opening China to the outside world' fertilised the ground in which widening foreign resources flooded into China, among which was the return of popular music (*liuxing yinyue*) (Baranoitch 2003:1). From 1978 until early 90s, *gantai* music (Cantonese and Taiwanese pop from Hong Kong and Taiwan), northwest wind originates from Shanxi area of northern China (*xibeifeng*), prison songs (*qiuge*) and rock and roll (*yaogun yinyue*) constituted the popular music scene in Mainland China (Baranovitch 2003).

The first Chinese student rock band *Wanlimawang* (1979-1984) covered Western rock and pop, such as The Beatles, Paul Simon and Bee Gees. When they first performed on campus through a joint-student-performance (*huiyan*), everyone was shocked by the unique musical

performance, which was significantly different from typical student performances such as poetry reading, chorus, and solo singing. *Wanlimawang* sang in English, and the music they played was so distinct from Chinese traditional and mainstream music, such as revolutionary songs (*geming gequ*), Peking Opera (*jingju*) and officially sponsored *tongsu* music that promoted political ideology and was musically influenced by Cantonese and Taiwanese pop (Jones 1992, Moskowitz 2010). Though no one understood what the band was singing, everyone was engaged in the performance. Its debut was also reported by China Radio International. The group also subsequently held live concerts in other Beijing-based Chinese universities (Steen 1996). Though the band dissolved when the four members graduated from the University, it marks the beginning of Chinese rock as a novelty.

In 1986, Chinese rock first appeared in the public sphere through the large-scale popular music concert in celebration of International Peace Year – “Let the World Filled with Love”. Rock emerged as a novelty in China for ‘rock was itself a foreign import’. As Baranovitch quoted from Peter Micic, ‘the participation of foreigners in early Chinese rock was important because it ‘lent a degree of credibility’ to the nascent local bands.’ (Baranovitch, 2003: 31). He associated rock with Beijing for three aspects: musically, rock matches the musical style of northern China, featuring bold, fast-tempo and percussive that derive from Northwest Wind (*Xibeifeng*), which is in contrast to southern Chinese popular music came from Hong Kong and Taiwan – *gangtai*, featuring soft voices, slow tempo and sweetness. The second aspect lies on the political environment of Beijing being the capital of China; it’s the most politicised. Thirdly, it relates to the presence of foreigners residing in Beijing, in particular the northeast embassy areas, as well as its relation to universities, in which increasing number of foreign students studied in Chinese universities, formed bands and exchange cassettes of western rock.

When Chinese rock emerged in the 80s, it was quite marginal, as Baranovitch (2003: 31) notes, rock music was performed mainly in Beijing’s northeast foreign embassies region, where most foreigners work and live. Bands majorly performed in small nightclubs, bars and hotels frequented by foreigners. Except the first rock band *Wanlimawang*, a couple of other rock bands also emerged in China during the 80s, including *Dalu*, formed in 1983, who majorly covered Western rock and has only produced a few originals. All their band members were Westerners (See Figure 3.1.1.). *Dalu* mainly performed in international clubs and universities. Emerging Chinese bands also include Roly-poly Toy (*Budaoweng*), formed in 1984, who covered Japanese, American and European pop; Seven-Player Band (*Qiheban*),

who was active from 1984 until 1985 (See Figure 3.1.2.). They also mainly covered pop rock of the West and performed in small restaurants and hotels around Beijing. Its members contained Cui Jian, who latterly became the father of Chinese rock. Two other well-known bands were Black Panther (*Heibao*), established in 1987, which published their first album in 1991 and signed on to a Hong Kong record label – Rolling Stones (*Gunshi*). And Tang Dynasty (*Tangchao*) formed in 1988. Since then, rock became a youth cultural phenomenon in Beijing, people could often see long-haired young males carrying instruments on their bikes: they were on their way to rehearsal (*Nu Fang* documentary 2015).

3.1.2. Music and the politics of place: Towards cultural fusion

Mapping out the geographical locations of rock music practices in the 80s, and the initial characteristics of Chinese rock music formation are significant for this PhD. On one hand, Chinese rock music was shaped under reforms characterised by marginality; it was circulated exclusively among small and underground bohemian circles. Then distinctiveness, its rock spirit and music form are in contrast with officially controlled popular music *tongsu* (Baranovitch 2003), and it is western-influenced. *Tongsu* music, as argued by Jones (1994) was approved and sponsored by the government to promote political propaganda and to cover up any mistakes or tragedies made by the government. It articulated a strong sense of patriotism. These characteristics of Chinese rock music are significant markers of subcultural politics of Chinese rock, as with the popularity of rock around the early 90s, rock became a sound of post-revolutionary, where Chinese youth took up creative expressions to express their frustrations, angers, rebellion, and counter-hegemony facing the sudden exposure to Western cultures and the failures and drawbacks of the revolutionary past.

On the other hand, music and its environment have a bounded relationship, as Sarah Cohen (1995: 444) notes, ‘music has a symbolic representation of place and the social production of place is always a political and contested process’. Chinese rock music is often associated with the geographic north, and musically it was influenced by the Northwest Wind (*Xibeifeng*) music that originates from Shanxi area (Branovitch 2003). Rock articulates a northern sound that features boldness, directness, challenges and rebellion. The political centre Beijing, located in northern China, represents power and political control, which is in opposition to rock’s liberating, critical and rebellious mythologies (de Kloet 2010). Whereas mainstream

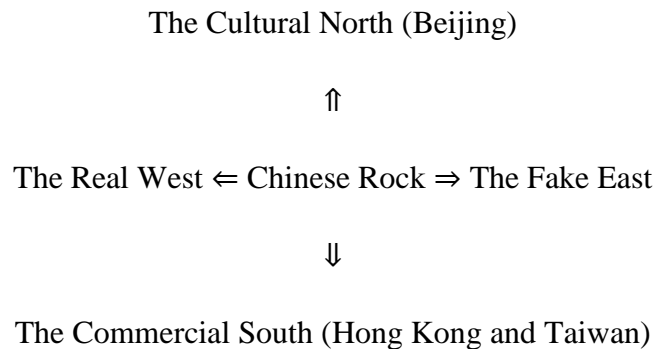
soft pop has been much related to *gangtai* music (Cantonese and Taiwanese pop), featuring soft music, sweetness, slow tempo, and harmless content. It originates from the south of China – Hong Kong and Taiwan. The geographical influences of *gangtai* music as a ‘Western sound’ over Guangzhou as a result of it being geographically close to Hong Kong, also, facilitates the emergence of first Chinese band Purple Violet performing electronic instruments on stage for Music Tea (*yinyue chazuo*) business.

Furthermore, mapping out such a rock music landscape within Beijing also helps to identify ethnographic locations for fieldwork and to explore the dialogic relationship between music and cities; including how rock music practices shape and transform the city and how the city shapes music practices (Cohen, Lashua, and Schofield 2010). From collected data, it has been observed that the emergence of Chinese rock in the 80s was much related to students, universities and the northeast embassy area of Beijing, where more foreigners resided. Within the current geographical landscape of Chinese rock, it has been observed that many Live Houses, bars, and clubs in which rock and punk communities are situated, are still centring around both the north-eastern area of Beijing - the Drum Tower (*Gulou*) area, such as Yugong Yishan, School Bar, The Star Live and Mao Live House, as well as the northwest part of Beijing that centre around *Wudaokou*, where most universities locate, such as D-22 and 13 Club (See Figure 3.1.3.).

In addition, for ethnographic fieldwork conducted in different scales or tiers of cities, such as Shanghai, Qingdao and Zibo, the PhD suggests rock music practices are influenced by local cultural heritage and urban characteristics. Such as, Qingdao has a history of being colonised by Germany during the Second World War. It is also one of the 14 coastal cities that first opened to foreign investment in 1984 under Chinese Economic Reform, which led to its economic prosperity. But Qingdao is labelled by local music fans as a ‘cultural desert’ due to the city having a colonial history with both Germany and Japan, in addition to a business focused culture. Thus, its local rock music scene is relatively small and marginal though it is economically developed. Zibo, an industrial city and the ancient capital of Qi, located in the same province with Qingdao in Shandong, is less economically developed. But it has a livelier rock music scene, participated in by working-class Chinese youth. Its rock music produced by local musicians is heavy and articulates a sense of dissatisfaction and irony. Shanghai, the economic centre of China, has a complex colonial history with the West, and is in Southern China. It articulates a fashionable and cosmopolitan yet less political music scene in comparison to Beijing. Thus, detailed discussions of the social and political production of

place in relation to Chinese rock music is significant to this PhD, as it assesses the geopolitical differences of Chinese rock, which will be addressed in Chapter 5.

For de Kloet (2010: 25), he further maps out a geographical relationship of Chinese rock, in order to illuminate the political and social production of place:



(Figure: *Geography of Chinese Rock*)

This figure illuminates two binary dichotomies of Chinese rock. The horizontal dichotomy shows that rock music is a Western culture that carries Western cultural hegemony over the East, in which Chinese rock musicians have always learned from, or mimicked ‘the real’ Western rock. Chinese rock musicians face the challenge of being accused as copycat of Western rock or being inauthentic, for it articulates Western values and Western rock music formats. Chinese musicians constantly struggle to prove its authenticity by addressing its originality and Chineseness. Here, authenticity is explained by Herman and Sloop (1998: 2) as ‘the ground for a practice of judgment through which musicians, fans and critics were able to distinguish between “authentic rock,” which was transgressive and meaningful, and inauthentic rock (or ‘pop’), which was co-opted and superficial.’ In de Kloet’s (2010: 28) words, when rock leaves from the UK and America and travels to China, it carries a hegemonic gaze from the West. De Kloet’s argument is in accord with Manuel (1988), as they both address the dominant and influential role of Western music on local culture and questioned the authenticity of local music if it is driven by commercial benefits or reflects genuine cultural values.

The Western cultural hegemony upon the East is also evidential from my ethnographic data. It has been found that not only rock emerged in China as an out-of-nowhere cultural novelty

under reforms as it lacks any pre-existed history. The first generation of rock musicians also did not have much knowledge of producing rock music so that many emerging bands formed in the 80s only covered Western rock. On the other hand, the economic condition of China in the post-revolution, when everyone was ‘equally’ poor in the initial stage of Chinese Economic Reform, with an average of 30 Yuan per month. Early Chinese rock musicians often produced music with poor-quality, low-cost instruments, and suffered from a lack of rehearsal space. In order to produce Chinese rock music, they had to spend long hours practicing guitars and listening to Western rock cassettes repeatedly, so that they could analyse the composition of Western rock through a do-it-yourself approach. As Ding Wu, the guitarist of Tang Dynasty recalled his memory from the 80s:

When I walked to the music store in *Wangfujing*, I would stay for half an hour just staring at the electronic guitar, because it was the only electronic guitar you could find in Beijing, it’s a really poor-quality one, like no one would like to buy it now. But back in the days, I did part-time jobs for a year and eventually could afford to buy it...I used to learn from western rock songs by listening to what notes/chords they were playing, it took me about two weeks to a month to completely understand, as you could only rely on your ears to analyse the notes. Sometimes, I even spent a whole night just trying to figure out one note. It might sound like note E in the evening, but the next morning it sounded more like note F. It’s hard to analyse or cover the music.

(*Nufang* documentary 2015)

In addition, the Western gaze as argued by de Kloet (2010: 28) carries a colonial attitude and a Western universalism, in which judging the authenticity of Chinese rock has been based on Western terms. As Helen Feng from the band Nova Heart notes:

There are a lot more opportunities to go overseas now, but I think just being a Chinese musician doesn’t really help anymore. China does get a fair bit of attention. However, the old curiosity about China has been replaced by negative stereotypes, and even though you have more chances to go abroad, people always

try and pin you as a copy of ‘blah blah blah’ because they refuse to believe that (your music) could be original. The only time they think, ‘Oh that may be original,’ is if you’re playing some Chinese traditional instrument or... taking very directly from Chinese music.

(Redefine Magazine 2013)

The second dichotomy falls on the cultural division within China: the cultural and political north versus the commercial south that influenced by ‘foreign’ cultures from Hong Kong and Taiwan (See Figure 3.1.4.). Where the northern sound of rock represents authenticity, subcultural, rebellion and individualism, the southern sound of soft pop carries implications of over-commercialised, lack of creativity and inauthenticity (de Kloet 2010: 32, Baranovitch 2003). This ‘authentic rock’ versus ‘artificial pop’ also symbolises cultural hegemony by the Chinese state, in which mainstream pop are approved and commercialised both for political aims and for maximum sales. *Gangtai* music (Hongkong and Taiwanese pop) was also circulated in mainstream media, but rock music was controlled, censored, and circulated mainly through underground, private units or alternative mediums. This division has also been observed by academics such as Jones (1994), Barmé (1999) and Baranovitch (2003).

But as de Kloet (2010: 25) notes, both the binary relationships indicated from the geographical map of Chinese rock are ‘as persistent as they are problematic’. I argue that though the geography of Chinese rock is significant to understanding the cultural hegemonic forces implied by Chinese popular music; it also draws authenticity and commercialisation of Chinese rock in question. Such approaches easily fall to essentialising Chinese rock as binary oppositions in terms of authenticity and commercialisation, inauthenticity and cultural hegemony. From ethnographic data, the PhD suggests that such a binary relationship between the commercial south and authentic north is inaccurate. Additionally, the geographical relationship between the south and north division is best applied to the 90s popular music landscape, when *gangtai* music from southern China gained increasing popularity and the rock music scene started to decline, after the state banned Chinese rock from mainstream media. However, I also argue that such a geographical illumination also downplays and neglects rock music scenes in southern China. Bands from southern China such as First Floor Circus (*Dinglou maxituan*) from Shanghai, P.K. 14 from Nanjing, *Zhaoze* from Guangzhou, to name a few, are not discussed.

Furthermore, a binary indication that Chinese rock from the north is political and cultural in opposition to the ‘commercial south’ (de Kloet 2010) does not fully explain the situation that in the twenty first century. Chinese rock is increasingly commercialised and festivalised and subsequently; occasionally sponsored by the state and local government as a tool to support tourism and commerce (Groenewegen-Lau 2014). From my ethnographic data, it has also been observed that Chinese rock entered mainstream media on December 31st, 2017. The Frozen Rock Festival (*Kuxue*) was broadcast by Beijing Television, Heilongjiang Television, and Hebei Television in celebration of the New Year. The music festival was held in Thaiwoo Ski Resort and Alpine Park in Zhangjiakou, located in Hebei Province next to Beijing. The music festival was sponsored by the touristic project to attract public attention for commercial sales. In addition, I further argue that regarding global cultural hegemony as a one-way flow to less developed countries (Peet 1989) ignores the fact that in the age of digital media, cultural fusion between the East and the West also travels back to the West and get involved in the music listening experience of Western youth. As one research participant Ross Hurley notes:

It's interesting because I found out about them (Chinese bands) by hearing Western artists (on Youtube and Spotify) that they are affiliated with. Chinese Football and Higher Brothers were on similar forums as bands like Joie De Vivre and Tiny Moving Parts, so I naturally gravitated towards them due to the fact that it aimed to be in the same genre as the Western bands.

For Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2017: 8), mobile telephony-driven music streaming such as Spotify and Apple Music, driven by information technology has transformed music consumption as a more mobilised and dynamic experience, in which music listening is not restricted to domestic consumption and consumer electronics. Thus, the PhD suggests it is more significant to look at rock music consumption and its complex relationship in terms of local, translocal and global in the context of latest development of networked mobile personalisation. Therefore, drawing from Wallis and Malm's (1984: 299-303, 1992: 214) idea of culture hybridity, which is noted by Hodkinson (2002: 14) as ‘a complex set of interactions between global and local popular-music technologies and styles formed in the ongoing production of an international ‘transculture’, composed of the most universally accessible

elements appropriated from music styles throughout the world'. It also includes aspects of Croucher and Kramer's (2016: 97) notion of cultural fusion theory that address immigrants' cultural-adaption experience and their fused identity during the process of acculturation. The PhD employs the conceptual device cultural fusion to explore the complex, active and dynamic process of cultural transformation between the global and the local in the age of digitalisation, with focuses on how the glocalised sound of rock articulates cultural hegemony, subcultural politics, authenticity, and youth identity in the process of ongoing cultural fusion. For Croucher and Kramer (2016: 97), they explain cultural fusion as:

Cultural fusion theory describes how newcomers acculturate into the dominant culture and maintain aspects of their minority culture, while at the same time the dominant or host culture also fuses aspects off the newcomer's culture into the dominant culture to create a fused intercultural identity.

Through the notion of cultural fusion, the PhD not only explores how rock music as a glocalised sound influences youth within China, but also examines middle-class Chinese youth who temporally migrate to the UK for higher education. The focuses are on their fused values and identities between the East and the West through rock music participation and consumption, in which educated middle-class youth express a sense of displacement as they are being critical about Chinese mainstream culture and traditional values, yet they cannot fully engage in Western culture and lack of a sense of belonging. As emerged from my ethnographic data, a few of my interviewees who were rock music fans that have lived in Europe employ the poem by Ijeoma Umebinyuo's 'Diaspora Blues' (2005) to illuminate their identities: 'So here you are, too foreign for home, and too foreign for here, yet never enough for both'. A detail discussion of cultural fusion phenomenon emerged from ethnographic data will be addressed in Chapter 5.

3.1.3. The popularisation of Chinese rock as a resistant sound and its decline

The changing socio circumstances in which Chinese rock music has been contextualised: from its first emergence in China 'out-of-nowhere' as a western imported culture (Baranovitch 2003: 31) under reform and was given birth in Chinese capital and political centre - Beijing. Rock articulated ethos of a new era in the post-revolutionary reform environment, in which young people desired to adopt cosmopolitan culture, and rebelled

against Chinese authorities, the official sponsors of mainstream culture, and traditional values (Baranovitch 2003: 40). As musician Zhang Chu said,

While many young Chinese at the 80s were touched by Taiwanese pop singer Deng Lijun's soft and sweet voice, as they have never listened to such a beautiful voice before, rock youth often had different tastes from the majority young Chinese, as they were more shocked by hearing the sound of rock and roll from the West, such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.

(*Nufang* documentary 2015)

Rock youth were less interested in *gangtai* music (Cantonese and Taiwanese pop), because musically and lyrically it is so plain. As Baranovitch (2003: 32) notes, 'even songs by Deng Lijun, which did celebrate individual feelings, still expressed general, objectified personal feelings rather than a personal, subjective voice.' As an example of Deng Lijun's song 'As Sweet as Honey':

As Sweet as Honey:

Your smile is as sweet as honey

Just like the way flowers bloom

In the spring breeze

In the spring breeze

I wonder where on earth

Where on earth I've seen you?

Your smile is so familiar to me

But I still cannot remember where!

Ah..... In my dreams!!!

...

Zhangchu is distinct from rock youth and from the general Chinese young people who listened to Taiwanese pop singer Deng Lijun. It forms conscious distinctions and boundaries between 'us' and 'them', insiders and outsiders, which articulates subcultural substance of distinctiveness and identity.

To further illuminate the subcultural politics of rock in the context of reform and student protest, rock entered the Chinese public sphere from being marginal with the losing control of the state under Chinese Economic Reform. The emergence of rock is closely connected to the social context in which it locates: rock music emerged in Beijing in the 80s, got its first appearance in public in 1986 through the large-scale *tongsu* concert 'Let the World fill with Love' in celebration of International Peace of Year. Over a hundred Chinese popular music musicians sang at the concert, among which was the father of Chinese rock – Cui Jian. His ballad 'Having Nothing' immediately caught people's attention as it was so different from the old revolutionary songs from Mao's era, the officially approved *tongsu* music that featuring patriotisms and propaganda (Moskowitz 2010: 27), as well as differentiated from *gangtai* music (Cantonese and Taiwanese pop) that featuring sweet voice and slow rhythms. As musician Liang Heping recalled his memories of the concert, he mentioned that

No one else has brought me any excitement through the concert except Cui Jian, because he was the only one singing his own music... when I saw him playing guitar on the stage in a yellow army T-shirt, with his pants rolled up, I felt that's exploded (so cool)!

(*Nufang* documentary 2015).

Cui Jian's music features direct and bold expression in a fast tempo, strong beat, with rough and loud vocals. In comparison with officially approved *tongsu* music that serves for political cultural control, and *gangtai* music's featuring themes of love rather than a societal critique in its lyrics. Cui's music was a direct expression of individual feeling that focuses on authenticity and contains political criticisms. What makes Cui's rock music distinct from mainstream popular music was that he wrote his own lyrics. Pop musicians typically did not write their own music and only sang pre-written music for commercial or political aims. For Baranovitch (2003), Cui's music symbolises new Chinese voices in the reform era, as it

celebrates personal feelings and challenges the official approved *tongsu* music, in which Chinese musicians are expected to ‘serve the voice of the state of the people’. In particular, rock reached its popularity in 1989 and early 1990s (Baranovitch 2010: 36). Cui’s song ‘Having Nothing’ from his album ‘Rock ‘N’ Roll on the New Long March’ (see Figure 3.1.5.) published in 1989 also became the theme song for Tianan Square Student Demonstration.

Having Nothing:

I have asked you endlessly, when you will go with me.

But you always laugh at me with, for having nothing

I want to give you my dreams and give you my freedom.

But you always laugh at me for having nothing

Oh.... When will you go with me?

The soil under my feet is moving. The water beside me is flowing.

But you always laugh at me with, for having nothing

Why do you always laugh, why do I always have to chase

Could it be that in front of you, I will always have nothing?

Oh.... When will you go with me!

‘Having Nothing’ symbolises the collective desire in Chinese youth for social transformation of modernisation following the end of Culture Revolution and sudden exposure to Western culture. It symbolises societal conflicts in which the individual self has been long suppressed by Chinese collective culture derived from Confucianism and Mao’s ideological implantation during the Culture Revolution. ‘Having Nothing’ is a celebration of lack of control, in which Chinese youth express their anger, frustration, anxiety and rebellion facing a disillusioned social segment between the socialist past and a modernised future, in which they realised, both spiritually and materially, they have nothing.

The PhD suggests that the cultural and social situation that rock music emerged as an anti-authority sound is in accordance with CCCS theory of subculture, where the core idea

focuses on ‘resistance and dissent’ (Blackman 2014: 502). Rock as a marginal subcultural practice articulates agencies of dissatisfaction and non-conformism, but also celebrates the loosening of control in reform era and called for adopting Western values. Rock subcultural practices were performed through multiple narratives of bricolage (Blackman 2014: 502) by employing a Do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.) approach (Barnes 1979).

As argued in previous sections, in terms of subcultural styles, male rock youth often dressed in black leather coats or denim jackets, with long hair, jeans and ornaments (See Figure 3.5.). For the Do-it-yourself subcultural music production, the first generation of rock musicians such as Ding Wu and his band mates either purchased low cost instruments or made instruments by themselves, as guitars were expensive for young people in the 80s, when most of the university graduates earned fixed wages (*guding gongzi*) from state-owned enterprises. The state-owned enterprises adopted a ‘structural wage’ system, consists of fixed wages, positional wages and floating wages (Wilson 2009). Also, Chinese youth learned rock music by themselves through covering Western cassettes. Since there were limited opportunities to perform, even though musicians were eventually able to form bands, they could only perform in restaurants and small-scale parties. In order to make a living as a rock musician, DingWu and He Yong note:

He Yong: Another way to perform was through going on tours with some popular music performing groups, namely *zouxue*, I got to visit a lot of places in China.

Ding Wu: I also performed with the group (*zouxue*). In terms of income, it was really low, I only got paid once or twice a year, I played the guitar for about 20 days and earned about a few hundred Yuan. If I ended up not having any money left, I went home to stay with my parents.

(*Nufang* documentary 2015)

Zouxue is a term that emerged in the 80s China to refer to a group of musicians and performers who make extra money through moonlighting outside their government-controlled work unit under the emerging market economy. The significance of *zouxue* phenomenon was that performers were not necessarily controlled and sponsored by the government to follow their norms and beliefs. They got to work privately and through this

phenomenon, as suggested by Baranovitch (2003: 17-18), unofficial songs, such as rock music by Cui Jian, Ding Wu and He Yong got disseminated alternatively.

Although Chinese rock is a part of Western culture, which is often accused for its inauthenticity, the PhD suggests that in the context of post-revolutionary China, rock articulates subcultural authenticity of resistance, individualism, anti-authority and rebellious agencies. This is in opposition to Adorno's argument of the passivity of standardised popular music industry (Adorno 1941). In the initial stage of Chinese economic reform, China still employs a mixture of free market economy and state-controlled socialist economy. Rock music was also disseminated majorly through unofficial private units, which is outside the state-controlled music industry. Adorno's opinion (1941/1990) of rock music as a pseudo-individualised and mass-produced sound of the West for maximum sales cannot fully explain the situation when rock travels to China and served as a sound of reform. For Chinese youth in the 80s, they were idealistic and desired to change China towards a more modernised and democratic society, which is also against Adorno's opinion that consumptions of popular music make people content, satisfied and temporally forget about the harsh everyday reality. Chinese rock musicians such as Ding Wu and Cui Jian even quit their jobs from the state-controlled work units to pursue their 'rock dreams'. Though rock in the West, in Adorno's viewpoint have minimal diversity from other genres of popular music, rock in China articulates a sense of authenticity that is in opposition to state sponsored popular music in the post-revolutionary era.

Additionally, societal conflicts intensified in the historical conjunction of social change. While rock music was marginal, mainly participated in by university students before the Tiananmen student movement took place in 1989, rock popularised with the ongoing student demonstrations. The student movement called for democracy, freedom of the press and the speech, anti-corruption and greater accountability, following the emerging drawback of market economy that led to inflation, unequal career opportunities for graduates for the new economy, and restrictions on political participation. As rock popularised with the ongoing student demonstrations, it illuminates the participatory nature of popular music that through participating in rock culture, students and intellectuals were calling for change for a democratic modern China. Drawing from the conceptual framework of conjunctural analysis from *Resistance through Ritual* (1975: 44, 53) as noted by Blackman (2014: 504), the notion of "conjunctural" is used:

in relation to the sources of subcultural style and how the historical conjuncture (the balance of forces between domination and subordination...will produce changes in the...matrix of problems, structures, opportunities and experiences which confront that class stratum at a particular historical moment.

Thus, the symbolic politics of rock subculture that is in opposition to of political control and official cultural hegemony formed in the historical conjunction of reforms can be interpreted as social struggle within a temporary stability (Jessop and Ngai-Ling 2012, Blackman 2014: 504). With the failure of the movement, rock songs created in the post-protest period also reflects helplessness and disempowerment by Chinese youngsters (Baranovitch 2003:39). For Baranovitch (2003: 40-42), both the popularity and decline of Chinese rock have a close relationship with 1989 student demonstrations: the rise of rock was associated with student movement's celebration of freedom, democracy and self-empowerment, yet the decline of rock music was associated with the failure of the student demonstrations, in which Chinese people became less interested in political activities and were less idealistic. Instead, the consumerism fever swept China with the deepening of Chinese economic reforms. People transferred their focuses on making money and enjoying a materialistic life. The crackdown on student movements marks a historical turning point for Chinese culture, in which rock returned underground, though it has never made its way into mainstream culture due to its marginality.

To summarise, the PhD suggests rock's association with protest as an anti-authority sound, and its marginality as well as its distinctiveness from the officially approved *tongsu* popular music articulates subcultural politics of resistance drawing from aspects of the CCCS theoretical position of subculture (Blackman 2014). Rock music as a sound of post-revolutionary China articulates subcultural styles, subcultural authenticity and counter-culturality, in which Chinese youth took up creative expressions that aim to solve contradictory societal problems between the dominant state and the ruled class in the process of reform transformation. Not only dozens of Chinese rock bands established during 1990 – 1993 that participated 'a desired identity of exclusive anti-mainstream and anti-officialdom fraternity' (Baranovitch 2003: 39), rock music was also banned from mainstream media following the 'failure' of the student movement.

While Chinese rock music as a post-revolutionary sound under reforms articulates subcultural politics of resistance and non-conformism, the PhD suggests, it has a dialogical relationship

with the state's cultural hegemony rather than a binary opposition. The PhD adopts Baranovitch's (2003) theoretical position that addresses the dynamics of hegemony and resistance in the context of China, rather than viewing hegemony and resistance as fixed and static (Stuart Hall 1980). For Baranovitch (2003: 222), 'hegemony and resistance are two forces that are in a constant process of negotiation', in which 'resistance may influence and shape hegemony'.

To further illuminate this argument, it has been observed that the Chinese state not only controlled rock music through banning it from mainstream media, but also utilised rock music as a 'democratic sound' for implanting its educational and political purposes. For example, after the crackdown of student movement in 1989, Cui Jian's 1990 concert tour was allowed by Chinese government as Cui Jian offered to donate one million Yuan to the state for hosting the Asian Games that year. The state's allowance on Cui's concert, though Cui's rock music articulates rebellion and anti-authority, was also for transferring public's attention from the failure of the movement to the concert.

Furthermore, the 1990 rock concert – officially being called the 1990 Modern Music Concert held in Beijing Capital Indoor Stadium, featuring line-up of six bands including Ding Wu's Tang Dynasty (*Tangchao*), female band Cobra (*Yanjingshe*), Cui Jian's Ado, 1989, Breathing (*Huxi*), Baby Brother (*Baobei Xiongdi*), also marks a historical moment in Chinese rock, in which Chinese rock bands first time collectively performed in large-scale public concert, with thirty thousand tickets sold-out and two hundred giant amps installed in the stadium. The average age of the rock youth was below 24 (Yang 1990). The term 'modern' was a politically correct term to substitute 'rock', in which the concert was permitted by the state under the strictly 'Two Serve policy' that 'art should serve for the people', and 'art should serve for the socialism'. The concert was used by the state not only to promote China's modernised and democratic images under reforms, but also as Baranovitch (2003: 37) suggests, the permission of the concert was to 'ease tension and regain credibility' among Beijing youngsters after the crackdown of student movement.

3.2. The rebirth of Chinese rock: Commercialisation, festivalisation and digitalisation

This section illuminates the rebirth of Chinese rock after rock was banned by the state and returned to underground since 1993 (Huang 2001). The focuses are on changes and opportunities of Chinese rock music scenes under multiple forces of technology change, music dissemination, festivalisation and commercialisation from the mid-90s until post-millennium. While it has been argued that rock gradually lost its counter-hegemonic characteristics in comparison to the past (Jones 1994), the section seeks to analyse tensions and negotiations of rock as a subcultural sound in the late 90s and new millennium.

3.2.1. Tensions and opportunities: Chinese rock in the continuing of economic reforms

When Chinese rock got banned from mainstream media with the ‘failure’ of 1989 student demonstrations, Baranovitch (2003) suggests that rock returned underground not only from state control, but also for the growing popularity of karaoke technology in which people entertain themselves with singing to a song rather than dancing to a song. Where *gangtai* music was easy to sing along with for its catchiness, slow-tempo, and clear articulation of lyrics, rock music in contrast lost its popularity in karaoke due to its fast tempo and strong rhythm.

After the crackdown of student movement, Deng’s political power was weakened, and he retired from the political scene in 1992, Jiang Zemin became the president of China. But Deng reasserted his economic agenda by launching a southern tour in China in 1992, in which he addressed the significance of reform and opening up through making various speeches and gaining local support. Jiang eventually continued Deng’s economic reforms, but Jiang’s economic policy of emphasising investment in coastal regions has caused increasing economic imbalance between the interior provinces and coastal regions, as well as an opening wealth gap between rural and urban. There was also a massive unemployment rate during Jiang’s leadership as a result of deregulation of a number of heavy industries that led to state-run companies shutting down. But still ‘to get rich is glorious’ became a catchphrase in the 90s, in which the continuing of reform not only facilitated Chinese economic growth, but also it has transformed youth culture and popular music scenes with new looks.

For Jones (1994), he argues that Chinese rock gradually lost its counter hegemonic characteristics in comparison to the past, though rock remained marginal in Chinese society. 'Rock music's gradual absorption into China's burgeoning market economy has defused much of its politically opposing potential' (Jones 1994: 149). For Steen (2000), genres of rock music became diversified in the changing social, economic and political environment in the 90s, though there has been tight cultural control from the state. In order to survive from the harsh cultural environment, Chinese rock musicians also verbally agreed to 'a politically responsible and economically motivated music industry' (Steen 2000: 3), in order to develop their career and release records. Steen and Jones both argue that Chinese rock lost its radical 'rebellious spirit' from the past and transformed into a politically lighter version.

The PhD acknowledges this negotiation and compromise of Chinese rock facing the harsh Chinese cultural environment and the overwhelming power of materialism. Since Chinese people became less caring for politics due to its potential risks, after witnessing the violent crackdown on the student movement; Chinese rock rebellion was reflected through forms of 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' (Hebdige 1987: 91), in which subcultural groups took up 'risk-free' creative expressions against societal problems, traditional Confucius values and cultural hegemony, rather than organising to form an 'articulated opposition' (Brake 1985: 7). For example, the establishments of private music companies such as Modern Sky in 1997 that ran apart from the state-run music companies and foreign companies in Hong Kong and Taiwan provided opportunities for Chinese rock to rebirth, in which independent music labels were against the 'dominance of Beijing's older music guard' (Steen 2000: 2-3) and hence changed the landscape of Chinese popular music industry.

3.2.2. *Dakou* youth culture

Through the mid-1990s until early millennia, the emergence of cut-out (*dakou*) music products also facilitated the rebirth of Chinese rock (de Kloet 2010). Cut-out, or *dakou* namely means illegally imported Western CDs and cassettes punched with cuts. They were abandoned as 'plastic trash' for recycling by European and American music companies such as BMG, as a result of they produced too many CDs and tapes for the market demands. Instead, *dakou* CDs and cassettes were smuggled into Chinese underground market and were sold for cheap prices in kilos illegally. CDs and cassettes were punched with cuts by

Europeans and Americans so that they won't be able to be sold again. But actually only a few songs can be erased because the CD plays from its centre to its margins, or sometimes the punch only damaged the cases of cassettes instead of its inner parts (See Figure 3.2.1.).

The emergence of *dakou* culture participated in and consumed by *dakou* youth was criticised by Chinese media as a subculture for its delinquency and marginality that separate from mainstream culture. Chinese youth born in the 80s as the first generation of one-child was also labelled as 'The Beat Generation' (*kuadiaode yidai*) by Chinese media in comparison to American youth, as the post-80s Chinese youth (*balinghou*) were spoiled by parents as 'little emperors' (Steinfeld 2015) and were impetuous in workplaces. They sought for individual ease, comfort and hedonism rather than following Confucius' spirits of self-restraint. Neither have they experienced the hardship and unease of their parental generations who have been through the Cultural Revolution. For *dakou* youth (*dakou qingnian*), *dakou* cultural products opened up alternative ways for them to explore and access Western alternative music, which were too marginal or censored by distributors in the Chinese music industry. Through *dakou* consumption, I got access to various genres of alternative Western music including jazz, indie-rock, alternative, post-punk, metal, blues, and ambient, which played a fundamental role in shaping my music tastes before MP3 and digitalisation became commonly accessible. As my autoethnography and field dairy states:

I still remember when I was in primary school in Qingdao, my mum always brought me to a CD shop with a secret backdoor access to *dakou* products. The shop owner only showed that room to his acquaintances. Though we didn't know much about those musicians, we simply loved to buy CDs and cassettes based on album covers, or being given recommendations by the shop owner, as he seemed to be more knowledgeable. Through *dakou* consumption, I started to approach Enya, Nirvana, Enigma, and Guns and Roses. There was even a band whose name I could not remember, but one of its songs started with a man's screaming or vomiting with electronic guitar which impressed me, as I'd never listened to music like that. Within that secret room full of boxes of CDs and cassettes, there was a camera monitoring customer activity of 'the normal part' of the shop where legal CDs were stored. The camera was to prevent the situation in which the

police would suddenly visit the shop and confiscated those illegal cultural products.

For *dakou* youth, they were only a small portion of the Chinese population who listened to Western alternative music through looking for a map of *dakou* dealers in their own cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Shanghai, Xian and Jinan, to name a few. From ethnographic data, it has been found that *dakou* has become a youth cultural phenomenon that has swept China. Being ‘alternative’ (*linglei*) became the ideal identity for *dakou* youth to distinct themselves from mainstream society and to carve out space from increasing commercialised and globalised Chinese society. According to Xiao Budian from *Shanren*,

The 90s was a really good era, before that China was closed up (*fengbi*), when most music available was revolutionary sounds, with a few *gangtai* pop. *Dakou* CDs were foreign rubbish; they had a good market in China and became precious. *Dakou* was a way of (music) self-education, because at that time the overall status (of rock youth) was initiative, they had a strong desire for a cultural and spiritual life except eating and sleeping (materialistic). Before *dakou*, youth relied on fighting to prove themselves and to distinguish their identities. In order to prove myself, I could fight against three or four young guys. We were influenced by hooligan films such as *Young and Dangerous* film series by (Hong Kong director) Zhou Xingchi, but it was just a way of proving myself.

Many *dakou* dealers were also the owners of legally operated music shops, which sold mainstream mandarin pop, *gangtai* music and classical music. Other dealers sold *dakou* products covertly, with temporary secret selling spots away from the police’s gaze. They did however attract a good number of customers selling outside universities, bookshops, pop-up night markets and by the entrance of tube stations. Many *dakou* youth committed to *dakou* shopping through following a map of *dakou* selling spots. They travelled across the city to discover different resources of *dakou* products, in which they were looking for *jianhuo*, literally the most unique and the most popular albums. For example, if a Western band was

recommended by a Chinese rock magazine, such as *Music Heaven* (*yinyue tiantang*) and was hard to purchase, dealers would immediately raise its price.

The emergence of *dakou* culture filled the market gap in which state-controlled music companies and foreign music companies could not fulfil music demands for a small group of alternative youth. Comparatively the hooligan (*liumang*) youth culture in the 80s that celebrated the novelist Wang Shuo, in which Beijing fringe youth had playful, hippy, teasing and counter-culture attitudes towards the post-Mao mainstream culture through; taking up negative behaviours of playing around, having sex, getting drunk and listening to rock n roll (Barmé 1999). *Dakou* culture marks a generation that consumes Western popular music in their everyday life, in which they were against the sudden shift from the cultural and political 1980s to a materialistic and individualistic 1990s after Deng's southern tour in 1992. In the process of consuming and participating in *dakou* culture, music tastes of *dakou* youth also became increasingly picky. Many of the famous rock musicians nowadays have once been *dakou* youth, such as P.K. 14, *Zuoxiaozuzhou*, *Shanren* and Sober. For music critic Yan Jun, the significance of *dakou* culture is that

It represents a generation that refuses to be suppressed, that seeks unseeingly, that connects to the underground, that creates marginal culture and lifestyle that grows stubbornly, that resists and struggles.

(Yan 2004: 176)

For de Kloet (2010:24), *dakou* culture is characterised by a growing diversity of music styles, in which it 'slowly bifurcated from the hard sound of rock further into a range of hyphenated styles' such as post-punk, post-rock, folk rock and fashionable bands who sing in a mixture of Chinese and English and articulates cosmopolitan aesthetics.

According to de Kloet (2010), the significance of *dakou* culture is that it marked Chinese rock entered an era of cosmopolitanism, where 'negotiations and representations of the on-going struggle by Chinese youth to reconcile individualistic and collectivist orientations' (Weber 2006: 332; de Kloet 2010: 366). De Kloet further adopts Foucault's notion of 'technologies of the self' and argues that Chinese youth identities are synthesised and fluid rather than fixed and given in the twenty-first century. He focuses on the 'reflexive project of

the self' drawing from Giddens's (1991) and DeNora (2000), in which he argues that media and music are significant 'symbolic toolboxes in the process of reflexivity', as they provide 'sonic and aesthetic means through which identities are articulated and group boundaries are formed' (de Kloet 2010: 141). Chinese youth in the new century are still struggling between multiple controlling powers of the state, the family and education (de Kloet 2010: 142-148, de Kloet and Fung 2017). The technologies of the self, enabled by Chinese rock are distinguished by 'masculinity, to youth, to place (coming from the mainland, perceiving Beijing as the centre), to self-regulation and to politics (de Kloet 2010: 152).

In other words, what de Kloet argues drawing from his data from interviews, quantitative questionnaires and fan emails from the *dakou* youth is that Chinese rock music articulates generational differences, a sense of belonging, subjective feelings of rebellion, emotional release or nostalgia, as well as political views and memories of the past generations. He focused on three music scenes: fashionable bands that are inspired by a cosmopolitan aspiration, the political underground bands who express dissatisfaction and rebellion, and the urban folk musicians who express nostalgia. However, de Kloet refuses to place *dakou* culture within a subcultural framework, but rather employs the conceptual tool 'rock mythology' to specifically refer to the subcultural characteristics of hard rock. He focuses on scenic fluidity and movements articulated by different genres, but his arguments are pre-occupied by individualistic and subjective emphasis of youth culture from a postmodern subcultural perspective, without focusing on class and structural influences.

The PhD sees *dakou* youth as a collective social formation in the historical moment of continuing reform where tensions of state-control on music industry and opportunities derived from globalisation and commercialisation coexist. *Dakou* youth who participated in the marginal *dakou* culture articulates subcultural substance of distinction, identity, and commitment as well as resistance towards centre-controlled culture industry, authority and mainstream values drawing from the socialist past and Confucianism. *Dakou* products gradually lost its competitiveness with the popularity of new technologies, with the proliferation of the Internet, online downloading became the new way of accessing alternative Western music.

3.2.3. New Sound Movement and D.I.Y. record labels

Alongside the emergence of *dakou* culture in mid 90s was the New Sound movement and the establishment of Modern Sky record label in 1997. This facilitated a new generation of rock musicians, who were different from the political rebellious, heroic and idealistic rockers in the 80s, such as Cui Jian, Tang Dynasty and Black Panther. According to Steen (2000: 17), the new generation of rockers featured a short haired, modern look, (a Western trend) and they expressed 'realism and common urban sentiments' through playing new genres of music such as punk, electronic, and underground rock.

The movement took place under the background of political and economic tension intensified by Deng Xiaoping passing away, and China taking over Hong Kong from Britain (Steen 2000: 22). Additionally, the emergence of *dakou* culture has paved the ground in which young Chinese were able to engage in Western popular music consumption, despite the state's tight cultural control. Chinese music industries were still dominated by popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The movement began around 1997 was initially supported by the independent record company Modern Sky (*Modeng Tiankong*) founded by Shen Lihui, who has transformed Chinese rock music scenes from a heavily political sound, to a more diverse one consisting of: punk, garage, indie, electronic, folk, and the old heavy sound of metal and rock.

For Steen (2000), the establishment of Modern Sky Company was significant as it was a success marketing strategy and a 'novel invention of the young generation', as it grasped a new market gap. The founder Shen Lihui was a musician from the band Sober (*Qingxing*), who graduated from the Beijing Arts and Crafts Institute (*Meixiao*). In 1997, his Brit-pop inspired band, Sober (*Qingxing*), released the first album on the new label established by himself through a do-it-yourself approach. As Shen notes in an interview:

Originally it was just to put out my own band's record. No one else wanted to do it. At the time I was doing a lot of print work, I had some money. Not a lot, but it could be considered a decent amount. There weren't any good record labels, just a bunch of pirated music. So, we just decided to do it ourselves. So, we did it and set up this label, and afterwards I thought having a label with just one band was strange. So, then we signed two more bands, but my main concern was still my own band. The other two bands were also our classmates, New Pants and

Supermarket. They were all from Meixiao, though a bit younger than us. But those were the only other bands we knew.

(Feola 2013)

Alongside the record label, Shen Lihui also established a music magazine – *Modern Sky Sound Magazine* and collaborated with a friend to run a Live House called No.17 in Sanlitun area of Beijing from the year 1999 to 2001. For Shen Lihui, Beijing has the right music environment to establish independent record label, as it is the centre of the music industry of China, which includes attention from media, venues, practices spaces, music festivals and infrastructure. When Shen first started to put up gigs in club No.17, tickets were quite cheap, around 20 or 30 Yuan, and bands always performed jointly such as P.K.14 and *Zuoxiaozuzhou*. The venue was relatively small and could only fit a hundred people. By the end of the show, band members could only receive fifty Yuan for getting a taxi. This situation lasted for a year, as it was hard to pursue any commercial benefits.

Within China there were increasing capitalised economic circumstances, a do-it-yourself approach for cultural production articulating the politics of being creative, managing oneself, and automating the artistic process (Oliver 2010: 1422-1423). This opposition towards mainstream profit-making music corporations approved by the state, which had a democratising effect by providing ‘independent’ alternatives to dominated business (Hesmondhalgh 1997: 225-257). Since rock was banned from mainstream radios and televisions, the establishment of independent record companies challenged the landscape of traditional music industries. Also, in order to produce the music magazine that covers topics of music albums, music-related stories, reviews and commentaries, one of the tricks for the music magazine business is to publish the magazines with a music-publishing license instead of a print publishing license. Thus, the CD attached on magazines provided convenience to skip publication approval from the State Press and Publishing Administration. This trick was also utilised by other rock magazines such as ‘So Rock! Magazine’ (*Woai yaogunyue*), and *Tongsu Songs (Tongsu gequ)*.

The company also founded the sublabel Badhead in late 1998, which signed more underground bands such as The Fly, Zuoxiao Zuzhou and Tongue. Since then, Modern Sky record label has gradually grown into an influential music enterprise that not only has significant influence in China, but also has broadened their business towards the global music

industry. Such as in March 2017, Modern Sky UK was established as a record and publishing company. In the same year in September, it launched its Modern Sky Music Festival New York City, in central park. It aimed to bridge popular music exchange from China and countries abroad, as it has invited Western bands to tour in China and has brought Chinese bands to perform in Europe and America.

The establishment of the record label Modern Sky by Shen Lihui in 1997 and sub label Badhead, which was dedicated to more experimental music in the late 1998, enlarged the diversification of rock music genres in China. A number of bands mushroomed from various genres and music communities have been quite diverse as well, including experimental rock featuring No, The Fly, Zi Yue; garage band Xie Tianxiao and Cold Blooded Animal; fashionable bands such as Queen Sea Big Shark (*Houhai Dashayu*), New Plant (*Xinkuzi*), Supermarket (*Chaoji shichang*); post-punk band P.K.14 and Retros (*Chongsu Diaoxiangde Quanli*), Gothic rock Wooden Horse (*Muma*); Alternative rock Hedgehog (*Ciwei*), etc. It symbolises historical conjunction for Chinese rock music development, as Shen Lihui notes in an interview with *Southern Weekly* (*Nanfang Zhoumo*),

Before 1997, Chinese rock was red rock, after 1997, it enters an era of globalised rock music scenes.

(Wu and Zhang 2009)

What Shen signifies is that in the rebirth of Chinese rock under new sound movement, it symbolises an ideological shift under increasing commercialisation, in which being politically rebellious like Cui Jian in the 80s that features long haired and aggressive music fell out of style. During the past ten years, Chinese rock had been degenerating rather than blossoming. According to Steen (2000: 22), ‘rock music’s common failing is that the “rebellion caught an illness”’, in which the new generation of rockers were rebellious against the ‘old guard’ but expressed ‘realism and urban sentiments’ through their various styles of music such as electronic, punk, garage, and indie rather than the idealistic and heroic rebellion articulated from the old rock spirit.

In addition, apart from Modern Sky Music Company and its popularised music festivals such as Strawberry Music Festival and Modern Sky Music Festival. The establishment of Midi

Music School in Beijing in 1993 was the first contemporary musical school that features rock music tuition, and to have trained a number of famous Chinese rock musicians including Xie Tianxiao from Cold Blooded Animal (*Lengxue Dongwu*), Mao Chuan from Escape Plan (*Taopao Jihua*), and members from Wooden Horse (*Muma*). It soon established its own rock music festival since 2000 – Midi Festival, which is seen as the Chinese version of Woodstock Music Festival.

A range of music labels and music festivals also mushroomed in Beijing since the New Sound Movement, such as Scream-records founded in 1999, featuring rock, metal and garage bands such as Yaksa (*Yecha*), Thin Man (*Shouren*), Twisted Machine (*Niuqude jiqi*), Miserable Faith (*Tongkude xinyang*); self-founded non-profit experimental art organisation Subjam (*Saba jiemo*) by music critic Yan Jun in 2000, which mainly publishing and curating events for music, sound, visual art and poetry. Yan Jun and Christiann Virant founded its sub-label Kwanyin Records in 2004. The establishment of Shanshui record label by Sulumi, a Chinese electronic musician in 2003, facilitated the Chinese electronic music scene. Thirteen Month independent record label founded in 2006, mainly promoting rock and folk, its signed musicians include Shanren, Wan Xiaoli, Suyang and Zhong Lifeng, to name a few. Miniless (*Mi'le*) records founded in 2006, which promoted indie rock, and has also established an electronic music sub-label Miniless-E and an avant-garde experiential music organisation 'Reconstruct the Experimental Soundscape of Ourselves'. Independent music label Maybe Mars (*Bingmasi*) launched in 2007, which has contributed to underground music scene in Beijing by publishing records and excelling gigs of the best rock, punk, experimental and noisy artists across the country.

Music festivals have also become an all-year around phenomenon in comparison to the early 2000s, which was dominated by Midi and Modern Sky in Beijing. Drawing from my autoethnographic data, the proliferation of music festivals has swept China including both northern China and southern China. Music festivals have also become standardised and driven by profits, in which its central holding locations were spread from big-scale cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou to smaller-scale cities such as Qingdao, Xi'an, Hangzhou, and Lijiang, to name a few. For example, drawing from my autoethnographic data, when I went to music festivals in the early 2000s – 2010s, locations for holding festivals were centralised around Beijing – the North of China, and large cities, including Strawberry Music Festival in 2009 (Beijing), *Zhangbei Caoyuan* Music Festival in 2011 (Hebei province that next to Beijing), and *Yuegu* Music Festival in 2011 (Beijing). Then in the mid and later

years of 2010s, music festivals have been frequent events taking place in smaller-scale cities and Southern China, *Midi Electronic Music Festival* in 2014 (Suzhou, a smaller-scale city next to Shanghai), and *Cangmashan Music Festival* in 2016 (Qingdao, a coastal city in Shandong province).

3.2.4. Technological influences and the rise of virtual community

Chinese rock music culture has been influenced by multiple forces through the past thirty years, the evolvement of music dissemination technology also played a vital role in the changing economic, cultural and social environment; from the earlier cassettes to Western illegally imported CDs and cassettes punched with cuts, to latterly illegal online downloading and the proliferation of online music streaming sites and mobile technology. Technology changes have made musical resources increasingly available to younger generations of rock music participants, which are in contrast with the past, when rock was imported as a western music product in the 80s and was disseminated majorly through cassettes and small-scale performances in the 90s. In the post millennium, the rise of social media such as *Douban*, Chinese Guitar Forum, *Baidu* Forum, and *Weibo* have facilitated online rock subcultural communities participated in by young Chinese local, translocal and globally, as rock music fans were able to connect to each other regardless of locations.

In addition, online music downloading and streaming have also played an important role in disseminating music, such as, when there was limited musical resources in relation to rock available online, in addition to purchasing in cut-out cultural products from underground market, rock music fans also used P2P seed database website (*wangpan*) such as VeryCD (2003), and online storage space 115.com (2009) to download different genres of rock albums. Though the downloading and sharing might have copyright issues, social media users built up their listening experience and subcultural capital, (Thornton 1995) mostly via free illegal downloading. There were even online forums sharing downloading links of albums on a frequent basis back in the early 2000s, such as Douban discussion group (*Douban xiaozu*) – Blur (*Hu*), with a number of 3500 users, it was established in 2010 by Douban user Kzeno, and members needed to be invited by internal members to join the group, as the setting of the discussion group is hidden within Douban online community. Though the group has no longer been active since 2014, as new technologies of legal music streaming sites such as

NetEase Music (*Wangyiyun*), Baidu Music and Xiami Music have replaced the old ones, younger generation of rock music fans no longer need to rely on the old-fashioned way of illegal downloading through *Wangpan*. Another reason that these music-sharing activities are no longer popular was due to the state having censored such downloading sites, as it might distribute politically sensitive content. *Wangpan* offered a grey area between the government-controlled cultural products and secretly disseminated cultural resources by online users.

Within the Blur (*Hu*) community, all the topics are related to music sharing, with categorised genres and country of origins stated in each post. The links that direct to 115.com were valid for downloading only within a specific range of time and might be expired if you download too late (See Figure 3.2.2. for a snapshot of Blur online community). In addition to participating in *Douban* community Blur, as an insider of Chinese rock music communities, I also gained access to music through a few other alternative ways, as my autobiography and field dairy notes:

Back in the days, my parents limited the time I could spend on the PC and Internet, because I was still a high school student, I needed to concentrate on my study for National Higher Education Entrance Exam. Listening to music, surfing on the Internet, and other entertainment would consume time I could spend on revising coursework. Except occasional bought CDs and cassettes, such as Linkin Park, Avril Lavigne and Green Day, from normal CD shops, or more alternative *dakou* ones, such as Enya and Radiohead from the underground market. Going online to check what other friends (*Douban*) were listening to constitute much of my earlier musical taste, as I couldn't find many non-virtual friends that liked rock. I also fragmentally listened to songs from Songtaste and Myspace, as long as I found the melody beautiful, or the music is unique, I immediately try to save the song from the website, as I just wanted to repeatedly listen to it. When I listened to my favourite rock songs, such as John Lennon's 'Oh My Love', Devics' 'My beautiful Sinking Ship', and Blond Redhead's album '23', I felt I was emotionally connected to it, and could take a break from the endless schoolwork.

What I want to highlight here is not purely how technological change can make rock music more available to Chinese youth through generations, but additionally it illuminates the non-mainstream, and underground position of rock consumption among Chinese youth, in the post millennium. Getting access to wider rock music albums both legally and illegally was still a difficult thing, because it took efforts for rock music fans to discover good music from either the East or the West. Another reason was that members in the Blur (*Hu*) community follow and rely on each other's music taste and recommendations of albums to get into wider rock music resources. The virtual space of Douban discussion group Blur (*Hu*), formed around the illegal downloading of rock albums, articulating non-mainstream view points, subcultural politics, in which Chinese youth desired to have wider subcultural capital in relation to rock music, and carving out a space from the surveillant power and cultural control of the state. Through Douban discussion group Blur, rock music fans were relying on each other to distribute music resources, in which commitment was formed, and subcultural social contacts were established. Listening to rock was still a underground activity that being distinguished from mainstream commercial pop, and rock music fans were cherishing the music resources as they were limited and precious, which was different from the post 2010 condition, in which younger youth could listen to Chinese/western rock with lessened limitations with the proliferation of online music streaming sites such as Xiami, NetEase Cloud Music and Spotify.

Alongside the technology change, there was also emerging performance spaces in Beijing, Shanghai and other big cities over the past thirty years, such as Mao Live House, D-22, Yuyintang, Yugongyishan, Maquewashe, Yue space, School Bar, Wuhan Prison and Downtown-bar at Qingdao. This signifies the growth and diversity of Chinese rock music communities in which rock culture were participated by Chinese youth both online and offline, both virtually and in reality.

Conclusion

To conclude, through mapping out Chinese rock music scenes and youth cultures in the process of wider social, political, economic and cultural change. Chinese rock music scenes have been shaped and facilitated by multiple forces of cultural policy, technological evolution, commercialisation and globalisation. Having been through its emergence as a cultural novelty; it rised as a sound of protest; its decline was a result of political control; and its rebirth under *dakou* culture and the rise of virtual communities, rock as a Chineseified, yet Western-imported sound has dialogically negotiated with multiple forces of cultural hegemony, both from the state and from the globe, both from the political north and the commercial south.

The chapter has discussed two contrasting approaches in studying Chinese rock. The first approach is a geographical one that focuses on Chinese rock music as a glocalised sound fusing cultures both from the West (global) and the East (local), in which authenticity became the key judgement for creative and subcultural expressions by Chinese youth. The second approach is chronological, in which generational differences of youth values, ideologies and rock music scenes have been addressed to illuminate Chinese rock as a complex culture within its broader changing socio-economic and political circumstances. The PhD suggests, cultural fusion is characterised with ongoing and dynamic interactions between the East and the West rather than a binary flow, in which there has been constant absorptions, negotiations, and contradictions during this dynamic and dialogic process.

The chapter draws from CCCS theorisation of subcultural resistance and the four indicators of subcultural substances by Hodkinson (2002) to illuminate different forms of subcultural practices by Chinese youth within rock communities facing tensions and opportunities in the process of Chinese continuing of economic reforms. Rock spirits have been articulated by Chinese youth through their subcultural rebellion, D.I.Y. aesthetics and subcultural styles towards mainstream commercial pop from Hong Kong and Taiwan, the political promoted sound - *tongsu* popular music, the societal ideological influences either Confucius or political, as well as the 'old-fashioned' heroic and idealistic rock values in a specific historical moment that has been claimed by the new urban youth that has degenerated Chinese rock development, in which realism, urban sentiments, and cosmopolitan became the new themes for urban one-child generation.

Chapter 4: Subaltern Sound and Disadvantaged Youth within Chinese Rock Music Communities

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Chinese rock subcultural communities in the digital age, with a focus on norms, values, contradictions and motives shared by rock subcultural participants. The chapter employs the term ‘subaltern’ to refer to ‘music worlds that are involved in a struggle over and for recognition’ (de Kloet 2010: 104) based on Indian Subaltern Studies Group’s notion as ‘countering colonial discourses by giving room to heterogeneous and above all female indigenous voices’ (Spivak 1988, de Kloet 2010: 104). Within this PhD, ‘subaltern’ is employed to refer to marginal voices of those disadvantaged in terms of class, gender, and ethnicity, which are crucial markers of subcultural identities (Blackman 2014) within Chinese wider socio-economic circumstances of the deepening of Chinese reforms.

The chapter consists of two sections. The first section addresses marginal voices of disadvantaged youth in terms of structural inequality of socio-economic status and ethnicity (Blackman 2014), through examining the impact of socio-economic transformations on class structures and youth cultures as well as the *Shucun* subcultural community in Beijing. The PhD suggests rock subculture has transited from an elite subcultural resistance among privileged youth towards a new working-class subculture, in which rock spirits of rebellion and anti-hegemony are inherited. The thesis argues that subcultural authenticity is articulated by ethnic minorities through constant negotiations, contradictions, veiled but cleverly tailored to creative strategies towards cultural hegemony of the Han Chinese and globalisation.

The second part focuses on a new genre of Chinese rock ‘agricultural metal’ (*nongye jinshu*) that is found in working-class youth culture. Drawing from ethnographic data and textual analysis of lyrics and online content, the PhD suggests that agricultural metal articulates subcultural criticism and satire towards Chinese authorities and widening materialistic inequality. *Kuso* (spoo) culture has been utilised as a mocking tool to mediate controls and to express dissatisfaction. In addition, there has also been a gender imbalance within Chinese rock music scenes; both female music fans and musicians are facing constant struggles of established norms, values and beliefs dominated by social institutions and masculinity.

4.1. Introducing marginal voices of disadvantaged youth: A newly emerged Chinese working class and ethnic inequality

This chapter studies rock subculture firstly through the lens of Chinese changing class structures, in which a new subcultural community formed by working-class Chinese youth emerged in the process of urbanisation and growing inequality between diverse social groups. Through looking at marginal positions and voices within Chinese rock music communities, the section focuses on structural inequalities, such as working class versus middle class, Han majority versus the non-Han ethnic minorities. The chapter addresses rock subcultural authenticity in terms of resistance to hegemonies. As Blackman (2005: 15) notes, subcultures are ‘lived and experienced through hierarchical structures where struggle is played out against social categories’, including class, gender and ethnicity, as well as individual’s social identities, which are also inserted in. Thus, through looking at structural inequalities, I will seek to examine subcultural agencies and identities within the broader social context of China, alongside gender inequality with a focus on fandom and sexuality.

The chapter also looks at working-class rock subculture from a micro and everyday perspective that is grounded in empirical data of ethnographic interviews, observations as well as textual analysis of lyrics. Through analysing norms, values, motives, and identities articulated by Chinese disadvantaged youth, the section suggests that Chinese rock subculture is characterised with four indicators of subcultural substances: consistent distinction, identity, commitment and autonomy (Hodkinson 2002).

4.1.1. Class and inequality in contemporary China

In order to understand subcultural politics within rock music communities in contemporary China, ‘class’ has traditionally been a major focus of cultural studies and popular music studies in terms of distinctive styles, such as Clark and Jefferson (1973), Hebdige (1979), Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) and Blackman (2014). The historical context of class in China has been a rather complex issue due to how Chinese economic reforms have led to significant socio-economic changes that had a major impact on Chinese class structures, as well the CCP has separated class consciousness from its socio-economic positions by

committing to working-class historical mission under Marxist-Leninism (Goodman 2014:25-26).

On the one hand, class positions of Chinese rock participants have not been fixed, but rather, a large percent of them have fluid class positions or class identities in the context of the long progress of Chinese economic reforms and opening. Such as musicians and music fans might have been from working-class backgrounds in the initial stage of economic reform, when ‘everyone was equally poor’ and worked in state-regulated work units (Jones 1992). Under Maoism and the CCP’s convention of Marxism-Leninism, the CCP serves as ‘the vanguard both of the Chinese working class and Chinese people and the Chinese nation’ (Constitution of the Communist Party of China, 14 November 2012), in which there were ‘two classes and a stratum’, namely workers, peasants and intellectuals. Economically, after the mid-1950s, the economy was divided into three ownership sectors: the state, the collective and the private sectors. As Goodman (2014: 36) notes, while the private sector was insignificant, the collective economy’s ownership was socialised by the people living or working in a unit, work units (*danwei*) were the principal method of implementing party policy, as workers were bounded to work units for being assigned housing, health care, education for children, and even permission for marriage and travelling. In particular, the phenomenon that workers used to live in the same community with their housing assigned by the work units formed a compound culture (*dayuan wenhua*). For people working in state sectors, their employment was compared to ‘iron rice bowl’ (*tiefanwan*) for they would never lose their jobs but received adequate benefits in terms of housing, health and education for their kids.

On the other hand, rock music participants’ class positions to some extent transformed to a middle-class background as a result of socio-economic change throughout the late 90s and 2000s: where at the initial stage of economic reforms, foreign investment was regulated, and private businesses were allowed but relatively small (Dickson 2010: 295). Both the middle and the managerial classes have expanded in size with the continuing of the reforms (Goodman 2014: 3). By the time of 2002, under Jiang Zemin’s leadership and his ‘Three Represents’ theory that represents China’s advanced social and productive forces, advanced cultures and the interests of the overwhelming majority (Jiang 2002), the CCP focused on developing ‘a state-sponsored discourse of the harmonious middle-class’ (Goodman 2014: 27), in which the party aimed for the majority of the Chinese population to eventually become middle-class.

Therefore, to understand rock music as a subculture within Chinese wider socio-economic context, it is significant to consider the changing class structures in terms of youth identities. The PhD suggests that rock music first emerged in China as an elite culture that popularised among intellectuals and privileged Chinese youth, who grew critical and cynical towards mainstream culture in the context of reforms and opening up, when Western cultures and products got into Chinese mainland, but then it passed down to a mixture of working-class and middle-class Chinese youth with the continuing and deepening of Chinese economic reforms.

Many of the rock youth from the 80s had received art and musical education from childhood, when materialistically China 'had nothing'. 'Such as Cui Jian, the father of Chinese rock was born in a musical family in Beijing, his father was a professional trumpet player who worked for the Military Band of the Chinese Air Force and Army, his mother was a dancer who worked in China National Ethnic Song and Dance Ensemble. Cui Jian learnt trumpet at the age of 14 and worked as a trumpet player in Beijing Symphony Orchestra. But in order to play rock music, he left his 'iron rice bowl' as a trumpet player. Similarly, Ding Wu from Tang Dynasty was an art student; his father worked for the military and his mother was a cadre. He got into rock music when he was attending an art university in Beijing. Ma Xiaoyi from the first Chinese band *Wanlimawang* also had a privileged family background, in which one of his parents was a diplomat working for the Communist Party. And Wang Xinbo, another member from *Wanlimawang* was an experienced music producer who had worked for China National Ethnic Song and Dance Ensemble; he purchased his first guitar at the price of 18 Yuan back in 1969.

Even more, the origins of listening to Western rock was associated with Lin Ligu before Cui Jian and *Wanlimawang*, Lin Ligu is the son of an important Chinese political leader Lin Biao, Lin Biao held the three responsibilities of Vice Premier, Vice Chairman and Minister of National Defense from 1959 onwards within the Communist Party, but he died in 1971 in a plane accident. Drawing from my ethnographic data, my interviewee notes,

To talk about rock music in China, it must be dated back to the earliest time. When Lin Ligu, the son of Chinese political leader Lin Biao, got the privileges to access Western culture back in the 60s. Even Cui Jian mentioned in an interview that if Lin Ligu became the political leader of China one day, he

would let every Chinese listen to rock and roll and would cancel the revolutionary opera (*yangbanxi*) (which was engineered during Culture Revolution by Mao's wife Jiang Qing).

During the Cultural Revolution, popular music was banned in China, and bourgeois cultures were regarded as enemies and pornographic. But Lin Liguo got access to Western cultures because of his privileged background when it was politically dangerous for the ordinary Chinese population. Lin Liguo went to Beijing University, but dropped out of school during the Culture Revolution. As a privileged youth, who's the son of Lin Biao, he listened to The Beatles and was a fan of the Cuban Revolutionary, Che Guevara. He had a film projector in his room where he watched Western films such as *Woodstock* directed by Michael Wadleigh and *The Graduate* directed by Mike Nichols, when no one in China had ever heard of rock music or accessed Western films and literatures during the Culture Revolution. It is said that Cui Jian dressed in military clothes to perform rock and roll was associated with his childhood memory, when he saw Lin Liguo sang a song of The Beatles in the compound of Beijing Air Force military (*Beijing kongjun dayuan*) (Haidao 2015). Cui Jian's rebellious spirit was also a continuing of Lin Liguo, who had a special identity as the child of Chinese CCP leader Lin Biao but didn't have a choice to live as a normal Chinese youth. Instead, he had limitations and burdens as a young adult from a strict and serious political family. Through accessing imported Western cultures with other privileged youth within the Communist Party, Lin Liguo was aware of the drawback of Culture revolution, he thought independently through accessing imported Western cultures beyond the limitations of Chinese politics, though practically he could offer little resistance. The common spirit articulated by both Lin Liguo and Cui Jian was rebellion and criticism towards Chinese officials.

The PhD is not arguing that all first-generation rock musicians came from a privileged stratum background. Instead it argues that the emergence of rock music in China articulates an elite cultural resistance towards mainstream Chinese culture that is controlled by authorities, differentiating it from British post-war youth culture that was grounded in working-class culture. Thus, in comparison to the British post-war youth culture that being expressed through distinctive styles as a solution to materialistic inequality (Clarke 1976, Hall and Jefferson 1975), the subcultural politics of Chinese rock rooted in resistance towards

mainstream culture by the privileged, heroic and idealistic youth in the context of social change. As music critic Yan Jun notes in a documentary:

The emergence of Cui Jian in the 80s was more like a social phenomenon, he aroused a huge sensation, all that new stuff, urbanised stuff, youth stuff, plus it was from Western culture, young people were eager for it, and it caused a huge cultural strike.

(*Yaogun Duoduo* documentary 2006)

Though cultural fusion phenomenon can be observed from the time period of economic reforms, when Chinese youth took up Western values, norms and subcultural behaviors, and then banned from mainstream media after the failure of student movement, the transformation into a market economy under Deng especially during the mid-90s has facilitated people who worked in the state-sectors to ‘go into the sea’ (*xiahai*) by starting up private business and entrepreneurship instead of keeping their ‘iron rice bowl’. As a result, economic reforms have led to former public-sector working class reduced in size and politically downgraded, but a new working class consists of peasant migrant workers moved to urban cities for long-term employment formed a new urban subordinated class.

After the 2000s, the subordinated class is characterised with diversity, in particular as a result of the loosening of restrictions on rural-urban movement based on household registration (*hukou*) that assigns family welfare and benefits based on regional residency status. The household registration system was introduced in 1955 and was developed in the 1960s, which tied almost every Chinese to their place of birth for life without many opportunities to move to somewhere else. For example, rural Chinese were unable to receive the benefits and welfare of urban life. Also, the one-child policy implanted from 1978 until 2015 towards urban married couples but excluding ethnic minority and the rural population has led to urban family size decline as well as a dramatic shift in the sex ratio, in which there were far more males than females in Chinese society. Thus, the subordinated class as noted by Dong (2016: 37) encompasses the urban working class, the peasant migrant workers and the peasantry. But each of the subordinated group demonstrates their own identities and class-consciousness.

The middle class in China is characterised as entrepreneurial, professional and managerial, possessing knowledge, skills, experience and organisational abilities.

4.1.2. Subcultural community and marginal youth in Beijing

With the continuing and deepening of Chinese economic reforms, there have been increasing urbanisation and growing inequality between the rural and the urban as a result of the reform. In the 1970s, approximately 80 percent of the Chinese population lived as peasants, by 2011, it reached the first historical conjunction that more than half of the Chinese population resided in cities and towns (Qian and He 2017: 828). In the field of Urban China Studies, there has also been a shift of focus from macro analyses of broader market transition and social change towards a micro investigation of the cultural, physical and governmental construction of urban spaces, in which ‘diverse social groups and the multifaceted experience of living in rapidly changing cities’ have examined (Qian and He 2017: 828). Urban China has transformed from a ‘relative homogeneity and equality of the Maoist’ towards an unequal ‘social polarisation and differentiation’ between the advantaged and disadvantaged social groups (Qian and He 2017: 828).

During this process, a rock subcultural community called Tree Village (*Shucun*) emerged in the northwestern outskirts suburban area of Beijing, which constitutes the multifaceted urban outlook and social polarisation in Beijing. *Shucun* was located around the 5th Ring Road (*Wuhuan*) of Beijing, which is 10 kilometers away from the city center. Drawing from ethnographic data, it has been examined that *Shucun* (Tree Village) subcultural community was active from the mid-90s to early 2000s. It was a small village in the area of *Shangdi* that could not be easily found on the Beijing map. *Shucun* situated not far from the Beijing Midi School of Music established in 1993 located at its northeast direction. It was also close to universities and a range of venues such as D-22, Screaming Bar, and Kaixin Leyuan.

The population that resided in *Shucun* consisted of residents, some people in poverty that made a living by picking waste, non-Beijing migrant workers, and rock youth who came from all over China, including Jiangsu province, Hebei province, Henan province, Guangxi province and Yunnan province. But within this village, it produced around 20 Chinese latterly well-known rock bands, such as Tongue, Wooden Horse, AK47, Zhou Yunpeng and Miserable Faith. Its existence was compared to the Woodstock utopia in America in 1969, as

a lot of rock youth came to *Shucun* to pursue their rock music dreams regardless of the harsh reality that rock music was an underground and marginal pursuit, in which they could not make a living by playing in bands, especially after rock was banned from mainstream media by the government since the early 90s. Many rock youth lived in *Shucun* for its cheap rent and its closeness to attend Beijing Midi School of Music.

Within the *Shucun* subcultural community, rock youth were materialistically poor; the average cost for renting a poorly built room was about 100 Yuan per month, which equals to 10 British pounds. Within a rented room, piles of CDs, living goods, instruments and amps often accumulated together, making the living space even more crowded. Rock youth expressed their commitments to rock music by refusing to take up any proper jobs except making music. As having a full-time job was regarded as shameful by rock youth for it kept them from practicing and making music. As one male interviewee notes:

I'm a rocker so that I shouldn't do anything else. Subconsciously, I'm demonstrating I am different.

Whereas there was also another group of rock youth within *Shucun* who made livings by doing commercial performance, and this way of living was always disliked by the group of rock youth who only concentrated on making and practicing music. As for them, commercial performances were regarded as benefit-driven and disloyal to making rock. But one of the common commitments of rock musicians is that they practiced for long hours every day to improve their musical skills, with a routine of waking up around noon-time, started to play guitar after lunch and stayed up late until midnight. The PhD suggests that the production value for rock music lies on its subversive social meanings that distinguished from dominant mainstream culture driven by commercial interest (Regev 1994: 89), in which the aesthetic of rock is realised through its social functions (Frith 1987, 1990).

Friendship was maintained through socializing, which includes playing football, having meals together, rehearsing and attending gigs at surrounding live houses of Kaixin Leyuan, Screaming and D-22, in which a number of bands had joint performances together. The gig ticket was cheap at around 10 Yuan. When the local residence complained about the noise, they often solved it by covering their windows and doors with duvets to reduce volumes. The

marginal and harsh living condition in *Shucun* and their subcultural values were best illustrated from my interview with Xiao Budian, who's a multi-instrumentalist from the band *Shanren*. He lived in *Shucun* with his brother, who's also a rock musician from the band AK47:

Shucun became a rock village around 1996, when everyone went to Midi School of Music for studying, it was very cheap to live, and gradually a lot of students and non-Beijing bands lived there. There was also a Midi Music Festival held by the Midi School of Music, and then more and more people came to stay there. 2006 was the last wave of musicians (living there), since then the village was demolished. Then the rock community moved to *Houying*, another village nearby, after *Houying* was knocked down, there was no such assembly place anymore. I was lucky to be there. It was like a heaven and a utopia, whereas the real life was just like a landfill. Many people in *Shucun* didn't have enough food to eat. They could live without eating just for making music. Some people even couldn't afford to rent a place; they lived under a tree by paying 10 yuan rent. Because I cooked with my brother, whenever it's mealtime, there would always be people coming to visit, because they could share some free food from us. The living condition was hard, but spiritually, everyone could not disobey (the spirit of) rock: I'm doing rock so that I should not be doing other jobs.

In terms of subcultural styles, which consist of 'symbolic objects of dress and appearance that were made to form a unity with the group's relations, situation, and experience' (Hall et al., 1975: 56). It has been examined that rock youth distinguished their identities from normal young people by wearing leather jackets, big head leather shoes (*datou pixie*) and having piercings and long hairs. With their poor economic condition, having longhair was the most convenient and identifiable dressing style, as it didn't cost any money. Though subcultural styles varied from each other with individuality and creativity, there's a certain degree of unity within the *Shucun* subcultural community, as they displayed common subcultural style elements. According to Xiao Budian:

My entire neighborhood in *Shucun* looks bizarre. They came from different places of China. Every afternoon started from 14:00, the whole village started to rehearse. Everyone dressed in similar styles in which it looked like wearing work uniforms (laugh).

Subcultural styles were addressed by rock youth to distinguish their identities from ordinary youth, in which they were seeking independent thinking and differentiation towards mainstream culture and dominant ideologies at the stage of rock burgeons. Making rock music was also regarded as a subcultural lifestyle in which distinction of identity from ordinary youth was articulated. As noted by my research participant Xiao Budian:

Some people distinguished their identities by studying well in schools. But rock youth often don't have a good academic performance. Some people also prove themselves through fighting (being a hooligan). So, rock is just a way of proving oneself. There's a saying that if you don't study hard in school as a teenager, when you grow up, you will be playing rock music (laugh).

Though rock youth distinguished their identities collectively from ordinary mainstream culture, there has also been internal diversity within rock subcultural community. For example, in terms of music tastes and authenticity, it has been examined that while many rock musicians in *Shucun* were into heavy metal; illustrative bands include AK47, Miserable Faith, Yaksa, and Liquid Oxygen Can. They were driven by improving music skills such as how fast they can play guitars, rather than focusing on originality and creativity, whereas a few rock musicians lived in *Shucun* preferred to make something unique and less-heavy, in contrast with those who mimicked Western heavy metal bands. This is demonstrated from my interview data:

There were a lot of musicians with good skills, and the only criteria were to compete who plays faster and who plays more notes. It was just like a machine. Our band *Shanren* never got involved in any circles (*quanzi*). To be honest, I don't like to be engaged in any circles. There was a phenomenon in *Shucun*, in

which all the music played were heavy metal, except a few others who made something different. One was the band *Feixu*, and the other one was *Mutuigua*, whose music was experimental. I got to know a lot of musicians through playing football with them. And it led to our friendship become closer. So, I was then asked to play in a death metal band on keyboards. They wanted me to become a keyboarder just like the one in Rammstein (German heavy metal band), and I was constantly asked to learn from them by watching videos. After a few times of rehearsal, I found an excuse to quit, as I couldn't bear the sound of distortion.

After quitting the death metal band, Xiao Budian joined the band *Shanren*, in which their music styles are inspired by the sound of the nature and ethnic minority cultures from Yunnan province. The band *Shanren* distinguished their music styles and identities from metal youth, though both subcultural groups have internal connections within Beijing's underground music scene. Though the rock subculture community was characterised with internal diversity depending on taste, values, and even geographical locations (Hodkinson 2002). Rock music in the Chinese context is rather an inclusive umbrella term that encompass a variety of subgenres (Frith 1978, 1996), at the center of Chinese rock music is a unifying concept based on its spirit of dissatisfaction, independent thinking, and resistance to mainstream culture, which is evidential from my ethnographic data. According to my research interviewee Qu Zihan:

In China, rock music is a spirit, whereas in the West, it is a genre. In the emergent stage of Chinese rock, it articulates a sense of heroism. It's going to make a big cultural transformation. But it also carries too many responsibilities.

For Chinese rocker Zheng Jun, he compared Chinese rock music to a dwarf:

When Chinese rock music was given birth, it carried too many missions and burdens, as it not only needs to articulate the sound of an era, but also needs to criticise the reality and be against the mainstream culture. But rock music itself

was a baby; it still didn't have the ability to meet all these expectations... In China, rock music has never belonged to the mainstream culture. Chinese rock as a culture did not go through its teenage stage but already started to think about/sort out societal problems. It is like a dwarf, in whom it carried adulthood's thoughts, but in a child's body.

(Song 2017, from News Weekly)

What Zheng Jun suggests is that Chinese rock music itself was a Western imported culture that does not have a cultural root in China. Though Western rock fuses with Chinese local culture as a transglobal sound, rock music's history in China has been relatively short, in which Chinese musicians always have to learn from Western rock. But since rock first emerged in China in the 80s, it already started to articulate subcultural resistance. The PhD suggests that when Chinese rock first emerged, it was rooted in privileged youth groups who became critical towards Chinese dominant cultures in the transition from a socialist past of Maoism towards modernisation in the context of economic reforms. In the process of increasing urbanisation and growing inequality, the underground music scene facilitated by disadvantaged working-class youth within *Shucun* subcultural community, there is a continuous subcultural rock spirit of the first generation of rockers, such as Cui Jian, Tang Dynasty and Black Panther, which articulates freedom, independent thinking, dissatisfaction and resistance (Huang 2001, Friedlander 1991: 70). As music critic Yan Jun notes in the documentary:

Young people who have been influenced by Cui Jian, Tang Dynasty and Black Panther have formed a small rock community. They had their own lifestyle, and then when they started to influence others, China had rock. Since rock is a kind of collective culture, a kind of lifestyle, a common way of expression, a certain way of talking and dressing, in which it articulates common values, a whole set of styles that have changed daily life, and after the 90s these things really had an effect on some of the young people.

(*Yaogun Duoduo* documentary 2006)

In addition, Yan Jun has also drafted a *Shucun Announcement (Shucun shengming)* (See Appendix 4), which has been signed by many rock musicians from *Shucun*. The announcement was in the commercial film *Beijing Love Story*, which produced its story based on the Beijing underground rock music scene. At the center of the film is a love story between a Hong Kong musician who has to stay in Beijing and fell in love with a marginalised female Beijing rock musician. The actual Beijing rock youth refuted the film's representations of underground rockers, in which the film superficially exaggerated the images of rock youth into angry, strange looking youngsters, and that pursue their music dreams by living in poverty but are still being able to spend money and have fun. However, the film itself did not explain anything about the norms, motives and values articulated by rock youth.

According to the *Shucun Announcement* signed by *Shucun* musicians including Tongue, Miserable Faith, Yaksa, Zuxiao Zuzhou, Lure (*Youdaoshe*), and many more.

About underground rock, we want to say, no one has forced us to live a life like this, no one has been tempted us to choose such a (poor) living environment... We are responsible for what we are doing. Underground rock is not only about dressing styles and music styles; it is not only about poverty and anger. It is to produce music based on our thoughts and decisions. We want to improve our living standard, and hoping to make a living by producing rock, but what makes us happy, as rockers are that we are fighting for maximum freedom, especially in terms of spirituality and independent thought...

(Yan et al. 2000)

Therefore, the PhD suggests that the marginalised and disadvantaged youth group in the *Shucun* community took up creative strategies of making music and dressing abnormally to express their subcultural resistance and dissatisfaction towards Chinese society and hegemonic culture, in which they call for freedom, independent thinking and intransigence facing societal inequality, governmental control, superficiality and increasing commercialisation. This is reflected not only from ethnographic data, but also from textual

analysis of lyrics, such as in the early album of Miserable Faith, *This is a Problem* published in 2001, one of the most popular lyrics that have been celebrated in music festivals by the audiences was ‘where there is oppression, there will be revolt’. In their song *This is a Problem*, they sang

Threat is everywhere,

And this becomes a problem,

...

The problem is that we do not dare to stand out and question why you are pusillanimous

The lyrics of Miserable Faith articulates a clear sense of resistance towards hegemony, in which under the state’s dictatorship, everyone is too scared to take up any solutions to resist. Later, the album was also censored by the Chinese media. Therefore, the CCCS theory of subculture in terms of resistance and refusal still contains theoretical values to this research. In particular, the PhD recognises the value and applicability of the CCCS in relation to the examination of individual biographies and histories, in which a means of subcultural imagination research methodologies become central to reflect research reflexivity (Blackman and Kempson 2016: 11). This is demonstrated through my in-depth interview with Xiao Budian from *Shanren*, in which his biographies of living *Shucun* as a rock youth linked counter cultural practices to its wider political and economic circumstances.

Furthermore, subcultural substances among *Shucun* youth have been indicated through constant distinctiveness in terms of music tastes, values and dressing styles, in which a degree of internal diversity have also been acknowledged (Hodkinson 2002). But within *Shucun* rock subcultural community, a clear set of tastes and values that address the distinction between rock spirit and commercial interest became a central indicator of subcultural substances. In addition, subjective identities and distinction have also been present in the above analysis of *Shucun* rock youth, in which rockers took up creative strategies to distinct themselves from ordinary youth and mainstream culture. For example, through spending much of their free time listnening to rock music, forming certain patterns of friendship, living styles and going-out habits, subcultural substances have been demonstrated through rock youngsters’ constant commitment to producing, participating and consuming rock music. The subcultural community also retains autonomy, in which external non-subcultural products, such as the

commercial film *Beijing Love Story* produced by a larger-scale commercial interest and has been distinguished and resisted from internal subcultural forms of commerce, such as joint-performances in surrounding venues.

4.1.3. The voices of non-Han ethnic minorities: The case of Shanren (Mountain Man)

There are fifty-six officially recognised ethnic groups in China, linguistically referred to as *minzu* (nationalities). With the majority population in China being Han ethnicity, ethnic minorities only constitute 8 percent of the population (Baranovitch 2003: 56). In addition, according to Baranovitch, there are also no officially recognised minorities, who are still seeking official recognition. Each ethnic group has different cultures, history, population size, location and size of territory, but also some of the ethnic minorities have been or are facing assimilation by the majority Han Chinese, who have the dominant positions in Chinese society, while others try to distinguish themselves from mainstream society and resist, such as Tibetans and Uyghurs.

Inequality between Han and non-Han has been reflected through a geographical and economic relationship, in which the economic developed regions of China, such as the east coast and central China are where the Han population majority are located, whereas most of the non-Han ethnic groups reside in the south-western area of China, such as Yunnan, and Guizhou; west of China: Tibet and Qinghai, northwest of China: Xinjiang province (where Uyghurs reside), Gansu province and Inner Mongolia, as well as a portion of ethnic Koreans live in the northeast China that neighbours North Korea. Historically and culturally, there has also been a ‘core-periphery relationship’ (Baranovitch 2003: 57), in which Han culture was seen as superior and more civilised, but minorities are seen as barbarians and subordinated. Thus, a certain degree of discrimination towards non-Han ethnic minorities is inevitable in Chinese society.

This is best illuminated through my interview with the band *Shanren*, in which most of the band members are from Yunnan province and Guizhou province (See Figure 4.1.1.). *Shanren* literally means ‘mountain men’, in which the band associates itself with nature, folk and rurality. The band members are from a variety of ethnic groups including the youngest member Xiao Budian (literally meaning ‘little dot’) from the Buyi ethnicity from Guizhou province. The bass player Li Guohua is from the Yi ethnicity, also commonly called Sani

people. Aiyong is from the Wa ethnic group. And the drummer Ou Jianyun and lead singer Qu Zihan are both from the Han ethnicity. In addition, the band also has a manager from the UK. He's in charge of interpretation and the band's overseas businesses. Though Qu Zihan has been registered as Han Chinese on his Chinese Residential Identification Card, he mentioned that his ancestors and elder family members are from a variety of ethnic minorities. Inequality and discrimination between Han population and ethnic minorities are best echoed from Xiao Budian's response:

When I was at home, I wore Buyi ethnic clothes. But when I was in schools, I wouldn't wear them, as I'm worried that I'm ethnic minority. My mum tried to change my ethnicity (from Buyi ethnicity) to Han ethnicity. Because she used to worry about when I became an adult, I would be discriminated. So now my ethnicity on Chinese Residential Card is Han. It is more convenient for me to go to schools.

Band members first got to know each other through the music community in Kunming City, in which local musicians established subcultural social network and friendships with each other within the music circle. According to Qu Zihan, there's also a music community in Kunming that can be compared to the *Shuncun* subcultural community in Beijing:

There's a similar community just like *Shuncun* in Yunnan, Kunming. It's a village called *Mayuan* where a lot of musicians used to live in that village, as it's close to Yunan Arts University. Though the village's scale was not as big as *Shuncun*, there were also a lot of musicians rehearsed there. I'd say musicians at that time were different from current youth, as their motives for playing music were purer.

While before 2006, *Shanren* performed in Yunnan province, and were influenced by Cui Jian's rock music style that sounds like a combination of Han Chinese music and Western rock. The band moved to Beijing in 2006 following the 'north drift' (*beipiao*) trend, in which non-Beijing young adults migrated to Beijing for work though they didn't have Beijing

residency under the Chinese *Hukou* policy (Yuan 2016). For *Shanren*, Beijing is considered as open, developed and comprehensive, the centre of the Chinese music industry. Yunnan as an urban city that is in southwestern China is considered as smaller and less open, in which the living pressures would eventually prevent them from having rock music careers. According to my research interviewee:

It's easier to be different (in Beijing), no matter what kind of music styles you are making, there will always be a potential market. But in smaller places, it would be impossible to survive by making rock. And gradually you have to do something else, as you don't have a choice. Or maybe you can make a living by doing commercial performances, but this is a kind of compromise. If I make music without my initial motives and values, then it's only a way to make money.

After *Shanren* moved to Beijing and was joined by the talented multi-instrumentalists Xiao Budian, their music styles had been shifted to a multi-ethnic rock band, in which they employed rich ethnic cultural elements in their music, both melodically and linguistically. In terms of dressing style, they wear folk costume that represents their ethnic identities, such as loose pants, colourful vests and also have long hair, sometimes tied in buns. Even members who are not ethnic minorities, such as the drummer, Ou Jianyun and the British translator, Samuel Debell wear ethnic clothes to represent their connection to folk cultures. In terms of music instruments, they play a variety of ethnic minority instruments such as a string instrument from the Yi ethnicity called *xianzi*, a plucked Chinese lute called *qinqin* and a Chinese wind instrument, *bawu* popularised in the Yi ethnicity, the Miao ethnicity and the Hani ethnicity (See Figure 4.1.2.) As Frith (1983: II) notes, rock is a 'mass-produced music that carries a critique of its own means of production' (ibid: II.) The PhD suggests that ethnic subcultural authenticity is embedded through their visual and musical representations that are rooted in ethnic minorities and rural folk cultures of Yunnan and Guizhou, which distinguish their music styles, visual styles and identities from the majority Han Chinese culture as well as Western rock music. Both Western rock and Han Chinese carry degrees of cultural hegemony over the disadvantaged ethnic minorities, in which ethnic minority rock musicians are in search of subcultural authenticity. According to Qu Zihan, who's the main composer of *Shanren*:

There's a stage that we wanted to break through. It started from instruments. Though we've spent a huge amount of time practicing guitars, including classical music, metal music and folk music. Then we realised a problem: guitar performance methods have already been exploited by Westerners, it cannot be surpassed. At the beginning we used the guitar to play ethnic music that was the song I wrote 18 years ago, called *Shanren*. I wanted to produce the sound of Bai ethnicity, something from the folk. But that was still the sound of a guitar. It didn't make sense, so why didn't we use ethnic instruments straightforwardly so that we have our own advantages. No matter how skilful we are at playing guitars. It is still not from our culture. It doesn't have the cultural root. We always address the importance to make music derive from our cultures.

Shanren attempt to preserve their ethnic cultural heritage as they faced the threats of modernisation to their traditional rural culture, as well as their minority status in the face of Han hegemony (Yuan 2016) and Westernisation, in which a lot of the ethnic minority population started to reject their own ethnic cultures in order to fit in the increasing commercialised and globalised mainstream Chinese society. The PhD suggests that there have been constant contradictions, negotiations and compromises by the disadvantaged ethnic minority facing the cultural hegemony from both the Han population and from globalisation, rather than a binary opposition towards the Han hegemony and global universalism in the field of Chinese popular music.

As Yuan (2016: 3) notes, ethnic minorities 'are sensitive to the preservation of their heritage, but also strive to be accepted by the Han majority through an awareness and incorporation of modern activities'. In the field of Chinese ethnic minority studies, it has been observed that minority cultures have been appropriated into Han Chinese cultures to define and represent authentic Chineseness. This paradoxical phenomenon can be traced from both in the era of the Republic of China (1912-49) and during the Maoist period after 1949, since The People's Republic of China was established. In addition, this phenomenon intensified in the 1990s when there have been growing Western influences on Chinese domestic cultures as a result of Deng's economic reforms. As celebrations of ethnic minority cultures 'helped to assert a much-needed authentic mainland identity in the context of intensified globalisation but was

also helpful in asserting the modernity of the Han self.’ (Baranovitch 2003: 81). This paradoxical phenomenon has also been found from my ethnographic interviews with *Shanren*, in which *Shanren*’s music has shifted from what they called ‘a negative resistance’ to cultural and political hegemony towards ‘a positive and meaningful’ cultural disseminator of authentic ethnic Chinese cultures. For lead singer Qu Zihan, he notes

From our views, in the past I would resist and swear at Han people, but now we’ve changed. We’ve found out even mainstream popular music [by Han people] has lots of merits. Our resistance and criticisms in the past were very narrow. Because there are social problems everywhere, it is hard to define what real rock music is. But rock is a type of music produced through independent thinking. There is resistance in our music, but now we want to express more positive themes that are different from the past. We want to make some meaningful music, which contains artistic and cultural values. We’ve performed in a lot of countries to disseminate our cultures. We want to improve our cultural and ethnic pride, as we feel it’s dreadful that some ethnic minorities already started to reject their own cultures.

The PhD suggests that *Shanren*’s resistant to the increasing inequality between rural and urban China as a result of economic reforms and the inequality between the disadvantaged ethnic minorities and Han majority, in which ethnic cultures are at the risk of being Hanised and eliminated, are demonstrated tactfully through their creative strategies embedded in their lyrics and music. Though during ethnographic interviews, they expressed a secured and depoliticised stance, in which musicians were sensitive to talk about any issues in relation to politics, as my recording technique is seen as an evidential method to save anti-governmental statements, which can be potentially threatening. *Shanren* borrow a Chinese proverb ‘mountain men have their own excellent plans’ (*shanren zi you miaoji*) to claim their distinction of identities as well as their veiled but cleverly tailored creative solutions towards increasing unequal socio-economic status between working-class rural youth and middle-class urban citizens.

In Chinese culture, mountain men are associated with hermits, especially those Taoists, Zen Buddhists and Kong Fu masters who hide in mountains for mediation and are in search for

spiritual advancement. *Shanren*'s (Mountain Man) associations with nature, the environment and rural mountains accord with Taoism philosophies in Han culture that place 'naturalness' as its central value: one must place their will in harmony with the natural universe, which is in contrast with the dominant and influential Confucius ideology that centre on political hegemony, ritual norms and hierarchies to maintain societal orders. Symbolically, *Shanren*'s preservation of Taoist ideologies is in terms of anti-industrialisation and naturalism can be understood as an opposition to Confucianism dominated mainstream cultures and hierarchical inequality.

In the context of Chinese tight political and cultural controls, *Shanren* shies away from direct and bold resistance against authorities and hegemonies in comparison to aggressive punk and metal bands who articulate a clear sense of dissatisfaction. While many of their songs are reflections of authentic rural life and ethnic minority cultures, including *Listening to the Mountain (Tingshan)*, *The Song of Wa Ethnicity (Wa'ge)*, *A World without Sound (Wusheng Shijie)*, to name a few. There are also songs reflecting inequality and societal issues as a result of Chinese economic reforms, such as *Thirty Years (Sanshinian)*, *Mountain Man (Shanren)* and *Pay back Money (Huanqian)*. Selective illuminative lyrics include:

Thirty Years:

Looking for a job thirty years ago, looking for a job today,

I found a good job today, but it doesn't belong to me.

Looking for a job, looking for a good job, but it doesn't belong to me.

(Let's go to watch idol drama)

Looking for a job thirty years ago, I got one today.

I found a girl, but the girl doesn't belong to me.

Pay back Money:

I will always find you no matter where you are hiding

When you will pay me back money?

..

You said you were going to pay me back, but you disappeared

Don't you feel shameful?

...

I'm sorry I was economically tight recently,

I just paid my rent, and I don't know how to pay you back

You always found an excuse when you said you would pay

Your promise sounds like farting! (Don't swear at people)

Mountain Man:

(Voiceover: My father only sings hometown songs, not like you, who sing Western songs. Listen, how rich is the content!)

My home is on that mountain,

It's far from both the city and the villages.

Urban citizens call me a bumpkin,

Comrades swear at me like this.

...

(Voiceover, I was a mountain man, busy with a life on farms, the spring wind of economic reforms blew to the mountain, and it makes my heart itchy)

”

(I want to be like them, to have whatever I want)

I have a lot of ideas when I move to cities

What I want the most is to have a home (in the city)

Even I'm covered with goat's skin, I'm not afraid,

Mountain man has his own excellent plans.

Drawing from textual analysis of *Shanren*'s lyrics, *Thirty Years* is a metaphor of thirty years of economic reforms. Economic development has led to increasing inequality between the newly emerged working class, which consist of rural migrants, peasants and urban working-class and middle-class citizens. After *Shanren* moved to Beijing, they identified with the lifestyles of migrant workers, especially under the *hukou* residential system that bound people to their birth of place in terms of welfare and receiving benefits. *Thirty Years* reflects the reality that rural migrants are discriminated against their poor materialistic status and lack of education, in which they could not easily find a good job, or even a girlfriend in large-scale urban cities. This subordinated and unequal condition is also reflected in the lyrics of *Pay back Money*, in which a poor migrant worker is being humiliated and chased by an urban rich man constantly for returning money. Subcultural authenticity is reflected through their expression of identity as a rural mountain man, who's trying to learn to be an urban citizen but constantly struggle to do so. According to the lead singer Qu Zihan:

At the centre of urbanisation is Westernisation; it's a worldwide phenomenon. When I was a kid, I grew up at the border area of Yunnan province and Myanmar, then my family moved to Fuxian Lake, which is also a marginal area. That place is not even a county. It is just a town. I've always been a marginal person. When I first moved to Kunming (city), I wanted to learn some Kunming dialect, but I failed. It's just to learn to be an urban man, I've tried many times, but I've never got it.

A sense of Chinese nationalism has also been articulated by ethnic minority musicians, in which they accept the hegemonic position of Han population, and ethnic minority cultures are regarded as an essential part to reflect Chineseness in the process of globalisation. Such contradictions are derived from my interview data:

The greatest culture in the Chinese nation is the Han culture. Even though Japan has invaded three provinces in Northeast China. Japanese also celebrate Chinese Spring Festivals. The Manchu has ruled China in Qing dynasty, but eventually the official culture is still Han culture. The traditional Han culture is very

systematic and worth learning. For example, I'm from Bai ethnicity. From when Duan established Dali kingdom (after Nanzhao) back in ancient China, they burnt all the legislation and language of Bai ethnicity. Even some Japanese were originally from Chinese ethnic minorities. Some Japanese go to Yunnan province to worship their ancestor.

By displaying a friendly and less counter-hegemonic position, *Shanren* aimed at disseminating their ethnic cultures and music by entering mainstream Chinese media and performing on international stages. Not only had they obtained international followers through performing in Canada, Australia, the US and the UK, but also in 2016, they went on the third season of a Chinese talent show called *Sing My Song*, which was broadcasted by national media CCTV-3, even going on to win. While in the past *Shanren* had a negative view towards commercially produced talent shows for its artificiality and commercial interest. They have since become more tolerant towards mainstream produced media programs, as it's beneficial to facilitate originally produced music and to disseminate ethnic minority cultures, in which authenticity is valued. Drawing from my ethnographic data, *Shanren* notes:

I think there are both advantages and disadvantages of reality shows. The reason we participated in *Sing My Song* was that this show is still different from other commercial shows, as it's beneficial for facilitating originally and creatively produced music. At the beginning we doubted if we should participate, as talent show is just like the Roman Colosseum. It is about fighting and killing, though spiritually. China doesn't lack of good singers, but it lacks good composers. Even the talent show itself is a copy from the West. What we want to do is to disseminate these ethnic cultures to our country, to other countries, to let more people know about ethnic minorities. The characteristic and function of ethnic minority culture is to create richer Chinese cultures in the process of the Han population governing the country.

Thus, the PhD suggests there have been a dialogical relationship in terms of subcultural resistance by the ethnic minorities towards the hegemonic Han majority, in which a sense of

Chinese nationalism is articulated. The ethnic minority rock musicians take up creative strategies in terms of language, dressing styles and music styles to distinguish their identities from mainstream society and the ongoing process of globalisation. In addition, minority musicians articulate subcultural agencies in terms of norms, values and motives to paradoxically resist, compromise and to represent their ethnic minority identities. Through giving voices to marginal and disadvantaged rural ethnic minority rockers, the PhD argues that ethnicity-based experience of marginality articulates subcultural authenticity, which is in opposition to postmodern subcultural views that insist an individualist understanding of subcultures.

4.2. A new genre of Chinese rock music – agriculture metal and *kuso* youth culture

This section studies a newly emerged Chinese rock music genre – agriculture metal (*nongye jinshu*) that is grounded in grassroots working-class culture of rural migrants, peasants and urban working-class young adults. The section explores the cultural implications of agriculture metal in the context of intensified Chinese multi-faceted social problems since the millennium. During Hu Jintao's political leadership (2002-2012) after Jiang Zemin (1993-2002), as 'the fourth generation of Chinese leadership', he proposed to establish a 'Harmonious Socialist Society' (*Hexie Shehui*), in which he undertook a systematic approach to national development that combines with dynamic economic growth and heavy political and media control. As a result, there has been increased censorship to silent oppositional voices from the mass.

One of the most well-known cultural expressions that was against the government's attempt to build a 'harmonious society' was reflected through Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's work *Hexie* (See Figure 4.2.1.) that has been exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London (Sep-Dec 2015). The artwork contains innumerable porcelain crustaceans (river crabs), which is a metaphor of Chinese intensified censorship. As the pronunciation of 'river crab' in Mandarin sounds the same with 'harmonise' - a keyword in Hu's political policies.

In the field of popular music production (Bourdieu 1993) that operates within a set of relations within the Chinese context, agriculture metal (*nongye jinshu*) music has been endowed with new cultural meanings by the subordinated Chinese youth, which they took up a D.I.Y. creative approach to resist inequality, controls and commercialisation in the context of building a 'Harmonious Society'. Through analysing ethnographic interviews, observations as well as textual contents created by agriculture metal bands online, the section addresses a newly emerged youth subculture that is characterised with sarcasm, subordination, spoof and hatred within Chinese rock music communities. This section employs the Japanese loanword *kuso* (literally meaning crap and bullshit) to describe this banter within youth culture that is reproduced by Chinese youth through imitating and deconstructing the classical and traditional mainstream pop culture (Cai 2007: 55, Yu 2008). In addition, the section also focuses on gender inequality within agriculture metal scenes, with focuses on how female

rock music fans have been perceived by male rock musicians in terms of sexuality and identity.

4.2.1. The changing meaning of agriculture metal as a music genre: From positivity and eco-friendly towards negativity and sarcasm

Agriculture metal (*nongye jinshu*) is a newly emerged rock music genre that specifically originates in China. Existing studies on agriculture metal music are rather limited, such as Liu's (2014) paper on underground popular music in Guangzhou, in which he analyses an agriculture metal band *Yishi* under the category of 'urban folk songs' and maintains its subcultural politics. In addition, Yuan's (2017) PhD thesis on the Chinese metal scene includes studies of agriculture metal in terms of 'identity reconstruction in the trend of cosmopolitanism', but his examinations of agriculture metal (Yuan 2017: 192-204) lacks ethnography and depth. His analysis of agriculture metal that employ textual approaches contains inaccuracies, as he sees agriculture metal as 'a forming concept from its initial funniness towards seriousness, so that it may be difficult to predict that what it will eventually become'. Such writings according to Internet descriptions of agriculture metal by Chinese online users are vague (Zhouwancheng 2011), as the term agriculture metal was initially proposed by the ethnic minority band *Shanren*. *Shanren* proposed the term to indicate their music is inspired by the sound of nature and Chinese rural agriculture with positive indications, and to distinguish their musical identities both from Chinese industrial metal bands (a fusion of heavy metal music and industrial music) and from western heavy metal bands, which Chinese rock musicians always tend to learn from or mimic.

However, the term 'agriculture metal' was spoofed by a variety of Chinese rockers to create new music styles characterised by sarcasm, irony, and mockery. Through agriculture metal music practices, musicians either express or show resistance to their working-class identities that have derived from grassroots working-class Chinese culture. Agriculture metal then became an ironic metaphor to represent low-taste working-class culture consumed by the most subordinated peasantries and rural migrants with the consequences of economic reforms. The changing meaning and style of agriculture metal is illuminated through my ethnographic interview. According to Qu Zihan from *Shanren*:

In between the end of the 90s and early 2000, we came to Beijing to develop our rock music careers. At that time, everyone was playing a music genre called industrial metal. When we named our music style, we called it agriculture metal, and this music concept was first created by me. After that, they (the later agriculture metal musicians) misused the phrase, they thought agriculture metal is about sarcasms. But to me, it has positive implications. Agriculture metal is metal music derived from agriculture culture, because this country has an agriculture culture. But then you name yourself industrial metal? Industrial metal is a fake phenomenon. Because fundamentally China is rooted in agriculture. When those rockers called themselves industrial metal people, we said then we are agriculture metal people. It was just like this (laugh).

Though *Shanren* indicate themselves as agriculture metal musicians. Musically, agriculture metal is distinct and different from normal heavy metal music that features a massive and thick sound, speedy music playing and intense tempos. While heavy metal is characterised with highly amplified distortion, overwhelming loudness and extended guitar solos, in which both lyrical and performance styles are associated with aggression, *Shanren*'s agriculture metal in contrast, is characterised with ethnic minority native melodies with the use of a variety of folk instruments. It features eco-friendly themes, reflections of rural life and seeks for music originality through producing unique ethnic sounds. Their performances are also distinguished from metal music performances, as they intimate folk dance movements and physical movements of rural population. At the centre of *Shanren*'s music is an 'anti-industrialisation' attitude (Yuan, X. 2016: 18) in which authenticity is valued. *Shanren* refuses to mimic or learn from Western heavy metal music.

The reason that *Shanren* claim themselves as agriculture 'metal' music is a result of their initial subjective understandings of Western rock music as fast, loud and intensive music. As Qu Zihan notes:

I prefer clear sounds rather than distortion. I used to play in a Yunnan rock band called *Kuafu*, and the band was playing trash metal. Back in the 90s and 80s, what we understood Western rock was heavy metal, that kind of very fast music

(laugh), and latterly I was asking, ‘can’t we play something different?’ Every rocker at that time just focused on practicing speed (on guitars).

Shanren saw themselves as an exception and alternative within Chinese subcultural rock communities in the 90s, when there were many Chinese rockers started to form heavy metal bands. The PhD suggests, the initial meaning of agriculture metal is on its distinctiveness

The modified implications of agriculture metal are still grounded in working-class culture, which ‘reaffirms grassroots class and rural identities’ (Liu 2014: 232). In contrast with *Shanren*’s positive definition of agriculture metal as an authentic sound derived from rurality, folk, nature and ethnic minority, the newly modified meanings embedded in agriculture metal by a different group of rockers are associated with negativity, which includes hatred, joking, sarcasm and criticism towards Chinese unequal commercialised realities. ‘Agriculture metal’ then became a music style that represents the low-taste, vulgar and hated subordinated working-class culture, as a major characteristic of agriculture metal lies in its satirical and bold lyrical content that often contain swearing, violence and sexual references. This symbolically defines the group’s public identity and social experience (Hebidige 1979). The PhD suggests agriculture metal’s lyrical styles are to be regarded as ‘coded expressions of class consciousness’ (Murdock and McCron 1976: 203),

For instance, the band Bodao (Refute) has named its songs as *Giving Blow Jobs to Two Hundred Old People Who Have Alzheimer's Diseases* and *The King of Fucking Everything*; the band Urethral Fracture (*Niaodao Duanlie*) produced songs such as *Fake Pussy* and *Born to Murder the World*; the band Yumbi (*Yunmubi*) has titled its song as *Everything Dies*. In the song *Everything Dies*, Yumbi covers the melody of *The Most Dazzling Folk Style* by Phoenix Legend, which is regarded as the most popular Chinese music group consumed by the subordinated working class. Yumbi deconstructed the original lyrics by inserting a mixture of Chinese and English lyrics taken from top-ranked mainstream popular songs such as *Qianli Zhiwai* by Jay Chow, *Juejiang* by Mayday and *Wake Me up when September ends* by Green Day, but they also include non-sense broken English and swearing in Chinese. Agriculture metal then articulates ‘hooligan’ ironic resistance and contradictory positionality.

4.2.2. *Kuso* reconstructions and subcultural resistance by ‘agriculture metal soldiers’ (nongjin zhanshi)

Musically, it has been observed that under the big umbrella of agriculture metal music, its styles are rather hybrid and varied, which includes traditional noisy and intensive heavy metal music elements, such as the band Urethral Fracture (*Niaodao Duanlie*) and Cave Have Rod (*Xueyougun*); semi heavy metal and punky music by Yumbi (*Yunmubi*), which the band also covers and mixes a wide range of cheesy mainstream commercial pop songs, including Cantonese and Taiwanese pop, mainland Mandarin pop (many of which are popular songs with Chinese traditional folky and ethnic music elements), and some of the popularised Western rock music, such as *Where did You Sleep Last Night* by Nirvana. In addition, there is also less-heavy oriented music style; such as the band *Bodao* (Refute), which produces music with acoustic guitars and djembes. Some of *Bodao*’s music also contains spoof covers of cheesy popular music, such as *Ka Shizizuo Nong*

In terms of music production, agriculture metal musicians employ low-cost D.I.Y. strategy, in which many of the cheaply recorded songs have lo-fi music qualities. Their musical instruments have been purchased with cheap prices due to their poor socio-economic status. Musicians’ music skills are also doubted as a result of lacking professional training: it is not rare to hear a lead singer singing out of tune in an album and a guitarist who always plays simple chord progression. My ethnographic observations accord with Blackman’s (1997, 2005: 14) and Williamson’s (1997) arguments that ‘consumption is a chimera of choice in constructing subcultural identities.’

In term of dressing styles, the PhD suggests there hasn’t been a unified dressing style among agriculture metal adults due to their creative yet differentiated reconstructions of meanings embedded in agriculture metal. Individuality and creativity are associated with the band’s own music style and preferences. Such as *Bodao* (Refute) has dressed in both black T-shirts and casual clothing to perform on stages. Among some of *Bodao*’s photos posted by themselves online, the lead singer and main composer Zhang Yong has also dressed like a rural famer: wearing a loose white vest, a straw hat, or covered his hair with a towel (See Figure 4.2.1). Band members have mid to long hair. As a result of the lead singer being into djembe, he also styled his hair with dreadlocks later. Heavier music-oriented agriculture

metal bands such as Yumbi, often has a classical metal youth look: long hair, black T-shirt and metal music guitars (See Figure 4.2.2.).

Data from the fieldwork suggests that the newly altered meaning of agriculture metal by working-class Chinese rock musicians is symbolically associated with Chinese economic status as a developing country, in which the growing inequality and the ‘inflexible, difficult and blatantly unfair’ welfare system (Branigan 2013) have placed subordinated populations living in difficult and harsh conditions. Whereas Western heavy metal is a metaphor of economic advancement as in comparison to China, Western developed countries have well-established welfare system to guarantee people’s well-being, even for the most subordinated population. In addition, China’s geographical isolation from the economically developed U.S. and Europe and its different socio-economic and cultural circumstances have also facilitated agriculture metal to be distinct from Western metal music, in which it has Chinese own characteristics. Thus, in the process of cultural fusion between the East and the West, constant differentiation and negotiation between Western metal music and Chinese agriculture metal music have been reflected through young adults’ creative reconstruction of rituals, in which symbolic meanings have been embedded by Chinese subordinated youth.

Sarcasm, subordination and resistance are reflected in the spirits of newly defined agriculture metal through *Bodao*’s (Refute) self-mocking introduction through a *kuso* reconstruction. The lead singer Zhang Yong from *Bodao*, who also have an internet nickname as Zhang Baiwan (‘*baiwan*’ means millionaires or million) wrote its band description on the Douban website as:

The representative agriculture band Bodao, forever young, forever weeping in the crotch. Famous for being super imaginative of music production and well known for being super weak at playing instruments. We are well known for writing witty lyrical content and producing dynamic melodies. Taking up the missions of grasping the artery of an era and cutting the vein of an era. Bringing courage to the broad body of music fans, which are being controlled spiritually. Bringing courage to the broad range of subordinated young people, who are being discriminated.

The band's name *Bodao* literally means refute, which articulates a sense of disagreement and resistance. Their expression 'forever young, forever weeping in the crotch' is a spoof of a popular slogan demonstrated among Chinese rock youth - 'forever young, forever full of tears'. The slogan was originally from the book *The Dharma Bums*, written by the American writer Jack Kerouac in 1958 from the Beat Generation. The book had a significant influence on the Hippie counterculture of the 1960s. It tells a story about two passionate young people Ray Smith and Japhy Ryder pursuing the true meaning of life and are in search for the spirituality of Zen Buddhism. The reason that the slogan has been popularised by Chinese youth is for its expression of youthfulness, and its indication to always persist in dreams and truths, no matter how difficult and stressful the real life is. The employment of 'forever young, forever full of tears' can also be found in Chinese folk-rock musician Wan Xiaoli's lyric. In his album *All the Things are better than You Imagine (Zheyiqie Meiyou Xiangxiangde Namezao)*, one of its featured song is named after *The Dharma Bums (Damo Liulangzhe)*. The last two lines of lyric are a direct quotation of Jack Kerouac's 'forever young, forever full of tears.'

But for Zhang Yong's spoof of this slogan, which he indicates 'forever weeping in the crotch' illuminates an embarrassing image of a young adult's crotch is wet. In contrast with the original indications of pursuing dreams and truth with passions, which young people are having tears in their eyes, the spoofed description has an ironic implication that no matter how hard-working a subordinated youth is, he has always to be submissive to the crucial reality by giving up their dreams. This is because the structural inequality is rather difficult and impossible to be overcome. The modified slogan that 'forever weeping in the crotch' is also a metaphor to indicate under Chinese tight political control, everyone is too afraid to stand out and to resist societal issues, unfairness, and inequality. As in Chinese folk stories, when a man got too scared, he will be 'pissing' in his pants.

Though *Bodao's* (Refute) music features joking, bold and sexual languages, which articulates a sense of transgression, hooliganism and uncomfortableness. *Bodao* (Refute) maintains their music is characterised with 'not being serious', in which playfulness and parody are their central creative strategies to articulate their voices. In addition, the band also articulates a clear sense of resistance and dissatisfaction towards authorities and the CCP. Their rebellion that has been expressed through jokes and sarcasms is illuminated from both my ethnographic data of interviews and textual analysis of their online blogging content on *Lofter*:

Mengyao:

What does the band want to express?

Zhang Yong:

Complaining, and it's not a usual complaining. We can complain when we want. When we want to make a big complaint, we don't need to think about if we have the courage. This is our characteristic. No matter how big the complaint is. We have been stopped by the policemen at least three times since we have performed (at different venues), because of our lyrics.

Agriculture metal musicians and fans call themselves 'agriculture metal soldiers', as they have the courage to sing for the subaltern group and to demonstrate unfairness. While the norm of the Chinese population is focused mostly on materialistic life and making money, instead of engaging with Chinese politics, *Bodao's* (Refute) distinct identity away from those 'being manipulated' as the mainstream Chinese population, in which *Bodao* have the subjective subcultural agency and courage to 'freely' complain about unfairness and societal issues. *Bodao* (Refute) is in opposition to the Chinese authorities' tight controls on speech, in which the Chinese population are sensitive to publicly challenge Chinese authorities.

Drawing from textual analysis of their online blog *Lofter*, in their article 'Those Who Are in against of One-child Policy are Rutting Female Dogs', *Bodao* used sarcastic languages to resist One-child policy that has been implanted by the CCP for more than thirty years. From the blog:

In order to carry out One-child policy, Chinese politicians would rather burden bad reputations worldwide, because they are responsible for Chinese society. If there were no One-child policy, Chinese population would surpass 20 billion now. And every Chinese are benefiting from this policy. You can be against with violent abortion; you can complain it's hard to raise old people by yourself; you can be worried about the aging population... but there's no doubt that everyone who is against the One-child policy is just a rutting female dog.

Agriculture metal bands use bold language and metaphors to sarcastically indicate their subordinated status and struggles, as well as addressing diverse social problems, which take place in China under the CCP's 'democratic dictatorship'. The data suggests Chinese agriculture metal youth collectively respond to their material experiences by posing creative challenges to the dominant authorities and bourgeois order through forms of resistance (Blackman 2014: 508). Thus, the CCCS approach to subculture still has explanatory potential to analyse Chinese youth culture in terms of hegemony and resistance.

4.2.3. Social media communication, friendships and subcultural authenticity

Agriculture metal bands such as *Bodao*, are also against superficiality and blind mimic of Western rock by Chinese young adults, as they address the subcultural authenticity that differs between insiders and superficial outsiders (Hodkinson 2002). On *Bodao*'s online blog *Lofter*, an article titled with 'I Know the Word Rock and Roll, I Know the Word China, but When Connecting Them Together, isn't it Shit?' was written by Zhang Yong (2012) against an accusation of a social media account called '*yaogun zhongguo wang*' on Chinese social media, Sina Weibo. The social media's username literally means 'Rock China Website'. It has more than 26 thousand followers and the account often posts a large amount of music criticisms and comments about Chinese musicians. Zhang Yong got offended by their posted comments about the agriculture metal band Yumbi (*Yunmubi*), who are good friends of *Bodao* (Refute) and also an authentic insider within the agriculture metal community. The original Sina Weibo post of 'Rock China Website' account notes:

'Silly youth (erbi qingnian): Flowers, Yumbi and Xuri Yanggang.'

Flowers is a Chinese punk band formed in the 90s by a group of teenagers, its lead singer Zhang Wei gradually became a mainstream pop idol when he became an adult, and since then he has produced a lot of popular songs, which have been accused of being direct copying of Western music in terms of melody and music progression. *Xuri Yanggang* is a pop music group who have performed on the Chinese official gala in celebration of the Chinese New

Year. *Xuri Yanggang* constitutes two male musicians who are peasants from the Chinese subordinated class. The pop group sing covers of popular songs, which praises the Chinese government and their happy life of being peasants. The pop group articulates a strong sense of patriotism and nationalism. Key words in their covered songs include ‘hope, spring, happy, honourable and home’. Thus, *Xuri Yanggang*’s musical image perfectly suits the cultural representations promoted by the Chinese Communist Party - to build a ‘Harmonious Society’, and to unify the Chinese population from all ethnicities, genders and classes with the celebration of an annual Spring Festival gala under the CCP’s auspices. As Yu, H. (2009: 38) notes, the central policy by the Propaganda Department of the CCP is to direct all Chinese media organisations to celebrate the Spring Festival ‘wholeheartedly and make it boisterous (*renao*), jubilant (*huanqing*) and harmonious (*hexie*)’.

Bodao, as an insider of the agriculture metal community, felt offended by the social media account ‘Rock China Website’, as this account categorises Yumbi (*Yunmubi*) – an ‘agriculture metal soldier’ with those mainstream popular music singers as silly young adults (*erbi qingnian*) together. For *Bodao* (Refute), both Flowers and *Xuriyanggang* are driven by commercial benefits or being culturally submissive to the CCP, as they have covered or mimicked the greatest hits of popular songs from China and the West without creativity and authenticity. But Yumbi, as a subcultural insider dares to use creative sarcastic reconstructions of mainstream popular songs and bold language to challenge mainstream values and authorities. According to the online blog of the band *Bodao* (2012):

Chairman Ba (nickname) from the band Yumbi is my good friend, and he just had his birthday, he didn’t even know why he has been criticised by your group of ‘old poor shoes’ (‘poor shoes’ is a Chinese slang that literally means people who have messy sexual relationships). Originally, you are the ‘mainstream’ (voices), you can corrupt by yourself, and you can progress by yourself. You have no relationship to our group who’s into hooligan music production. Since the so-called Chinese rock have already been in the status of dead or half dead for so many years, but you are still keen on picking up small issues from others?

Zhang Yong from *Bodao* (Refute) has articulated a clear distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ on online social media platforms. Through online participation, cyberspace provides a

medium ‘in which and with which some individuals seek meaning’ (Bromber 1996: 147). Agriculture bands *Bodao* (Refute) and Yumbi are based in different locations within China: *Bodao* (Refute) is from Zibo, Shandong Province, whereas Yumbi is from Beijing (See Figure 4.2.4. for a map). According to Sina Weibo, the social media account ‘Rock China Website’ is also based in Beijing. The PhD suggests virtual spaces have facilitated the growth of subcultural relationships through ‘connecting individuals from diverse locations through “virtual conduits”’ (Williams 2003: 40). Through instant transfers of subcultural knowledge, views and conversations by a mouse-click away, virtual spaces have enabled the presentations of subcultural identities through online social interactions within broader social contexts, in which authentic subcultural insiders are identified in opposition to mainstream and corrupted superficial outsiders.

The fieldwork data analyses that agriculture metal subcultures are also constructed online and disseminated through social media platforms simultaneously in addition to offline real-life cultural and musical practices. But at the centre of virtual subcultural practices are still bounded by insider values, beliefs, norms and those communications ‘within the boundaries of a particular argot’ (Billig 2001). In addition, through using a variety of online communication tools, such as Chinese social media platforms: Sina Weibo, Douban and Wechat, and online blogs: Lofter and 163, mentioned of subcultural information has been facilitated not only among insiders but also between insiders and others. As Williams (2003: 42-43) suggests, ‘subcultural argot, when set as key words in Internet search engines, may facilitate subcultural diffusion through contact with non-subcultural participants.’ The PhD is aware of online subcultural information movement and has observed that insider subcultural values and norms have also caused discussions and different responses among non-subcultural outsider online users. Drawing from textual analysis of online data, while some non-subcultural online users expressed agreements of the values expressed in the article ‘I Know the Word Rock and Roll, I Know the Word China, but When Connecting Them Together, isn’t it Shit?’ (Zhang 2012), such as:

User *Minigu* (迷你骨) notes:

Rock music is a spirit; the key is who sings it. There must be a story behind every song. It’s sincere and pure. It’s inspiring and touching.

User *Ye de kong* (十夜の空) notes:

What you write is a bit aggressive, but I agree with your opinions

Other non-subcultural respondents also expressed irrelevant views:

User *Fensha Meitou* (粉纱媚透) comments:

I don't understand what rock and roll is.

User *Mini Ke'er* (迷ni可儿) comments:

Thanks for writing the post, please remember to visit back.

Thus, online subcultural communication is characterised as dynamic and interactive among the subcultural insiders, in which friendship has been maintained and subcultural identities have been articulated. Interactions have also taken place between insiders and non-subcultural others, in which non-subcultural outsiders might have been influenced by the values and norms by subcultural insiders or being indifferent or opposite to. The PhD studies fluid collective boundaries of a subcultural community rather than seeing subculture as fixed from an absolute perspective. But at the centre of policing subcultural boundaries is still in relation to a group's distinctive norms, values, motives that are different from or in opposition to mainstream culture or authority. Thus, drawing from William's interactionist theoretical framework to understand virtual subculture, subculture is seen as 'culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who come to share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects and practices through interaction' (William 2011: 39). William's parameters of studying subcultures are also compatible with Hodkinson's subcultural 'substance'.

4.2.4. Female voices, identity and sexual relationships

Drawing from ethnographic observations and field dairies, it has been examined that there has been a gender imbalance within Chinese rock subcultural communities. According to Whiteley (2013: 2), 'gender conflict became the most basic form of human conflict, replacing class as the principal *raison d'être* for women's social subordination, their secondary position relative to men'. This gender subordination is particularly applicable to the agriculture metal

music community. While the analysed agriculture metal bands regardless their norms and music styles all consisted of male musicians, including the eco-friendly ethnic rock band Mountain Man (*Shanren*), and those sarcastic and hatred bands *Bodao* (Refute), Yumbi, Urethral Fracture (*Niaodao Duanlie*), *Shuai Lang Diao Bi* and Cave Have Rod (*Xueyougun*). The PhD data suggests that there has yet to be an agriculture metal band with female members. But within Chinese rock music scenes, though male musicians remain dominant in terms of numbers and proportion in comparison to female rock musicians, there have also been a few all-member female bands such as Hang on the Box (*Guazai Hezishang*), LaCygne, Old Aunties (*Lao A'yi*) and Cobra (*Yanjingshe*).

In addition, it has been a popular phenomenon within Chinese rock music scenes that a band would have a female member taking a role either as a front lead singer or as a drummer, guitarist or bass player. This includes Absolute Purity (*Juedui chunjie*), in which their singer is an artistic female musician Wen Jun. The electronic rock band Nova Heart's central member is Helen Feng who was born in Beijing but grew up in America. Shi Lu from the band Hedgehog is a well-known Chinese drummer, who looks youthful and energetic. And Zhao Meng was a bass player in Chinese electronic rock band New Plants and laterally she formed her own band Twinkle Star with other male members, to name a few. As Qu (2018: 349) notes, 'female-fronted bands are the fashion in rock music in China'.

However, both female rock musicians and female music fans in China have struggled with established masculine expressions and norms within Chinese rock music scenes. Female musicians express their resistance towards established perceptions on females by Chinese mainstream values and cultural influences drawing from Confucianism, including the traditional values of 'Three Obedience and Four Virtues': females should be submissive to men and remain dependent on males. Thus, within Chinese context, not only female rock musicians need to take up 'diverse guerrilla vocal strategies' to challenge masculinity (Qu 2018: 350), but also the male-dominant hierarchy within Chinese rock music scenes have facilitated groupies as a 'sexual feminine object of masculine subject desire' (Schippers 2002: 26), in which male musicians have been constructed as high status in terms of sexualised positions in comparison to female rock music fans.

According to Qu's (2018: 351) study on 'vocal authority' of female voices within Chinese rock music scenes, she argues that 'sensuality and sexuality' are central to female musicians' performances, in which females 'are obliged to "perform" their gender while singing'. The

PhD found that even in Chinese mainstream society, women remain disadvantaged in comparison to males in aspects of social life, including marriage, sexuality and housing. For example, not only ‘parental favouring of sons over daughters in home buying’, which has led to a ‘wealth gap’ between genders has been identified (Fincher 2016), but also unmarried Chinese women over the age of 27 have been devalued. Mainstream media and population have labelled them as ‘left-over’ women (*shengnv*). Thus ‘left-over’ women are discriminated by men in the marriage markets, as a result, China is still being dominated by patriarchal ideology that ‘lags far behind the socioeconomic reality’ (To 2015: 164). But if a man gets older and is still not married, a man still has his ‘advantages’ in comparison to females, as an aged man has often been symbolically associated with being mature and materialistically successful with established careers. In a word, Chinese mainstream views of marriage include marrying at a young age. Chinese men prefer to get married with a woman who is less superior to them in terms of education, achievements and career. As a result, Chinese women are facing social anxiety and pressure from mainstream society and social institutions of family. According to Yan Jun from the band Absolute Purity (*Juedui Chunjie*), she notes in an interview with the fashion magazine *i-D*:

The most difficult thing about being a woman from a social perspective is that people won’t regard you as a ‘person’ in some circumstances, but they regard you as a ‘female person’. They have an expectation on your ‘female identity’, or they might judge you according to the so called ‘traditional norms and moralities that women should have’.

(Xu 2018)

In addition to established norms and values on femininity, typical aesthetics towards an ideal woman in mainstream China include having pale skin, big eyes, skinny body and slim face, as a result of which, a popular three one-word adjective phrase *baifumu* – namely ‘white skin, rich and beautiful’ becomes the ideal female identity in China. As Li et al. (2014: 1) suggests, *baifumu* has become the beauty standard that most Chinese females ‘appear to strive toward’. Whereas *gaofushuai* (tall, rich and handsome) has become the ideal identity for a Chinese man. *Diaosi* – literally means ‘dick hair’ has been used as a comedic slang to refer to low-

status Chinese men who were born in lower class background with no materialistic advantages. As one female research participant notes:

I've always spent many hours doing make-up and exercising. I'd put foundation on my face to look pale, and purposely lose weight so that I can be more attractive to men.

The PhD fieldwork suggests that subcultural substances are reflected through female rock musicians' dissatisfaction, distinction and intransigence towards established norms, values and standards from mainstream Chinese society and hierarchical inequality, which is embedded in Chinese traditional culture. Such resistance and intransigence have been demonstrated from my textual analysis of the Shanghai band LaCygne. For example, LaCygne is an all-female band consisting of four members: Taozi (peach), Leila, Xiaozhu (little pig) and Sei (See Figure 4.2.4). The band was originally named as Second-*Chongjiejing* (Second-recrystallisation) and they sing both in English and Chinese. On their self-created Douban discussion group 'Second-*Chongjiejing*', the band describes themselves as:

Four girls: optimistic, intendant, natural and unrestrained, cute and lively but not sweet; sexy and mature but not artificially feminine. We can be as glorious as a sunflower; we can also be as modest as a little daisy. But the beauty of rose is the true re-crystallisation (*chongjiejing*). We are not as immature as the color pink; we are not as pure as the color white, but we are as charming as a rose - the redness that has derived from the color of blood. This kind of gentleness is the feminine reflected through resolute and steadfast. It's not too sharp. Let the beauty of rose blooms in the vast night sky, by passing the stabs of floral axis.

LaCygne expressed their individuality and femininity not defined by the mainstream conventional standards and expectations toward females. They resist the artificial sexiness and femininity either defined by the Asian standard of beauty that possesses an angelic, sweet,

innocent and submissive image, or a Western sexiness that ‘appeared to be wild and aggressive’ (Chan 2014: 130). Instead, the group of female musicians pursue natural femininity, and express independent attitudes in opposition to established mainstream norms and values towards an ideal female: submissive and dependant. Such attitudes of anti-superficiality and anti-mainstream have also been demonstrated from their lyrics:

If I can:

Matching a schoolbag with high-heel boots

This look is a bit odd

If following the trend has become a craze

Then could you please mimic entirely

But what a pity

Mimicking has already been out of date

So please stop creating bizarre styles and being proud of it

I’m not serious in daily life

I drink a chocolate milkshake in wintertime

I’m not as sexy as a cougar (*shunv*)

(I have) my own individuality

Put on the sunglasses and wear a T-shirt with skull designs

I sing for my dream and hopes

...

By expressing views against the blind mimic of mainstream trends and aesthetics dominated by the males’ norms, LaCygne as a local Shanghai band articulates distinction of identity that characterised with individuality. As one female musician states:

I'd love to dress differently from those (mainstream) girls. Especially those women who love to dress very femininely and sexily with angelic or 'innocent' look. They are the typical popular girls preferred by Chinese young men. But to me, it just makes everyone looks the same without individuality.

In particular, the data suggests that Shanghai's environmental and urban characteristics have also facilitated its local bands possessing a sense of proudness, individuality and narcissism by demonstrating their Shanghainese identities. As Anthony Cohen (1982: 6) notes, people 'experience their identities not through the performance of elaborate and specialised ceremonials but through the evaluation of everyday practices'. Shanghai as a large-scale, economic-developed coastal city fuses cosmopolitan fashions, cultures and values in the process of globalization. Its socio-economic superior status in comparison to regions of interior China and rural China in poverty has enabled local residence asserting local Shanghainese identities in addition to being Chinese. Not only has LaCygne demonstrated their tastes, aesthetics and fashion attitudes in their lyrics, but also the group has expressed a clear view to implicate the cosmopolitan and modernised superiority of Shanghai bands in comparison to northern Chinese bands. According to my female interviewee:

Northern Chinese bands are relatively *tu* (unfashionable), when they start to sing, it sounds rather *tu*. It sounds a bit weird.

According to Yuan (2016: 3), within Chinese youth culture, *tu* literally means 'folk, native and authentic', it has 'negative associations of being backwards and lagging behind', and linguistically, the phrase is in opposition to *chao* that literally means fashionable and modernised. Yuan argues that the *chao* aesthetic also draws from imported non-Chinese Western popular music, and Western mobilised Korean and Japanese popular music. Thus, my interviewee as a female young adult who's into Japanese culture and cosmopolitan values presents her proud, fashionable, and socio-economic advanced Shanghainese (Southern) identity through producing and performing rock music. It is distinguished from 'the cultural and political North' that are associated with authenticity, native and folk (de Kloet 2010). Thus, the PhD suggests that cultural fusion between the local and cultural East and the global

and commercial West is a dynamic and contradictory process, in which constant interactions, absorptions, negotiations and paradox takes place. LaCygne distinct cool and alternative identities from mainstream cultures by dressing their authenticity of styles, yet their admiration and worship toward fashionable, cosmopolitan Western cultures or Japanese music is also a reflection of their ‘inauthentic’ aspects: rather than demonstrating Chineseness, they hope to be westernised.

In addition, during the ethnographic fieldwork taking place in Shandong province, it has also been observed that a portion of disadvantaged young female rock music fans seek to identify themselves and present their identities to others through establishing sexual and dating relationships with male ‘rock stars’. Groupies – ‘An extreme type (usually) female fan who seek intimate emotional and/or sexual relations with musicians’ (Larsen 2013: 190) have become a youth cultural phenomenon within Chinese rock music scenes. Drawing from ethnographic data collected at Cangmashan Music Festival in Qingdao in 2016. My male interviewee, who’s a lead singer of a rock band notes:

Many people came to the music festival not for music, but for other things, such as selling alcohol or dating some girls. There was a music festival in Rizhao last summer, I went to see Zhang Qianqian, and her performance wasn’t good, so I wasn’t very happy. What makes it worse is that I encountered some *yuepao* (sexual dating). Not only among men, but also a lot of young women were initiatively in search for having sex. I really don’t understand why Chinese young women are so ‘open minded’. I think the society’s bias towards women is even heavier than before. Since there is more liberation nowadays, young women want to get self-approval so much from the society as they feel anxious. But then having sex became the easiest way to get self-approval?

According to this male interviewee, he asserted the reason that Chinese young women are open to sexual dating in contrast with being reserved is due to the Chinese biased mainstream social values, where females remain disadvantaged in comparison to men in aspects of social life. In addition, the PhD suggests that China’s lack of sexual education and its suddenly increased sexual freedom as a result of modernisation and reforms has led to increasing sexual openness and problematics, which include a high rate of abortion as birth control

under the One-child policy and sexual diseases as a consequence of unprotected sex, yet sex talk has still been a taboo object (Griffiths et al. 2016).

Within Chinese rock music communities, establishing sexual relationships with male musicians not only constitute part of the rock consumption experience for some of the female music fans, but also as Schippers (2002: 28) notes, 'gendered meanings attached to rock fandom, like the musician/groupie relationship, reflect and reproduce male dominance by constructing sexual attraction to musicians as inferior to musical appreciation'. Drawing from my ethnographic data, my interviewee notes

I have a broad social network. Since you've left Zibo (city), I got to know more people than before. Among these people, there have been girls who were really initiative in terms of sexual dating. Some of them dated me because I'm a musician, some of them dated me because I'm a writer, and some of them thought I'm a very cool person. But few of them dated me because of who I am. If you are in a high status in a specific field, you got approved and liked by others. You might feel happiness, though it cannot be real.

My ethnographic data echoed the Western academic interpretations of groupies as an essential part of rock culture, without which male musicians 'could not relieve tension or receive their deserved amount of adulation' (O'Reilly, D. et al. 2013: 190). While female groupies are considered as easy, low-esteem, shallow and predatory, male musicians are regarded as celebrities, who are desired by female music fans and have been looked down upon. The PhD suggests that masculine perceptions of groupies as faceless and sexual predators (Schippers 2002: 27) within the Chinese rock music scenes generates gender negativities towards women, in which a hierarchical gender inequality has been articulated. Through looking down and questioning groupies in terms of their sexual motives, male musicians also distinguish between real authentic music fans and those 'superficial' music fans who are driven by sexual desires. Thus, within the field of rock music, where 'a set of social positions and shared practices, beliefs, styles and musical sounds that distinguish from other music' (Schippers 2002: 26), groupies are constructed as feminine sexual object that accomplish the dominant status of masculinity within rock music scenes.

In addition, it has been observed that within virtual communities of Chinese rock music, rock music fans have also taken up creative strategies to be against with the advantageous positions of male musicians in terms of malicious sexual motives. A Douban forum group called *Wo'men Daibiao Yueliang Xiaomie Juxinbuliangde Yueshou* (We represent the moon to eliminate malicious and duplicitous musicians) has been created by a genuine female rock music fan in 2008 to reveal bad behaviours and gossips of Chinese rock musicians. The group is a hidden group within the Douban community, and it is invite-only in terms of becoming an internal member. For instance, with its hard-to-join exclusiveness, users within the Douban online community have established copy versions of this group with the same name, but the group's setting is open to public. On its group description, it says 'a high-end mimicking of the original 'moon' group'.

The group had received increasing popularity around 2010 and has reached its total numbers of 128,066 by 5th June 2018. The group creator has also named its members as Sailor Moon (*meishaonv zhanshi*) drawing from the famous Japanese animation *Sailor Moon*. The group articulates a clear counter-cultural attitude towards established masculine domination within the Chinese rock music scenes. And hence it is possible to argue that subcultural resistance has been articulated both by female musicians, facing unequal hierarchy status and masculine dominated norms, but also by rock music fans who have taken up the role of watchdog to supervise male musicians' social behaviours.

Conclusion

This chapter explored Chinese rock subcultures with focuses on marginal voices and positions within Chinese rock music communities. Through analysing the changing Chinese class structures, the PhD argues that subcultural resistance has been articulated by and has shifted from a group of privileged youth, who first got access to Western cultures in the context of social change and economic reforms, to a new working-class Chinese youth consisting of migrant workers, peasants and urban working class in the context of the continuing and deepening of Chinese economic reforms. During this process, growing structural inequalities in terms of class, gender and ethnicity, as well as intensified diverse social problems under different political leadership have facilitated the ground for rock subcultures to emerge, develop or embed with changing cultural meanings.

The PhD has examined Chinese youth culture employing a multifaceted approach. Through studying the emergence and the development of the Shucun subcultural community in Beijing; the non-Han ethnic minority band Shanren; the changing meaning of agriculture metal as a new music genre specifically originated in Chinese mainland and embedded with subcultural meanings through musicians' creative *kuso* reconstructions; the subcultural communications on social medias; as well as those female voices, positions and oppositions towards established mainstream norms and values dominated by masculinity and Confucius hierarchy. The PhD suggests that the CCCS approach of subculture still has explanatory potential to illuminate youth cultures in terms of societal conflicts between the subalterns and mainstream domination (Blackman 2005, 2014). Hodkinson's subcultural substances (2002), his biographical approaches (Hodkinson 2015), and William's (2011) examinations of a subculture centred on symbolic interactionist, remain valuable in studying rock subcultures within the context of contemporary China.

In addition, by examining the geographical politics of Shucun as a suburban village of Beijing, and the cosmopolitan and socio-economic advantageous position of Shanghai, the PhD suggests that the cultural meanings of rock are associated with first tier cities' socio-economic urban features: internal inequalities within open cultural atmosphere. Cultural fusion is rather a multi-faceted process, from which geo-politics has influenced the local bands' absorption, interaction, resistance and negotiations towards Western cultural hegemony.

Chapter 5: Cultural Fusion as a Local, Translocal, and Global Phenomenon

Introduction

This chapter explores the cultural meanings of rock through the lens of local, translocal and global music scenes. ‘Scene’ is defined by Straw as ‘geographically specific spaces for the articulation of multiple musical practices’ and a flexible term serves for sociological analysis that include categories of ‘art work, simplex or subculture’ (Straw 1991, 2006: 7-8). The PhD employs the term for its focuses on dynamism and intimacy of urban musical collectives (Straw 2001: 248), which facilitates the understandings of cultural fusion between the East and the West, local and global, as it recognises cultural mobility and displacement embedded in transglobal sounds (Sardinha and Campos 2016: 2).

The chapter examines rock music cultures drawing from autoethnographic and ethnographic data collected both in China and in the UK. For examining cultural fusion as a local and translocal phenomenon, I focus on local music scene in smaller scale cities – Qingdao and Zibo – which contrast with previously examined first tier cities Beijing and Shanghai. This thesis suggests that local music scenes in different cities are in relation to, yet also in conflict with, their urban characteristics. For example, Qingdao as a commercial city has a less-developed rock music scene, where Zibo as a less commercial city has a more authentic and developed local rock music scene. In addition, I will also address the translocal participation, dissemination and consumption of rock cultures within Shandong province, including fandom organisations, venues and cultural artefacts within this province.

This chapter explores migrant middle-class Chinese youth in the UK and the meaning of rock music in diaspora settings. It will also engage with the wider context of transglobal participation, consumption and celebration of rock by young Chinese and questions how broader social, political, cultural circumstances have imposed identities. The PhD will argue that middle-class migrant youth have facilitated the process of cultural fusion, from which they not only present distinct identities, in terms of tastes and cultural consumptions, but also have utilised rock music as a diaspora sound to express loneliness and contradictions facing pressures from Chinese social institutions and foreignness (de Kloet and Fung 2017).

5.1. Local and translocal music scenes: Cultural fusion

Here I will explore cultural fusion phenomenon by looking at local and translocal music scenes, drawing from theoretical influences of scene as a ‘local, translocal and virtual phenomenon’ (Bennett and Peterson 2004). ‘Scene’, as Straw (2006: 6) notes, ‘persists within cultural analysis’, as the term does not essentialise music collectiveness with fixed and visible boundaries but addresses musical practices within given geographical spaces that are marked by ‘levels of intimacy’ and ‘dynamism’. Scene is a useful explanatory tool in this chapter for it focuses on the ‘distinctive relationships between localism as a musical value and the articulatory system shaped by economic and institutional globalisation’ (Straw 1991: 369; Said 1990: 8).

Cultural fusion as a theoretical framework is developed by Croucher and Kramer (2017: 98) as ‘the process through which newcomers to a culture adopt behaviours or traits of the dominant culture and maintain elements of their minority identity to function in the dominant culture.’ It focuses on intercultural transformation and is a process where a newcomer blends in ‘new cultural traits (acculturation)’ while maintaining their original cultural behaviours (Croucher and Kramer 2017: 102). The chapter suggests that cultural fusion is a phenomenon that has emerged from ethnographic fieldwork to illuminate the constant cultural interactions, negotiations, contradictions and paradoxes between the East and the West within rock music scenes. For local and translocal music scene within China, it has been observed that when Western culture travels to the East, it carries cultural hegemony and universalism to Chinese domestic cultures, though it could not democratised local culture in the context of governmental controls, as de Kloet and Fung (2017: 4) notes, ‘youth culture in China is not about revolution nowadays, nor is it driven by notions of (Western) democracy, and while it is opening up to global culture and the Internet, this does not forebode political change.’ The PhD suggests that young Chinese have taken up creative strategies to interact, absorb and negotiate with newcomer cultures that can influence or even transform their values, norms and identities, but subcultural resistance to structural inequalities and governmental controls are articulated through and limited to ‘semiotic guerrilla warfare’ (Hebdige 1979: 101).

The chapter draws attention to the ‘organic relationship’ between rock music scenes and its urban characteristics that include socio-economic status, cultural histories, and other local cultural forms: identities, language and dress (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 8). The section

addresses the relationship between music and place and is informed by Sara Cohen's (1991) studies on Liverpool rock culture that has focused on local socio-economic status, cultural heritage and creative practices. The aim is to understand shared narratives and contradictions created by local musicians and music fans in everyday life. It has been found that cultural fusion between the East and the West embedded in rock music may well be in opposition to its wider urban environment, commerciality and mainstream cultural circumstances from a local level.

The chapter explores translocal music scene with focuses on translocal distribution, participation and consumption of rock music. As Bennett and Peterson (2004: 8) notes, 'often the most self-conscious local music scenes' that centre on a particular genre is often 'in contact with similar local senses in distant places.' Thus, translocal music possesses a 'high energy that spills across regional boundaries, perhaps even becoming global' (Slobin 1993: 19). The main focus of this chapter is to explore the role of cultural artefacts in disseminating rock related information, knowledge, events and cultures across geographical boundaries, drawing from 20 volumes of *So Rock! Magazine* (2009-2013). In addition, I consider the experiences of music fans and musicians at music festivals and gigs in relation to travelling in order to understand rock music practices. The chapter suggests that cultural fusion between the East and the West articulates diversity and dynamism within translocal rock music scenes.

5.1.1. Local music scene and urban characteristics: Zibo and Qingdao

Music and place have a bounded relationship. As Long (2014: 48) notes, 'Senses of local and national 'character' are conveyed through the compositions and instrumentation that evoke images and emotions stereotypically associated with such cities and nations.' Musical cultural heritage has also been associated with a city's image and has facilitated urban tourism in relation to music consumption, such cases include birthplaces of certain music genres: New Orleans and Jazz, Bristol and Trip-hop, Liverpool and the Beatles, Tokyo and J-pop, Shanxi province in China and Northwest Wind music (*Xibeifeng*), to name a few. Not only 'place is omnipresent in music', but also 'reciprocally, music is clearly evident in place' (Long 2014: 49). While several studies have focused on how place has become recurring themes in musical commodities, such as Keeling (2011), Connell and Gibson (2004), and Long's (2014) study of Sheffield sound. Cohen (1995) employs a biographical approach to study the

sensuous production of place through Liverpool music, from which Cohen suggests that the interrelationship between music and place has always been a dynamic and ‘contested ideological processes.’ The following section explores local music scene in relation to its environmental urban characteristics and cultural heritage and suggests that the interrelationship between local rock music scene and place can both be facilitating and oppositional.

5.1.1.1. Zibo music scene as a lower tier industrialised city

Drawing from ethnographic data, it has been observed that Qingdao as the most socio-economic advantageous city within Shandong province has been characterised with ‘*chao*’ (fashion and Westernised) in comparison to other cities within Shandong province. For instance, Zibo as another research site that locates in interior Shandong area is characterised with ‘*tu*’ (unfashion and grassroots), as it possesses with an urban image of heavily industrialised, within which manufacturing holds a significant position for the city’s economy (see Figure 5.1.1. for cities in Shandong province). Its major manufacturing includes petrochemical industry, construction materials, machinery and textile. Zibo’s cultural heritage as the ancient capital of Qi - the most prosperous state during the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States (*Chunqiu zhanguo*) and its interior location within Shandong province have enabled its local music scene is heavily oriented, subcultural and less influenced by Westernised Korean pop, Japanese pop, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwanese pop (see Figure 5.1.2. for photos of Zibo).

For instance, Zibo has produced well-known garage band such as Xie Tianxiao and Cold-Blooded Animal, folk-rock musician Zhang Tie, as well as the agriculture metal band *Bodao*, who articulates subcultural resistance towards structural inequality. It has been observed that local music scene in Zibo are profoundly influenced by Xie Tianxiao (see Figure 5.1.3. for Xie Tianxiao and Cold-Blooded Animal), with many student bands such as *Nishizhen* (*Anti-clockwise*) and *Chase-king* from Shandong University of Technology covering songs of Cold-Blooded Animal. They have performed both on campus for cultural events and commercially for newly opened shops and restaurants in Zibo.

(Photo 5.1.1. Student band *Nishizhen* covering songs of Xie Tianxiao and Cold-Blooded Animal at a cultural event in Shandong University of Technology)



(Photo 5.1.2. The bass player of *Nishizhen* purposely broke his self-made bass after the last song of their final show before graduation)



(Photo 5.1.3. Student band *Shizijun* performed on campus, I was playing keyboard on the left)



The fieldwork data suggests that Zibo rock scene is in relation to its urban image as a heavy industrialised lower tier city, which is less Westernised but articulates traditional cultural

heritage and authenticity in comparison to Qingdao, which is upper tier and more cosmopolitan. Through lyrical analysis of local musicians such as previously examined agriculture metal band Bodao in Chapter 4 and the ‘new godfather of Chinese rock’ - Xie Tianxiao (China Daily 2013), it reflects working-class urban citizens’ subcultural struggles in terms of disadvantaged socio-economic status and hierarchical inequalities. In the lyrics of *Xiangyanghua* (Sunflower) by Xie Tianxiao, he sings:

The beautiful sky is borderless
There’s a seed buried beneath clouds
Its nutrition comes from the mud
It takes root and burgeons naturally
Numerous raindrops hit the ground in front of me
Standing here, I have only one question
Sunflower, if you only grow up in the darkness
Will you still blossom?
Will you be afraid?
...

In his lyrics of ‘One’s Whereabouts is a mystery’ (*Xialuobuming*), Xie sings:

Numerous people were in search of something crazily, from their birth until getting old
They have stones full of their mouths but were still shouting, jumping in between two trees constantly
One’s Whereabouts is a mystery
...
A person is slowly falling down, because he took some poisons
A young woman gave birth to a baby, and she threw the baby away into the nearby icehouse
One’s Whereabouts is a mystery

...

Here we see that Xie's lyric reflects diverse social problems such as under Chinese One-child policy and insufficient sexual education, there has been increasing abortion rates of teenage pregnancy. Facing increasing commercialised urban life, people become extremely materialistic driven, but spiritually they are empty so that they are in search for something meaningful from birth until death. At the meantime, the poisoned man can be interpreted in terms of pollution issues and environmental concerns, especially within Zibo, the air is polluted as a result of a variety of chemical and manufacturing factories operate. Thus, Xie's lyrics question whether one will still be optimistic and not be afraid to resist just like a sunflower growing from the mud, in the context of growing up in a materialistic disadvantaged status and polluted environment and facing authoritative controls by Chinese government. Xie's lyrics reflect 'everyday life experience of a particular place' (Bennett 2002b: 88), as Fiske (1989: 6) argues, 'popular texts are inadequate in themselves... they are completed only when taken up by people and inserted into their everyday culture.' Authenticity and subcultural values contained in Zibo local musician's production accord with the facilitating force of Zibo's urban characteristics on local rock scene: a historical, culturally rich but socio-economic less developed second tier or third tier city within Shandong. This subcultural approach of placing lower-tier city's music scene in relation to its socio-economic less developed urban characteristics is informed by Hall and Jefferson's (1993) accounts of on east London working-class youth, which focuses on racialised disadvantages 'within a broader ideological critique of capitalism' (Arapoglou 2012: 227).

5.1.1.2. Qingdao music scene and its Westernised urban myth

Qingdao is not as cosmopolitan and prosperous in comparison to first tier large cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Its history as a German concession during the First World War, and later being occupied by Japan during Second World War, has provided the city with a Westernised outlook in comparison to other regions within Shandong Province. Its historical position as one of the first 14 coastal cities that opened to foreign investment under economic reforms that have contributed to the city's economic prosperity, which has in turn also facilitated local residences a sense of pride, reflected in the tendency of locals to identify as being from Qingdao rather than being a Shandong. According to my interviewee:

It's impossible not to be proud of Qingdao, especially after you have visited other regions of China that are far left behind or those being industrialised too much.

Typical image of Qingdao is a costal touristic city with a nice living environment, and its distinct local culture has always been associated with seafood dining, locally produced Tsingtao beer and a Westernised influenced cultural atmosphere. The old town in western Qingdao constitutes historical Germany architectures and the eastern part of Qingdao is the business and commercial centre where numerous skyscrapers locate. Within the city, there are longstanding Japanese and Korean communities. The city is known as the Switzerland of the East (*Dongfang Ruishi*) for its European style urban outlook and natural beauties (see Figure 5.1.4.). But at the same time, Qingdao as a city developed from a fishing village historically and laterally colonised by the West has led to it's always been accused as a 'cultural desert' due to its Westernised urban characteristics and its bourgeois cultural vibe, which is in contrast with interior Shandong regions which articulates a stronger Chinese-ness and authentic culture.

According to Zhao (2013: 1), he argues that Qingdao's cultural consumption level remains low partially is due to Qingdao residences are more focused on materialistic consumptions instead of cultural consumptions. Local residences' consumption habits have become an obstructing force to local cultural development, though overall, Qingdao's consumption level is high in comparison with other cities in China: it ranks 14 for nationwide in China (Luo 2016). Drawing from ethnographic observations, the rock music scene in Qingdao is also rather marginal and comparatively undeveloped, suggesting that the mainstream population are driven by materialistic and leisure consumption rather than an interest in independent cultural consumption. According to my research interviewee:

No matter rock music or other forms of independent music, or even the recent increasing popularised electronic music, they are all very marginal in Qingdao. In a word, 'cultural desert' (*wenhua shamo*) was already built by the older generation of Qingdaoness. And the current generation of young people are not

very into cultural life as well. So, there are only few people around who are really into promoting rock or independent culture.

We see that Qingdao as a tourism developed city but also a ‘cultural desert’ is in contrast with Long’s (2014) approach of studying Sheffield sound, where the musical and artistic attractiveness of a city has become the central facilitators for developing tourism, but rather, ‘urban soundscapes produced by *some* musicians may as well ‘transmit senses of delay, derelictions, drugs and despair’ that is in contrast with a city’s marketing strategies (Long 2014: 50). Rock music’s association with Qingdao has always been marginal, struggling and non-mainstream. Its socio-economic developed and commercialised position has led to the city producing many mainstream TV stars and K-pop idols, such as Victoria Song, who was a pre-member of the Korean pop group *f(x)*, and Zitao Huang, who used to be a member of the Korean boy band *EXO* (see Figure 5.1.5.). In comparison with independent culture and rock music’s marginal positionalities, Qingdao’s geographical closeness to South Korea and Japan have facilitated mainstream popular culture in Qingdao is centred on K-pop, J-pop and Mandarin pop or even animation culture from Japan. The most popular selling concerts have always been those mainstream pop concerts, such as Jay Chou from Taiwan, Xue Zhiqian from Mainland China, and Rain from Korea, to name a few.

During the fieldwork, it has been observed that local rock music scene in Qingdao has been based on university bands, one or two small-scale music venues, and few music festivals initiated by genuine rock music fans within Shandong province: they cooperated with local government with excuses to facilitate commerce and tourism. Many of which has stopped running after being held for a few years, including the most well-known and large-scale Golden Beach (*Jinshatan*) Festival that has stopped running since 2014. Drawing from my autoethnographic dairy:

I still remember back when I was a high school or a university student, it was hard to find a venue to attend regular rock music shows in my hometown Qingdao. The only memorable one was a pub called Freedom Cuba (*Ziyou Guba*), and the venue used a logo of Che Guevara to represent itself. But then the pub was closed for some reason. It feels like it’s even harder to track where the local rock music scene was after the venue was shut down. Then after a few years, I’ve

heard there's a new venue called Downtown-Bar opened up, which became the central place for holding gigs.

Freedom Cuba was active during the late 2000s. It soon got closed after a short lifespan of only a few years. The latterly opened rock venue Downtown-bar in Qingdao has also moved its address from the original location within *Creative 100 Industry Park* – a governmental supported creative industrial circle (see Figure 5.1.6.) – to a run-down area of Qingdao, *Taidong* district (see Figure 5.1.7.). When I visited Downtown-bar for ethnographic fieldwork, the location of the pub was hard to find, and its bar gate was well hidden in a busy night market that sell a mixture of cheap clothes and daily necessities. This suggests that the venue's hidden and marginal location within Qingdao, which is a commercial prosperous city, reflects rock music's position within Qingdao urban cultural life: underground and marginal. According to my interviewee:

I feel Downtown-bar has met some difficulties in terms of operating and making commercial benefits. *Creative 100 Industry Park* has some of its own regulations and safety concerns. I don't know the details though. And I suppose Downtown-bar could not afford to become a very professional live house such as *Mao* live house or *Yugongyishan* in Beijing. *Taidong* district is only a passable location for operating a live house. The original Downtown bar was also operated along with a tattoo studio when it first moved to *Taidong* area.

The Downtown-bar does not offer a very large space. When entering the bar gate, there were a few tables and chairs lining towards an alcohol counter. The performance space is in the room that leads on from the alcohol counter. To place this into context, the number of attendances at the gig of band Twinkle Star, where I conducted ethnographic observation at, was about less than a hundred, and its audiences consisted of primarily young males with a few female attendances. Many rock youth were in black clothing and 'band T-shirts' to indicate their associations with rock culture and to present their identities as rock youth. This observation echoes with Bennett and Hodkinson's (2013: 90) interpretation of rock fandom, where external images of haircut and clothing are creatively and actively used by youth to

‘make sense of who s/he is, who s/he was, and who s/he might become’ (Oberg and Tornstam 1999: 89).

(Photo 5.1.4. Downtown bar is located next to a dried seafood shop, with a steel gate)



(Photo 5.1.5. Male audiences and a poster of rock music ‘Tsingtao calling’, the underneath Chinese said, ‘wish you super lucky and wealthy in 2018.’)



It was found that rock music scene’s marginal position in Qingdao is oppositional to Qingdao’s commercialised and Westernised urban characteristics, where mainstream leisure and popular music remain dominant. The interrelationship between music and place is closely connected to local commerce and marketing. Where mainstream commercial popular culture remains dominant and hegemonic, rock culture in contrast, is subcultural and marginal. Though music is a medium ‘through which people convey their environmental experiences’ (Kong 1995: 52), this thesis argues that environmental circumstances and the leading cultural

vibe of a place also enables obstructive forces to independent cultural production. As my interviewee states:

In terms of geographical location, as you know, within Qingdao's city center locates those entertainment venues such as nightclubs and karaoke, which are popularised for mainstream consumers. But if you are looking for performance spaces for participating electronic party or rock music, they must be locating outside Qingdao's city center, it can be as far as in Taidong district, or the Western part of Qingdao where the old town is. As you know, it costs a lot of money to invest a business within city centre.

During the gig at Downtown-bar, Twinkle Star (*Shanxing*) from Beijing sang both in Chinese and English (see Figure 5.1.8. for the gig poster). The alternative rock band has a female front Zhao Meng, who is also a bass player from the Beijing retro electronic rock band New Trousers (*Xinkuzi*). Zhao Meng is a Shandong girl who went to study rock music in Beijing Midi School of Music – an informal music school in comparison to higher education – graduating in 2005. According to an online interview article, Zhao Meng notes:

My family kind of supports me to be a rock musician, but they think being a professional rocker cannot be a life-long profession for a girl.

(*Benzhen Yinyue* 2012)

Key themes expressed in Twinkle Star's lyrics and their conversations with music fans during the gig include, 'don't give up your dream no matter how harsh the reality is', 'persist what you are doing and do not got beat by the reality'. In their lyrics of '*Darkwave*' (*An'yong*), Zhao Meng sang:

Has always been asked to give up,
And then it came to silence and sighs
...

No one cares about my world
Completely crashed, completely disillusioned
Completely facing everything when got awake from my dream
It is further than I expected
Doubting myself, doubting the past
Next time, I will still choose to waste time
The same choice

It would be argued that the Twinkle Star's lyric reflects Zhao Meng's experience as a female rock musician. Zhao Meng grew up in Shandong and pursued her rock dream in Beijing, regardless of the harsh reality of the gender balance within the industry. There were only few female rock musicians doing rock when rock music was quite underground and marginal in the 90s and early 2000s. Chinese mainstream media has always portrayed rock negatively: it's associated with drug consumption, fighting, alcoholism, and chaotic sexual relationships. Drug addiction has been considered as 'a personal failure, which is highly stigmatised' in Chinese society (Zhang and Chin 2016: 1). Thus, being a professional female rock musician is further stigmatised, as rock is labelled and criticised by Chinese governments as 'representing spiritual pollution from the West' (Leng, 1991, de Kloet 2005: 325). Therefore, there have inevitably been much pressure and doubts on both a societal and family level imposed on rock musicians, both male and female. This is also evidenced in my ethnographic interview data:

Medias are a more effective tool than a real weapon. If media are negating towards a particular culture (rock), then their values pass down to the whole society, families and individuals. That's why it's hard to find high quality bands in smaller places.

What my interviewee implies is that in comparison to first tier cities Beijing and Shanghai, where cultural atmospheres are more open (*kaifang*) and globalised. A lower tier city's cultural atmosphere is more closed, conservative and traditional, which can be easily

influenced by mainstream values and beliefs articulated by media and education. Mainstream media's negative portrayals of rock has led to local music scenes within commerce-dominated lower tier cities being characterised as marginal and subcultural, as a result of being disapproved by social institutions of family, media and education.

Although the band's music is not quite unique, Twinkle Star's performance has received big responses from audiences. For instance, there were young males constantly shouting 'Niubi!' (cow's vagina). 'Niubi' is an informal Chinese phrase that refers to 'great' or 'awesome'. Audiences also waved their hands with the global rock gesture (the index finger and the little finger are upright, and the thumb is clasped against the two middle fingers). My data suggests that local rock music fans identify with Twinkle Star's norms, values and beliefs in terms of subordinated positions, identities and struggles facing increasing commercialised urban city life. According to an interviewee at the gig:

I feel most of the young audiences are school dropouts, or those who didn't study well to go to universities. The venue can basically make benefits through selling alcohols to the young adults.

Here we see that the shared experiences and marginal positions between Twinkle Star and marginal young audiences within Downtown-bar articulate subcultural resistance to materialistic realities. Rock music, or rock dreams have been regarded as a creative strategy to fight against mainstream standards, norms and expectations in terms of education and socio-economic status. Shared identity and collectiveness within Qingdao music scene have been demonstrated through being both Shandongness and a genuine participant. As Cohen (1995: 436) notes: 'social practices involving the consumption and production of music also draw people together and symbolise their sense of collectivity and place'.

Qingdao rock scene's marginal position in opposition to the city's urban image as a commercial prosperous, modernised and westernised city has also illuminated the oppositional relationship between a genre of music and a city's cultural, social and economic image. Even during a local held music festival – *Cangmashan* music festival, the 'cultural celebration' of rock music was more of a commercial strategy for promoting a newly opened

suburban holiday resort and for advertising estate selling. According to my autoethnographic dairy:

I was a bit confused when I first got my festival ticket checked and passed the main entrance. There was a hall you have to go through to enter the main festival field. Inside it was an exhibition of estate building models. Then I suddenly realised it is a really good way for advertising estate selling.

Cangma Mountain holiday resort, also called Qingdao Light-horse Mountain International Tourism Center locates at a newly industrialised district within Qingdao – Huangdao district. This tourism project has been invested by Shandong provincial government with 500 billion Yuan in 2016 (Gao 2016). The three-day festival at *Cangmashan* was held during Chinese May Day holidays: from May first until May third. The three-day tickets cost 300 RMB, a single day ticket was 150, and an early bird ticket was 120. It had two stages and its lineup featured both Shandong bands such as Orange Ocean from Qingdao, *Houmianbaoding* (Baobab Bits) from Zibo and *Daotian* (Rice Field) from Linyi. It also contains well-known rock musicians from other regions in China such as Li Zhi, Luo Qi and Ma Tiao. Within the lineup, there were also musicians less recognised by rock music fans, including *Haomeimei* and Cheng Bi, who are folk musicians but got popularised by covering popular songs. As I noted in my autoethnographic dairy:

The music festival locates so far; my parents drove me for two hours from Qingdao city center to that suburban place, and the whole holiday resort looks so empty, hardly can I find any tourists except there are some festival goers. The line-up isn't very good as well, except Li Zhi, Luo Qi, Ma Tiao, and my friends from *Houmianbaoding*, I've barely heard of any other names from the line-up. If it's not to conduct ethnographic fieldwork, who would go to such a boring music festival on a hot day and waste time?

In comparison to a large-scale music festival like Strawberry Festival in Beijing or an electronic music festival Midi in Shanghai, this music festival was less organised. During the fieldwork, it has been observed that the crowd in front of a main stage was relatively small. A large portion of audiences travelled from nearby regions within Shandong province, such as Zibo, Weifang, Linyi and Rizhao. (See Figure 5.1.1. for a map of locations). There were also local suburban inhabitants who knew little about rock music. They attended the festival just for fun and to look at what was going on. According to my interviewee at the festival:

I came here mainly for Li Zhi. I arrived a bit early, but I wouldn't mind waiting for him. I'm from a nearby city Rizhao. I feel maybe I came too early and the sun is too big, so that there are not many attendances right now. To be honest, the lawn here isn't very good, only a few grasses here, but with lots of dirt. Since I came, I will just wait until the night to see how the festival would be like (laugh).

Here we see that the festivalisation and commercialisation of rock in China has become a mediated way for rock musicians to negotiate with governmental control and supervision, from which rock musicians could make a living through performing at festivals. Festivalisation of rock has been regarded as a city-branding strategy to facilitate tourism and commerce by local government under the CCP's shifting economic policy from 'made in China' towards 'create in China', which aims at 'transforming the base of the economy from manufacturing to services (Groenewegen-Lau 2014; Ouyang 2011: 8). Though Qingdao's local music scene is marginal and undeveloped, its music festival gathers large crowds and the festival's celebrating and advertising effects draw media's attention. Local government values festivals' commercial values rather than authenticity and creativity involved in rock music production and dissemination.

As Groenewegen-Lau (2014) notes, the term 'festival' (*jie*) is concerned with 'sizable' audiences in the Chinese context. Therefore, the festivalisation of rock music in the smaller-scale city of Qingdao is in contrast with Long's (2014: 49) study of Sheffield sound (in the UK), where 'city marketing agencies are understandably keen to be associated with artists who enjoy critical acclaim and international recognition' through bands such as The Arctic Monkeys. With Qingdao's urban image as a 'cultural desert', rock festivals have to rely on musicians from outside of Qingdao to attract local and translocal participations of the festival.

For example, headliners of *Cangmashan* festival include famous folk-rock musician Li Zhi from Nanjing, and the female rocker Luo Qi, who is based in Beijing, and they have become the major attractions for genuine rock music fans.

My data suggests that, through analyzing local music scene and urban characteristics, cultural fusion is a dynamic and contested process. Qingdao is a Westernised urban city with a colonial history and cosmopolitan cultural heritage, which could be imagined as a site that facilitates cultural fusion between the East and the West. However, its local music scenes are dominated by commercial K-pop, J-pop and Mandarin pop. Qingdao's domestic inhabitants' materialistic consumption habits in mainstream leisure and entertainment have led to the rock scene remaining marginal in Qingdao. Qingdao's popularised bourgeois lifestyle has caused independent culture to struggle. This situation has made the cultural fusion process (between the East and the West) characterized by paradoxes and contradictions.

5.1.2. Translocal participation, consumption and dissemination of rock

Music scenes foster intimacy and participation with defined spaces. Face-to-face interactions within bars and live venues are participated by musicians and local audiences. Kruse (1993) acknowledges the equal importance of 'translocal properties of the music and its associated stylistic innovations', because such practices 'serve to produce affective communities that transcend the need for face-to-face interaction as a necessary requirement for scene membership' (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 9). The data suggests that young Chinese engage in translocal participation and that consumption and dissemination of rock has facilitated development of translocal rock scenes, particularly within lower tier cities where the rock scene is highly marginal. Young Chinese reinforce their subcultural commitments to rock through networking, cooperation and offering mutual supports across geographical boundaries.

5.1.2.1. Translocal rock scenes within Shandong province

According to the ethnographic data, it has been found that the previously opened rock venue Freedom Cuba (*Ziyou Guba*) in Qingdao was also associated with a translocal fandom

organisation *Zaodongshe* (Moving Restlessly Society) that based in Yantai city within Shandong province (see Figure 5.1.1. for a map of Shandong cities). The rock fandom organisation travelled within and outside Shandong province in order to attend gigs and music festivals. Members also regularly socialise with rock fans based in other cities both online and in person. They organised and supported translocal rock events through liaising with bars, musicians and media companies based in different locations. Both Freedom Cuba in Qingdao and *Zaodongshe* in Yantai have played a significant role in facilitating translocal rock music development. As my interviewee notes:

Freedom Cuba has been closed for a while, its previous owner Mr. Zhang now focused more on his own career. Freedom Cuba in the past has been really significant to Yantai rock music scene and our *Zaodongshe* (fandom) organisation. At the beginning, there were no rock performances in Yantai, so we would travel to Qingdao to attend a gig. After a few times translocal participations and interactions, we got to know each other. Mr. Zhang offered a lot of help to *Zaodongshe* when the organisation was first established. He introduced gigs to Yantai, which has led to even now there are still gigs going on in Yantai. Every era there was a group of fans or an organisation that was representative. The role of *Zaodongshe* was that it built up lots of music fans within Shandong. We got some reputation and were remembered by people, especially after attending the Golden Beach Festival in 2009.

Zaodongshe was closely connected with a local rock venue in Yantai city called *Hawana* pub. The organisation was founded in 2008 in Yantai and claimed itself as a self-established music society that consists of rock music fans from both within Yantai and other regions in Shandong province. Its members have reached more than 1,000, and include musicians, students, photographers, and music fans from different professions (see Figure 5.1.9. for a photo of its members). And later the organisation's growing engagement with rock-related activities has also led it become an influencing force of Qingdao music scene and other cities within Shandong. For instance, in addition to the major organisation *Zaodongshe* in Yantai, they have also established other branches in Weihai and Rizhao – two coastal cities in Shandong province. *Zaodongshe* has not only liaised with the Qingdao media company *Xihai*

Wenhua to organise the first-ever large-scale music festival *Jinshatan* (Golden Beach festival) of Shandong province (Qingdao was the location for holding it), but it has also developed its own brand image and cultural merchandise, to include rock T-shirt and other souvenirs (see Figure 5.1.9.). I argue that that *Zaodongshe* fandom organisation articulates subcultural values and beliefs, within which, not only members have a degree of autonomy, but they also call for liberation, idealism and equality in opposition to oppressed Chinese social environment, where materialism and hierarchies are central. According to my interviewee:

Zaodongshe was a utopian organisation, within that place everyone was equal, and we felt like a big family. Though we might not be rich materialistically but at least we are rich in spirits.

It has been observed that members of *Zaodongshe* contributed to translocal rock development voluntarily within Shandong province. Many its members have dedicated much of their spare time and energies into developing translocal music scenes for their love and passions towards rock, rather than for commercial benefits. Whilst there are core members who participate in translocal scene genuinely, there are also less committed members who attend occasional rock events. Through their online Douban account, they have listed social media contacts of key members, who oversee major organisation of events and communications (see Figure 5.1.10. for *Zaodongshe*'s online Douban page). It echoes Hodkinson's notion of 'subcultural voluntary commitment' (2002: 127), where members within an affinity group demonstrate 'a strong moral imperative for their own survival and regeneration', or a genuine individual desire of participating in music scene that is inseparable with one's identity and lifestyle (ibid: 127). As my research participant notes:

I've been promoting a concert that focuses on originality and creativity for two years in Yantai. And now I'm preparing for the third year. To be honest, I'm doing it quite idealistically, but it does facilitate local rock scene. It helps with old bands and new bands. But once the concert is finished, everyone just returned to their previous status: either recording music with a playful attitude, or just

concentrating on performance opportunities. Not one is responsible for making their music more systemically or dedicatedly.

When attending translocal events such as Midi Festival in Zhenjiang (a small city near Shanghai) and Golden Beach Festival in Qingdao, *Zaodongshe* members also dressed in self-produced T-shirts. They held D.I.Y. banners and flags to demonstrate their collective rock subcultural identities (See Figure 5.1.9.). This study suggests that D.I.Y. T-shirts, banners and flags were utilised by *Zaodongshe* members to interact and socialise with translocal music fans from other regions of China in music festivals. My ethnographic data accords with William's (2006: 174) argument that music and identity has a 'dialectic relationship'. Firth (1996b: 109) is concerned with 'how a particular piece of music or a performance' produce people, 'how it creates an experience... that we can only make sense of by taking on both a subjective and a collective identity', rather than how it reflects them. Thus, through demonstrating shared rock subcultural identities with symbols and rituals at music festivals, rock music fans from different locations within China can easily identify other similar fandom organisations and develop translocal friendship.

However, the fandom organisation eventually dissolved as a result of internal conflicts and different interests. As my interviewee recalls:

We eventually got regular gigs at *Hawana* pub in Yantai. We got development opportunities in terms of organizing gigs and liaising with musicians. But this has also led to our team become less enthusiastic towards (voluntarily) organizing rock events, as I did spend much of my efforts into that. I learnt a lot and made a big progress. But then when it came to the issue of updating gig equipment and expanding markets, members of our fandom organisation got different opinions and interests, which have eventually led to a not very happy ending – dissolution.

Though the Freedom Cuba was closed, and *Zaodongshe* fandom organisation disbanded, it doesn't mean that translocal facilitation and participation of rock music have been terminated. Such rock-related practices and contributions have been taken on by newly emerged venues such as Downtown-bar in Qingdao and individual rock enthusiasts or crowds that continue to

demonstrate their commitments and insistence to developing rock scene. My data suggests that ‘the flow of affinities across national and continental borders’ (Laing 1997: 130) that center on a particular fandom organisation or ‘club crowd’ (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 9) have shifted to a new collective, within which there have been newcomers participating in music scene, but also with older members taking up shifting roles and multiple identities within rock music communities. According to Erpao, who is a previous member of *Zaodongshe* organisation and a current manager of the band *Diku'ai*:

I believe Shandong rock scene is better than before. There have been a few professional rock venues emerged, who are much better than those previous ones. I think this condition should facilitate domestic rock scene, but, it's not as good as imagined. I am still in contact with the owner of Downtown-bar Mr. Xie. He's a very independent person. But he's more like an artist rather than a cultural promoter. I think he hasn't put many efforts in operating gigs. (After leaving *Zaodongshe*,) I worked at an indoor music festival the year before last year in Qingdao. There were many bands attending, but few of them really attracted my attention, as they didn't have much of independent spirits. They were more like playing music for fun rather than producing good music seriously.

It is possible to suggest that genuine rock music fans have demonstrated their commitment to rock subculture by developing multiple identities within translocal scenes, including the roles of music fan, event organiser, and band manager. This builds upon Hodkinson's (2002) examination of subcultural substances. Cultural fusion facilitated by translocal rock scene in smaller scale cities within Shandong province still face constant challenges in terms of rock's marginal positions as a result of urban characteristics and government's cultural policies. Where rock youth has illuminated their constant commitments and struggles towards rock participations, the festivalisation and commercialisation of rock has offered a middle ground, where ‘government agencies, music companies, and bands negotiate collaborations.’ (Groenewegen-Lau 2014)

5.1.2.2. Rock fanzines

In addition to translocal participation and contribution to gigs and music festivals, translocal dissemination of cultural artifacts such as fanzine ‘So Rock! Magazine’ has also been essential to connect rock groups that are based in different geographical locations. As Bennett and Peterson (2004: 8-9) note, while music participants are local, ‘they are also connected with groups of kindred spirits miles away.’ My data suggests that popular music magazines have disseminated rock related knowledge, information, and values to Chinese youth across geographical boundaries in Mainland China. Such cultural artifacts have also facilitated cultural fusion process between the East and the West, as a number of Chinese magazines focused on introducing Western popular music to China, including ‘*So Rock! Magazine*’ (1999-2013), ‘*Yinxiang Shijie*’ (1987-2011), and ‘*Hit Music*’ (1998-2013). ‘*So Rock! Magazine*’ reached its golden sales during 2003-2008, with over 100,000 copies sold. The circulation of ‘*Hit Music*’ was about over 200,000, and the peak sale of ‘*Yinxiang Shijie*’ was about 220,000 copies (PEdaily.cn 2018). According to my research interviewee Zhang Haisheng, who is the owner of *Yuyintang* venue in Shanghai:

I first got involved with rock partly through attending a fandom organisation (*gemihui*) attached to a popular music magazine ‘*Yinxiang Shijie*’ (Audio and Video World). The organisation often held activities to introduce latest released Western albums and music videos. It was just like a school society. There were members who helped to translate Western lyrics or contents. At that time, there hasn’t been rock magazines such as ‘*Hit Music*’ or ‘*So Rock! Magazine*’. It’s not easy to find such magazines nowadays, as online media have replaced print media.

Yinxiang Shijie magazine was created in 1987 and was the first large-scale published monthly issued magazine specializing in music, video and entertainment (see Figure 5.1.11.). It was published by China Record Group Co. (*Zhongguo Changpian Zonggongsi*) established in 1949, the oldest and largest record company owned by Chinese government. The magazine covers broad themes of music genres including jazz, rock, classical, Chinese pop and folk music. It also contains introductions and interviews with film and TV celebrities, both from China and from the West. For instance, its 2018 volumes feature articles on Linkin Park, the

Dutch singer Laura Fygi, the French actress Audrey Tautou and the Chinese actor Nie Yuan (*Maizazhi* 2018). The magazine aims at promoting high art and national cultures and to enrich cultural life of Chinese people. According to Xin (2010: 130), China Record Group Co. is the most authoritative audio and video publishing company in Mainland China. The magazine initially only introduced audio and video products published by its company China Record Group. But the magazine started to revise its structure of contents since 1989 and introduced Western rock and popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan in the context of reforms and opening up. That the state sponsored music magazine *Yinxiang Shijie* introduces Western popular music to its public readers can be interpreted as a way to meet the political needs of modernisation and globalisation. But such magazines do not contain political sensitive topics or subcultural contents that were articulated by subordinated small groups of interests or niche market.

The later established rock magazines '*So Rock! Magazine*' was established in 1999 in Hebei province, and '*Hit Music*' was first published in 1998 by Bigmouth media (Dazui Chuanmei) in Shanghai. Where '*Hit Music*' is a monthly issued magazine that solely focuses on Western music, with its reporters based worldwide, including Germany, France and Singapore, to name a few. The magazine covered broad range of Western musicians, such as Arcade Fire, MGMT, Vampire Weekend, The XX, and James Blake (see Figure 5.1.12. for an example of this magazine). '*So Rock! Magazine*', on the other hand, was more underground, and specialised in rock music and (sub)cultures both from China and the West. Both '*So Rock! Magazine*' and '*Hit Music*' were published by private publishing companies or small groups of individuals rather than state-owned companies. The emergence and popularity of fanzines in the late 90s were associated with New Sound Movement and *dakou* culture that have been examined in Chapter 3, where the rebirth of Chinese rock has facilitated the growth of subcultural print media.

(Photo 5.1.6. A Cover of *So Rock! Magazine* Vol.82, on the bottom it says 'New Year God Bless Every Fxxking Guy')



So Rock! Magazine covers a broad range of themes and contents including introducing new rock songs and lyrics, advertising rock merchandise and for Beijing Midi School of Music, fashion guides of bizarrely dressed Western musicians, interviews, recommendation of rock albums, 'Shit Humour' that articulates spoof, sarcasm and resistance to the CCP and social institutions, and a news section called 'Hard Truth'. Towards the end of the magazine, there is also a photo section called 'Look at Picture' that includes sexual memes.

(Photo 5.1.7. an example of bizarre fashion guide, including Western musicians Justin Hawkins, Juliette Lewis, Lovefoxxx, and Elton John)



According to Leonard (1998: 103), fanzines are ‘self-published, independent texts devoted to various topics including hobbies, music, film and politics [which are] usually non-profit making and produced on a small scale by an individual or small group of people...’ My data suggests that *So Rock! Magazine* was mainly consumed by young people who are into rock subculture. Its core editor Mr. Duan (with online nickname ‘Rock Duan’) is also a genuine rock music fan himself and regularly participates in local and translocal rock scene. The magazine was established by a small group of people in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, which is close to Beijing (see Figure 5.1.13. for a map) – the political and musical center of China. Each issue of the 80 pages’ A4-size magazine is sold at the price of 18 Yuan (less than less than £1.8). If a reader pre-order the magazine for a whole year’s issues, a free rock T-shirt will be given as a gift. Each volume of the magazine also contains a free CD, which is a collection of Chinese rock songs by a variety of underground artists. As O’Dell (2014: 141) notes, such kind of independent rock magazines were ‘cheap enough that the regular college students could afford it, and too cheap for the CD pirates to make money.’ Based on such magazines produced by rock enthusiasts are in pursuit of rock spirits of utopian, freedom, independence and idealism rather than commercial driven. Thus, the template set up by the UK magazine *Sniffin’ Glue* (1976-1977) in the mid-1970s related to punk as a significant legacy in terms of cultural production.

We can see that *So Rock! Magazine* takes the form of ‘subcultural media...- that is written by, about and for enthusiasts of the same substantive lifestyle grouping’ (Hodkinson 2002: 161). Within the magazine, its content articulates subcultural spoof, irony, humour, sarcasm,

resistance and criticism towards Chinese officials and social problems that are shared by rock insiders. For example, in Volume 81, there's an article called 'Revising the Classical: Using Mao's Ideologies to Cure Mental Illness' (Jingdian Chongwen: Kao Mao Zedong Sixiang Zhihao Jingshenbing). The article was originally published on People's Daily newspaper on 8th October 1971 and was reposted on *So Rock! Magazine*. The content reflects how a state-owned mental illness hospital implements Mao's ideology to 'successfully' treat its patients:

Chairman Mao has educated us that 'within a social class system, everyone is living in a certain class, every thought is embedded with a certain social class'. Everyone has realised that mental illness patients are categorised by the class system. Using Mao's theory, it can be identified that most of the illness are in relation to the patient's social class and social life. Most of the patients who express passions towards Maoism are born with a good stratum background and they behave well. But that bad-behaved patient must be from an exploit stratum; his worldview must not have been educated.

Such an article in a rock fanzine articulates a sense of jokey and ironic attitudes towards Chinese politics and the CCP. Without reproducing or reconstructing the original content from *People's Daily*, a direct repost of such political writing looks bizarre, old-fashioned and funny for the one-child generation youth who grows up in the context of reform and the opening of China. Having never experienced Mao's leadership, they cannot relate to the cultural and political conditions of the 1970s. Similarly, in Volume 87, there is another example of demonstrating resistance towards censorship. An article called 'State Administration of Radio and Television is the Guide for Popular Trend' (Guangdianzongju Shi Liuxing Fengxiangbiao) has been written to illuminate 'the timeline of censorship' by the CCP.

(Photo 5.1.9. timeline of censorship from 2002-2009)



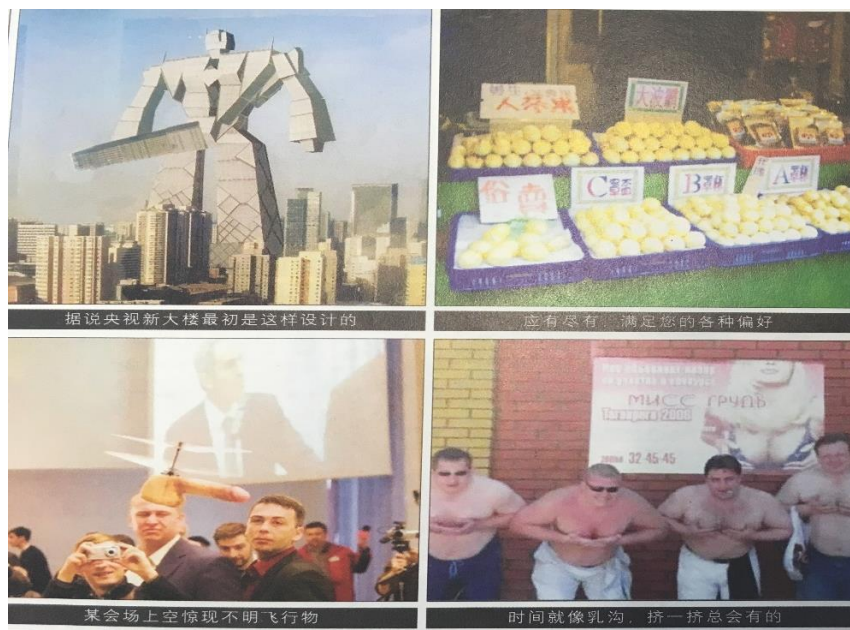
According to this timeline published by the magazine, censorship in the context of building a ‘Harmonious Society’ under the leadership of Hu Jintao (2002-2012) included: the prohibition of sexually explicit films such as *Lost in Beijing* (2007) directed by Li Yu and *Lust and Caution* (2007) directed by Ang Lee; the closing down unlicensed video websites; banning foreign animations during the time period 17:00-21:00 from Chinese TV channels; removing a very popular Taiwanese TV drama ‘Meteor Garden’ (*Liuxing Huayuan*) from television schedules; and forcing certain mainstream shows to promote political ideologies, such as singing competition ‘Super Girl’ (*Chaoji Nvsheng*) broadcasted during 2004-2009 by Hunan Satellite Television and ‘Super Boy’ (*Kuaile Nansheng*) produced in 2007. A major

criticism articulated by the writer of this piece for the magazine is that there was lack of classifications of films that based on age in Mainland China. As the writer notes:

The reasons of censoring cultural products stated by the State Administration of Radio and Television (*Guangdian Zongju*) have always been very simple: to protect the teenagers. Though teenagers need to be protected, adults still need to make love. So, films should really be classified according to age. It's cool that teenagers are forbid to watch AV, but sexual education is a must.

Through outlining key censorships, rock participants are concerned with social issues of sexual education and cultural rights for the adults. As a resistance to cultural controls of mild sexual content and China's lack of sexual education, the magazine displays sexual memes in its 'Look at Picture' section.

(Photo 5.1.8. an example of 'Look at Picture' section that contain sexual memes)



For example, the picture on the upper right of Photo 5.1.8. portrays baskets of fruit, categorised by a seller based on 'bra sizes'. The lower right image depicts western men trying to 'squeeze out' big breasts just like women. The upper left is a spoof reconstruction of the building of CCTV- the most authoritative and influencing media owned by the state: it becomes a giant man with a big penis. And the lower left is a Western man wearing a penis accessory on his head in a meeting.

I suggest that *So Rock! Magazine* articulates subversive values, norms and beliefs, which it disseminates to its translocal readers. It was also these shared values, tastes and agendas, articulated by insider rock fans that have bound the youth group collectively beyond geographical boundaries. As Hodgkinson (2002: 169) notes, ‘their exclusiveness to the subculture and their construction of a common agenda meant that, abstractly, they connected their geographically dispersed... readers with one another through their common consumption of the publication.’ Furthermore, considering *So Rock! Magazine*’s subcultural position as a non-mainstream cultural artefact, the magazine avoided governmental censorship by selling the CDs to the public rather than the magazine itself in order to secure permission to sell their product. In other words, it is easier to survive censorship by publishing a CD that only contains music and lyrics, in comparison to an 80 pages’ magazine that contains a variety of subcultural contents. According to my interviewee:

So Rock! Magazine is a very anti-authority magazine. In order to get away with censorship, they claimed that they were selling the CDs instead of the magazines. If it was to sell magazines, it must have been censored. But if the magazine was attached to the CD as a free thing, then they could easily get away with censorship and to write whatever they wanted. When I first approached the magazine, I realised rock n’ roll isn’t only about music and how to play guitar. It was about resistance: to government, hegemonies and parents, to fight against inequality and mainstream cultures. It also contained sexual jokes. You cannot see these contents from any other magazines. That’s what I found the most interesting about. I bought it at a pop-up newspaper stand. It also helped me to enrich my rock knowledge.

The subcultural discourses in fanzines are a prism of cultural fusion between the East and the West. In each volume, there has been dissemination of knowledge of Western rock, including lengthy interviews, band introductions, lyrics, fashion guides, and memes. Contradictions, absorptions, interactions and resistance to Western cultures can be grasped both from a mainstream level and a non-mainstream perspective. The state-sponsored magazine *Yinxiangshijie* introduces Western popular music, jazz and classical in order to enrich people’s spiritual life and to meet modernisation and globalisation. Yet, the government’s

banning of foreign animations on TV channels during a specific period of the daily television schedule also indicates government's control of dominant culture, through which they reassert hegemonic control over and resistance of the overwhelming Western culture.

From a non-mainstream perspective, through the prism of rock fanzines, it has been observed that not only translocal rock music participants rely on music magazines to disseminate information, and to articulate subcultural norms and beliefs, but also in the process of interacting with Western culture, young adults creatively make fun of Western cultural phenomenon through visual memes. As de Kloet (2010: 28) notes, 'This hegemonic gaze from the West – in which musicians, journalists and academics are complicit – is internalised in popular Chinese discourse.' Rock magazines reveal 'not only the Chinese gaze upon the West (extensive coverage of Western rock), but also the Chinese gaze upon an assumed Western gaze (in reports that question whether or not rock in China is 'just' a copy).'

5.2. Transglobal music scene and diaspora sound

This part of the chapter will focus on middle-class Chinese youth who migrate abroad for higher education and careers and participated in music scenes in transglobal locations in the UK. Drawing from ethnographic interviews, observations and autoethnographic data as my position as insider researcher and musician, the focus is on middle-class youth identities, motives, beliefs and values behind participating and consuming Western rock in a non-Eastern setting, which is crucial to examine the cultural fusion phenomenon between the East and the West, reflected through the prism of rock music. The chapter focuses on middle-class educated youth that ‘are being fostered by Chinese system and are acquiring a relatively advantageous positions... in terms of social resources they can command and manoeuvre’ (de Kloet and Fung 2017: 16)

Here, I examine how middle-class educated youth negotiate pressures and realities from social institutions of the state, family, media and Chinese education. As Clarke et al. (1976: 62) argues, ‘if working-class subcultures presented a threat to middle-class power from without, then the ‘middle-class’ counter-culture posed a similar threat from within: ...spear head[ing] a dissent from their own, dominant, ‘parent’ culture’. The chapter suggests that there have been multiple voices emerging among middle-class educated youth in the UK. While some of them in diaspora settings employ creative strategies to articulate their Chinese identities and nationalism, rock was consumed as leisure. Others whom participate in the London music scene have demonstrated distinct identities in terms of cultural capital, individuality, artistic aesthetic, and shared norms and values influenced by British cultures. They are sensitive to and critical against those institutions that ‘reproduce the dominant cultural-ideological relations- the family, education, the media, marriage, the sexual division of labour’ (Hall and Jefferson 1993: 62.). At the same time, this study suggests that advantageous middle-class rock participants have also contributed to transglobal scene by bridging cultural fusion and exchange between the East and the West. As a result of which, the Eastern rock sound also travels back to the West and has constituted part of the cosmopolitan music scenes.

5.2.1. Middle-class Chinese youth's participation and consumption of the London music scene: Identity, values and motives

In the study of South Asian youth cultures in London, Helen Kim (2014: 2) points out that there have been growing urban scene consists of diasporic Asian youth cultures in London, especially with the convenience of Internet and mobile technologies that have facilitated 'unprecedented access to underground music cultures.' This study suggests that diasporic youth cultures have centred on Black cultural production, as Kim (2014: 2) notes 'Stuart Hall writes that construction of the political category of 'Black' in the UK often privileged the Afro-Caribbean experience over that of Asians' (Hall 2000). This means that studies of Asian diasporic youth culture are fewer in number in comparison to other ethnicities. Additionally, within the so-called 'Asian diasporic youth cultures', much focus has been given on Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people, as they have been the major long-term migrant population in the UK. Little attention and analysis of diasporic youth cultures have focused on migrated youth from East Asia, such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean young people in Western settings.

There have been increasing numbers of East Asian youth temporarily migrating to the UK for higher education, and many begin their careers overseas after graduation. As Fong (2011: 67-69) notes, 'studying abroad emerges as an instrumental means for increasing the likelihood of sending positive and distinctive signals to employers in an increasingly globalised setting'. However, due to the tight immigration policies implemented by the UK government, it is particularly difficult for international students from non-Western background to get a job through a sponsored visa in the UK. Thus, to obtain a long-term residence permit in the UK is challenging. From ethnographic data, it has been observed that a majority of Chinese educated middle-class students are able to study in the UK for a few years then they have to return to home country for jobs due to visa limitations. The minority of ambitious Chinese students who can work in the UK with visa sponsorship eventually acquire British residency. During this international mobility of studying abroad, Chinese privileged middle-class youth have participated in music scenes in London and bought cultural products such as vinyl, CDs, rock merchandise, and gig tickets. It has been observed that a relatively marginal 'going to gig' community of Chinese young people has formed in the UK, with its central location in London. Its members are primarily young, middle-class Chinese rock fans who connect to

each other both virtually on social media and in face-to-face. According to my research participant:

Mengyao:

In the UK, I've observed that it's easy to encounter Chinese students at gigs in London, is there a particular group or community?

Ka (m):

Yes. It feels like it's always that group of people who goes to gigs regularly. I think there are not many East Asians going to gigs. But a lot of my acquaintances often go (to gigs). They always went to the similar kinds (of gigs). Not the very mainstream ones, for example, those [posh] bands that have been often reviewed by big music magazine websites. I don't know how to describe. You know those bands are [well-claimed].

During the interview, Ka (m) responded to me in Mandarin, but also with occasional English phrases to refer to hard-to-translate feelings and descriptions. 'Posh' and 'well-claimed' are the two examples of answering my questions in English, as it's hard to translate its accurate meanings in Mandarin. However, it must also be noted that speaking in a mixture of Chinese and English has also become a habit of many middle-class youth who have lived abroad. This bilingual ability symbolically relates to their Westernised, well-educated and advantageous Chinese social positions and identities in comparison to working-class Chinese youth, who often use nonsense broken English in their lyrics. For example, the agriculture band Yumbi mentioned in Chapter 4 sing in jumbled English alongside Mandarin in the song 'The King of Fucking Everything'. For example, '*Baby baby baby baby hong, sorry sorry sorry sorry sao(骚)*'. In contrast, my research suggests that middle-class Chinese youth in the UK are aware of the use of languages and try to avoid grammar mistakes as possible both on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Sina Weibo and Douban) and also in offline daily conversations. I therefore argue that languages are a significant marker of identities, which relates directly to social class. This approach has also been acknowledged in Rampton's (2006: 242-244) ethnographic study on young people in an urban secondary school in London, where 'social

class was a central reference for young people in their interactions with both teachers and peers.’ (Spencer et al. 2012: 130)

In terms of the group of middle-class youth who are regular gig-goers in London, this study suggests that the majority of rock, electronic, or avant-garde music participants consist of young females. This contrasts with the cultural phenomenon that the majority of rock musicians and music fans participate in rock music scenes in China are males. Dedicated middle-class Chinese youth’ participating in the London music scene identify themselves as ‘*mimei*’ (young female fan) or ‘*midi*’ (young male fan). On Chinese social media Wechat, there’s also a chat group called ‘Going to gigs in London’ (*Lundun yue* [gig] *qun*) that has been joined by approximately 220 people by June 2018. Within that group, members often exchange gig information, resell tickets, and organise off-line meet ups at gigs. This is a ‘closed’ group, and members join the social media chat group through a personal invitation by current members. Membership growth therefore resembles a rolling snowball, as each member is also connected with music fans based in different universities or regions in the UK. Social media site Douban also facilitates social interactions, exchange of information and knowledge, as well as broadening one’s social network within the group of middle-class Chinese youth who are into rock, electronic, avant-garde and experimental music. According to my research participant:

There are more females than males within the group of people who go to gigs. It’s strange that it’s harder to find *midi* (young male fan) (in comparison with *mimei* – young female fan). For me, I normally won’t speak to people at gigs. I got to know rock music fans mostly through a friend I know on Douban. I usually establish new contact through a recommendation of a friend, or his/her friend. For example, if I’m going to a gig, and I know there’s another person going to the same gig on social media, I might meet up with him/her.

My data suggests that middle-class Chinese musical youth in the UK share collective identities in terms of their social positions, experience, common views and cultural capital. This group is distinct from other middle-class Chinese youth studying in the UK who tend to be fans of mainstream mass-produced popular music. This shared identity has also been observed during my ethnographic interviews in London. My own shared experience, tastes

and values as a middle-class, one-child, well-educated urban youth who has an interest in Western cultures meant that my conversations with research participants were easy and harmonious in terms of values and interests – an insider researcher position as claimed by Hodkinson (2002). This is evidential from my interview, he states:

I really like your questions. I have more common topics with people who are into similar things. When I communicate with them, I feel we are on the same page. Even in relation to the way one gets along with people, I feel our shared experiences give us similar manners and values. It's not only in terms of music; it's in our views on daily life and events. What I described above is within the same background [middle-class Chinese youth into Western independent music]. It's in comparison with other oversea students [who consume mainstream popular cultures]. Though both two groups are middle-class or upper middle-class.

What my interviewee implies is that middle-class Chinese students in the UK articulate independent and critical thinking through their participation in the London music scene and the consumption of Western independent culture, which includes a variety of Western rock, electronic, avant-garde and experimental music. Through the deep engagement of Western rock cultures and independent values in everyday life, they are aware of social issues from a broader angle, rather than being 'brainwashed' by Chinese social institutions of family, education, state and media that articulates traditional Confucius culture or government promoted values, from which a strong sense of patriotism and nationalism are embedded. The 'us' and 'them' identity distinction within the body of middle-class educated Chinese youth in the UK is further illuminated through my interview conversation:

Mengyao:

Do you think you as an individual or part of the group who often go to gigs is influenced by a cultural fusion between the East and the West?

Kaka (m):

Definitely, it's very obvious. I feel this question is hard to answer, but the answer is very clear. They [middle-class rock youth] are closer to the core culture [of the West]. That's more above or below the surface of the culture. I'd say if you only do ordinary things in the UK, such as going to school, eating and sleeping, these belong to the 'surface culture'. But if to know about ideological or philosophical things, such as how the leftists think, or what British would like to chat about after drinking and smoking weed. In this respect, they [rock youth] may understand some things [in comparison to ordinary middle-class youth]. Because through actively involving local British culture (such as drinking, or smoking weed), it can help you open a big window to know what British people think.

Here we see that during the international mobility of middle-class Chinese youth who migrate to the West, cultural fusion is reflected through 'intercultural personhood' where newcomers 'merge their identities with those of the surrounding cultural identities' (Kim 2008). However, these migrants also 'have impact on the surround culture' through social interactions (Croucher and Kramer 2016: 97-98). Middle-class Chinese youth participating in the London music scene has adopted Westernised cultural identity through their daily engagement with Western norms, values and beliefs such as critical thinking, individualism and democracy. According to my ethnographic data, my male interviewee notes that middle-class Chinese rock youth are closer to the core culture of the West in comparison to a large number of 'ordinary' middle-class youth whose lifestyle centre around daily school routines, eating and consuming Chinese mainstream cultures or Western luxuries.

Diasporic Chinese youth's distance from Mainland China, where the CCP's imposed ideology has a significant impact, has offered opportunities for educated advantaged Chinese youth be critical towards their mainstream Chinese culture. However, while 'alternative and hipster' middle-class youth who are into rock cultures are more critical towards Chinese mainstream cultures, those 'ordinary' middle-class youth in contrast, employ an indifferent and negative approach towards the processes of counter-culture. That said, Chinese youth are often 'ambivalent towards the Party', as a result of the CCP's tight control on oppositional voices and critical thinking. As argued by de Kloet and Fung (2017: 38), 'partyism also evolves to a kind of cultural capital that privileges and makes youth feel or act superior in many social relationship (which is different to Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital on a social

level in the Chinese context)', especially in terms of career and personal development in Chinese society. Thus, distinction of identity within middle-class Chinese students abroad are illuminated through their different approaches towards Chinese social, political and cultural controls: being critical and obscurely oppositional or showing compromise and indifference. In particular, it has been observed that although middle-class Chinese rock youth are critical towards Chinese mainstream values, cultures and social institutions, they are also sensitive towards expressing anti-authority positions by taking a non-related or 'outsider' position towards Chinese political rock sounds. As my interviewee notes:

H (m):

I didn't put much attention in terms of music's connection with politics. If there is, I suppose those anti-political lyrics must have been censored. Even when I listened to music, I couldn't feel many connections with politics or have noticed the lyrics may contain political sensitive issues. Maybe it's very obscure, so that I didn't notice. I feel Chinese rock is more about youthfulness and love. Personally, I didn't feel the rebellious rock spirits, though everyone says there is. I didn't experience any live vibe that is oppositional towards the government.

Me:

How about Miserable Faith (*Tongkude Xinyang*)?

H (m):

Yeah, some of their songs, I've listened to that band many times. There's indeed such (anti-authority) elements. Personally, I didn't feel it. I didn't consider it as my focus. I was more into the melody. Though there was some lyrics that shocked me. But that wasn't the major reason that I listened to the music.

The data suggests that my interviewee, as an educated middle-class youth, was aware of the interview technique as a mean of recording for academic use, which is official and might contain a potential threat to personal credibility and development by documenting anti-political views of Chinese society. In contrast, it has been examined that Internet and mobile technologies have provided a space for young Chinese to express their views, annoyances,

frustrations and disappointment towards their society (Clark 2012). As Liu (2013: 24) argues, ‘the interaction between youth and the Internet holds the potential to effect or at least contribute to far-reaching economic, social cultural and political changes.’ Such complaints, frustrations and counter-culturality have been observed on social media Douban, where middle-class Chinese youth have used certain obscure and reconstructed languages to refer to or criticise societal issues and inequality. For example, referring to China as ‘your country’ (*niguo*) rather than calling it as ‘my country’, has become a popular phenomenon by middle-class Chinese youth online. Anger and frustration toward the CCP have also been expressed metaphorically on Douban users’ micro blogs or personal status. For instance, in 2017, when the Chinese Nobel Prize winner Liu Xiaobo passed away in a Chinese prison, it was observed many middle-class young Chinese studying in the West expressed depression, anger and frustration on social media, though they were cautious about not to clearly demonstrate what their emotions were related to.

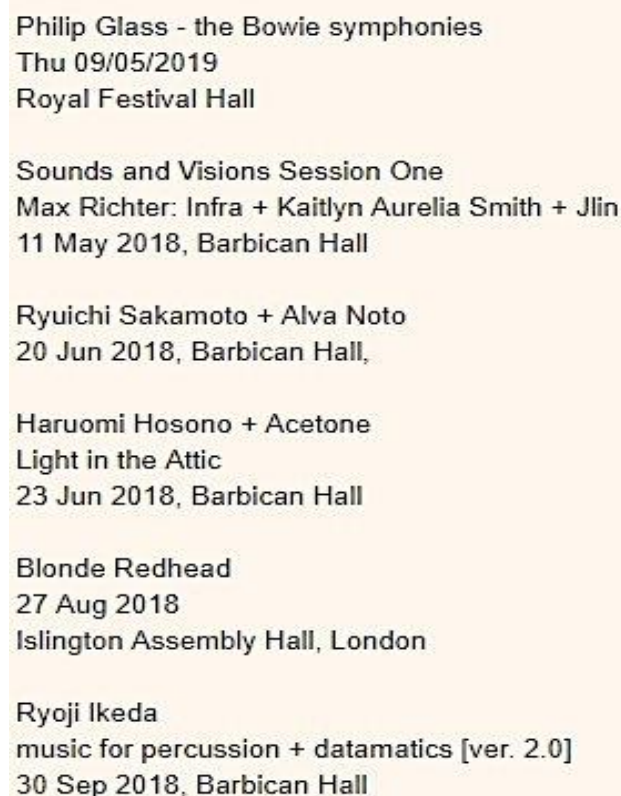
My fieldwork observations suggest that middle-class educated Chinese youth in the UK are very conscious of their individual fashion with artistic outfits. In contrast, working-class rock youth dress in cheap black T-shirts, with piercings and long hairstyles. Middle-class youth in London display a ‘neat’ look influenced by high street styles such as Urban Outfitters, Topshop, Cosstores, Other Stories, Unif or more expensive independent/luxury designs such as Vivien Westwood, Yang Li, Opening Ceremony and Acne Studio. Middle-class female students wear expensive makeup products including Chanel, Tom Ford, and Dior. My interviewee also notes:

The ‘going to gigs’ people dress in cool styles in comparison to ordinary people. They look like those who are going to a music festival. I know my description is a bit lame, but there’s definitely a vibe there.

Middle-class rock youth subscribe to gig ticket sale websites and apps including Songkick, Dice and See Tickets, so that they won’t miss their favorite bands on tour. Most of the students studying abroad are family sponsored. Thus, with financial freedom offered by their parents, they have disposable income with which to buy expensive gig or festival tickets for well-known bands and festivals such as Radiohead, The Cure, British Summer Time, Field Day, and Reading Festival. This also extends to building vinyl collections. London venues

such as Barbican, Roundhouse, Café OTO, and Electric Brixton are the regular base places for middle-class Chinese youth participating in the London music scenes. In particular, on Douban website, it has been observed that a number of middle-class youth in the UK display their records of gig attendance as a means to demonstrate their genuine participation of British music scenes. These public demonstrations offer opportunities for diasporic Chinese youth to connect to similar artistic young Chinese adults who are based in the UK.

(Photo 5.2.1. Examples of middle-class youth in the UK posting gig list on their Douban social media account)



Philip Glass - the Bowie symphonies
Thu 09/05/2019
Royal Festival Hall

Sounds and Visions Session One
Max Richter: Infra + Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith + Jlin
11 May 2018, Barbican Hall

Ryuichi Sakamoto + Alva Noto
20 Jun 2018, Barbican Hall,

Haruomi Hosono + Acetone
Light in the Attic
23 Jun 2018, Barbican Hall

Blonde Redhead
27 Aug 2018
Islington Assembly Hall, London

Ryoji Ikeda
music for percussion + datamatics [ver. 2.0]
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In addition to examining counter cultural connotations within educated middle-class Chinese youth in the UK, it is also important to consider their self-representation and subjectivities articulated by them. As Scott (2001: 141) points out, ‘those who still see social position as a decisive aspect of experience, for example in class analysis, often downplay self-representation, with structural factors seen to operate “behind the backs” of the people involved.’ In this chapter it has been argued that rock music is a medium, through which collective distinction of identity, critical thinking and counter-culturality have been articulated. The nature of individual patterns of rock music consumption must also be considered in relation to an individual’s changing life experience, social relationships and his/her evolving music taste in the context of widening musical resources as a result of globalisation and digital media. According to my interviewee:

When I was in high school, I was into Western popular music such as Maroon 5, Backstreet Boys, and Cantonese pop. As I’m from Guangzhou [geographically next to Hong Kong], it’s easier to be influenced. Cantonese pop is also influenced

by the UK, the music reached its peak in the 90s, but after Hong Kong returned to China in 1997, it started to decline. I got into rock in high school because of my friends. I followed what they listened to and they recommended Brit-pop, so I started to listen to rock such as Oasis and Coldplay. When I was studying in a Chinese university in Baoding, Hebei province, I listened to post-rock, because I couldn't adapt to the big contrast of moving from a big city Guangzhou to a small, very low tier city. I felt lonely. Then I went to study in Manchester, most of my friends here listened to post-punk or shoegaze. So, I got into Joy Division and New Order. I got into rock music because of a girl. When you fall in love with someone, you want to follow her music taste. I liked a girl when I was first year in high school. When I was still listening to Backstreet Boy, she already liked Brit-pop. I just followed what she listened to, and the music [she listened to] touched me.

My ethnographic data reflects how changing environment, life experiences and social relationships impact upon one's music taste and preferences. As Frith's (1978: 208) examination of British youth culture in Keighley (England) demonstrates, 'one of the paradoxes...was that the group which most stressed individual musical choice also most stressed the importance of shared musical taste for friendship – music served as the badge of individuality on which friendship choices could be based'. Thompson and Larson (1994: 732) also address how subjective experiences of different types of rock music are made in relation to social context: rock is associated with 'to whom it is listened with and where it is listened to'. Furthermore, studies suggest that rock music evokes an emotional response (Justin et al. 2008), as my interviewee notes:

I really consider melodies and lyrics of music. I like the feeling of catching melodies in a song. It's also in relation to my emotion. If I need to release some negative emotions, I would listen to heavy metal, those ones without singing. The most touching melodies for me have always been melancholic, Shoegaze always give me a dreamy feeling. It's also in relation to my personal taste. I'm into those genres of music that can inspire memories, or whose lyrics make me feel touched, or articulates shared feelings and experiences. I don't really understand that

Gothic metal music, the kind that contains lots of religious imagery. If I don't connect to that culture, then its music and lyrics won't attract me.

This data accords with Frith's (1978: 217) examination that music is a medium that is used by adolescents as 'a means of identifying and articulating emotion'. As Frith (ibid: 217) notes, 'whatever material differences between young people, they still have more problems in common with each other than with the adults of their own class or sex – hence the resonance of rock music, a sound and interest for all young people'. Furthermore, rock as a mechanism 'through which adolescents negotiate age-specific developmental tasks' (Smothers, 1961; Kaplan, 1984) has been identified in my ethnographic data. In relation to the control of Chinese institutions of family and school, teenage rebellion is articulated through the consumption of a music style, which is placed in opposition to mainstream commercial pop. It echoes Frith's (1978: 216) argument, which music is used, 'to distinguish the young from the old, to identify a place or time or occasion as youth' property'. Through the consumption of rock music, middle-class Chinese youth have demonstrated 'signals of control' (ibid: 216) within their own spaces. As my research participant notes:

Chinese people and Chinese parents have a kind of control desire. They control their kids from a young age, in terms of whom to hang out with and what you are doing. Under their control, a lot of young people started to rebel. My music taste was also driven by rebellion. When I was in high school, I was very rebellious, I felt like I need to listen to something different from other people. At that time, I completely deny all Chinese mainstream popular music. Looking back now, I realise I have missed a lot of good mainstream music as well. Now I've learnt the skill of communicating with my parents. Because I understand you cannot discuss certain issues with them, because they won't understand you. For example, Chinese parents can hardly accept LGTB children. Though at the same time, they want to do something good for you.

As we see that through consuming and participating rock, middle-class Chinese youth attempts to carve out space from familism and controls. Chinese familism has been argued by

de Kloet and Fung (2017: 45) as an effective tactic that ‘moulds gender and marriage norms in Chinese society, legitimizing heterosexual love, indexing practices of marriage and family life, and reinforcing the collective roles of monitoring gender norms and values.’ At the same time, despite the perception of the one-child generation being dependant on their parents (Tu 2018: 3), my data suggested that many have sought to migrate abroad to remove themselves from their parental controls.

However, Chinese young adults also do not aim to ‘completely desegregate from the cultural control of the family in the process of navigating the forces of urbanism, consumerism and cosmopolitanism’ (de Kloet and Fung 2017: 44). Thus, the process of cultural fusion at a transglobal setting in the UK adds tacit complexities and contradictions. According to my interviewee:

Sometimes after I had an argument with my parents, I felt I shouldn’t argue with them. They didn’t realise what they have done was wrong. But I don’t blame them [for not understanding], because they grew up in the old era when Chinese social and cultural context was really closed. It’s also in relation to their education levels. I feel we are [moving on] (with new globalised values), but they are not [moving on], and this has led to a cultural gap between us. So, I just told them that I don’t have these problems, being gay. My parents are great, especially my mum. She knows her son likes Western music and cultures. Sometimes she wants to catch up with the global trend as well. She went to a gig for me in China while I was in the UK. It was a post-rock band from Iceland - Bang Gang. She got me a CD with their signatures, and some photos from the gig. I feel she really supports me. She’s more supportive of me going to gigs now. In the past, she was like my dad, who considers listening to rock as a waste of time.

My interview data accords with de Kloet and Fung’s (2017: 44) argument that parental controls can also be a force for consuming Western cultures by offering financial support and cultural capital. My fieldwork suggests that exposure to global cultures has facilitated cultural fusion in terms of migrated Chinese youth’ values, norms and beliefs. The powerful influences of social institutions such as the Chinese state, family, and education received before studying in the West, means that the engagement of middle-class Chinese youth with

different cultural repertoires is challenging, contradictory and difficult. Furthermore, it has been suggested that interpreting middle-class Chinese youth cultures through the prism of rock music needs to consider wider social institutional controls, counter-culturality, as well as paying attention to individual experience, emotions, and social relationships. Both shared and individual motives, values and identities are central to understanding Chinese youth culture as a complex phenomenon.

5.2.2. Cultural fusion and diaspora sound

Evidences for cultural fusion emerged from ethnographic, autoethnographic and textual data within this study. In terms of cultural fusion within Chinese music scenes, this chapter shows how rock musicians and music fans negotiate, absorb, resist or contradict hegemonic Western culture. Through rock fanzines, Western rock lyrics, albums, artists and fashions have been introduced, all of which played an important role in the accumulation of subcultural capital for Chinese youth. Within Chinese rock music scenes, Chinese music professionals and musicians learnt from Western approaches to operating record labels, organizing music festivals and promoting rock events. From a subjective level, my interviewees have illuminated how their norms, values and beliefs have been influenced by Western cultures and higher education systems within the UK, leading to increased critical thinking, individualism, and independence. This final part of the chapter further illuminates diasporic middle-class youth identities in the process of cultural fusion between the East and the West.

The notion of 'diaspora' is explained by Georgiou (2010: 8) as 'people who cross boundaries and who settle in locations different to those of their origins.' While there have been a number of scholars focusing on defining and redefining the conception, such as Clifford (1994) and Brah (1996), within this thesis I understand diaspora through studies of transnationalism, as 'networked and transnational formations' (Portes 1997; Vertovec 2009), which implies 'multiple connections across space and flows of ideas and information beyond a singular nation' (Georgiou 2010). This study is concerned with diaspora as an imagined transnational community that is not restricted by the binary opposition between global and local but emphasises its connections and interactions across fixed national boundaries (Georgiou 2010: 8). This definition accords with the indications of cultural fusion that emerged out of my data, which is characterised by constant interactions, absorption,

contradictions and negotiations between the East and the West, rather than a one-way flow. This study focuses on diasporic identities of educated middle-class Chinese youth in London, who participate in transglobal music scenes. As Kim (2014: 33) suggests, diaspora has been positioned as ‘a process of identity’ and ‘a *lived* experience’ that is reflected through the prism of popular culture. Cultural production plays a transformative role in terms of ‘challenging normative ideas about race, ethnicity, gender and identity’ (Kim 2014: 33).

Drawing from ethnographic data collected in London, I demonstrate that middle-class diasporic Chinese young adults articulate a sense of loss and disillusionment in the process of participating and consuming the London music scenes. This is particularly evident in terms of their fused identity and values as they take on both Western and Chinese cultural influences. It is also evident that their engagements with Western rock in a diasporic locale have added contradictions and underappreciation of youth identity: they were cynical about Eastern cultures, but also could not fully adapt to Western cultures. On the other hand, there is also a body of middle-class Chinese youth who followed Chinese mainstream norms, values and beliefs. Their production and participation of rock had a different narrative that was associated with Chinese-ness and nationalism. Both elements of Chinese middle-class students within this study echo Croucher and Kramer’s (2016: 97) cultural fusion theory where ‘newcomers acculturate into the dominant culture’ and maintain aspects of their original or minority culture in diasporic circumstances. The differences lie in two contrasting approaches and attitudes towards diasporic identities under cultural fusion. As my interviewee notes:

The problem I encounter now is that part of my values is Western oriented. But I am not a Westerner. I have an Eastern face. I feel when I went to a gig [in the UK] as the only East Asian guy; I was different to my surrounding people. I feel I’m inferior. I always have a feeling that I cannot adapt to the British society because I have an Asian face. I wish I could be a white person. It’s not our fault to have been born in a Communist country, but I really dislike many behaviors and manners of Chinese people. Even though I have not developed these negative behaviors. To be honest, it’s not about people [Westerners] discriminating against me; it’s me discriminating against myself. It’s a sense of inferiority of being Chinese. I remember my friend once said something that I completely agree: ‘you

are too foreign for here [the UK] and too foreign for home country.’ I feel I’m a foreigner here but when I’m in China, I still feel I’m a foreigner. It’s like in the middle of a gap.

My interview data suggests diasporic middle-class youths’ struggles and contradictions in term of re-articulating identities in the process of adapting to host cultures in the West. The sense of ‘in the middle of nowhere’, disillusionment and loss echoes Ijeoma Umebinyuo’s *‘Diaspora Blues’* (2005), where a diasporic youth is ‘too foreign for home, and too foreign for here, yet never enough for both’. Most middle-class Chinese youth have been ‘spoiled’ both materialistically and spiritually by families under the only-child policy in modern China. The foreignness of living and studying in a Western country with distanced cultural values and beliefs have resulted in homesickness, loneliness, yet freedom and sufficient youth spaces.

The privileged cultural hegemony of the West is illuminated not only through young Chinese’ introspection and resistance to their home cultures, but also through their advantageous middle-class position in terms of possessing cultural capital: through their class privilege, they can instantly access, participate in and consume Western culture. Engaging in rock fandom is therefore indicative of one’s superior identity. According to my interviewee:

It’s a common phenomenon in China that Chinese population has blind worship and admiration toward Western cultures [*chongyang meiwai*]. I think partly it’s because of Chinese people are not confident in our own cultures (as a result of historical Western invasions and colonisation on certain cities). We are not like Japanese (who are confident in their own cultures). Some Chinese rock youth form a band to perform just to demonstrate their cool and to attract girls. But their music is just a simple mimicking or covering. Because it can make them feel superior or great [by playing Western cultural form].

The cultural hegemony of the Western during the process of cultural fusion is also symbolically demonstrated through the cultural consumption processes of educated middle-

class youth, who selectively and purposefully listen to Western rock music instead of Chinese rock:

When I first listened to ‘No Surprise’ by Radiohead, I was shocked by how dedicated and meaningful the music was made [in comparison to popular music in China]. The process of listening to rock music for me involved listening to Western rock first and then coming back to Chinese rock. Because I was curious about what Chinese rock would be like. When I listened to Chinese rock, I have certain biases towards it, because Chinese rock is learning from Western rock. Though some Chinese bands have their own specialities. Most of them are mimicking Western rock.

A contrasting understanding of cultural fusion diasporic identities is illuminated through my ethnographic fieldwork at the Jenova Festival (held at University College London) during which UCL Chinese student bands articulate collective Chineseness and nationalism. This is markedly different from artistic middle-class Chinese youth who express counter cultural and cynical attitudes towards Chinese institutionalised mainstream cultures. Jenova Festival is an annual event organised by a group of Chinese students, studying at UCL. The event was founded by a UCL Chinese society called *Qingchuangshe* (Youth Created Society) in 2013, which organises a variety of student events, including career talks, forums and music festival. The festival featured mostly London-based Chinese student bands, with majority of its performances playing covers of Chinese rock, Western rock, as well as mainstream Taiwanese and Cantonese pop (*gangtai* music). It was reported on a small-scale Chinese media as the biggest Chinese musical event in the UK, attracting thousands of students in the past four years (Dagongzixun 2017). Tickets were sold at the price of £7 in 2017, and it has been observed that while most audiences were Chinese female students, who are classmates or friends with performers instead of genuine rock music fans, the musicians were dominantly Chinese males, with occasional bands having one or two Western members.

For me as an ethnographic observer, the atmosphere of the festival was more like a mainstream pop concert, with audiences given free glow sticks at the entrance. Glow sticks are common tools found in Chinese large-scale pop concerts. In comparison, rock audiences mosh in a crowd and display ‘metal’ hand gestures as subcultural rituals. Waving glowing

sticks can also be interpreted as a symbolic ritual at Chinese commercial concerts, through which audiences express their passions and enthusiasm for a pop idol. Performed songs at Jenova festival 2015, for example, included covers of Muse's 'Time is Running Out', Guns and Roses' 'Night Train', 'Kill the One from Shijiazhuang' by Chinese band Omnipotent Youth Society (Wanneng Qingnian Lvdiàn) and a few original written songs by Chinese student bands, such as 'Lost London Life'. My data suggests that an engagement with rock music can be interpreted as a part-time leisure and an entertainment by UCL student bands, within which creativity and authenticity are less valued. According to my interviewee:

The festival was not about to compare each band's performance and musical abilities but was more about to let the audiences experience the live vibe (of rock). Because rock music has an instigating power, when you enjoy this music, it can easily excite your emotions. It's more important to make the audiences feel high. So, we'd say as an event, it was successful. As we are students, we don't have much time to spend on making original music. If we are like those professional rockers, we can then work towards the goal of performing on the television but not here (in a student hall). Giving out free glow sticks was aimed to reflect Chinese concert cultures, as few of the student audiences ever listened to rock. They came to the festival more because of they were curious about what's going on. It served as a commercial strategy and a way to interact.

My data echoes Frith's (1987) analysis on rock and leisure, within which youth is 'the symbol of leisure', and rock is used by students 'as an aid to relaxation' and a 'leisure commodity' (1987: 260-261). In this sense, rock becomes a way of developing friendship through having fun collectively. Student rock festivals provide a space for students who are in control of their free time. The 'inauthentic' and commercialised organisation and participation of the student rock event articulates shared identities of being well-behaved and aspirant 'good students' by Chinese mainstream standards, which is in contrast with being critical, cynical and rebellious. It has been found that UCL Chinese student bands express positive and energetic connotations through playing and producing rock music, through which they celebrate collective Chinese identities in diasporic circumstances. As my interviewee notes:

Rock is a spirit that you know what you want to express, no matter what difficulties you might encounter, you can always use rock spirit to overcome these difficulties. Although most rock music is about [complaining about something], rock's true spirit is about dealing with challenges through positive responses. I think this is important. Although a lot of rock lyrics are negative, they search for positive hopes. It's the purest expression of your inner mindset, which is in contrast with commercial pop that sings for nothing. For example, our own song 'Lost in London' is a true expression of ourselves. It was inspired by a conversation when walking down Tottenham Court Road. It reflects our memory in London, a sense of frustration and loneliness when we first come to London, and realizing you have nothing in common with the people that surround you.

Furthermore, the celebration of Chinese-ness and nationalism is illuminated by the exclusion of foreign students within the Jenova festival. As my interviewee notes:

Most of our audiences are Chinese, except of a few our Western friends. We have to be realistic and target our events towards Chinese. Although music doesn't have a national boundary, if a foreign student is into rock, he's welcome to come. But we didn't aim to attract a lot of Western audience members. That's zhuangbi (a Chinese slang literally means pretending a cow's vagina – pretending to be awesome). We have different national conditions, cultures and norms. So, we just do what we are good at [organizing an event towards Chinese students]. We don't need to pretend that we are good at [doing an event for Westerners].

On the other hand, the international mobility experienced by these Chinese students has facilitated cultural fusion as an interactive progress rather than a one-way flow - Western cultural hegemony in the East. This could be demonstrated both in terms of Western young adults' consumption of Chinese music rock music, such as the case of British young adult Ross Hurley, who listened to Chinese bands on Youtube and Spotify as previously suggested in Chapter 3. This is also evident in Western audiences' participation and consumption of Chinese rock at gigs and festivals - Chinese bands Nova Heart and Longshendao performed

at Glastonbury Festival 2015 in the UK. This can also be found through the ways in which ambitious middle-class youth exercise independent cultural agency to contribute to transglobal music scene and cultural exchange between the East and the West. For example, Mentha&Pateners (*Bohe Jihua*) is an event and music management agency founded by a group of Chinese young adults who studied in Europe to facilitate translocal and transglobal music scenes. According to their company aims:

We offer tailored solutions for live music touring & consultancy, artist management and audio-visual productions in both Asia and Europe.

(Mentha&Pateners 2018)

The cultural agency was founded in 2014, with its central location at Shanghai and Paris. It was initially founded and participated by Qi Yijia, Ma Xi, Zhao Luolin, Peng Yi'ou and Huang Shan, who aim at bridging cultural exchange between the East and the West through creative strategies. This group of young adults have been spent significant time in different parts of Europe, to include London, Amsterdam and Paris. They have both invited Western bands to tour in China, such as Ceremony, The KVB, and Nite Fields, but also have helped Chinese bands to tour in Europe, including Birdstriking, Wangwen and Carsickcars. The agency first cooperated with Chinese independent record label Maybe Mars to bring the Chinese band Carsickcars to Paris. The agency's members are not driven solely by the commercial benefits of their activities. Mentha&Partner has become a recognised brand within and beyond China that plays a role in facilitating transglobal music scene in the process of cultural fusion.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have examined examples of cultural fusion that emerged through autoethnographic, textual and ethnographic data as a local, translocal and transglobal phenomenon (Straw, 1991; Hodkinson 2002; Bennett and Peterson 2004). By analysing local and translocal music scenes, this chapter argues that rock music scenes in China are influenced by both urban characteristics and cultural heritage. The cases of lower-tier cities Qingdao and Zibo illuminate two contrasting approaches in terms of bounded relationships between music and place (Cohen 1991). Local rock scenes in smaller scale urban cities remain more marginal in comparison to music scenes in first-tier cities like Beijing and Shanghai, where cultural atmosphere is open and cosmopolitan. In terms of translocal music scenes, I have demonstrated the role of translocal subcultural fandom organisations and fanzines in facilitating translocal consumption, dissemination and participation of rock cultures. A focus on local and translocal music scenes within Shandong province has highlighted subcultural practices, motives and beliefs that illuminate resistance and struggles against social inequalities and controls within Chinese society.

In relation to engagement with rock music in diasporic circumstances in the West, middle-class Chinese students in London serve as an additional location for cultural fusion. For this middle-class rock youth community in London, consuming and participating in the London music scene relates to a distinction of tastes and identities (Bourdieu 1979) and counter-cultural feelings toward Chinese social institutional controls of family, the state and Chinese education (de Kloet and Fung 2017), within which critical thinking, individualism and democracy are not encouraged. Within this study, I considered participation in rock-focused activities from both a collective perspective (in terms of structural aspects of race, gender, and class) and as a subjective experience, of the emotions and social relationships that develop in the individual processes of understanding rock. Within this context of cultural fusion, my data suggests that middle-class young Chinese demonstrate two contrasting approaches in relation to their diasporic identities: countercultural versus mainstream. Significantly, the migration and transglobal involvement of rock music scenes have carved out space and freedom for Chinese youth to critically engage with Chinese mainstream cultures, but on the other hand their cultural displacement in the West results in a shared sense of loneliness, loss and disillusionment. Within these paradoxical positions, Chinese

youth strategically negotiate, compromise, interact and contradict the processes of cultural fusion that exist between the East and the West.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Introduction:

This chapter draws together findings analysed through empirical and textual data. During the analytical process, existing literature and theories have guided and informed examination of Chinese youth culture and rock music from a multi-disciplinary perspective of cultural studies, sociology, popular music studies, globalisation studies and Chinese studies. The study sought to construct an understanding of Chinese popular music and youth cultures in the context of historical social change, technological involvement, social institutional controls, commercialisation alongside processes of globalisation, within which, structural inequality and diverse social problems have impacted on the cultural and subcultural meanings of rock. The conclusion chapter will focus on the application of cultural fusion, assessment of the qualitative research methods applied, and research findings through textual and empirical data analysis. The chapter also includes implications and future directions for researching Chinese rock music and popular culture.

6.1. 'Cultural fusion' as a unifying concept

The PhD has employed the metaphor of cultural fusion that emerged from empirical and textual data to illuminate the development of Chinese popular music and youth cultures in the context of globalisation and modernisation. The metaphor places rock music practices within wider social, political, economic and geographical circumstances of transformation. Cultural fusion has been interpreted as a dynamic and interactive process, in which rock as a Western sound travels to the East and fuses with domestic culture, forming a hybrid youth culture. Cultural fusion is an interactive process rather than a one-way flow, as during which, Chinese youth constantly interact, negotiate, contradict, and absorb fused cultural values and identities.

The study has aimed at understanding rock music and popular culture through the lens of cultural fusion as a complex and dynamic issue by allowing diverse positions and voices to emerge from the collected data, in which a multi-method ethnographic strategy (Hodkinson 2002) has been employed, and a 'mosaic' of positions (Blackman 2010) has been constructed. Through the idea of cultural fusion, the PhD has sought to explore the different social, cultural practices of young Chinese people expressed through youth culture and popular music.

In particular, the thesis has suggested that Chinese young adults have taken up different positions and creative strategies toward cultural fusion between the East and the West. On one hand, within working-class rock participants, authenticity has been addressed by rock youth to negotiate Western cultural hegemony. Rock, as a Western imported cultural product in the context of continuing and deepening of reforms in China, has facilitated Chinese youth's growing accumulation of subcultural capital and the rise of subcultural communities within different tiers of cities. Subcultural reconstructions of rock symbolise working-class youth's contradictions facing Western cultural hegemony upon the East, as paradoxically, rock as a Western cultural form also facilitates subaltern youth to articulate disadvantageous identities in terms of class, gender and ethnicity, through which they resist to social inequalities and authority controls.

On the other hand, within the body of middle-class urban youth participating in rock music scenes on local, translocal and global levels, they articulate two different stances towards cultural fusion: counter cultural attitudes expressed by artistic and authentic rock participants toward Western cultural influences while being cynical and critical about Chinese

mainstream cultures and social institutional controls. The other contrasting stance has been demonstrated through the group middle-class youth through their engagements with rock as a leisure activity, in which they have been influenced by Chinese mainstream values. They have articulated nationalism and collective Chineseness through the process of cultural fusion. The study did not aim at essentialising Chinese youth cultural phenomenon and popular music by taking an 'either' or 'nor', 'this' or 'that', 'us' or 'them' perspective, but acknowledged multiple forces of commercialisation, cultural policy, technological development, Westernisation that have shaped youth cultural practices. While structural inequality and wider social change are significant in terms of interpreting popular music practices, there have also been internal diversities and overlapping within youth (sub) cultural communities during the process of cultural fusion. The analytical process has been accomplished through exacting themes and codes by generating thick description and using grounded theory analysis of data.

6.2. Reflections on methodological approaches and positionalities

The PhD has employed a multi-method methodological approaches that encompass ethnographic interviews and observations, autoethnographic narrations and textual approaches of qualitative content analysis and semiotics to study popular music and youth culture in China, within which, reflexivity has been central to the research positionalities. This part of the chapter reflects the value of using these qualitative approaches.

6.2.1. Research Positionality

The methodological approaches of this thesis derive from my reflexive research positionality as an ‘insider researcher’ from a non-absolute sense that characterised by significant levels of initial proximity between researcher and researched (Hodkinson 2005: 131). Through my biography, I am a genuine participant of rock music scenes, a female Han ethnic D.I.Y. musician, an educated middle-class Chinese youth born under one-child policy, who has been involved in both Chinese music scenes and transglobal music scene in London under cultural fusion. My position as a researcher and a D.I.Y. musician, who grew up in the context of the Chinese Economic Reform has enriched me with tacit knowledge on how Chinese popular music and youth culture developed in the processes of social transformations and cultural fusion. My insider proximity has facilitated the process of gaining access to the researched field and building up research contacts through snowball sampling and theoretical sampling. Insider research position has facilitated establishing trusts and friendship with research respondents, where webs of fieldwork relationships have enabled me to explore diverse voices and positions (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

My social distance from my male, ethnic minority or/and working-class research participants has enabled me to critically and reflexively engage with examined cultural phenomenon through immersion. As Hodkinson (2005) argues, a researcher’s ‘particular elements of identity fluctuate back and forth’ in relation to ethnographic research context, thus, constant cautiousness and reflexivity have been valued in different research situations within this study. The potential advantages of being an insider researcher, such as sharing with my research participants ‘an internalised language and a range of experiences’ (Roseneil 1993: 189; Hodkinson 2005: 144) have been realised through my social and research skills (Bennett

2003). Recognising the values of increased reflectivity has been significant to this thesis to minimise potential biased and distorted interpretations of collected data, which can be influenced by a researcher's subjective political interest (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007)

6.2.2. Ethnography and autoethnography

The PhD has employed a flexible and multi-method ethnographic approach (Hodkinson 2002:4-5) that encompasses in-depth interviews, participant observations, autoethnographies, qualitative content analysis and semiotics to study Chinese popular music and youth culture. This flexible ethnographic approach has allowed me to gain access to multiple positions and voices through constructing an ethnographic mosaic (Blackman 2010: 195 - 215). Thick description (Geertz 1973) has been generated to present an empirical grounded data analysis and interpretations, where constant comparisons between different data sets were central (Glaser and Strauss 1967). My insider researcher positionality has been demonstrated through my extensive access to gigs, music festivals, and venues, where I connected with musicians, music fans, critics, and music professionals. This researcher positionality has facilitated me to listen to various voices. My focuses on diverse data sources such as autoethnographic diaries, social media content, documentaries, and blogs have broadened my research scopes.

Ethnography as a central methodological approach of this PhD has been informed by the Chicago School of Sociology (Hart 2010). It is valuable for understanding popular music and youth culture within wider social context (Tagg and Negus 1992). As a singular reliance on textual sources and analysis is insufficient to understand Chinese rock music as a complex culture that is influenced by multiple sources of technology, globalisation, commercialisation, urbanisation, and 'its networks of production, distribution and marketing' that associate with popular music industry (Cohen 1993:126).

During my ethnographic fieldwork, there have also been challenges in terms of my insider researcher positionality. For example, I conducted ethnographic interviews and observations at the Modern Sky Festival at Beijing in 2014. I was watched and followed by the 'authoritative personnel' who worked at this festival. They were cautious about my research motives and interview questions and were eager to know if any of my interview themes contained anti-governmental aspects. This incident occurred after I had a short conversation with an authoritative security staff in terms of their roles and responsibilities at the festival.

My received responses were nothing more than silence and ‘confidential’. I felt uncomfortable being watched by the authoritative personnel when conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Thus, the study has suggested that awareness of ethnographic research circumstances is important to data collection in the context of Chinese cultural and political controls. Being under surveillance made me sensitive to my ethnographic fieldwork process, such as the way I engaged with my research participants. To ensure all participants feel safe to speak at the festival, I fully anonymised my fieldwork records as a precautionary action.

The thesis has employed autoethnography to understand Chinese youth identities, motives, and beliefs behind rock participation, production and consumption within the wider social context. Autoethnography implies a ‘humanistic stance in which phenomena under investigation are examined through the eyes and experiences of individual participants’ (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009, Méndez 2013: 280). This approach has been significant to this PhD as it generates rich data for my insider researcher position as a D.I.Y. musician, an urban one-child youth who grew up in the context of the reforms and opening up of China. I have experienced and witnessed Chinese rock music development and transformations under both social change and cultural fusion. The study has argued that my personal narratives, experiences and opinions are valuable data to understand this research, as they have facilitated cultural understandings through multiple layers of personal consciousness and experiences and have advanced sociological understandings (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 739, Wall 2008: 39). The thesis has demonstrated against Delamont’s (2007) argument of autoethnography, which is seen as a self-indulgent and narcissistic approach.

Emotional evocations have been present in autoethnography to connect with my readers, and to let them experience the scene rather than being purely spectators (Ellis and Bochner 1996: 24). Autoethnographic narratives were accomplished through my writings of autoethnographic dairies. I was aware of ethical issues when my autoethnographic narrations involved people around me. For instance, in Chapter 3 - Mapping out Chinese Rock Music Scenes and Youth Culture through Social Change, I wrote about my personal experience of consuming dakou (cut-out) cultural products where my mum was included as part of my data. The validity of my autoethnographic data has been demonstrated through my comparison of autobiographical narrations with existing literatures and different data sets including ethnographic interviews, observations, and textual analysis, where a multifaceted cultural experience has been displayed (Ellis et al. 2011).

6.2.3. Textual approaches of qualitative content analysis and semiotics

The thesis has employed textual approaches of qualitative content analysis and semiotics to examine a variety of intertextual data sources. As Bennett and Waksman (2014: 13) suggests, ‘the everyday qualities of culture as a dynamic and ever-evolving entity’ requires it ‘to be interpreted in a number of different ways –as text, as performance, as reception as interpretation and so on’. Qualitative and textual methodological approaches have been valuable in this study, as they have facilitated understandings of Chinese popular music and youth culture through interpreting online contents involved in, such as fandom forums on Douban, writings and descriptions by Chinese rock bands, conversations and posts on social media, as well as cultural artefacts of fanzines and photos. My insider researcher position has played an important role in the process of interpreting textual data, as I was able to draw verification of textual analysis from my ethnographic conversations with diverse positions of research participants: music critic, venue owner, musicians, music fans, and rock magazine readers, as well as from my autoethnographic experiences and narrations. The thesis has sought to minimise the potential ‘risks’ of analysing popular cultural texts that is argued by Victoria Alexander (2003) as offering ‘inappropriate readings when there are no ‘insiders’ to offer verification of a researcher’s findings’ (Renzo 2003: 12). Textual analysis in this thesis has been used as a complement of ethnographic studies, where an ‘ethnographic mosaic’ (Blackman 2010) has been constructed.

6.3. Research findings

The findings of this PhD contribute to on-going debates within popular music studies, cultural studies and sociology. In particular, the thesis has identified gaps within literature, in which new knowledge has been generated to contribute to such academic fields. For instance, the thesis has presented studies on new genres of Chinese rock music, such as agriculture metal, which has not been examined systematically and comprehensively within Chinese or Western literatures. In addition, the thesis also seeks to contribute to academic understandings on Chinese rock subcultures with a focus on structural inequalities of gender, class and ethnicity. The PhD has analysed development of Chinese rock at different historical conjunctions within wider social, political, economic change and its transformation of cultural meanings. The geopolitical relationship between music and place from a local, translocal and global perspective under cultural fusion has also been explored. The study has engaged with sociological work to popular music with the analysis of audiences, text and its related resources within the production of musical meanings (Bennett 2008), while cultural studies approaches remain central for this PhD to understand popular music and youth culture within broader structural inequalities and social institutional hierarchies. The research findings address the theoretical values and insufficiencies of the terms ‘subculture’ and ‘scene’ in understanding Chinese popular music and youth culture under cultural fusion. In addition, rock music’s relation to personal emotions and resonance, life experience, social relationship and leisure will be addressed from a micro level.

6.3.1. Wider social change and multiple influences on Chinese rock music

The first level of cultural fusion has been examined through rock music’s emergence, development and transformations in the context of wider social change. The focuses have been given on how multiple forces of technology; cultural policy, commercialisation and globalisation have shaped cultural meanings behind rock music at different historical conjunctions. The fieldwork, textual analysis and autoethnographic interpretations have revealed that rock, as a Western imported cultural form can be interpreted as a sound of an era, when China opened its door to the West in the context of the Chinese Economic Reform by Deng Xiaoping (1978-1993). Under these circumstances, Western cultural resources

flooded into Chinese Mainland in the context of loosening controls by Chinese state, among which was rock popularised among privileged Chinese youth and idealistic intellectuals within central location of Beijing.

The thesis has found that rock music, in the context of reforms, articulated Western values of individualism, rebellious, democracy and liberation. Rock youth in the 80s and early 90s participated in Chinese rock music scenes that were characterised by marginality and novelty, through using Western music styles, cheap instruments, performances and fashions. Rock music has become a facilitating force that evolved through protests and demonstrations – the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 for its anti-hegemonic rock spirit was in opposition to governmental controlled mainstream popular music *tongsu* and those *gangtai* music (Cantonese and Taiwanese pop) from neighbouring Hong Kong and Taiwan, whose music styles were influenced by Western pop. It was found that while *tongsu* music was utilised as a governmental tool to promote political propaganda and patriotism (Jones 1994), in which authoritative hegemony was embedded, *gangtai* music featuring themes of love was driven by commerce and was regarded as inauthentic by Chinese rock youth. In this level of cultural fusion, the study has argued that rock music as a Western cultural product that was adopted by the East, articulated subcultural resistance towards cultural hegemony and governmental controls. It also presented contradictory attitudes toward Western cultural hegemonies. Rock youth both learned from Western rock music styles and were resistant to Western influenced popular music, such as Taiwanese and Cantonese pop, because mainstream popular music was considered less authentic and very commercial by them.

The PhD has examined two geographical relationships between rock music and place, drawing from de Kloet's (2010) geographical studies on two dichotomies – 'the commercial south' versus 'the cultural north' and 'the real West' versus 'the fake East'. Such geographical relationships illuminate the hegemonic forces and the question of authenticity within Chinese popular music studies. In terms of 'the commercial south' versus 'the cultural north', we have seen that Beijing, as the political centre in northern China, is the birthplace of Chinese rock. Thus, music scenes in northern China are often seen as authentic and subcultural. The popular, southern sound from Hong Kong and Taiwan has often been accused of being 'inauthentic'. Regarding 'the real West' versus 'the fake East', we have seen that not only Western rock has a hegemonic gaze upon the East, it also 'defines' the standards of authenticity for rock music. Through examining these two geographical relationships, the study has suggested the ease of interpreting Chinese popular music and

youth culture from a binary perspective. This understanding of ‘the cultural north’ versus ‘the commercial south’ downplays the activeness of rock music scenes in Southern China and neglects the rock cultural landscape after the 2000s. The thesis instead has argued that cultural fusion as an interactive process between the East and the West has created possibilities and flexibilities in defining the standardised authenticity and hegemony of Western rock. In the case of Chinese agriculture metal music, authenticity can relate to Chineseness, nature, Daoism, sarcasm, spoof.

Mobile technologies have transcended geographical boundaries to consume and disseminate rock, Chinese rock music has also travelled to the West and has been consumed by Western rock lovers. Furthermore, the study has argued that Chinese mainstream popular music and rock cultures are not binary opposite to each other, as the state has also utilised rock performances as a medium to generate commercial benefits and to display its modern and ‘democratised’ outlook.

The changing rock music landscape has been examined at different historical conjunctions within this study. In particular, the ‘failure’ of Tiananmen Square protests, which transformed Chinese people’s attitudes toward politics and consumptions of popular cultures. With the ‘failure’ of protests, rock music was also banned by the state from mainstream media and returned to underground. Instead, gangtai music from Hong Kong and Taiwan has swept Mainland China, especially with the popularity of Karaoke, where Chinese people preferred to sing along with easy lyrics and catchy melodies. The marginal position of rock was also in relation to Chinese changing life attitudes: from caring about politics toward indifference, but instead, they focused on materialistic consumptions in the continuing of economic reforms led by Jiang Zemin (1993-2003) and globalisation.

The PhD has argued that within this harsh cultural condition, Chinese youth has taken up ‘risk-free’ creative expressions against emerging societal problems as a result of economic reforms, hierarchies from Confucianism and state cultural policies. In this stage, cultural fusion was reflected through the emergence of dakou cultures – Western abandoned CDs and cassettes punched with holes in the mid-90s, where Chinese youth expressed their struggles to the sudden shift from the cultural and political 1980s to a materialistic and individualistic 1990s. The two remarkable conjunctions – dakou culture and the New Sound Movement, as examined in Chapter 3 – Mapping out Chinese Rock Music Scenes and Youth Culture through Social Change have facilitated the rebirth with Chinese rock, which was

characterised with growing diversity of rock music genres, including post-punk, post-rock, folk rock, electronic rock, and the emergence of independent record labels, fanzines, venues and music festivals. Through my analysis of diverse data sets, it has been argued that Chinese rock is characterised with generational differences, and the rebirth of Chinese rock represents ongoing struggles faced by Chinese youth in a growing commercialised and globalised society. In addition, technological developments: from dakou to illegal online downloading and the later proliferation of online streaming have also facilitated virtual participations and consumptions of rock music, where online subcultural communities emerged.

6.3.2. Subculture theory and its interpretation

The PhD has employed subculture theory as a major theoretical framework to interpret Chinese rock music and popular cultures within wider social, political, economic and historical circumstances of China. The study has argued that subculture theory still remains explanatory potential as it ‘accounts for young people’s subcultural activities across different countries at different historical and political conjunctures’ (Blackman 2014: 508). My ethnographic and textual data have suggested that subcultural practices including rituals, dressing styles, commitments and autonomies were utilised by Chinese marginal youth to resist and negotiate the inequalities and controls within Chinese wider social, economic and political context, within which structural inequality of class, gender and ethnicity at Chinese different historical moments have led to subaltern youth distinguish their identities from parental cultures through taking up creative strategies.

Multiple aspects of subcultural practices in relation to Chinese rock music have been examined across different chapters within this PhD according to ethnographic, autoethnographic and textual data. Chapter 3 - Mapping out Chinese Rock Music Scenes and Youth Culture through Social Change has focused on the impact of social change on Chinese rock subcultural development. It has been found that rock music has participated in the process of social change and protests as a Western imported sound: it was utilised by elite and idealist Chinese youth to express anger, frustrations, rebellion and resistance toward the state’s governs and hegemonies facing the sudden exposure to Western values in the transition period from Chinese socialist and revolutionary past led by Mao Zedong (1949-

1977) towards a marketised and modernised future implanted by Deng Xiaoping (1978-1989).

The study has suggested the importance of recognising the different social circumstances in which Chinese rock subculture emerged in comparison to the post-war Britain. Where British post-war youth culture centred on working-class youth's distinctive creative practices as a resistance to materialistic inequalities (Hall and Jefferson et al. 1976), rock subculture in China was initially articulated by elite and heroic youth who got privileges to first access Western cultures when popular music was regarded as 'pornography' and banned by the CCP during the Culture Revolution. The thesis has argued that economic reforms marked a crucial historical turning point for the emergence of rock subculture in China, where elite youth in the 80s desired to change China to a democratic, liberalised and modernised society. My ethnographic and textual data have suggested that Chinese rock articulated anti-authoritative connotations, especially for it was banned by the state from mainstream media as an opposed sound with the 'failure' of the Tiananmen Square protests 1989, but its subcultural rock spirits have been inherited by a new working-class body consists of migrant workers, urban working class and peasantry (Dong 2016: 37) in the continuing of Chinese reforms led by Jiang Zemin (1989-2002).

The PhD has then examined rock subcultures in the context of the continuing of Chinese economic reforms that have led to diverse social problems including growing materialistic inequalities, increased rates of abortion as a result of the one-child policy, enlarging wealth gap between rural and urban residence following the hukou residential system that has bounded a Chinese person with its birthplace in terms of receiving welfare, education and housing benefits, as well as subordinated positions of females (Qu 2018) and ethnic minorities (Yuan 2016). At this stage, my ethnographic and textual data have suggested that the popularity of dakou youth culture has facilitated the rebirth of Chinese rock, in which marginal urban young Chinese consumed illegal-imported Western CDs and cassettes punched with cuts to accumulate subcultural capital, and to carve out spaces from increasing commercialised Chinese society. The thesis has argued that dakou youth culture articulated marginality that was distinctive from mainstream culture controlled by the state in the 90s and 2000s. Dakou youth have demonstrated subcultural substances (Hodkinson 2002), where subcultural commitment, distinctiveness, identity and autonomy were present. Furthermore, internet technology influenced the traditional dissemination of rock music, the thesis has further analysed the formation of online subcultural communities on Chinese social media

Douban, where internal group members of Blur (Hu) secretly shared illegal download links to collectively consume and exchange Chinese and Western rock music as subcultural capitals.

Chapter 4 *Subaltern Sound and Disadvantaged Youth within Chinese Rock Music Communities* has focused on examining Chinese rock subcultures holistically in respects of class, ethnicity and gender in the continuing (Jiang Zemin's leadership) and the deepening of economic reforms (under Hu Jintao's leadership 2003-2013 and Xi Jinping's 2013-now). Through examining Shuncun subcultural community located in Beijing, the case of ethnic minority band *Shanren*, diverse female voices and a newly emerged Chinese rock music genre – agriculture metal that articulates subcultural spoof, ironies and reconstructions, I have examined different positions and oppositions within Chinese rock music communities with focuses on first tier cities (Beijing and Shanghai) as well as varied norms, motives and beliefs articulated by Chinese youth to negotiate with and to resist to structural inequalities and Confucianism hierarchies.

My data has suggested that marginalised working-class youth in Shuncun community at suburban Beijing demonstrated subcultural commitment, friendship, rituals and identities. They expressed anti-mainstream attitudes and non-conformance through committing to rock music though they were in poverty. Such findings do not see subcultural practices as homogenised but recognise internal diversities within working-class subcultural practices. For instance, it has been found that while a majority of Shuncun youth were committed to producing and practicing heavy metal music, the self-claimed agriculture metal band *Shanren* differentiated itself from industrialised heavy metal by addressing subcultural authenticity. Subcultural authenticity has been further demonstrated by ethnic minority band *Shanren* as a strategy to negotiate ethnic identities facing cultural hegemonies both from China and the West. Yet they have expressed a contradictory attitude rather than binary oppositional, as the state also sponsored ethnic minority sounds as part of nationalism.

In terms of gender, subcultural resistance was articulated by female musicians toward Confucius hierarchies, where masculinity has the advantageous societal position. Disadvantaged female music fans have also established a virtual community on Douban to collectively resist suspicious male musicians who took advantages of female fans in terms of sexual relationships. In the case of agriculture metal as a newly emerged rock genre, it articulates a bold anti-authority position by creatively reconstructing mainstream commercial music using vulgar languages.

In analysing such subcultural phenomenon in contemporary China, I have adopted a multi-facet subcultural theoretical positions drawing from CCCS's subculture theory, Hodkinson's subcultural substances and Williams' interactionism approach that focuses on virtual subculture. Blackman's (2005) critical engagement with subculture theory is influential for this PhD to place Chinese youth culture in its wider social context and structural inequalities, which is different from a postmodern subcultural perspective that favours individualistic understandings of youth cultural practices. In this thesis, I have examined Chinese rock cultures with focuses on distinctive youth styles, their marginal positions, resistance, media and space, societal reactions, identity and authenticity (Williams 2007) by using a multi-method ethnographic strategy incorporating autoethnography, ethnography, textual approaches of qualitative content analysis and semiotics.

In terms of subculture, in Chapter 5 - Cultural Fusion as a Local, Translocal, and Global Phenomenon, I examined the local and translocal subcultural practices through analysing fanzines – 'So Rock! Magazine' (2009-2013), fandom organisation – Zaodongshe, representative local musicians – Zhao Meng and Xie Tianxiao, subcultural contributions and practices within local venues – Downtown-bar and Freedom Cuba in lower-tier cities within Shandong province. I suggest that the thesis has contributed to studies on non-Western, non-white, male and female, spectacular and non-spectacular subcultures (such as the case of eco-friendly ethnic minority band Shanren) through exploring multiple layers of subcultural phenomenon rather than merely relying on class as a factor and to assume it's homogenised. The marginality of a local music scene that is in relation to/being opposite to its urban outlook has added extra insights to interpret subcultures from a geo and spatial perspective.

6.3.3. Agriculture metal as a new genre of Chinese rock

The PhD sought to contribute to the field of popular music studies through the examination of a newly emerged rock music genre – agriculture metal that specifically originates in China and characterised with Chineseness. My data has suggested the changing meaning of agriculture metal within Chinese context: initially by ethnic minority band Shanren to articulate ethnic authenticity, distinction of identity from Western industrialised heavy metal, and to express eco-friendly attitude that associated with rural life and a return to agriculture. I have argued that agriculture metal has been symbolically connected with counter-hegemonies

from the West under cultural fusion. Yet, it displayed a paradoxical position towards Chinese Han cultural hegemony – resisting, but also being part of broader Chinese nationalism. Then, this genre of music was embedded with different cultural meanings by a group of working-class, majorly Han, Chinese youth, who collectively expressed spoof, ironies, sarcasm and resistance toward Chinese authority, their subordinated status and commercial cultures.

My data has suggested that agriculture metal can be seen as a unifying genre, which is symbolically related to Chinese historical, cultural and economic conditions as an agriculture country, which is different from industrialised heavy metal that originates from the West. I have argued that Western heavy metal signifies economic development and a well-established welfare system, in comparison to China as a developing country, whose diverse social problems could not be minimised through its welfare policies. Thus, agriculture metal has been interpreted as an oppositional strategy towards Western cultural hegemonies. It articulates a distinction between Chinese identities and Westernised identities, such as ‘us-agriculture’ and ‘them-industrialisation’. But at the same time, the thesis has denoted a positive connotation that was expressed by the agriculture metal band Shanren and a negative, sarcastic implication that was demonstrated by the group of working-class youth, who expressed dissatisfaction toward the hegemonic mainstream culture that is controlled by the CCP. The differences between the two groups of agriculture metal music youth rest with a mild ‘risk-free’ resistance – a compromise by ethnic minority musicians, or a bold, challenging dissatisfaction by the Han working-class youth such as *Bodao* (Refute). Thus, by revealing the internal diversities of agriculture metal as a unified genre, the thesis has found both consistency and inconsistency through the articulations of this genre.

In terms of music styles, my data has suggested that agriculture metal youth have reconstructed mainstream commercial pop, Western pop and rock and adopted some of those elements into their production of metal-style or folk-style music. Regarding dressing styles, they are in relation to an agriculture metal band’s musical preference, such as *Bodao* dress like farmers as they concentrate on making folk music, but *Yumbi* dress like Western metal youth and make heavy metal music. A common ground between different styles of agriculture metal youth rest with their vulgar, bold and sexual swearing languages in the lyrics. My textual data has suggested that their linguistic strategies within agriculture metal reflect their working-class, subordinated identities. They are cynical, sarcastic and ironic toward unequal Chinese social realities. Agriculture metal youth’s subcultural creativities have been interpreted as a collective social solution towards growing materialistic

inequalities. Furthermore, the thesis has examined agriculture metal music practices both virtually and in reality.

6.3.4. Reflections on ‘scene’ as a theoretical framework

The thesis has examined Chinese rock music scenes from local, translocal, and global levels, drawing from ‘scene’ as a ‘local translocal and virtual phenomenon’ (Bennett and Peterson 2004). ‘Scene’ as a theoretical concept has been investigated in terms of its potential to explain the relations between music and place (Straw 1991, Shank 1991). It is an inclusive term that encompasses ‘a particular state of relations between various populations and social groups, as these coalesce around specific coalitions of musical style’ (Straw 1991: 379). The PhD has suggested that ‘scene’ is valuable to describe ‘unities of highly variable scale and levels of abstraction’, and to refer to musical practices ‘dispersed throughout the world’ (Straw 2001: 248). It has been used throughout this thesis to examine Chinese rock music practices as unities at local, translocal and global levels, as de Kloet (2010: 41) argues ‘the local and global implications of the concept are helpful in the context of ‘Chinese’ rock scenes, precisely because the global is so deeply implicated in the local’. What de Kloet suggests echoes my analysis on cultural fusion through the prism of Chinese rock, where cultural flows from the East and the West travel to each other and generate interactions, contradictories, negotiations and fused identities. However, Western popular music carries a degree of hegemonic force over Chinese domestic popular cultures, in comparison to Chinese cultural power upon the West.

David Hesmondhalgh (2005) criticises this scenic approach in his evaluation of ‘subculture’, ‘neo-tribe’, ‘genre and articulation’ and ‘scene’. For Hesmondhalgh, what seems to be valuable denoted by the term scene, is confusing and problematic. As according to him, ‘sometimes [scene] is used to denote the musical practices in a particular genre within a particular town or city, sometimes it is used to denote a cultural space that transcends locality’ (Hesmondhalgh 2013: 124). Even in response to Straw’s (2001: 248) defence on scene as a valuable term within cultural studies, Hesmondhalgh is not convinced, ‘given the incommensurable attempts to theorise it’ (Hesmondhalgh 2013: 124). He sees the term as over-inclusive and ambitious. He prefers to use ‘genre and articulation’ to refer to musical practices.

I suggest that Hesmondhalgh's approach focuses on the sociological aspects of popular music, which could be downplayed by a cultural approach of analysing musical practices, this is evidential as he supported 'an amicable separation' of the study of youth and the study of popular music (2005: 38). But even he advanced 'genre and articulation'; he suggests that 'one or two concepts will never be enough to analyse the social complexity of music.' De Kloet favours a combination of 'scene' and 'genre and articulation' in his studies of Chinese dakou youth culture. However, as the thesis has argued in Chapter 3 - Mapping out Chinese Rock Music Scenes and Youth Culture through Social Change, De Kloet downplays the collective understandings of Chinese marginal youth in terms of struggles, contradictories, and resistances toward structural inequality. Thus, I have used subculture theory as a major theoretical framework in combination with 'scene' to analyse Chinese rock music practices. As Chinese rock music practices are participated, produced and consumed by a mixture of working-class and middle-class Chinese youth across different locations and historical conjunctions.

Here, the notion of scene is valuable in this thesis to address the cosmopolitanism and diversity of youth cultural practices especially in urban settings. The advantages of the term rest with its implications of 'dynamism and a recognition of the inner circles and weighty histories which give each seemingly fluid surface a secret order' (Straw 2001: 248). In Chapter 5 - Cultural Fusion as a Local, Translocal, and Global Phenomenon, I have analysed how lower-tier cities of Qingdao and Zibo in comparison to first-tier cities of Beijing and Shanghai have different rock scenic characteristics. Rock music scenes are influenced by their urban characteristics. The thesis has examined rock music scenes in lower-tier cities such as Qingdao, and found that its geographical, historical and cultural roots as a 'cultural desert' has caused the local music scene to struggle in comparison to mainstream Chinese popular music and Korean pop. 'Scene' as a theoretical framework that connects music and place, is valuable to examine music practices within the Chinese city tier system, in which urban cities are ranked based on their scale, economic prosperity, welfare, educational and cultural resources.

Scene is also a useful term to demonstrate my additional data analysis of London music scene. London has acted as a cultural fusion location during my ethnographic fieldwork, as middle-class Chinese youth migrate to the West for higher education and participate in London music scenes. Scene facilitates understandings on how diasporic middle-class Chinese youth engage with cosmopolitan music scenes from a transglobal perspective. My data has suggested that

using a combination of theories of scene and subculture provide explanatory potentials to understand Chinese popular music as a complex culture. To the former, it acts as a useful framework to demonstrate music scenes as a local, translocal, virtual and transglobal phenomenon; to the later, it offers explanatory potentials to understand disadvantaged youth and marginal positions within Chinese societies, where growing inequality between classes has resulted in diverse social problems.

6.3.5. Middle-class youth cultural practices in diaspora settings: counter cultural edge, nationalism and leisure

Another level of cultural fusion has been examined from middle-class Chinese youth's music practices in London, which has acted as an additional location for cultural fusion. According to my ethnographic data and semiotic analysis of social media content, it has been found that within the body of educated middle-class youth in the UK, multiple positions and voices have emerged within London rock music communities. Both groups of Chinese rock youth I examined, including those artistic and counter culture youth, and those leisure-driven youth, express struggles, loneliness, and distinction of identities in the diasporic, Western environment. The differences between these two groups rest with, one group articulate a counter cultural edge towards Chinese cultural hegemonies and social institutional controls, including familism, partyism, and schooling. They consume mostly Western rock and engage in everyday British youth cultures. Through accepting British education and living in the UK, their values and identities have been largely Westernised. The thesis has argued that their distanced localities from mainland China also enable them to be cynical and critical toward Chinese mainstream cultures. This group of rebellious middle-class youth expresses 'risk-free' counter cultural attitudes. The other group of 'leisure-driven' youth present collective Chineseness identities through organising Chinese rock music festival within London universities. For them, producing and participating rock music implicate a part-time social activity, a hobby, in which they can show off their personal talents through playing instruments, forming bands, and covering popular music in self-organised student events exclusive to Chinese audiences. In contrast with the first group of middle-class youth, who values authenticity and critical thinking towards Chinese society, making a student event commercially successful is more valued by this group of middle-class youth. My data has suggested that within this 'leisure-driven' rock community, middle-class youth has

demonstrated their nationalism and Chineseness through excluding Western audiences in their music events. Rock was utilised as a sound to express nostalgic and loneliness instead of a rebellious sound.

The study has focused on both individual and collective orientations rather than essentialising a youth cultural phenomenon. In addition to examine well-educated diasporic Chinese youth's collective attitudes, norms, values that are articulated through rock music, the thesis has also focused on sociological aspects of understanding rock music practices. For instance, in Chapter 5 Cultural Fusion as a Local, Translocal, and Global Phenomenon, I have examined how changing environment, life experience, social relationships and emotional evocation are in relation to Chinese youth cultural practices. My data has suggested that shared music tastes are a crucial marker for Chinese youth to form friendships and other social relationships at an age cohort. Rock music consumption is also related to an individual's resonance when listening to a song, mood and emotions within a given circumstance, and one's subjective understandings of lyrics and melodies.

6.4. Directions and implications for future research

The PhD has focused on a broad examination of Chinese youth and rock culture practices within wider social context, globalisation and commercialisation. Much of this PhD has been oriented toward a cultural studies and a sociological approach, with a focus on collective understandings of youth cultural practices at different historical conjunctions and context, but there have also been individualistic interpretations of youth values, beliefs and norms in relation to rock music practices, such as social relationships, life experience, emotion and resonance in relation to music. I suggest that future directions on studying Chinese popular music and youth cultures should focus more on diverse and broader interdisciplinary approaches, such as psychology, musical education and body movement.

The thesis has addressed the semiotic values of the texts, including those rock music lyrics, fanzines, documentaries, and contents created by rock music participants and musicians on social media sites. Using a semiotic approach to analyse different textual materials, it helps to understand the complexity and diversity of Chinese rock music culture. The PhD has described different presentations and expressions of musical materials by rock musicians. Such as in Chapter 4, I addressed the authenticity of agriculture metal music through distinguishing its melodies, the use of instruments, dressing styles, and its dance movement from Western industrialised heavy metal. Based on this general description of the music ensemble, I suggest, future research on rock music should also focuses on the nuances, gestures and grain of musical materials, as it will add semiotic value of the texts and lyrics.

Within this PhD, multiple spatial movements in terms of music dissemination and participation in the digital age have also been studied, including urban and rural, local, translocal and global, online and offline (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). It has been found that in comparison to Western rock music's centre position, Chinese popular music remains peripheral in the context of globalisation. However, online music dissemination has also made it possible that Chinese rock music can also be disseminated and participated by Western youth under cultural fusion. The case of agriculture metal music has implicated linear movements of music dissemination: from rural to urban, and from ethnic minorities to the Han majority. The spatial movements can be reflected both geographically and culturally: not only working-class Chinese rock musicians have migrated from the periphery – rural

China, to the centre of Chinese music industry – a first tier urban city such as Beijing to participate in the urban subcultural communities, but also, the migration has enabled peripheral musicians (such as rural villagers and ethnic minorities) to get involved in the broader and centralised Chinese rock music scenes culturally. And eventually, these centralised and developed music scenes in first tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai have been again disseminated via online streaming sites and social media communities to the peripheral China. I suggest further research directions should also focus on understanding the centre and the periphery of music scenes in China.

While the field of Chinese popular music studies is relatively small in comparison to existing studies on Western popular music and white youth, it has been found that existing research on Chinese popular music studies have predominantly centred on urban youth. I suggest it would be more comprehensive to take into account of rural youth practices through conducting ethnographic fieldwork, and autoethnographies on rural China, where disadvantaged and marginalised rural youth restrained by the *hukou* residential system (bound a Chinese to its birthplace in terms of accessing education, welfare and mobility) and unequal distributions of wealth, cultural resources and welfare. Cultural fusion might be less present in left-behind rural China, where even getting access to enough fresh water; electricity or the Internet can be difficult.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Mapping out record labels, music venues and social media platforms

Social media platforms:

Chinese: Weibo, Wechat, Douban

Western: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter

Music venues:

Beijing: Mao Livehouse, Star Livehouse, XP, D-22, 13 Club, Yugongyishan, Maquewashe, School-bar, Lao What, Jianghu, Yue Space, Two Good Friends, Woniu de Jia, Hot Cat, Jiangjinjiu, Tangguo Live, Temple bar.

Shanghai: Yuyintang, Mao Livehouse, Xianchang, 696 Live, Inferno, Harley's Bar, The Force.

Qingdao: Freedom Cuba (closedown), Downtown-bar

Zibo: Xiu, West Livehouse, Yese,

Yantai: Hawana

London: Barbican, Roundhouse, O2 academy Brixton, Café OTO, Alexandra Palace, Hammersmith Apollo, The Union Chapel, O2 Shepherds Bush Empire, The O2 arena, Electric Brixton, The Garage, KOKO, Village Underground, Royal Festival Hall, Scala, Oval Space, The Forum, 100 Club, Hyde Park.

Chinese independent record labels:

Modern Sky, Maybe Mars, Mile, Shisanyue, Shanshui, Screaming, Weiboziyan, Subjam, Lychee, Hotpot Music, Fusheng Changpian, Daomadan, Beige Zhongguo (4AD), So Rock, Dafu,

Appendix 2: List of interviewees, and selective ethnographic fieldwork at music festivals and gigs

2.1. List of interviewees:

Beijing:

Chinese musicians:

- Folk rock/ agriculture metal (*nongye jinshu*) ethnic minority band *Shanren* from Yunnan province:

 1. **Qu Zihan:** lead singer
 2. **Xiao Budian:** multi-instrumentalist
 3. **Ou Jianyun:** drummer
 4. **Ai Yong:** bass player

- Rock/post-punk band *P.K.14* from Nanjing, Jiangsu province

 5. **Yang Haisong** (also the CEO of independent record label Maybe Mars (*Bingmasi*))

- Rock/shoegaze band *Baby Formula* (*Ying'erpeifang*) from Wuhan, Hubei province

 6. **Kenzo** (anonymous): singer, founder of Mentha&Partners cultural agency
 7. **Li Guoran:** band member

- Other musicians:

 8. **Qi Kuan:** previous guitarist from student band *Anti-clockwise* (*Nishizhen*) at Shandong University of Technology, Zibo, Shandong province
 9. **Sidney** (anonymous): multi-instrumentalist from Beijing
 10. **Sun Tian:** band member from *The Sweet Escape* (*Tianmi dataowang*)
 11. **S** (anonymous): band member from *The Sweet Escape* (*Tianmi dataowang*)

Music fans:

12. **Zoe Zhou**
13. **Spoon** (anonymous)
14. **Lalian** (anonymous)
15. **A'liang** (anonymous)
16. **Kaiwen** (anonymous)
17. **Hu'er** (anonymous)

- 18. **Jessica Meng**
- 19. **Muma** (anonymous)
- 20. **Yaobairen** (anonymous)
- 21. **Alex Apps** (British)
- 22. **Craig Apps** (British)

Other participants:

- 23. **Matt** (anonymous) (Scottish): a music professional working at Modern Sky Music Festival in Beijing.
- 24. **Authoritative guy A**: working at Modern Sky Music Festival in Beijing.
- 25. **Authoritative guy B**: working at Modern Sky Music Festival in Beijing.

Shanghai:

- 26. **Zhang Tieqian**: musician from the female band LaCygne, music fan
- 27. **Zhang Haisheng**: musician and owner of the music venue Yuyintang
- 28. **Huang Shan**: musician, founder of the cultural agency Mentha&Partner
- 29. **Xie Banshi** (anonymous): music fan
- 30. **Song Boyang**: music fan, used to be a student band musician

Shandong province:

- 31. **Yu Bingqian**: singer, multi-instrumentalist in Qingdao
- 32. **Li Zhi**: music professional at a Qingdao university, organiser of rock music society
- 33. **Wang Jianshu**: rock music audience at Downtown-bar Qingdao
- 34. **Amanda Wang**: music fan from Qingdao
- 35. **Dola Sun**: music fan from Qingdao
- 36. **Riz**: (anonymous): music fan in Qingdao
- 37. **Koko**: (anonymous): music fan in Qingdao
- 38. **Sui** (anonymous): music festival attendance in Qingdao
- 39. **Xiang** (anonymous): music festival attendance in Qingdao
- 40. **Wang Jiabin**: musician from the band *Bodao* in Zibo
- 41. **Zhang Baiwan**: musician from *Bodao*, music critic, freelance writer (Zibo)

- 42. **Wang Ke**: student band musician at Shandong University of Technology, Zibo
- 43. **Zhang Aidang**: musician from the band *Julangdiaobi* (from the city Weifang)
- 44. **Jaja** (anonymous): musician from the *Julangdiaobi* (from the city Weifang)
- 45. **Er'pao**: band manager of Diku'ai, music fan of *Zaodongshe* organization from Yantai
- 46. **Huang** (anonymous): musician from the band Daotian (from the city Linyi)

London:

- 47. **Ross Hurley**: musician from the band Zilinski, music fan (British)
- 48. **Photonokaka**: music fan
- 49. **Hermann**: music fan
- 50. **Wang Jiayong**: Jenova Festival organiser, student band musician
- 51. **Jinn**: bass player
- 52. **Kai** (anonymous): student band musician at Jenova Festival
- 53. **Zhang** (anonymous): student band musician at Jenova Festival
- 54. **Li** (anonymous): student band musician at Jenova Festival
- 55. **Zui** (anonymous): audience at Jenova Festival
- 56. **Lin** (anonymous): audience at Jenova Festival
- 57. **Mosquito** (anonymous): music fan, founder of Mentha&Partner
- 58. **Tan Bo**: music fan
- 59. **Stacey** (anonymous): music fan
- 60. **Yi** (anonymous): music fan

2.2. Selective ethnographic fieldwork at music festivals and gigs

Modern Sky Music Festival at Beijing 2014

Midi Electronic Festival at Zhenjiang (near Shanghai) 2015

Visited Yuyintang venue in Shanghai 2015

Ratatat gig at Beijing 2016

Cangmashan music festival at Qingdao 2016

Jenova Festival at University College London 2016

Slowdive gig at The Garage, London 2017

Jenova Festival at Scala, London 2017

Twinkle Star gig at Downtown-bar, Qingdao 2018

Appendix 3: Interview themes and questions

- 1 Tell me about how you approach Chinese underground music, when did you first listen to it, and what did you think about the music. What is unique about the music?
2. Has your lifestyle including your social life and dressing codes influenced by the genre of music you listen to? Why?
3. What helped you to discover underground music? Tell me about the impact of technology such as Internet and the medium you rely on for listening to music
4. Have you migrated to different locations through your teenage years until now, if within China, where did you migrate? What's the difference between the music scenes in different places?
- 5 Has the change of location affect your involvement within underground music communities?
6. Apart from music listening tools, what other mediums do you find essential to approach underground culture? Such as fanzines, posters, youth culture webs, social media accounts etc.?
- 7 How often do you go to gigs/festivals, where did you go? What were you like? What was the atmosphere like? Describe the scene you could remember from your participated gigs/festivals
- 8 Do you think there's a trend of festivalization of Chinese underground music, if so, could you describe the trend? What's your attitude towards it?
- 9 How would you describe your identity attach the music you listen to, in addition to music, how would you describe your taste and social background, do you think there's certain association with taste and class in contemporary china
- 10 According to your experience as a music lover from a young age, what's the attitude of the government towards underground culture/underground music? What's your position in terms of government's attitude towards underground culture?
11. Continue with the question of festivalization of cultures and music, what do you think the authenticity of the music you listen to, are they heavily commercialized?
12. Under globalization and westernization, what do you think is the impact on local underground music? Are they characteristicized with Chineseness or western characteristics?
13. When a band is called copycat of the western band, what's your standpoint on this? Why do many Chinese bands sing in English?
- 14 How would you describe the diversity of underground music genres in China?
- 15 What are the crucial record labels in China? What role did they play in facilitate the development of underground music/culture?
- 16 What are the contradictions and tensions between the underground and mainstream music in your eyes?

- 17 With Chinese students' migration abroad trend, do you think students' identities will be influenced/changed in a different country?
- 18 As a musician, what's your purpose for producing alternative music? What themes do you want to express? What's the ideology behind it?
- 19 As a founder of record label, for ex: Maybe Mars, what made you want to develop the underground music market in China, what challenges did you face, what's the overall conditions when you first approach the market compare to nowadays?
- 20 Why there's constant closedown of popular venues in Beijing such as XP and Mao lives house etc.?
- 21 What's the role of college rock for fertilizing local underground music scene?
- 22 People say Beijing is the centre of Chinese rock, why? Compare to southern China, such as Shanghai, what's the difference between local music scenes in these places?
- 23 Does different genre of music represent a different social class of culture?
- 24 What's your parental generation's attitude/understandings of underground music such as rock/punk/metal?
- 25 Why many Chinese youth regard the west is the best, or the west is fashionable rather than domestic culture?
- 26 What social media tools/webs do you often use to explore underground music / interact with people from the community?
- 27 What's the ideology behind popular Internet terms such as artistic youth (*wenyiqingnian* - young people who are into literature and art), *zhuangbi* (pretending to be great/smart/unique/fashionable though he/she isn't), what do you think of the young people who label themselves with these popular terms?
- 28 Are underground music in China political or not? Why people wouldn't care about politics but rather interested in a materialistic life?
- 29 How would you define good music from your point of view?
- 30 Has mainstream TV shows promoted underground culture in some ways? As recent years there's TV shows on local TV stations such as Chinese Good Voice, Chinese Good Songs, Higher Education Rock Night, they select talented musicians from the mass, those musicians who has been on TV gains popularities.
- 31 Can Chinese rock stars make a living just rely on playing a band? Why and Why not?
- 32 From your experience, or social circle, what are the people like who are into underground cultures/music? What's the difference between different genres?
- 33 When you go to a festival, you see some young people dress like metal/Goth/punk, do you think they represent the culture or they just dress like that without representing a metal/Goth/punk? (Being superficial)

Appendix 4: Examples of field notes and autoethnographic dairies

Examples of field notes at Modern Sky Music Festival, Beijing 2014

2014.7.13
Jim coast
hedge dog
shanghai.
Scottish.
shit show
hear all the stage.
Government pay for this
place. no one comes to
hit take.

age 100 (like
20-30. younger
singing in English
4 men long hair
2 guitar 1 bass
1 drum 1 singer
same hairstyle.
except singer
all wear glasses
man like no

new scene.
roll. drumline.
the first wave.
2015 roll
plain hasn't been
much new stuff
electronic is all night
scene → a bit more
intense
Dmc punk scene.
interesting scene.

fatiomun chang
入场。
大排黑T. meet at
pizza place. one said
Just know money
2 people looks like
in their early twenties.
14:38.
a few police beside
in the eating tent
all playing their phones

An Example of my autoethnographic daries:

Much has changed, I realised when I first started to listen to popular music on TV and radios in my childhood, what was the most often heard music at that time was Hong Kong pop, until now, at the age of 26, that I listen to rock, electronic and classical music mostly on online streaming devices whenever I want, wherever I go. Through this time, not only the change of technology had a big impact on disseminating popular music in China. My music taste changed simultaneously alongside the change of technologies. Throughout these years, there have also been more available musical resources imported to China since economic reform. From the earliest underground band formed under the influence of westerners who lived around embassy's area in Beijing, the later illegal imported *dakou* CDs and cassettes, until the popularization of Internet, who brought a new virtual space for youthful expression, as the Internet became a fixture in young lives. At the meantime, not only music and subculture communities are forming online on social media sites such as Douban, so does off line events and festivals flourishes.

I still remember the first music festival I went to back in 2009. The three-days event took place in Beijing Tongzhou Park from May 1st to May third featuring three stages and over 60 bands from both China and overseas. Including Deerhoof, Xiuxiu, Zhangchu and Sulumi. It was held during Chinese public holiday—the International Workers' Day. That was also the first Strawberry Music Festival held by the largest mainland independent record label—Morden Sky, after the company successfully launched its first indie music festival Modern Sky Music Festival back in 2007. The other most influential music festival is Midi, who focuses on rock and heavy music, and it was also the first-ever rock music festival in Mainland China, who held a Midi Music Weekend in Xidan Cultural Square (Xidan wenhua guangchang) in Beijing, 2000. At that time, when I travelled all the way from my university town—Zibo in Shandong province up to north—the capital Beijing. I was so excited and energetic to participate in a festival as a Chinese youth who grows up in the urban east coast, where the economic is more developed than inner mainland. The vibe in the festival is just like freshly picked strawberries in the springtime, which is in accord with the branding of the festival: to feel romance, love and spring, just like Woodstock festival. Indeed, the first wave of established music festivals was more authentic, not only it's an attempt, an experiment to adopt western culture to Chinese markets. It's also a celebration to express youthful, creative ideas.

When I was a kid, the most memorable music were those bright and lively children songs, my mother bought those cassettes from limited music stores and night markets, in the early nineties, none of internet, mp3s or CDs were popularized. From 1994-1995, when I was struggling to go to kindergarten simply because I didn't like socializing with any kids in my class except one girl, I was an introvert little girl spoiled by my grandmother as I was the youngest girl among her grandchildren and I was also the only child of her younger son under the one-child policy. As long as I didn't want to go to the kindergarten, my grandmother

could always make up an excuse for me and told my teachers that I couldn't attend the class. Eventually, even the headmaster knew me just because of my terrible attendances. Except those children songs, teachers from the kindergarten also played the piano in class and taught the kids some children's songs. Though children's songs I obtained from class, cassettes or TV were the main musical influences in my early childhood, I do remember my mum also played her beloved popular music on tape recorder, it was music of a Hong Kong pop star called Zhang Xueyou, his music frequently ranked within top ten in the weekly pop music chart. My father's favourite musician is a Taiwanese female pop star Deng Lijun, who has a very sweet voice and renowned for singing love songs. Her voice was also described as being "like weeping and pleading, but with strength, capable of drawing in and hypnotizing listeners. My mum isn't a crazy fan of Zhang Xueyou (Jacky Cheung), Zhang Xueyou was more like a trendy icon for her, but Deng Lijun was undoubtedly my dad's favourite pop singer even until now. I remember he told me listening to Deng's music wasn't that easy in the 80s, not only for the limited mediums for listening to music: not many families in mainland China had tape recorders, but also for government's censorship on popular music, Deng's music was regarded as pornographic music in revolutionary era. Because of the continuing political tension between Taiwan and mainland China, pop music from Hongkong and Taiwan were regarded as too 'bourgeois'.

15th October 2014

By Mengyao Jiang

Appendix 5: Shucun Announcement (*Shucun shengming*) (translated by Mengyao Jiang)

In recent months, a movie themed on Beijing underground rock is being filmed in Beijing. The film is called 'Beijing Rocks' (*Beijing Yueyunu*). It is directed by Zhang Wanting from Hong Kong. It has been confirmed that the film does not include famous film stars. As a commercial film, it contains a range of themes such as superstar, love, pop rock, and alternative youth. The film will employ underground bands' dressing styles, languages, performances and accommodations as important filming elements.

The filming team has been in contact with most of the underground bands, and it got help from a lot of musicians. Musicians have involved in offering help to dressing styles, script, and actors. But during the process of discussions, establishing friendship, and getting in touch with the team, participated musicians started to feel disappointment. This was because participants (musicians) gradually recognised there have been misunderstandings from commercial cultural professions, though the filming team has been working very hard. Many bands that live in Shuncun Beijing and Dongbeiwang have confirmed such facts right after our (musician) friends have signed a contract with the filming team, that's when the film was going to be shot:

The producer of the film did not have the ability and obligation as we expected to truly reflect the life, thoughts and affections of underground rock bands. Though we are still respectful towards the filming crew, and we are thankful for their efforts in understanding rock culture, we feel disappointed that they only had a shallow understanding of rock. These kinds of understandings have been built upon our different life attitudes and beliefs. These problems cannot be solved through their hard work and the participation of rock musicians. Our musical friends can help with changing the hairstyle and conversations of actors/actresses, but we cannot help with making it less shallow and less commercial. Because we cannot let the producer understand – why we have chosen such a lifestyle and such a music style.

After discussing with 10 bands' representatives, we officially announce that we would like to stop the cooperation with 'Beijing Rock' filming team, in the context of not breaking any legislation and moralities. Because at least, we don't need to destroy our images by ourselves, to let underground rock only have instruments, colourful hairs and legendary stories. This decision isn't aiming at a particular individual, or a particular film, but is in regard to something we'd love to talk about, but we haven't got the chance to. It's a summary of our attitudes. First and foremost, we believe the film will make the mass population have another misunderstanding of underground rock instead of a real focus. Then, we believe film is just like music; it is not only for entertainment. We hope to express our honesty on if we want to participate a job, whose form is more important than its content. In addition, we believe that in terms of our music, lyrics and attitudes, we have been always against commercial culture and mainstream culture, as they have bad impacts on an individual and the society. Thus, it's unnecessary for us to join this (filming) activity. In addition, we believe Chinese rock is the same with other countries', it will be related to commerce and making benefits. But since the underground rock just emerged, it does not want to immediately become part of the mainstream culture that has been opposed by our previous generation of rockers. The film thing is just an incident in our life; no one wants to really engage with it. What we need to do is to express our underground attitudes.

About underground rock, we want to say, no one has forced us to live a life like this, no one has been tempted us to choose such a (poor) living environment. We hope to clearly understand the reality and everything might be happening in the future. We are responsible for what we are doing. Underground rock is not only about dressing styles and music styles; it is not only about poverty and anger. It is to produce music based on our thoughts and decisions. We want to improve our living standard, and hoping to make a living by producing rock, but what makes us happy, as rockers are that we are fighting for maximum freedom, especially in terms of spirituality and independent thought. What we are discussing now is not about the film 'Beijing Rock', but a fundamental question: What are we aiming for? We have left our hometown to live in the suburban Beijing. Not eating well and wearing strange clothing. We might be performing for our whole life in these small bars. There have never been abstract independent spirits, true affections,

and freedom of creation, societal justice. When we are talking about these topics, we are not impulsive. We know we are under massivel controls and lure. It is easy to mimic underground music, but what is truly valuable is to live a life just like making music.

No one can really represent Chinese underground rock, but we truly believe we are part of it. We only represent ourselves. But we must have represented more people. Today, across China, or across every corner of Beijing, there are numerous underground bands. Those mainstream controlled media and markets are trying to block rock music, but at the same time, they are trying to select what can be sold as a commercial product. What is underground and what is rock music? Those irrelevant people have always argued these issues, even for what we are doing today. But the most important thing is that – we don't have an organization, we don't have any powers. We don't even have desires to promote ourselves and to control others through being constrained by the institutional pressures. We are against cheating and being cheesy. We are against stop thinking independently. These are not slogans, but are thoughts deep from our hearts.

Facing all those outside doubts and comments, such as why we have tattoos, if we will be able to make a living, how the music will develop, and if we have the talents, we want to say it's our own underground rock business. Today we are signing on this announcement for expressing our determinants. It's time for us to act as just what we have said. Now, let's critically think and reflect ourselves!

14th Oct 2000

By Yan Jun

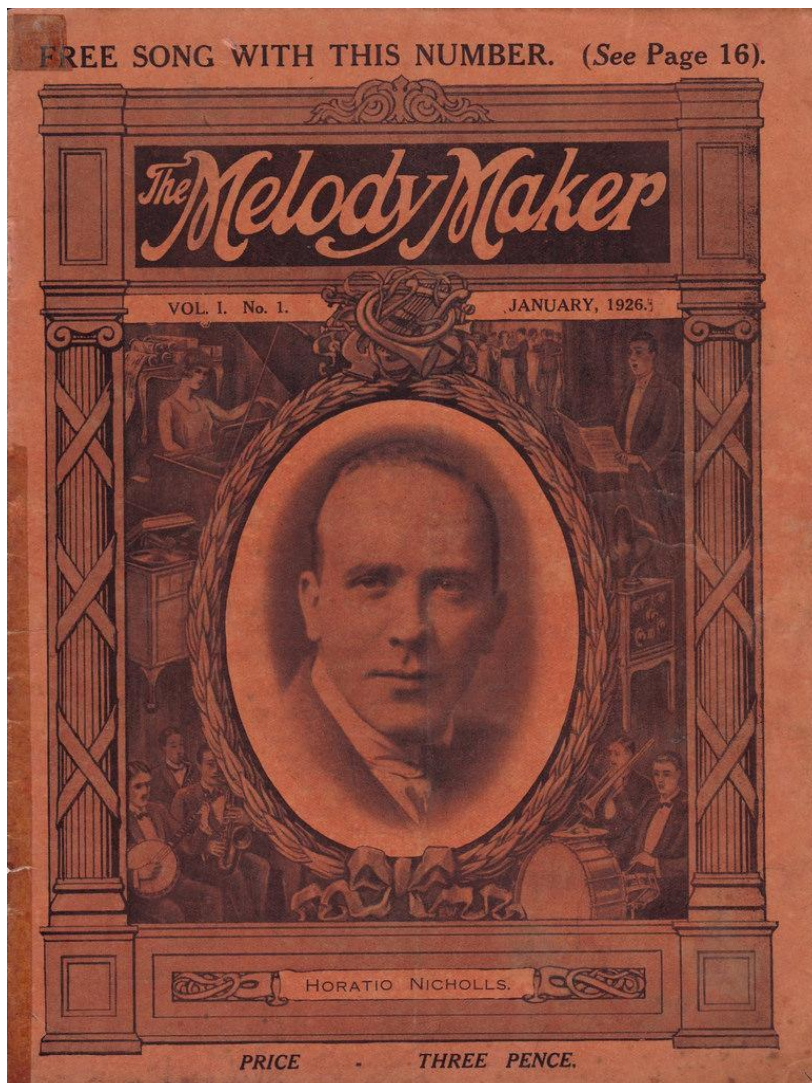
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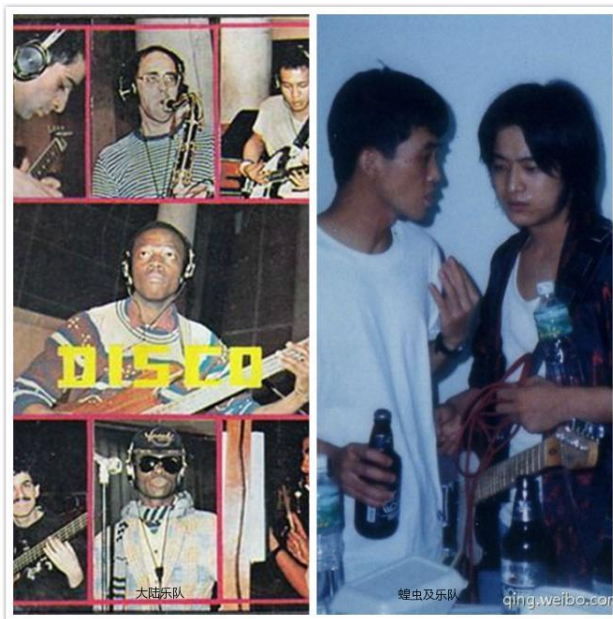


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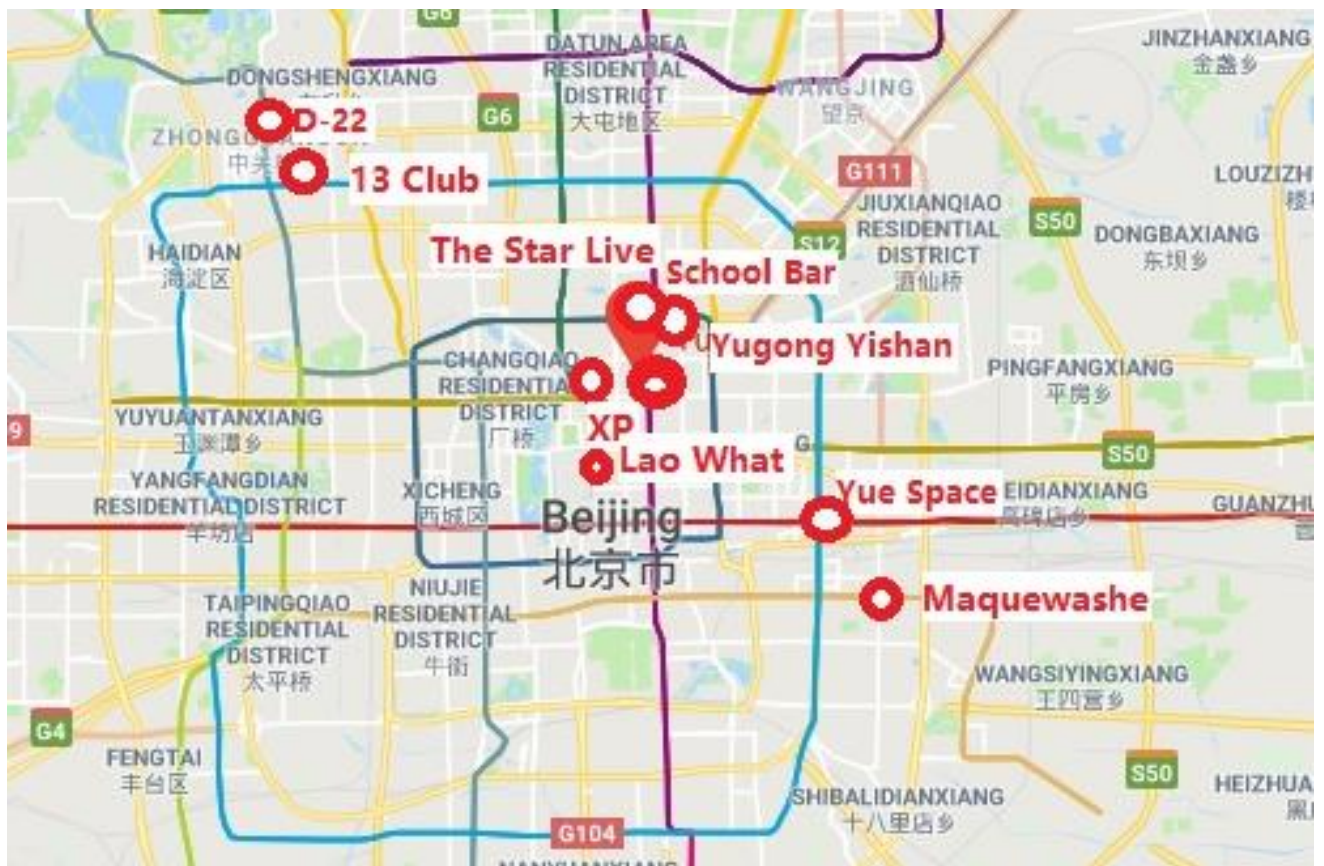


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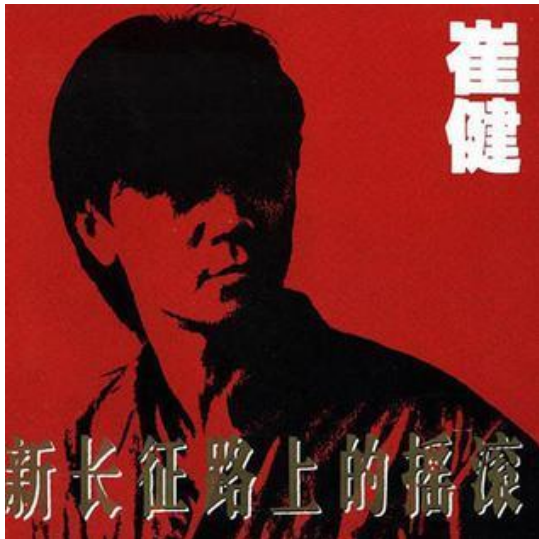


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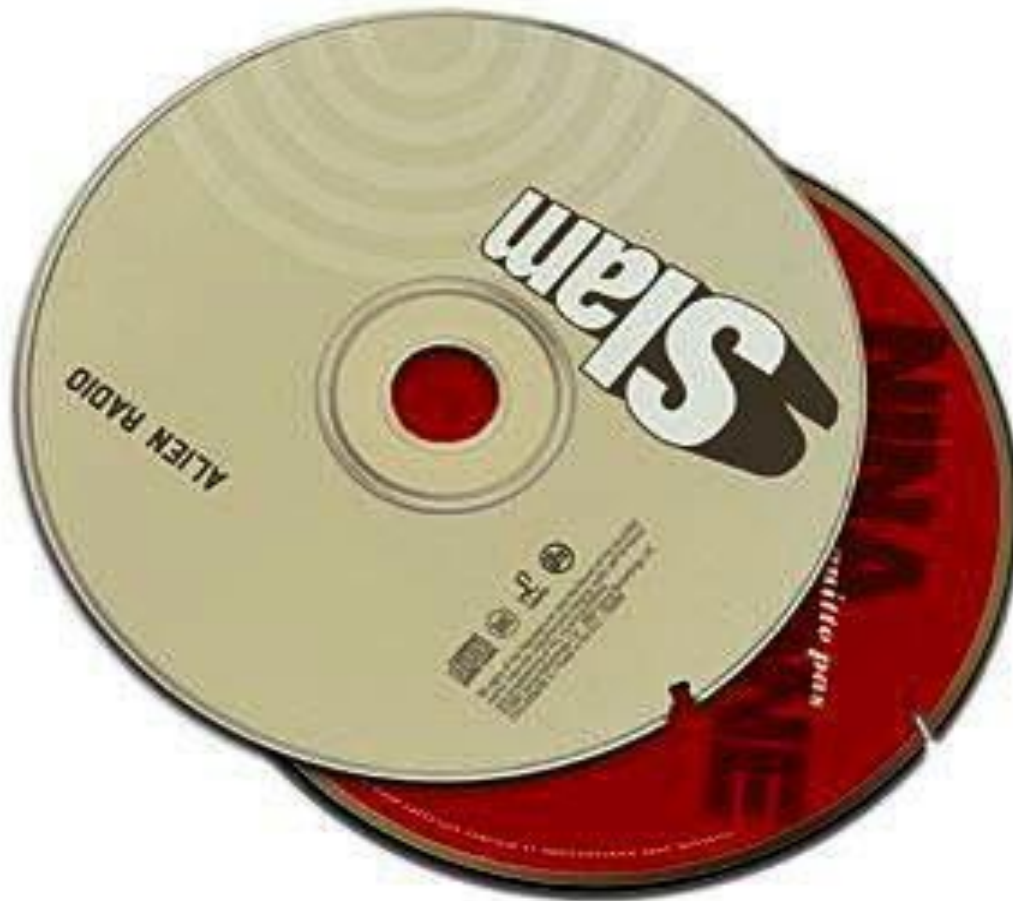


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【alternative】Primal Scream 10张	Doublebitch	10	2013-03-17
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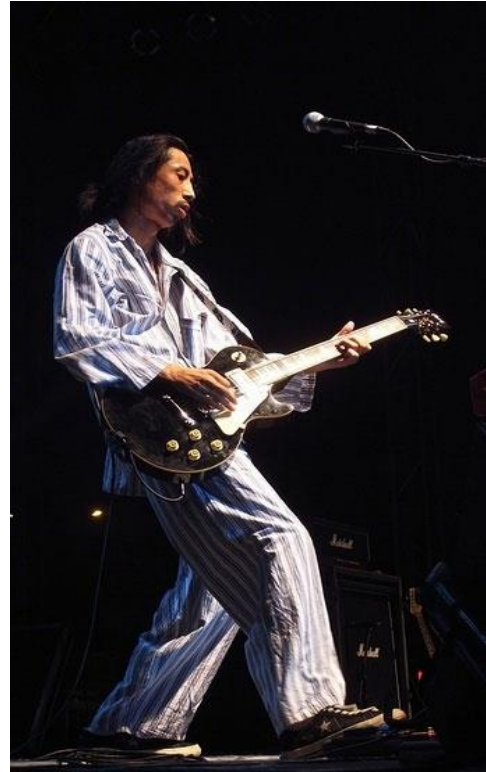


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