

Self-disclosure Beyond 'Vulnerability': Young people, musical biographies, technology and music-making

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'I want it. I need it. Because all of these records, they give me a language to decipher just how fucked I am. Because there is a void in my guts which can only be filled by songs'

(Hopper 2015, p. 13).

Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the author's signature.

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(Signature)

Contents

Contents	i
List of Figures	iv
Abstract.....	v
PREFACE.....	1
Mythologies and Impossibilities	3
Methods.....	6
The Problem of Music.....	8
Tensions of Self and Self-Disclosure	10
Thesis Outline.....	12
CHAPTER ONE - ON YOUTH ARTS DISCOURSE AND THE TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVE	18
1.1 The Youth Arts Framework.....	24
1.1.1 Youth Arts Framings of Vulnerability	29
1.1.2 Youth Arts Framings of Resilience	32
1.1.3 Youth Arts and Governance.....	34
1.1.4 Through the Neo-liberal Frame: How Vulnerability and Resilience are Inscribed onto Young People.....	40
1.2 Narrating Vulnerability.....	43
1.3 Towards a New Youth Arts Frame	47
1.3.1 Social Resiliency.....	53
1.3.2 Temporality.....	55
Conclusion.....	59
CHAPTER TWO - METHODOLOGY.....	61
2.1 Employing a ‘Version of Friendship as Method’	64
2.1.1 Self-Disclosure.....	69
2.1.2 Expertise.....	72
2.1.3 Making Sense of Experience	77
2.2 The Method.....	81
2.2.1 Recruitment.....	82
2.2.2 The Two Stages	84
Stage One	84
Stage Two.....	88
2.3 Considerations and Challenges	95
2.3.1 Blurring the Lines.....	95
2.3.2 Ensuring Participants’ Safety and Wellbeing.....	97
Conclusion.....	100

Contents

PARTICIPANT PROFILES: MUSICAL TRAJECTORIES	102
Dani's Profile.....	103
Dani.....	104
Ryan's Profile	108
Ryan.....	109
Dez's Profile	114
Dez.....	115
Julia's Profile	119
Julia.....	120
Mark's Profile.....	124
Mark	125
CHAPTER THREE - TECHNOLOGY AND SELF-DISCLOSURE	130
3.1 History of Technology within Music-making	134
3.2 Technology, Determinism, and Democracy.....	137
3.3 Aura and Authenticity.....	143
3.4 Intimacy.....	146
3.5 Technology as an Extension.....	150
3.6 Technology, Metrics and the Social	155
Conclusion.....	161
CHAPTER FOUR - NARRATING THE SELF THROUGH MUSIC.....	162
4.1 Musical Discoveries as Affective and Memorable Reactions	164
4.1.1 Epiphanies.....	167
4.1.2 Rediscoveries	171
4.2 Musical Biographies and Fandom	174
4.2.1 Readymade, Accessible Fan Cultures.....	178
4.3 (Post)Subcultures.....	184
4.4 Introducing 'Social Authorship'.....	189
Conclusion.....	192
CHAPTER FIVE - MUSICAL PRACTICES AND THE SOCIAL.....	194
5.1 Music-Making and Social Contexts.....	196
5.2 'Astonishingly Neglected'	198
5.3 Practice and Purpose.....	200
5.4 Individual Expression through Collaboration.....	211

Contents

5.5 Career Goals in a Precarious ‘Flawed Market’	220
Conclusion.....	230
CONCLUSION.....	232
Non-linear Music-making	233
Self-Disclosure	235
Vulnerability, Creative Expression and Resilience	237
Music-Making.....	239
Future Considerations.....	240
REFERENCES.....	243
APPENDICES	260
Appendix 1.....	260
Interview Schedule	260
Scoping Interview	260
Youth Arts Worker Interview	261
Case-Study Interview 1	263
Case-Study Interview 2	264
Case-Study Interview 3	265
Appendix 2	266
Interview Details.....	266
Appendix 3	267
Recruitment Material (Scoping Phase)	267
Appendix 4	268
Recruitment Material (Stage Two Case-Study Interviews).....	268
Appendix 5	269
Participant Information Sheet – Young Musician (Scoping Phase).....	269
Appendix 6	271
Consent Form – Young Musician (Scoping Phase).....	271
Appendix 7	273
Participant Information Sheet – Young Musician (Stage Two Case-Study Interviews).....	273
Appendix 8	275
Consent Form – Young Musician (Stage Two Case-Study Interviews).....	275
Appendix 9	276
Participant Information Sheet – Youth Arts Workers	276
Appendix 10.....	278
Consent Form – Youth Arts Worker.....	278

List of Figures

Figure 1. Traditional Youth Arts Transformation Model.....	25
Figure 2. Reconceptualised Youth Arts Model.....	47
Figure 3. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Dani.....	103
Figure 4. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Ryan.	108
Figure 5. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Dez.....	114
Figure 6. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Julia.....	119
Figure 7. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Mark.....	124

Abstract

I sit across the table in a café, ready to begin my final interview with Julia, a young musician living with bipolar disorder who participated in this research. With a short-sleeved shirt on, her self-harm scars are obvious from the outset. As the interview continues, I begin to understand exactly how these scars are central to her music-making practice, one that involved disclosing personal stories of family mental illness. Often mediated through technology, music-making is used by Julia, as well as other young musicians, as a constructive means of engaging with personal vulnerability. Doing so enables processes of self-disclosure, which assist in the young person enacting a resilient identity. This thesis analyses the ways in which young musicians with experiences of vulnerability utilise both personal and musical biographies as part of a music-making practice that affords opportunities to manipulate, tailor and take charge of personal experience.

The academic youth arts discourse assumes that young people with experiences of vulnerability are in deficit. As popularised by youth music-making initiatives, such an approach assumes that, through participating in an adult-run music-making program, the young person can move from vulnerability (deficit) to resilience (strength). Such programs elide the critical role music, as a cultural form, often plays in the lives and identities of vulnerable young people. Instead, programs position music merely as a youth engagement tool to govern and ultimately transform young people. This transformation narrative is in stark contrast with popular music discourse which romanticises stories of the tortured artist, celebrating musicians' ongoing and continuous engagement with personal vulnerability as part of practice.

This work entails a two-stage ethnographic methodology. Stage One consists of interviews with 13 young musicians with experiences of vulnerability and two youth arts professionals. Stage Two involves a series of three follow up case-study interviews with five of the young musicians who participated in Stage One. When speaking with young musicians, I utilised a 'version of friendship as method', an adaptation of Tillman-Healy's 'friendship as method'. Doing so generated experiences that could be situated in dialogue with existing youth arts discourse. This methodology also afforded new opportunities for understanding young musicians' life worlds.

Through an analysis of my empirical material, this thesis argues that young musicians with experiences of vulnerability use music-making as a means of self-disclosure; a practice that involves a continuous interplay of vulnerability and resilience as mediated through technology, personal experience and musical biography.

To make this argument, I analyse the experiences of the young musicians with whom I worked through a dialogue with a range of literature, including youth arts, vulnerability and resilience studies, technology studies, and fandom and subcultures research. In particular, I build on Frith's call for a focus within cultural studies on individual cultural practices, and I draw on Hesmondhalgh's contention that music involves both individual and collective practices - often at the same time - to suggest that the neo-liberal focus on individualisation is deeply embedded in the lives of young musicians, especially those with lived experiences of vulnerability. However, as I demonstrate, these individual practices are embedded in strong social and collective networks.

Within these contexts, young musicians with experiences of vulnerability engage in music-making practices, which afford opportunities for self-disclosure. These practices, in return, facilitate a fluid and non-linear engagement with vulnerability, which allow participants to enact a resilient self. Calling young musicians' experiences into dialogue with the existing dominant

Abstract

discourse surrounding vulnerability and resilience, this thesis argues against the transformation narrative that characterises much youth arts practice. Such an approach also has implications for methodology, suggesting that specific and contextualised approaches need to complement the broad categorical approaches to understanding youth practice. In this way, this thesis complements and extends the existing youth arts discourse.

Preface

In 2005 I was 20 years old, and as I sat behind a grand piano in a cavernous rehearsal room with a hastily formed band alongside me, I nervously etched out an original song that initially began as a reaction to a relationship breakup. As the song developed, however, it became clear that although it was sparked by a breakup, the song was actually the first time I had gained real insight into my own struggles with mental ill-health. The lyrics are long forgotten, however the content explored how my own interpretation of the world was muddled by a depression that had slowly emerged over quite a few years. Sonically, it mimicked the piano ballad style of 'Into My Arms' from Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds (1997) and attempted to live up the lofty introspective heights of Radiohead's 'Pyramid Song' (2001). Using that moody, dark ballad style as a backdrop, I found room within the confines of a pop song structure to document and navigate my own experiences of vulnerability. These vulnerabilities lived out in that song, and they continue to echo through that room.

My own experiences with music-making began much earlier than this. Between the ages of 4 and 5, my father would take me into the Victorian College of The Arts in Melbourne each Saturday morning. It was there that I would attend choir, and where my own foray into the world of music began. From my first piano lesson at the age of 10, my engagement with music-making was intertwined with my own thoughts of identity and vulnerability. After 6 years of piano, I decided at the age of 16 to also learn drum kit. I continued to take private lessons for piano and drum kit before focussing solely on the drums for my final years of high school, as well as an Advanced Diploma in Music Performance. It was in this final year of my Advanced Diploma where, in addition to drum kit, I began to write songs that explored my own personal vulnerability. Although in hindsight, they were overly emotional 'woe-is-me' piano-led ballads, writing them and rehearsing them with a band provided me a space where, for the first time, I

Preface

was able to gain specific insight into my own issues with depression. I stopped playing music on a regular basis a year or so after finishing that course in 2005. Since then, I have occasionally experimented with different forms of electronic music-making using my laptop and smart phone, however, as with my experiences with piano and drum kit, I found the limits of my talents, producing, reluctance to keep making music, and other priorities in life took precedence.

At the same time, music-listening continues to play a significant role in intersecting with my own experiences of vulnerability. Where music-making eventually led to frustration with my ability to use it to engage with notions of self, music-listening continues to provide a soundtrack to my life, there alongside significant moments of both personal hardship as well as significant realisations. Like many teenagers, I became obsessed with music, specifically Australian music. Using a dial-up modem, I would look for additional information about Australian bands such as Regurgitator, The Mavis's [sic] and Gerling, bands who often led me to and reminded me of my own vivid emotional reactions, including joy, anger, and sadness. Music-listening continues to elicit emotional reactions within me. Now I listen to a wide range of music, from anthemic rock from Gang of Youths through to neo-classical artists like Luke Howard and Nils Frahm.

Music, in all its forms, thus continues to act as a medium for my own continuous navigation of personal vulnerability. Throughout all of these experiences, both in making and in listening, music intertwines my own feelings of self-worth, confidence, as well as anxiety and depression. More recently I have written about Australian music for my own online publications and have written stories for others about how music operates as a soundtrack to key moments in life. It is from these personal experiences that I developed an abiding curiosity about the ways that young people use music to navigate personal vulnerability. It is thus the relationship between young people's experiences of vulnerability, their music-making practices and their music-listening biographies that this thesis interrogates.

Mythologies and Impossibilities

Mainstream narratives about popular music often construct the musician as a tortured artist, romanticising the struggles musicians have with experiences of vulnerability. These ideas about tortured artist have the status of a popular mythology that contends that *good* music comes from struggle and pain. These ideas find their origins in the cultural narratives about specific genres of music. Much popular music in the western world stems from what scholars term ‘black music’ (Shuker, 2002, pp. 22–23), a term that signals popular music as a response to stigmatisation and marginalisation; the most obvious example being the rise of blues music amongst African men who were subjected to the slave trade in colonial America.

Framing creative practices through this romantic and idealistic lens, certain ‘artists’ tend to be revered within popular culture, not simply because of their ‘output’, but also because of their ‘struggle’. And, of course, all too often, these tortured artists lose their ‘battle’ with their struggle. From major international rock icons such as Jeff Buckley, Kurt Cobain and Chris Cornell, through to local underground musicians like Fergus Miller and Szymon Borzestowski – all of whom took their own lives – depression, and mental illness in general is thought to shadow the lives of musicians (Jamison, 2011, p. 351; Van den Eynde et al., 2014, p. 23; Van Den Eynde et al., 2016, p. 19)¹. These narratives of struggle profoundly affect the ways in which publics make sense of musicians and their creative outputs.

¹ For many musicians, the struggle is very real, as evidenced by recent research investigating the ways ‘death’ and in many cases, suicide, is prevalent in the lives of musicians (Van Den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn 2016; Van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn 2014; Kenny 2014). Introducing their book ‘Death and The Rock Star’, Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun suggest that within western popular music forms, the act of suicide has ‘tended to seal the deal of the singers as ‘tragic’, in line with the Western, romantic fascination with the figure of the doomed artist’ (Strong & Lebrun 2015, p. 1).

Preface

By contrast, an equally compelling mythology - albeit more localised in its articulations and effects – is that propagated by youth arts discourse². In this discourse, music-making is constructed – perhaps paradoxically, given the dominance of the tortured artist narrative – as emancipatory; a panacea to young people’s experiences of vulnerability. Over the last two decades, programs and workshops specifically designed for young people with experiences of vulnerability have used engagement tools such as music-making as a way of ‘engaging’ them (See Bessant, 2003; Fox, 2013; Muncie, 2006; Raby, 2014; Vromen and Collin, 2010) and ‘transforming’ their lives.

As I elaborate in more detail in Chapter One, such programs and workshops tend to construct music-making as a tool to engage vulnerable young people and bind them in the project of overcoming their challenges (Baker and Homan, 2007; Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Eckstrom, 2007; Rimmer, 2012; Wang, 2010). The ostensible aim of these programs is to enable young people to resolve their vulnerabilities and position them to lead stable and fruitful adult lives. Further, vulnerability is seen as overarchingly negative, eliding the possibility that it might have a meaningful role to play in the creative process. In doing so, such programs propagate what I will call a ‘transformation narrative’, which frames the young people they target as in deficit (Furlong et al., 1997, p. 7) and asserts music-making as leading young people, in a linear progression, from a state of vulnerability to that of resilience. And, in the process, the perspectives of adults tend to outweigh those of young people.

This increased focus on the individual narrative and the responsabilisation of young people has been a key concern of youth studies for some time (Kelly 2001, p. 23). The focus on the

² Throughout this thesis, I use the term discourse when referring to the dominant ways of thinking and the language used when considering particular phenomena. I use Foucault’s notion that inherent in discourse are relationships with power and, as a result, exclusion (Foucault 2006, p. 170, 2002, p. 373). This understanding of discourse and how specific ways of knowing are perpetuated are what informs this doctoral research.

Preface

individual narrative, coupled with an increased focus on identity as dictating the ways in which young people interact with the world (Buckingham 2008, pp. 7–9), converts any experience of ‘socio-structural marginalisation [to] an individual responsibility’ (McLeod 2012, p. 11). This ‘conversion narrative’, however, suggests a tension. If there is a tendency within the current climate for young people to internalise and take personal responsibility for socio-structural marginalisation, this also feeds into a young musicians’ own compulsion to make ‘my own work’ (McRobbie 2004, p. 5).

How do young people experience vulnerability in the context of music-making? To what extent does the transformation narrative meaningfully intersect with their experiences? And what of so-called vulnerable young people’s music-making beyond the youth arts paradigm? These questions drive this thesis’ line of inquiry.

To this end, this thesis asks:

- How do young musicians engaged in music-making practice draw on ‘vulnerability’ in their creative process?
- What is the interplay between the music-listening/consumption practices of young musicians and their subsequent making practices?
- And, how might social contexts inform and shape vulnerable young musicians’ experiences of music-making?

To get at these questions, this thesis focuses in on the experiences of vulnerable young people who make music beyond the strictures of youth arts programs. Indeed, one of the central claims of this thesis is that we are yet to find appropriate ways of investigating the impact of music-making on *the everyday lives of young people who have experienced ‘vulnerability’*. There is literature that

broadly investigates how young people engage in creative practices, as well as literature that specifically documents young people's music-related practices in youth arts settings (Bloustien 2007; Bloustien, Peters & Luckman 2008; Bloustien & Peters 2011; Peters & Bloustien 2003). There is also extensive literature assessing the effectiveness of youth arts and music-making programs and workshops (Baker and Homan, 2007; Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Eckstrom, 2007; Rimmer, 2012; Wang, 2010). What is missing, however, is work that documents the direct and specific experiences of young musicians who make music outside of the traditional youth arts context.

Existing youth arts literature tends to deploy a top-down, adult focussed approach to the design and assessment of youth arts programs (Baker and Homan, 2007; Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Eckstrom, 2007; Rimmer, 2012; Wang, 2010), leaving little room for youth-centred understandings. Similarly, scholarship that addresses popular music's cultural movements provides detailed accounts of these situations and phenomena from a cultural, structural and political perspective. Thus, what Frith refers to as the 'actual people who write songs (and) who are symbolic creators' (1992 p. 184) are often elided. Frith (1992) suggests that cultural studies research tends not to focus on the micro processes, but rather the broader, societal and political structures that shape and are shaped by practice. The everyday processes of cultural production, according to Frith, have been 'astonishingly neglected' (Frith, 1992 p. 184). This thesis takes up the challenge Frith poses and focuses in on vulnerable young people's micro-practices. For young musicians, what do these on-the-ground practices look like?

Methods

This is not a conventional thesis. At the heart are the experiences of the five young musicians I spent time with between June 2014 and January 2015. I bring these experiences into dialogue

Preface

with the existing youth arts and youth cultural studies discourse throughout the thesis. The more typical criteria of a conventional 'literature-critique-data' structure creates barriers to the experience of participants. Within the context of this thesis, in order to better surface these narratives, I utilise a more engaged approach, one that documents both my own experience with the literature and fieldwork, as well as young musicians' own experience with vulnerability and music-making. The existing body of literature is then embedded into the substantive analysis that takes place throughout. Personal experience is weaved throughout this thesis, in part as a means of answering Frith's call. I also utilise this personal approach in order to better elevate the experiences of my participants.

As I explain in greater detail in Chapter Two, in this thesis I draw upon ethnographic work with five young musicians, all of whom have experiences with vulnerability. To do so, I employed a two-stage ethnography. Firstly, I conducted a scoping exercise in order to further identify the types of experiences young musicians had within an Australian setting, as well as to ascertain the kinds of young musicians who might be willing to participate in the research. In addition to these young musicians, I also conducted interviews with two youth arts professionals, both of whom facilitate and run music-making initiatives for young people with a focus on providing entries into the music industry. As part of the second stage, I selected five of the young musicians and conducted a series of three in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with each.

I employed a 'version of friendship as method' as my methodological approach, an adapted version of Tillmann-Healy's 'friendship as method' perspective (2003), one that employs self-disclosure as part of its practice (Reinharz & Chase 2003, p. 79). Through the development of close relationships with five young musicians, this thesis analyses their experiences as a means to argue for shifting the discourse from a top-down, category-based approach to understanding young people towards one that is built from their own understandings. It is an approach that

follows the natural flow of friendship and utilises similar practices, pace and ‘natural contexts’ to friendship, however done within the ethical confines of working with young people with experiences of vulnerability. In choosing to make fieldwork decisions that are based upon establishing a friendly and relaxed rapport with participants, this thesis asks how this might shift the kinds of data generated.

The Problem of Music

The late New Zealander musicologist, Christopher Small, elaborated what he calls ‘musicking’ (2011), as the act of participating ‘in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing’ (Small 2011, p. 9). Small advocates for music to be understood as a verb as opposed to strictly as a noun. Doing so focuses attention on the social and cultural settings that shape music-making. Taking Small’s lead, I extend the concept of ‘music-making’ beyond the act of writing original music by positing that music-making also inevitably involves music-listening and consumption practices, as well as the process of rehearsing, recording, and releasing a piece of music through digital and live means. Indeed, as I demonstrate in later chapters, for young musicians who write and release their own original music, music-making incorporates the full spectrum of listening, writing, releasing and performing original music. This thesis documents my participants’ musical biographies in detail, in order to account for the complexity of the music-making process, and to trace the ways it intersects with their vulnerabilities.

Given that the parameters of music-making practices in the lives of young musicians are broad, this thesis draws on a wide variety of literature. I purposefully merge insights from the fields of youth cultural studies (with a focus upon music) with other fields of study. Within youth cultural

Preface

studies, there has long been a tradition of combining popular music studies alongside a study of youth cultures (Bennett 2002, 2001; Bloustien & Peters 2011; Thornton 1995). The field of sub-cultural research is a good example of this (See Bennett 2011; Blackman & Kempson 2016; Clarke et al. 2006; Hebdige 2012). This thesis complements the broad categorical approaches to youth studies with a focus on the individual narratives of young musicians themselves. In doing so, I situate this thesis within the fields of youth arts (Bloustien & Peters 2011; Wang 2010; Cheong-Clinch 2009; Warren & Evitt 2010), vulnerability and resilience studies (Burns et al. 2008; Evans & Reid 2014; Gale & Bolzan 2013; McLeod 2012; Oliver et al. 2006), technology studies (Benjamin 2008; Ihde 2009), fandom and subcultures (Duffett 2013a, 2013b; Jenkins 2006; Bennett 2011; Hebdige 2012), and popular music studies (Frith 2012, 1992, 1981; Hesmondhalgh 2013).

One common discourse operating within popular music studies details the way in which music allows for both individual and social experiences. Speaking about his book *Why Music Matters* (2013), David Hesmondhalgh highlights the unique dichotomy that both music-listening and music-making produce:

‘In many ways, the most extraordinary thing about music is its ability to combine that very personal sense of musical feeling, that music means something very special to me with this other aspect of music which is its ability to offer intense feelings of sociability and collectivity. So, it’s that double sided nature of music that’s so interesting to me, that it’s both intimate and collective at the same time’ (BBC Radio 4 n.d.).

I utilise Hesmondhalgh’s work extensively throughout this thesis. His contention above that music-making affords both intimate and collective experiences, often at the same time, highlights a major conceptual theme that emerges in this thesis. As Hesmondhalgh contends, the social and individual experiences of young musicians as they engage in practice coalesce, with the individual practice given specific context and meaning through music’s collective nature. There is a

messiness that often prevails within the practices of young musicians, something that, for various reasons, is often purposefully left out of the existing youth arts discussion. I utilise this messiness and ‘in-between-ness’ in a theoretical sense as it assists in unpacking the role music itself plays.

Tensions of Self and Self-Disclosure

In my work with young musicians, self-disclosure became a key theme. Self-disclosure performs a vital role in the ways in which young musicians engage with vulnerability through their music-making practice. In this thesis, I have spoken with young musicians with experiences of vulnerability who use personal experience as part of their music-making. Music-making, as this thesis will argue, affords young musicians³ access to a broad language that holds both semiotic and sonic value. Through this language, practices of self-disclosure emerge.

Self-disclosure emerged across this work and was activated within three settings. The ‘version of friendship as method’ used as part of my fieldwork necessitated self-disclosure practices due to its focus on establishing a shared status. It also became a significant frame within which to understand the purpose and processes involved in participants’ practice, becoming intertwined with both music-listening and music-making practices, with these practices often mediated through technology⁴. This practice of disclosing aspects of self also emerged through looking at how music-making manifested through social practices. For participants playing music as part of an ensemble or as part of a collaborative duo, specific vulnerabilities were disclosed both in the writing and rehearsing stages and shared through these practices. In disclosing aspects of self

³ Throughout this thesis, I use the term ‘young musicians’ when making reference to young people engaged in music-making. This, in part, is a decision based upon an economy of words. It also, as I establish in the subsequent chapters, is a decision informed by the young people’s own identification with music and being a musician.

⁴ This PhD research forms part of the Connected and Creative research program that forms part of work conducted by The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, who work alongside young people, researchers, practitioners and policy makers to investigate the role technology can play in improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people. (See - Young and Well CRC n.d.). A major aspect of the work conducted by the CRC is understanding how technology can be integrated into the everyday practices of young people. I have therefore considered the role technology plays in young musicians practice, however, as I argue, technology played a positive, but not decisive role in these practices.

that might be deemed to be ‘vulnerable’ by the participant, I argue that they were in fact presenting a resilient self. Embedded deep into the resilient identity of a musician are processes of self-disclosure.

This thesis fully acknowledges the tension built into notions of self, especially in the lives and practices of ‘vulnerable’ young people. Modern neo-classical understandings of self suggest that the process of self-disclosure is bound in the revealing of concrete aspects of identity. Post-modern iterations, however, rely on a far more conceptual consideration where there is no unified self, but rather fluid, performative versions of self. Through a postmodern lens, processes of self-disclosure involve disclosing distinctly different identities depending upon context. This is in contrast with the way singular, concrete identities are typically used to identify vulnerable young people. My work found that young people experiencing vulnerability use the opportunity of music-making to explore the concrete identities that are often allocated to them - for example, mental illness, cultural background, gender identity or sexuality – and that these explorations and self-disclosure practices often become a core underpinning of their music-making; there is, if you like, a compulsion and requirement to mine this distinct self at play.

The processes involved in music-making can be seen to anonymise self. Whilst all participants were identifiable through their music being released online, the personal information many choose to disclose via song is not⁵. Through utilising a reflexive and continuously evolving language such as music-making, young musicians are given the option to self-disclose quite intimate personal phenomena. With the multiple voices (musical biographies, lyrics, chord progressions, melody lines, instrumentation) that comprise a piece of music, the meaning often

⁵ In ensuring that the identity of the young musicians participating remains anonymous, I have used pseudonyms for each participant. Collaborators have also had their names changed. Song titles and band names too have been removed and replaced with descriptions where appropriate. This is done to ensure that the personal lived-experiences that young musicians disclose through their music-making practice are left to exist within the format that they themselves have spent a great deal of time and energy investing in.

becomes ‘scrambled’ which can allow for quite direct and full self-disclosure by the young musician.

Particular creative forms act as mediums for facilitating self-disclosure. I argue that music is one such a form. Self-disclosure has marked benefits for research as it enables specific contextual narrativised data to emerge. From the perspective of the music-maker, self-disclosure emerges as part of their song-writing process speaking either directly or indirectly to personal experience. Self-disclosure is also connected to the production of intimacy between the music-maker and the audience. Importantly, this self-disclosure is not one way; there is self-disclosure occurring on behalf of the audience too. When audience members respond to music, they access a part of themselves that relates to the form and content of the song.

Thesis Outline

In this thesis, I utilise an un-conventional approach to structure so as to best reflect the messy, on-the-ground experiences of participants. It also operates as a means of bringing into dialogue the existing adult-centred understandings of young people’s experiences with the on-the-ground experiences of young people themselves. Therefore, before I detail the methodology used in Chapter Two, in Chapter One, I first introduce a critique of the linear transformation narrative that dominates existing youth arts discourse. This critique is developed in conjunction with key concerns of the youth arts workers who participated in the study. It also includes some data from the young musicians themselves as a way of developing context. As already referenced, the youth arts model used in existing discourse sparked the beginning of this thesis, and I critique it in Chapter One as a way of establishing the resulting frame through which the remaining chapters are to be seen through. In weaving this data throughout, I also present another idiosyncratic, data-led approach.

Preface

Situated between Chapters Two and Three, I present the musical trajectories of each participant who participated in Stage Two. This interlude acts as a bridge, a chorus of voices linking the emerging critique of the dominant youth arts transformation model with young musicians' specific music-listening and making experiences. It incorporates both graphical and narrative accounts of the listening and making practices of each of the five young musicians and the ways these practices intersect with experiences of vulnerability. In drawing these out, I position them as key formative experiences, ones that I draw on throughout the thesis. In presenting participants' own musical biographies in this way, I use them as key building blocks, ensuring a continuous dialogue is established between young musicians' experiences and youth arts discourse.

In Chapter Two I present a discussion of best practice for engaging young musicians in qualitative research that matters to them. The ideas presented in each of the subsequent chapters intersperse engagement with the existing literature alongside data gathered from young musicians and youth arts workers who participated in the fieldwork. The Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories section, sitting between Chapters Two and Three, utilises a strong story-telling and narrative approach as a way of giving life to these experiences. The experiences established in this section are referred to through the chapters following. Chapter Three works through the various applications of technology within practice. The final two chapters, Chapters Four and Five move the focus towards the practice of listening and making/playing. The following provides more detail as to what each chapter will explore.

In Chapter One, I provide a detailed account of how the dominant youth arts transformation narrative presents specific sets of expectations upon young people participating. It begins with discussion of how the model builds upon a deficit model of youth, casting specific expectations

Preface

as to how young people experience both vulnerability and resilience. Youth arts programs operate within current day neo-liberal agendas which tend to enforce a ‘resilience or peril’ framework upon young musicians, which, I argue has the potential to reinforce and heighten experiences of vulnerability. The chapter ultimately argues for a re-purposing of vulnerability, further advocating for the use of ‘social resilience’ and a temporal understanding of vulnerability and resilience as relevant to young musicians.

Chapter Two details the methodological approach used for this research. Discussion explores the process involved in the development of my methodology, before advocating for the use of ‘version of friendship as method’ as a methodological approach. The approach is designed to facilitate self-disclosure practices on behalf of myself and the young musician as well as disrupt inherent power imbalances that exist within traditional qualitative research structures. I then turn attention to the methods undertaken for the fieldwork, a two-stage ethnographic approach. Stage One was a scoping phase involving qualitative semi-structured interviews with thirteen young musicians with experiences of vulnerability, as well as qualitative semi-structured interviews with two youth arts professionals working at youth music-making initiatives. Stage Two involved a series of three case-study interviews with five of the young musicians participating in Stage One of the fieldwork. Discussion then moves towards the challenges and considerations that arose during the fieldwork, with specific focus on the unintended benefit of young musicians themselves talking in detail about their practice.

In Chapter Three, I explore how technology, in its various guises, operates as part of young musicians’ music-making practice. Underpinning this chapter is an exploration of how these various iterations of technology afford young musicians processes of self-disclosure with their collaborators and audience. Technology has long been a significant topic within youth and popular music scholarship. The chapter begins by providing insight into the various conflicts

Preface

that arise through understanding technology as both a democratiser and as a determinant of practice. Aspects of aura and authenticity as emergent through the use of technology are explored as a lead in to a brief detail of history of technology within popular music. In understanding the history of technology in practice, I lead into a discussion of the concept of intimacy as allowing for a better understanding of how self-disclosure occurs within practice. I then orient the reader to applications of technology within the context of music-making as embodied extensions. Finally, the chapter moves towards discussion of social media and online music distribution platforms as they assist young musicians in providing qualitative value to quantifiable data.

Chapter Four details the musical biographies of each of the young musicians who participated in the Stage Two case-study interviews. It begins with discussion of how music discoveries, with particular focus on ‘epiphanies’, ‘rediscoveries’ and ‘music as a technology of the self’, amplify the importance of discovery through participants’ music consumption practices. I then examine the role fandom plays in the articulation of self through music consumption with focus on the often-associated moral panics as well as how fandom cultures assist navigating sexuality and gender identities. The notion of post-subculture becomes relevant in discussion of musical biographies, and I move through a brief history of subcultural studies in the context of youth music cultures before arguing for a return to the post-subcultural approach towards understanding young people’s participation in music cultures. Finally, I introduce the concept of social authorship, arguing that developing better understandings of what informs practice (listening and personal experiences) for young musicians can help us effectively explore the ways in which young musicians utilise music-making as a means of self-disclosure.

In Chapter Five, I utilise the aforementioned ‘social authorship’ framework to explore how the individual practices of music-making are embedded deeply into social contexts. After a

Preface

discussion around the lack of qualitative literature that looks at how music-making affords modes of self-expression for vulnerable young people, I turn towards the song-writing practice of the young musicians participating in the Stage Two case-study interviews. In addition to the individual practice involved in song-writing, I also detail the collaborative practices involved. Finally, the chapter details the role of career for participants, and how, through establishing this resilient ‘musician’ identity, they become equipped to deal with the precarious nature of creative industries.

Finally, the Conclusion calls upon the specific arguments put forward in this thesis, building upon these as it proposes frameworks for future research. I look at how those participating outside of the existing youth arts structures present complex, fluid and ultimately messy experiences of vulnerability and resilience, the impact of technology on practice, and how distinct and continuously developing musical biographies inform a music-making practice that is both intimate and collective. I also suggest that combining both qualitative story-telling discourse with the existing structurally based youth studies can help to establish a fruitful dialogue. I then turn to how future research with and alongside young people engaged in creative practice may better engage and effectively capture their experience. I conclude that work such as this thesis, and future work within the youth arts field, should create dialogue utilising both existing meta-analyses of practice and micro-focussed qualitative work as a means of developing on-the-ground socio-cultural understandings of young musicians’ practice.

This thesis provides a detailed investigation into how young musicians with experiences of vulnerability utilise their technology-aided music-making practices to engage in processes of self-disclosure. This thesis builds from the notion that up until this point, the on-the-ground

Preface

experiences of ‘vulnerable’ young people engaged in creative practices are often left out of the discussion. Young people, and in this case, young musicians, have a great deal of expertise and knowledge to share. Music-making provides a powerful and relevant means for self-disclosure for young musicians. This thesis builds from these on-the-ground lived experiences. As I introduce in the opening chapter, however, these on-the-ground lived experiences are all too often left out of dominant youth arts discourses, with many obscuring the messy and fluid interactions young musicians have with vulnerability as it shapes and evolves their music-making practice. It is to this youth arts context that I turn first.

Chapter One

On Youth Arts Discourse and the Transformation Narrative

‘Once you’ve made it, you haven’t made it’

(Andy, Youth Arts Professional).

As the quote above from Andy suggests, the on-the-ground experiences of young people participating in youth arts programs differ from the linear transformative model that many youth arts programs utilise. According to Andy, such a model fails to capture the messiness and nuance of young people’s engagement with vulnerability as part of their music-making practice. Such a model purports to transform young people from a vulnerable state to one of resilience (Baker & Homan 2007; Cheong-Clinch 2009; Eckstrom 2007; Rimmer 2012; Wang 2010). In the experiences of Andy, who worked at a youth arts initiative focussed on young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the trajectories of young musicians are messy and non-linear. The organisation that Andy ran, ‘The Site’⁶, championed music-making for the sake of helping participants step into the role of practising musician. It was run and facilitated by a group of local musicians and DJs; Andy himself was an electronic musician with close to a decade of experience DJing around Australia and internationally. In this respect, the Site operates in contrast to the transformation paradigm promoted by other youth music organisations.

In this chapter I discuss how youth arts discourse frames youth experiences of music-making in terms of transformation. Through participating in an organisation that provides music-making

⁶ The Site is a pseudonym for the program Andy facilitates.

opportunities, young people are expected to follow a linear transformative trajectory where they emerge from a state of marginalisation, disadvantage and vulnerability through to a state of wellbeing, being ready to engage with mainstream work and education, and ultimately resilience. The specific terms of ‘vulnerable’ and ‘resilient’ are often not mentioned directly within youth arts discourse, however, as I outline in this chapter, both concepts underpin the transformation model utilised.

When I met with Andy, it was in an office block external to where The Site was usually run. At the time of the interview, The Site was renting office space from a youth media organisation. When we sat down to talk in a meeting room, we discussed how youth arts models typically operate and explored the ways his organisation might challenge some of the usual assumptions about young people and the benefits of their music-making. Notably, Andy highlighted how the dominant youth arts model limited the capacities of young people:

‘Yeah, resilience is, like, it implies resolution. It doesn’t imply an end-point. It implies that you’re not coming back from there because you have this resilience. And you can’t revert back into your old ways. And in disengaged and in disadvantaged communities and populations, that’s not true. I don’t think. Like once you’ve made it, you haven’t made it. I think it’s not a very good word... Who’s to say that once... you break out of the cycle of disadvantage you probably still could... pretty much be considered disadvantaged. Like, if you’re indigenous then the numbers are against you no matter... the numbers are still against you.’

This comment struck me. The meetings with the two youth arts workers had taken place before I spent time with any of the young musicians who participated⁷. Andy’s comments had not just showcased an on-the-ground experience that differed from what the literature was suggesting. They also offered significant insight into an alternative, and I suggest, more accurate portrayal of the on-the-ground practices of young musicians with experiences of vulnerability. I went on to

⁷ Andy was one of two youth arts professionals I spoke to as part of the scoping phase of my fieldwork. In addition, as part of this stage, I also spoke with thirteen young musicians with experiences of vulnerability. Stage Two involved follow up case-study interviews with five of those young musicians. A detailed account of the methodology can be found in Chapter Two.

clarify with Andy, asking whether he ever considered resilience to be at all positive within his work:

Well resilience implies, it's a really negative word. Because you are resilient against bad things. So, you have to be, you're fending off these bad things and you're strong enough to be able to cope with those. But it's kind of a coping mechanism really. But it's not saying that you're in a good position at all. It just means that you're in a better position than if you weren't resilient.'

The work that Andy and The Site conducted clearly forged a more nuanced path within the youth arts sector. As he would later tell me, when working with those young people who participate at The Site, *'we play on the fact that we're the cool guys'* suggesting an approach to working with young people that was collaborative and outside of a more common youth governance model (Bessant 2003, p. 88). In speaking to the tension within the sector, however, Andy highlighted how the transformation narrative that pervades youth arts discourse places unrealistic sets of expectations on young people.

There are obvious benefits in attempting to minimise the ways in which vulnerability may affect the lives of young people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. As I outline later, vulnerability is often linked to specific health and structural inequalities that can significantly hinder the lives of young people. As a consequence, as Andy later suggested, resilience could be understood as *'a band-aid solution a bit'*. The discussion with Andy attests to the notion that resilience as it is currently situated within youth arts discourse as a 'fix'; it is what substitutes vulnerability, a means of filling the hole the eradication of personal vulnerability leaves. What I advocate for in this thesis builds from these reflections. Although it may feel to be a knee-jerk reaction, Andy's discussion of the merit in a word like resilience in fact shows a significant frustration with the pathologising of the youth experience.

The majority of youth arts programs typically focus on tools of engagement pitched at reducing the levels of vulnerability experienced by participants. As I outline in this chapter, this focus on understanding young people as ‘being without’, or in deficit (Furlong et al. 1997, p. 7; Skeleton 2002, p. 103) frames the youth experience as in need of being governed and one that places emphasis on participation and engagement rather than agency. There is a tension, however, with how this sits within a neo-liberal agenda. With the increased pressure upon young people to take personal responsibility for structural inequality (McLeod 2012, p. 11; McRobbie 2004, p. 5), there is pressure on young people who are creative to then make something of this vulnerability.

I return to Andy’s reflections multiple times throughout this thesis as a means of identifying possibilities for shifting the discourse towards a strengths-based, youth-centred approach. However, at this point I introduce another youth arts professional, Nat, who assisted in the running of a youth arts initiative I term ‘The Program’⁸. The Program followed a more conventional linear model that sought to engage vulnerable young people using music-making as a way of (re)introducing them into mainstream education. As I explore in this chapter, there is a tendency for such organisations to want to govern ‘at-risk’ populations of young people (Bessant 2003, p. 88), both drawing on and reproducing a deficit model. The organisation that ran The Program catered towards young people with experiences of homelessness, mental health issues and substance abuse as well as other family, work or education problems. The notion of re-engagement is a cornerstone of many youth arts models. The idea of re-engagement also suggests that, in their current state, young people are in deficit, and by being involved in re-engagement programs, they are therefore able to ‘re-enter’ mainstream society and commence on a ‘path’ that provides ever greater progress and benefits for the young people. This is evident in Nat’s description of The Program as a:

⁸ Like The Site, The Program is also a pseudonym for the program Nat facilitated.

Chapter One – On Youth Arts Discourse and the Transformation Narrative

'TAFE accredited course. It's a Cert 1 in Access to Workplace... work and training or something. So, a lot of them then get easy access into TAFE to go and study music or whatever they're interested in.'

The aim of The Program was to ensure that, upon completion of the training, young people would be ready to enter mainstream forms of education – *'last semester we had a huge [success], out of the 10, 7 of them went on to do TAFE which is pretty high.'*

Ideas about skills transference are a common trope in youth arts discourse (Cheong-Clinch 2009, p. 52; Eckstrom 2007, p. 109). As I detail later in this chapter, the emphasis of such programs on the acquisition of the skills needed to be 'successful' also implicitly frame young people as in deficit and 'lacking skills or in need of guidance' (Furlong et al. 1997, p. 7). The promotional material on The Program's website uses language which extols the music-making skills participants can acquire as well as the access to instruments, recording equipment and professional industry people they are able to meet along the way.

Initiatives such as The Program, as well as other youth music organisations I explore throughout this chapter, thus frame the experiences of young people in very particular ways. They establish a connection between vulnerability and resilience that places them at either end of a process of linear transformation. Young people with experiences of vulnerability – for example, those who have mental health difficulties, are same-sex attracted or gender diverse, or coming from a culturally diverse or lower-socioeconomic background – are invited to participate in programs that use music as the tool for engagement. In turn, such programs frame music-making as a facilitator of the skills needed to re-engage with mainstream education and work. As a result of this participation, young people are understood to acquire the resilience needed to face the mainstream world.

As Cheong-Clinch has noted, popular music resonates with an exhaustive list, of ‘adolescent concerns such as sexuality, autonomy, individuality, romantic love, family values, dancing, identity, drugs, religion, social change, and drinking’ (2009, p. 51). Music-making programs targeting the resilience and re-engagement of vulnerable young people tap into this cultural relevance of popular music as a means of ‘engaging’ them in the project of self-improvement and self-determination. In these ways, programs exploit the language and cultural forms relevant to young people to develop structures for re-engagement (Rimmer 2012, p. 345; Peters & Bloustien 2003, p. 32), resulting in forms of youth governance that reproduce conventional ideas about youth as a period of both deficit and necessary transformation. In as much as resilience is posited as a desired end-state, it is ideologically implicated in the transformation narrative. As a result, as it currently stands, and as Andy alludes to, resilience as conceived within youth arts discourse fails to engage with and accurately reflect the on-the-ground experiences of young musicians. As I will suggest in this chapter, the experiences of the young people I interviewed demonstrate that resilience must be thought about, instead, as a processual characteristic of young people’s ongoing navigation of vulnerability.

In this chapter I critique how current youth arts discourse frames the experience of young musicians through the lens of linear transformation. The first half of this chapter will address how the current conceptions of vulnerability and resilience, as largely informed by youth policy and mental health literature, depict youth experience as one of deficit. This deficit model of youth is then further complicated within current practice through the consideration of how a neoliberal agenda further frames and re-conceptualises young people’s experiences as being of their own making. The youth arts model utilises such framings through promoting an engagement with music-making as a way to develop the skills needed to navigate adversity and overcome vulnerabilities (See Cheong-Clinch 2009; Eckstrom 2007; Wang 2010). Through this engagement, those participating are understood to emerge as resilient young people. Within the

context of youth music-making initiatives, music-making is positioned as a possible – and, if successful, transformative – pathway via which young people can move from being vulnerable to being resilient.

Using data generated from my fieldwork, I problematise this current understanding of a linear, transformative trajectory. I draw on concepts of temporality and social resilience as well as critiques of the neoliberal responsabilisation agenda to argue for a relational, processual, and non-linear model of young musicians' participation in music-making. In doing so, this chapter reflects on young musicians' lived experiences of vulnerability and resilience as they inform their music-making practice. It also provides a framework within which subsequent chapters then unpack how processes of self-disclosure – which are a central concern of this thesis – both operate as a window on and mediate young musicians' navigation of vulnerability and resilience through practice.

1.1 The Youth Arts Framework

As I outline below in Figure 1, the youth arts model frames young people's experiences through a transformation lens. Young people with experiences of vulnerability step into an existing adult-run initiative that utilises creative arts practice as a means of nurturing resilient young people. Turning on the assumption that music will act as an agent for transformation, programs use adult-centric criteria to define what success is for participants (See Eckstrom 2007). I argue that the motivations behind youth music-making initiatives that cater for young people deemed vulnerable, at-risk or marginalised are to regulate behaviour and ultimately transform the young person from their state of being 'at risk' to one that is productive, constructive and resilient. To this extent, to varying degrees, youth arts programs are imposed forms of regulation and

governance, ultimately delimiting expectations about what is deemed ‘troubling’ and what is deemed ‘successful’.

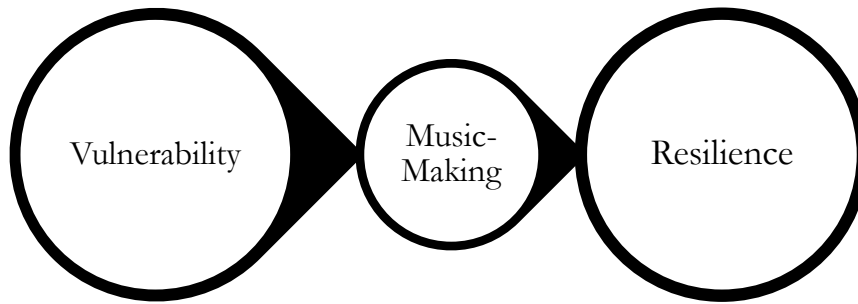


Figure 1. Traditional Youth Arts Transformation Model

In the transformation narrative, concepts like vulnerability and resilience become essentialised, taking on purely negative (vulnerable) and positive (resilient) qualities (McLeod 2012, p. 22; Rutter 1999, p. 135; Wexler, DiFluvio & Burke 2009, p. 565).

On the one hand, as I outline below, the literature tends to construct vulnerability as a key characteristic of a young person who is ‘at-risk’ and, therefore, in need of ‘adult supervision and influences’ (Eckstrom 2007, p. 113) and ultimately intervention. Experiences of vulnerability are thus framed in terms of a deficit; vulnerability is seen to reduce the capabilities of young people. In this context, youth policy suggests that ‘connecting vulnerable young people to their communities and enabling their active participation in family, school and community life is key to reducing vulnerability’ (Victorian Government Department of Human Services 2010, p. 2).

On the other hand, in these settings, the ideal outcome of achieving resilience is often framed within the transformation model that dominates youth arts context as the development of ‘positive adaption in the context of significant risk or adversity’ (Masten & Powell 2003, p. 4). Given that youth arts frameworks construct adolescence through the lens of deficits that must be overcome in order to reach adulthood, resilience resonates as a marker of the successful transition to adulthood.

Policy in these settings are deeply informed by developmental ideas about what constitutes ‘youth’ as a life stage. The continuous focus on ‘youth’ as a site of research within sociology, as well as psychology and education, has often framed youth as a time of transition between the two more concrete states of childhood and adulthood. This ‘transition’ perspective has been adapted within education studies and sociology. However, such an approach only perpetuates the ‘deficit’ model of youth, constructing young people as those who have not yet reached adulthood. A focus on the ‘deficit’ understanding of youth also brings focus to the concept of ‘futuraity’, suggesting that “youth is seen as a separate ‘stage’ of life because the time of youth is about preparation for future (real) life—adulthood” (Wyn & White 1997, p. 13). As Wyn and Harris suggest, that rather than this linear transition and transformation, the concept of youth is better understood in relational terms (Wyn & Harris 2004, p. 276; Wyn & White 1997, pp. 10-11).

Critiques of youth have largely emerged in response to the psychology literature, which has tended to utilise a developmental model (See Erikson 1978, p. 236). Such an approach has, as Wyn and Harris (2004) argue, ‘constructed and perpetuated homogenous, essentializing and normative ideals about growing up that exclude many young people from the ‘mainstream’” (p. 276). I argue, further, that even within the often more progressive literatures of sociology and education, the focus on ‘marginalised’ and ‘disadvantaged’ young people, perpetuates a similar

otherness that situates young people with a particular set of experiences as the focus of intrigue and speculation. This is not to take away from the importance from an academic standpoint of delving into the lives of young people with these kinds of experiences. However, this thesis argues for a shift within this perspective by proposing that we lead with the notion that young musicians use their craft to navigate their own personal vulnerability, as opposed to vulnerable young people who use music-making as a tool for engagement and ultimate betterment.

As I detail later in this chapter, while some youth arts scholarship appears to centre young people – and, for our immediate purposes, young musicians – within the youth policy space there is great variance in how this is applied, with policy itself often falling behind independent youth music organisations. For example, the youth policy for the City of Yarra has a strong focus on developing ‘healthy, happy and resilient community citizens’ (City of Yarra 2013, p. 21). Arts, within this context, is taken as a mode of enabling participatory practices and engagement for the purpose of providing opportunity for young people to have their voice heard about the ‘issues that affect them, as well as having opportunities to contribute to the decisions and actions that follow’ (City of Yarra 2013, p. 30). Here, arts practice is used as an avenue for ensuring young people reach this state. Other youth policy documents also emphasise this framing. The City of Darwin, for example, utilises arts and creative practice as a direct engagement tool, with their most recent youth strategy highlighting ‘supporting creativity and the arts’ as a key priority area (City of Darwin 2016, pp. 26-27). For a city like Darwin, with a high youth population experiencing significant levels of disadvantage; vulnerability; and engagement with the youth justice system, situating arts as a ‘priority’ area (one of four), showcases the discourses of arts as not only a tool for engagement, but also as one for individual young people’s self-transformation.

While policy clearly informs the practices of youth arts initiatives, the transformation narrative is often less explicit in practice. One organisation, which runs a large number of youth-focused music workshops and initiatives, is the Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE). ICE is based in Western Sydney, an area that has been often left out of ‘legitimate’ cultural and artistic production avenues. By very nature of the geographic region they cover, there is focus on large culturally and linguistically diverse populations, Indigenous people, as well as those living in lower socio-economic areas. The Chairperson’s report in ICE’s most recent Annual Report states that ICE has a focus on ‘those individuals and communities who are vulnerable and/or disadvantaged’ (Information and Cultural Exchange 2017, p. 2). Interestingly, this suggestion as to the kinds of individuals ICE engage with is not explicitly stated on their website or any direct promotional material. It is only within the context of an annual report where such a focus becomes overt. The Chairperson states:

‘Through our programs, leadership and advocacy we seek to move people from this disadvantage through articulated and appropriate programs delivering skills, capacity building; and create art and cultural production which deliver the often unheard voices of people and communities in Western Sydney’ (Information and Cultural Exchange 2017, p. 2).

This articulation of a transformation narrative is present but submerged within the ‘grey’ literature published by ICE. So too, it lies more implicitly within descriptions of other programs run by ICE. There is a strong emphasis on ‘pathways’, implying linear trajectories of transformation. For example, ICE claims to engage young people through ‘contemporary youth culture; increased access to art and technology; and support of education and employment pathways’ (Information and Cultural Exchange 2017, p. 7). ICE do significant work throughout the Western Sydney region across a range of creative practices. Specific music-based programs

include an electronic music workshop working with ‘female, transgender and non-binary Western Sydney youth’ (Information and Cultural Exchange 2017, p. 7), and the facilitation of access to a recording studio for ‘self-directed training and development for participants in music production’ are exclusively offered to those young people ‘facing barriers to access including mental health issues and social isolation’ (Information and Cultural Exchange 2017, p. 7).

Although there appears to be some variation within the policy and professional literature, the academic literature casts terms such as vulnerability in specific ways. A great deal of the literature I introduce throughout this chapter uses a categorical approach to defining vulnerability, which in turn suggests specific and deterministic definitions of resilience as the quality that is seen to replace young people’s vulnerability. In order to develop my critique further, I first introduce how the existing youth arts model frames both vulnerability and resilience. In doing so, I draw down on data generated via my ethnographic work with young musicians, about which I will say more in the next chapter. While I recognise that it is unconventional to discuss data before the methodology has been presented, I draw on it here in a gestural way to signal some of the limitations of youth arts discourse and thereby set the scene for remaining chapters.

1.1.1 Youth Arts Framings of Vulnerability

In my ethnographic work with young musicians, participants all called upon personal experiences of vulnerability in various ways to describe their relationship to song-writing practice⁹. Indeed, within the youth arts context, vulnerability is understood to be a calling card, the quality a young person needs to evidence in order to participate. This privileging of vulnerability in the recruitment strategies of youth arts programs is informed by youth policy and youth mental health literature, both of which essentialise the quality of vulnerability. Vulnerability, in these

⁹ I explore this in detail in Chapter Five.

settings, is primarily a category, which defines who can participate and how the ‘success’ of youth arts programs is measured. As I signalled in the Preface, however, the notion that youth arts programs can help move the young person away from vulnerability is at odds with the popular music discourse which romanticises and celebrates vulnerability. I use this tension to move towards a contextual understanding of vulnerability as it operates in young musicians’ practice.

Across the policy and social work literature, vulnerability is often used interchangeably with ‘at-risk’ often as a result of ‘marginalisation’, which in turn is used interchangeably with ‘disadvantage’. Vulnerability tends to be characterised by specific categories and is often mentioned within the context of what the young person is vulnerable *to* (engaging in illegal activities - Furlong et al. 1997; susceptible to developing a mental illness - Blanchard et al. 2008). For example, from a policy and social work perspective, Furlong and colleagues focus on experiences of poverty, largely due to geographic location, and suggest that vulnerability amongst young people can be typified by the following: ‘the risks associated with involvement in illegal activities, school exclusion and isolation from same-aged peers’ (1997, p. 15). Part of what shapes these determinist approaches to conceptualising vulnerability is its association with a developmental model of adolescence that marks out clear differences between ‘adolescence’ and ‘adulthood’ and the need for vulnerable young people to successfully transition from one to the other (Chung, Little & Steinberg 2005, p. 71; Collins 2001, pp. 285–286). Thus, the literature frames vulnerable young people as having a dual ‘transformation’ challenge; that of transitioning out of both vulnerability and adolescence.

Given the strong cultural ties between mental health and music-making, as gestured in the Preface to this thesis, I work here primarily with definitions of vulnerability that emerge within

the youth mental health discourse¹⁰. This is also, in part, because it offers a direct category with which to critically engage. The literature suggests that one's vulnerability to mental illness is amplified by 'social, economic or cultural marginalisation' (Blanchard et al. 2008, p. 35). As a consequence, much literature focusses upon the mental health of specific populations of young people. As set out by Blanchard and colleagues, among others, these categories include young people who are same-sex attracted or gender diverse, from a lower socio-economic background, or living with a disability (Blanchard et al. 2008, p. 35; Rickwood et al. 2014, pp. 2–3; Singh et al. 2011). Such category-based approaches can assist in the development of mental health tools or other engagement techniques to ensure young people reduce the likelihood that vulnerability increases. However, the dominance of categories of vulnerability in these approaches also raises questions about how they might be complicit – albeit inadvertently – in reproducing the marginalised status of young people who are identified by such categories. In this thesis I provide on the ground, experiential data that zooms in on categories of 'vulnerable' young people such as those listed above. In doing so, this work seeks to draw out the lived experiences of young people with experiences of vulnerability as a means of presenting nuanced and fluid understandings of the impact vulnerability has on their lives that can speak back to the rigid categories that drive youth arts discourse.

In calling upon entrenched ideas about vulnerability as a category, the transformation model understands vulnerabilities solely as deficits that hinder the life chances of young people, hence the resulting programs cater exclusively for young people that fall into these categories. By contrast, this thesis aims to situate vulnerability – in particular mental health challenges – in the

¹⁰ As mentioned earlier, this thesis is part of the Connected and Creative research program that forms part of work conducted by The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, who work alongside young people, researchers, practitioners and policy makers to investigate the role technology can play in improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people. (See - Young and Well CRC n.d.)

contexts of young people's everyday experiences,¹¹ and to engage with the popular cultural idea that 'stories of struggle' might be generative. As such, I define vulnerability in the context of this research as a young person's internalised sensitivity caused by marginalisation or stigma that results from health or structural barriers.

1.1.2 Youth Arts Framings of Resilience

Defining resilience is often messy and evolving (Ungar 2008, p. 220; Masten & Powell 2003, p. 4). Youth arts models are most often informed by the youth policy and youth mental health literature, and these literatures have had a strong influence on the 'transformation' narrative that dominates youth arts. Within these literatures, resilience is conceptualised in direct relationship with vulnerability, positioning it as the outcome of the transformation process. As Ungar points out, resilience is defined both as a *characteristic* of individuals who 'despite being born and raised in disadvantaged circumstances...grow up successfully' (Ungar 2008, p. 220) and as a *capability* – 'competence when under stress... positive functioning indicating recovery from trauma...' (Ungar 2008, p. 220). This competence is seen to take form in specific strategies, or the capacity to adapt to adverse circumstances by employing coping mechanisms and processes (Burt & Paysnick 2012; d'Haenens, Vandoninck & Donoso 2013; Oliver et al. 2006; Olsson et al. 2003).

Within a youth arts context, the development of these resilient qualities or patterns are constructed as tools that can be used by the young person to develop a conception of self and help ease them into adulthood. In this way, youth arts utilises the concept of resilience as a means of ensuring that young people engage in a process of 'skilling up' (Cheong-Clinch 2009, p.

¹¹ I acknowledge that the construct of mental illness informs young people's identities and subjectivities. The ways mental illness, and specific diagnoses are constructed within the mainstream and, for example, support services, deeply inform and shape young people's own identities (See Harwood 2003, 2006). In my own fieldwork however, participants did not explicitly identify how this category shapes their sense of identity. My discussion here thus seeks to honour that.

52; Eckstrom 2007, p. 109; Barrett & Baker 2012, p. 246), ensuring an effective transition into adulthood, marked by the move from vulnerability to resilience. In these settings ‘skills’ are instrumentalised as measurable phenomena. For example, in her research exploring how music was used in two learning environments including ‘an ESL (English as Second Language) high school for newly arrived immigrant and refugee students and a residential care facility for adolescent boys’ (2009, p. 50), Cheong-Clinch (2009) observes that participants’ ‘self-esteem and self-expression, building peer relationships, and...language skills’ (2009, p. 55) all increased through participation. Such processes of measurement testify to the positive ‘outcomes’ of youth arts programs, legitimising their ideological underpinnings.

As I describe later in this chapter, the young musicians participating in my research all had experienced or were experiencing some form of adversity. For them, resilience was not an outcome but *entangled in* these experiences of vulnerability. Although the transformation model often assumes vulnerability equates to deficit and that resilience is the mark of successful transition, among some quarters there is an acknowledgement that resilience is not a perpetual end state and that individuals are in fact complex and complicated:

‘...one would not expect a resilient person, however defined at one point in time, to be doing well every minute of the day, under all imaginable circumstances, or in perpetuity. Resilience is not a trait of an individual, though individuals manifest resilience in their behavior and life patterns’ (Masten & Powell 2003, p. 4).

I argue that there is a clear relationship between resilience and vulnerability. For a young person to be resilient, they must experience vulnerability. But resilience does not replace vulnerability. Resilience consists in an attitude towards the ongoing navigation of vulnerability. Indeed, for the young people with whom I worked, vulnerability continued to play an ongoing role in their lives. However, as I will discuss later in this thesis in more detail, they had found constructive and safe means for calling upon both personal vulnerability and other supportive and collective resources

to adapt and succeed when faced with new situations. My participants found such means for navigating vulnerability in their identification as a musician and in their diverse music-making practices. As I will argue, in claiming the identity of the musician, young people are afforded space to experience vulnerability in a constructive manner and engage in self-disclosure practices. In making this claim, I argue that young musicians' navigation of vulnerability is 'identity work'. According to Dupree and colleagues, 'identity status may function as a stable source of internalized strength and inferred support, representing a source of resilience for the individual' (Dupree, Spencer & Spencer 2014, p. 126). I take this link a step further to argue that the specific identity of 'the musician' provides an avenue for young people to explore their vulnerability. As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, both vulnerability and resilience are linked to notions of self and the kinds of self-disclosure practices that comprise music-making. With these conceptual framings in mind, I now turn to how youth arts discourse draws upon ideas about vulnerability and resilience to promote the governance of young people.

1.1.3 Youth Arts and Governance

In this section, I explore the impact up-skilling and ideas about transformation play in the governing of specific populations of young people.

In addition to the deficit model, other common youth studies approaches – such as those that have been labelled the transition model (Harris 2015; Skeleton 2002, p. 101) and the 'modes of becoming' approach (Kelly 2007, p. 42, 2000, p. 303; Skeleton 2002, p. 103) – also construct youth as bound up with ideas of transformation and preparation, positioning vulnerability as hindrances to be overcome and resilience as those qualities needed to reach adulthood. As Skeleton argues, both the transition and deficit model tend to disregard differences amongst young people and treat youth as a 'transitory state, rather than a recognised stage in its own right

with distinctive experiences and issues' (2002, p. 103). Such perspectives also reinforce incarnations of youth as deficit in that they set up 'notions of phases, passing through, emerging at the end as something better, improved, fully formed' (Skeleton 2002, p. 103). Many who critique this deficit model instead argue for a focus on what young people's lives actually look like, and an acknowledgement of 'youth lifestyles as individually elective, fluid and flexible' (Geldens, Lincoln & Hodkinson 2011, p. 348; See also Bennett 2011; Miles 2000; Wyn & White 1997). Although these fluid understandings of youth are evident within a great deal of youth studies literature, they are yet to infiltrate youth arts discourse.

Rather, 'transformation' is key to how youth arts programs are run. Once equipped with a key set of skills, transformation models posit that young people are then able to move from being disadvantaged through to being able to participate in everyday life. The very purpose of programs such as these is to provide a space for young people to come in and participate, and with the help and assistance of adults transform their state from deficit to success. For example, Eckstrom suggests that youth music workshops assist in 'aiding youth in avoiding substance abuse and the spread of HIV, obtain dignified and remunerative employment and be active and responsible citizens' (2007, p. 109). Throughout the work presented by Eckstrom, young people are continuously situated as the other, and in need of adult guidance (2007, p. 113). The adult-centred focus of work conducted by Eckstrom means that the young people participating are seen as ultimately 'incomplete' in contrast with the 'active and responsible citizen', which is the desired state.

Youth arts models enforce the importance of the adult in helping young people, through providing access to music-making equipment, affording the young person an opportunity to engage with 'cultural forms valued by young people' (Rimmer 2012, p. 345; Peters & Bloustien 2003, p. 32), and assisting them back into the mainstream. As posited by the literature, the role

of music within these organisations appears to either be essentialised – for example, ‘music has been associated with feeling of being in a safe, accepting and trustworthy relationship – and, as such, can be a substitute for relationships’ (Cheong-Clinch 2009, p. 51) – or plays a limited role (See Cheong-Clinch 2009, p. 53). At the core of these music-making programs, however, is the notion that music acts as a transformative tool of social mobility. Much youth policy thus assumes that, for vulnerable young people to effectively transition into adulthood, distinct problem-solving skills are required.

Nat also referenced this model of being able to use the skills learnt within the structure of music-making and apply them to other aspects of life:

‘So thinking outside the box, problem solving, a looser way of thinking, you know that saying – there’s more than one-way to skin a cat? So every time you come to a situation in a track, there’s... you can go multiple ways. I think sometimes a little bit more of a looseness of thinking maybe through doing it. You might have a song, but there might be 10 different ways of recording it. So maybe it enables a little bit of looseness.’

Entrenched in this ‘upskilling’ narrative is the need for young people to re-engage in mainstream society. While creativity, and specifically music-making, can facilitate skills that are beneficial, at the same time, the emphasis of some programs on skills de-emphasises the cultural and collective significance of music itself for young people. In this kind of way, such program are not always successful in connecting with young people’s experiences and priorities.

The kind of engagement and participatory ethos I have been discussing has been critiqued within youth studies, with some suggesting that youth engagement policies have a tendency to be overly tokenistic (Fox 2013, p. 986), and can reinforce an ‘elitism’ (Vromen & Collin 2010, p. 110) by elevating certain kinds of young people into positions of influence while others remain in marginalised or in vulnerable positions. Other research suggests that ostensibly participatory programs in fact constitute another form of youth governance (Bessant 2003, p. 88).

For example, often in these scenarios, music is seen as a facilitator of skills beyond those of music production. Cheong-Clinch cites the ‘educational objectives’ of participating in music programs and their ability to nurture broader ‘cognitive processes, such as attention and concentration, and organisation and analysis revealed a positive correlation between performance and the content and relevance of the activities’ (2009, p. 55). The notion of ‘governmentality’ (Foucault 1991, pp. 102–103) thus emerges as a key aspect of these engagement strategies. Further, whilst music-related youth arts programs may foster young people’s broader ‘life skills’, there is nonetheless a tendency to brush over the specifics of music as a form of self-expression. Rather, music in these cases is used to govern and regulate behaviour in ways that constitute normatively defined ‘young participants in society’. In this way, adults exploit the existing cultural forms with which young people relate for the purposes of regulating their behaviour (Rimmer 2012, p. 345; Peters & Bloustien 2003, p. 32).

Youth music programs, as well as associated research, consistently assert the imperative to re-engage ‘vulnerable’ young people with mainstream education and work. In this way, programs exploit the language and cultural specifics of music to develop what are in fact ideologically motivated structures and processes for vulnerable young people’s re-engagement. The desired outcomes of ‘agency, power and accomplishment’ (Wang 2010, pp. 68–69) are intrinsically tied to notions of citizenship and ensuring that young people reach an ‘adult’ state. The motivations behind creating music programs for young people deemed vulnerable, at-risk or marginalised are often, subtly, to regulate behaviour and ultimately transform the young person from their risky state to one that is productive, constructive and resilient.

Further, as I have begun to suggest, the importance of ‘participation’ in youth arts programs, especially for young people deemed to be vulnerable or at risk is often essentialised. Rimmer lists

off a number of different affirmations for such a model, including ‘tackling social exclusion’, economic benefits (bringing young people back into the economic mainstream), and young people being empowered through participation (2012, pp. 330–332). While Rimmer later suggests that there is ‘a need for caution in equating the rhetoric around youth participation with genuine benefits for young people’ (2012, p. 329), nonetheless, it is the transformative benefits that remain the focus of youth arts programs, which in turn treat the young people participating as in deficit. This adds to a delegitimising of young people’s experiences and approaches to life.

In reading the literature that assesses the effectiveness of youth music programs, something that emerges is just how rigid and structured many programs are. Youth music programs tend to be measured against how effective they are in developing key skills. As such, there are clear beginning and end points established. For example, work conducted by Cheong-Clinch investigating two youth music programs situates ‘success’ as something obtained when a set of skills are acquired (2009, p. 52), perpetuating adult-centric ideas as to what success potentially is for the young people participating. There is an assumption that music will act as an agent for transformation. Although there are some programs which afford young people agency in the kinds of music they listen to and make, some place quite restrictive parameters on them. The expectations for young people participating in the programs assessed by Cheong-Clinch (2009), for example, place specific instructions as to what young people are to do as well as what they are potentially to get out of participating. These expectations involve instructing young people to select an existing popular song and learn it, have a discussion about what the song means and the experiences of the songwriter, and then use these experiences to write lyrics to a new song (2009, p. 53). I suggest that these regulated expectations are directed at securing young people’s participation in ways that are ideologically directed at producing their integration into existing society, thereby lessening young people’s capacity for generative discussion and denying their full exploration of self through music.

In exploiting youth-centred forms of cultural expression, music programs use music-making as a facilitator of enforced social mobility. In an analysis of youth music program ‘The Beat of Boyle Street’, Wang argues that the creative expression that young participants engage in should ‘honor [young people’s] prior knowledge and skills rather than be a rigid form of language or a generic activity deemed “literate” or “educational” or “valued” by the dominant culture’ (2010, p. 68). Wang later suggests that engaging in music-making, and in particular, rap, facilitates the aforementioned ‘agency, power, and accomplishment’ (Wang 2010, pp. 68–69). As Wang details, music programs demonstrate ‘that popular culture and youth experiences need to be respected’ (2010, p. 69) and have the possibility of transforming spaces for young people constructed by adults such as classrooms and youth support services. My critique of programs like these (and their associated analyses) focusses on how spaces are created for young people to *lean into*, as opposed to stepping into, existing creative spaces already developed by young people themselves. Inadvertently or otherwise, these adult-developed spaces smack of an adult centrism, reinforcing the young person as the ‘other’, as incomplete and in need of ‘adult supervision and influences’ (Eckstrom 2007, p. 113).

This is not to suggest that we jettison participatory methods for working with young people. From a methodological standpoint, youth participatory models can facilitate a focus on young people’s own experiences. As Wyn and Harris suggest, the development of youth engagement methodologies that fall within broader youth studies ‘increasingly work to centre youth voice’ (2004, p. 284). Fleming takes this one step further, arguing that youth participatory research is about the act of participation itself, and through that, highlights the voices of young people (2011, p. 219). There will always, however, be an inherent power imbalance both within a youth arts context and in a research context when utilising participatory models. This is particularly the case for young people with experiences of vulnerability.

Fox has noted that young people themselves continue to show agency and capacity in ‘determining their lives and informing and transforming decisions which affect them’ (Fox 2013, p. 987). Through my own experiences in writing about and interacting with young musicians from around Australia, there is a vast array who engage in music-making practices with minimal assistance or help from adults. As I will discuss in later chapters of this thesis, the young musicians participating in my research all have experiences of vulnerability. However, they use both existing social networks and individual capacity to engage in music-making as a means of navigating these personal vulnerabilities. These young musicians’ experiences follow a do-it-yourself approach – it is music itself that the participant forges a relationship with as opposed to it being mediated by adults and a ‘transformation’ agenda.

1.1.4 Through the Neo-liberal Frame: How Vulnerability and Resilience are Inscribed onto Young People

Youth policy draws a link between vulnerability and structural inequalities (Burns et al. 2008, p. 14; Singh et al. 2011, p. 5). However, as McLeod argues, the current climate compels young people to internalise these structural inequalities, which, in turn, have the potential to increase their vulnerability:

‘In neo-liberal policy discourses vulnerability becomes tied to a ‘conversion narrative’ that renders social-structural marginalisation an individual responsibility and re-inscribes developmental explanations of social exclusion’ (McLeod 2012, p. 11).

This internalisation of vulnerability is not something unique to the youth arts sector but plays out across many fields targeting both young people’s and adults’ social inclusion, employment, education and so on.

As referenced earlier in this chapter, the celebrated notion of the tortured artist sits in tension with the neo-liberalist responsabilisation narrative. The difference lies, however, in how vulnerability is understood. On the one hand, within a youth context, neo-liberalism favours ‘individualisation and an accompanying self-responsibility’ (McLeod 2012, p. 13) as well as ‘*rational, autonomous, responsible* behaviours and dispositions of a *free, prudent, active* Subject’ (Kelly 2006, p. 18 original emphasis). For young musicians, neo-liberalism positions vulnerability as their responsibility, forcing them to manage and control it through their practice. This is in contrast to the constructive way vulnerability is constructed, on the other hand, within popular music discourse about struggle as generative of creative processes and outputs.

Youth arts discourse frequently reinscribes the traditional ‘transitional’/‘modes of becoming’ models commonly applied to young people. With the shift in discourse towards fluid understandings of youth and the different ways in which young people experience vulnerability and resilience, however, these rigid notions of vulnerability must be reconfigured. This thesis argues that working with and alongside young people affords opportunities to develop new, contextual conceptions of vulnerability and resilience that are built upon their lived experience.

In positing resilience as the purposeful removal of vulnerabilities in order to become a productive citizen, and by responsabilising young people for this transformation, the neo-liberal worldview elides issues of structural inequality. In their discussion of the value of resilience within modern society, Evans and Reid situate resilience within a neo-liberal world view. They suggest that, as opposed to the Nietzschean notion of ‘living dangerously’, resilience instead compels people to develop ‘the fundamental property’ which they ‘must possess in order to live with danger’ (Evans & Reid 2014, p. 2). In this context, ideas about resilience perpetuate the idea that living with risk is a fundamental – and irresolvable – condition of contemporary social life. As Evans and Reid suggest:

‘Our critique of resilience thus begins from the premise that liberalism is aimed today not at solving or preventing the manifestation of dangers and threats to security, but at making us forego the very idea and possibility of security through the embrace of the necessity of our exposure to dangers of all kinds as a means by which to live well’ (Evans & Reid 2014, p. 2).

Resilience within this neo-liberal discourse thus authenticates and validates particular ways of living. It, in turn, eradicates the possibility of living ‘otherwise’. This becomes especially relevant when considering the lives of young people who, because of issues beyond their control, experience their world in ways that differ from the mainstream expectation. Harris summates this neo-liberal agenda as a means of self-governance (2012, p. 146). She argues that the discourse of individual responsabilisation ensures a limited reliance upon the state whilst forcing individuals to make the ‘right choices’ (Harris 2004, p. 2) and enact resilience by adapting and changing. The repercussions of this on those young people who have life experiences that impact upon their ability to participate in everyday life are thus heightened. Further, as I argue later in this chapter and subsequent chapters, it enforces a competitiveness and spirit of entrepreneurship that responsabilises young individuals to ‘make something’ of themselves. It is against such impulses that a focus on young people’s experiences of their creative practices might open up opportunities for contesting neo-liberal framings of resilience.

In short, the existing literature pushes a youth development agenda with a tendency towards diminishing ‘vulnerabilities’ as negative aspects of self that need to be worked through and eventually eradicated. Therefore, within this framework, resilience resonates as a means of ensuring ‘*you can’t revert back into your old ways*’, as Andy suggested. However, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, in focusing solely on building resilience within young people, key aspects of

their identity can be lost. These key aspects of identity prove essential in understanding the impact vulnerability and resilience have on young people who are engaged in music-making.

1.2 Narrating Vulnerability

As part of the fieldwork I conducted for this research, I found that young musicians' experiences of vulnerability and resilience complicated the existing deficit and transformation narrative that pervades youth arts discourse. In capturing these contradictions, I would often quickly write down notes, or send debrief style emails to my supervisors. The following is part of an email I sent to my principal supervisor after spending time with a young musician, Julia, who participated in my fieldwork¹²:

Hi Amanda,

The interviews with Julia have gone well. The first interview took place at her home in a room at the bottom of their house (she lives with her brother, sister and mum). The room is a converted media room. She's now got surround sound, a midi keyboard and its carpeted etc. She said that her mum has worked a lot and built the house.

That interview went well though - she was a little nervous I think at the beginning, but got quite excited talking about some things too. ...I think the most confronting thing for me was seeing scars on her arms due to self-harm. She didn't talk about them or even seem bothered that they were showing. They looked fairly old and they weren't fresh, but hearing her talk about bipolar via Skype in the earlier interviews, it's so easy to just think about the manic periods where things are a little out of control and there's an unrelenting positivity. Seeing the scars in person reminded me of what bipolar actually is - it brought a lot of weight to how I'm understanding Julia's story.

Sitting in the State Library, utilising the free wifi before heading to the airport for my flight back home, I wrote and reflected on a weekend spent gaining new perspectives:

¹² Throughout this thesis I utilise both fieldnotes and direct qualitative data from participants. Please see Chapter Two for a description of my methodology.

Chapter One – On Youth Arts Discourse and the Transformation Narrative

...The second interview took place yesterday morning at what felt like a slightly upmarket cafe in an inner city suburb...Her [mental health] clinic was also close by, so she knew the area quite well. It's been pretty hot...but I thought maybe Julia would wear a long-sleeved top. But she didn't, and again, didn't seem to really care. This probably reflects upon my own uneasiness with being so open about self-harm maybe.

The ways in which young people experience these notions of vulnerability and resilience differ greatly from conceptions put forward in the literature. As I will elaborate further later in this thesis, it was both the individual and social contexts of music-making that proved vital in affording participants a level of confidence in how they understood and comprehended their own experiences of vulnerability, as well as how they engaged in processes of self-disclosure. Through these strong support networks, participants also accessed a resilience that was strongly tied to their social networks:

We spent the time talking a lot about her 'team' - her managers, her recording partner, her mum, her singing teacher and her boyfriend. This was really a support network, and she spoke openly about how having these people around her (especially her mum) motivated her and helped her to look after her health... The one thing I remember Julia saying from this interview was that she's in a really good place at the moment. I think it was because we were talking about all the people around her.

I get the impression that Julia has gotten a lot out of the experience - she made a few comments right across the past couple of months (since the scoping interview) that she knows she talks a lot, but she enjoys talking to me because I'm interested in hearing about her story. So I've found that to be an incredibly rewarding aspect of the work.

Thanks Amanda!

Michael.

Experiences of both vulnerability and resilience were deeply embedded in the lived experiences of the young musicians participating in this research. Not only are they embedded into their day-to-day lives, they also have significant ramifications on their music practice. The reflection above helped shift the way I understood the impact of vulnerability and resilience and the ways they

shaped the lives of participants. As I have established, the existing discourse has tended to essentialise vulnerability and resilience, placing them at opposite ends of a binary (McLeod 2012, p. 22; Rutter 1999, p. 135; Wexler, DiFluvio & Burke 2009, p. 565; See also Bradley, Deighton & Selby 2004; Rhodes & Schechter 2012). Taking this to its extreme, vulnerability is positioned as a negative aspect of a young person's life, and as something that, through the employment of music-making, can be overcome. What I found during my fieldwork, however, contradicted the youth arts literature which situates vulnerability as a point at which young people can choose – via being engaged in creative practice – to consciously move beyond the impact these vulnerabilities have on their everyday lives by transforming the self. In fact, these young musicians were instead choosing to engage with these vulnerabilities, keeping them ‘in play’ and using the space of music-making to engage in processes of self-disclosure that allow for detail, ambiguity and continuous careful construction of self. Julia’s on-the-ground experiences, as well as those of other musicians I spoke to, challenged notions of vulnerability and resilience as presented through the youth arts discourse. Participants all had experiences of vulnerability that fuelled their practice; for Julia, these experiences of vulnerability came through in lyric writing. Vulnerability fuelled the music-making practice of other participants in less direct ways. What draws their collective experiences together, however, is the role resilience plays in providing room for these young musicians to ‘sit with’ – rather than eradicate – their vulnerability. I detail how these practices occur in the following section as well as later chapters.

The neo-liberal agenda that pervades much youth discourse has ramifications for how young people experience the world. This produced an ambiguity for the young people with whom I worked. In addition to this choice or compulsion to mine their personal vulnerability as part of their music-making, there is also implicit in the experiences of vulnerability, as amplified by the current neo-liberal focus on responsabilisation, a requirement to make something of these experiences. For young musicians in particular, it is this neo-liberalism that shapes and infiltrates

young musicians' engagement with the music industry, encouraging a focus on the other as a means of standing out and ensuring a potential career¹³. This neo-liberal focus suggests a 'resilience or peril' narrative that pervades modern life (Evans & Reid 2014, p. 2). For young musicians with experiences of vulnerability there is a requirement, therefore, to enact this resilient musician identity. In making music, these young musicians are enacting a resilient identity, that of the musician.

As referenced earlier in this chapter, resilience is not just determined solely by the individual. As Ungar suggests 'the interaction between individuals and their social ecologies...determine the degree of positive outcomes experienced' (2008, p. 220). Within this social context, young people can access the support and resources needed to develop resilient qualities. This social resilience is 'one which articulates a relational, communal aspect to resilience' (Bolzan & Gale 2012, p. 504). In addition, the ways in which both vulnerability and resilience are experienced often differ from the streamlined linear narrative of youth arts discourse, instead suggesting a 'living present' (Loewen Walker 2014; Woodman & Leccardi 2015). The temporal nature of young musicians' experiences challenges the transformational 'rags-to-riches' notion. As I detail later in this chapter as well as following chapters, participants' behaviour and interactions, although informed by a neo-liberal focus on exploiting identity for competitive gain, were not uniform, and instead were impacted significantly by context and 'a dynamic engagement with temporality' (Loewen Walker 2014, p. 47). In the following section, I present the contours of a potential new youth arts framework, which considers how both social resilience and temporality can afford a better understanding of how vulnerability and resilience are experienced and interrelate within the lives of young musicians.

¹³ I acknowledge that 'neo-liberalism' as a term is used extensively across a variety of settings, sometimes with little definition (See Flew & Cunningham 2010, pp. 119-120; and Nonini 2008, p. 149 for extra commentary). Here, I am drawing upon the idea that a prominent feature of neo-liberalism is the 'processes of individualisation and an accompanying self-responsibility for demonstrating, claiming and enacting citizenship' (McLeod 2012, p. 13; See also Kelly 2001 and Burchell 1996), and that this has profound effects on young people's everyday experiences and the formation of their identities.

1.3 Towards a New Youth Arts Frame

This section prefaces ideas about the need to rethink how vulnerability and resilience are experienced through the lives of the young musicians, which will be developed in later chapters. I argue that, against the backdrop of the pervasive, neo-liberal, self-governance agenda, to better shape future discourse, scholarship must dialogue with the lived experiences of young people who manage and navigate experiences of vulnerability and resilience. I suggest in this section that, instead of a tool for transformation, music-making, as evidenced in Figure 2 below, is deeply embedded in, and gives young musicians opportunities to navigate, their experiences of vulnerability with resilience. Like the transformation model referenced earlier, resilience still remains the focus of this model. However, it only exists and operates through an active engagement with vulnerability.

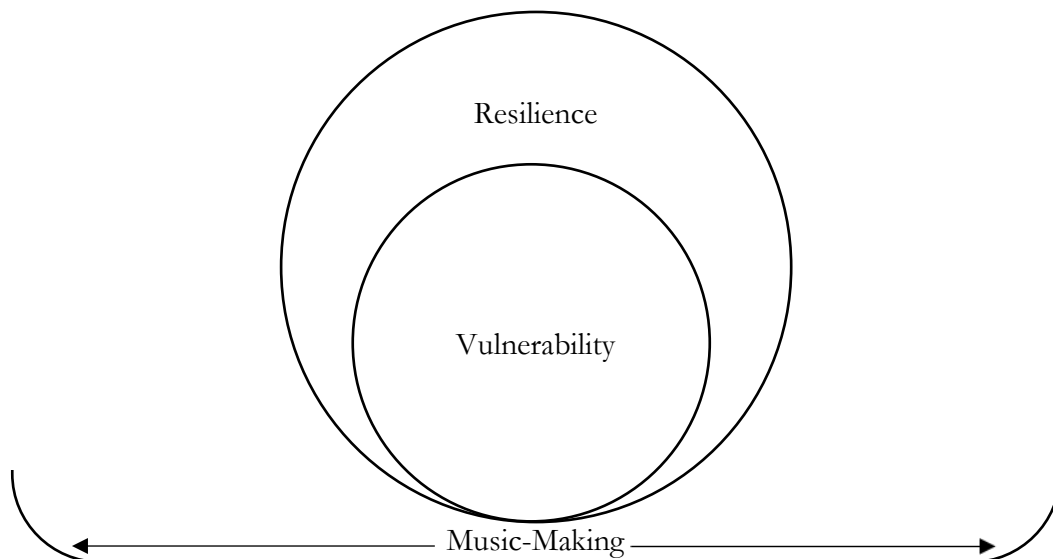


Figure 2. Reconceptualised Youth Arts Model

Music has long been the focus of youth studies literature, and sub-cultural research in particular. As I explore in more detail in later chapters, there is a strong body of work within the popular

music studies and youth studies literature that validates and speaks to the importance music plays in the lives of young. As pioneered through the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University during the 1970s (for example, see Hall & Jefferson 2006), music (sub)cultures research has long suggested the idea that music acts as a binding force for young people. More recently, and following on in this tradition, new ways of understanding young people and music consumption have developed (Bennett 2011; DeNora 1999; Lincoln 2005; Nowak 2016). This work is relevant to the current research for two reasons. It is the strongest body of work that in detail explores young people's relationship to music and the value that they draw from it. And as this research has shown, with the advent of the post-subcultural turn (Bennett 2011), the ways in which youth music consumption is now theorised represents the fluid music consumption practices of young people.

An emerging scholarship builds upon this music cultures literature, combining it with a youth-centred approach to address young people's own active participation within music cultures. Whilst not focussed exclusively on the practice of music-*making*, the work of Geraldine Bloustien involves working with young people, and argues strongly for youth arts discourse to take notice of the ways young people shape their lives around music (Bloustien 2007, p. 460). Her ARC-funded longitudinal research, *Playing For Life* (Peters & Bloustien 2003; Bloustien & Peters 2011; Bloustien 2007), explores the everyday music practices of marginalised young people, and has led to many insights that deal with young people's involvement with different music cultures, greatly informing how my own approach developed. Bloustien's direct engagement with young people involved in music cultures documents the experiences of young people, their music consumption practices and the meaning they place in music as a cultural text in ways that minimise the tendency to 'other' both the young people themselves and their experiences. It instead honours 'the serious and difficult work' (Bloustien 2007, p. 451) young people in this space put into their practice.

My own research also seeks to create dialogue between myself as a researcher and the young musicians who are conducting this ‘serious and difficult work’. In doing so, I call upon a critical lens through which to understand youth practice. Part of what I do in this work is to reassess the ways in which scholarship addresses particular phenomena that occur within the everyday lives of young musicians. In understanding the role governmentality plays in the youth arts space, it is also appropriate to use notions of citizenship when understanding the lived experiences of young people. Harris argues that the traditional ‘youth citizenship studies say less about young people than they do about the kinds of communities, societies, nations, and civic subjects that such knowledges attempt to produce’ (2012, p. 143). Instead of young people being simply ‘apprentice-citizens’ (Harris 2012, p. 144), there is a far greater level of subjectivity and a push towards youth being a time of ‘self-actualisation’ (Bennett 2008, p. 14). This emergence of the ‘self-actualising citizen’ (Bennett 2008, p. 14) or DIY citizenship (Harris & Roose 2014, p. 801) is one I utilise in my own conception of young musicians.

In addition to these traditional governance models of youth policy, there are also specific state music bodies, some with significant youth music initiatives. However, instead of focussing on models of re-engagement, these programs focus more specifically on music itself. Each state and territory in Australia has a peak music body. These are Music Victoria, Music NSW, Q Music (Queensland), Music SA, WAM (Western Australia), Music Tasmania, Music ACT and Music NT. All bodies, in various ways highlight the ways in which their service can be accessed and utilised by young people. These are youth policy frames which I utilise as part of this thesis that place a significant focus upon youth music mentoring and development.

Only two states, however, have a state-wide *youth* music body. These organisations, Indent in New South Wales and The Push in Victoria, both place emphasis on providing opportunities to

young musicians as well as young people interested in working in the broader music industry. Both form part of their respective state-based music bodies (Music NSW and Music Victoria). The focus of these organisations is to provide the young people participating with access to networks and resources that assist in their potential careers in the industry. Although both Indent and The Push were initially established as a mild form of youth governance (through engaging young people in alcohol and drug free music events) (Indent n.d.; The Push n.d.), both now position themselves as established footholds in their respective industries. As such, the language used by these organisations differs slightly from the typical policy language used in state governments arts and youth strategies.

The Push, for example, emphasises working *with* young people as already participating members of the music industry. Through a range of different programs, both music-making and industry focussed, they promote themselves as working ‘with music for young people as event organisers, audiences, community members and creative artists in a range of programs including band competitions, dance workshops, mentoring, and creative and professional development programs’ (The Push n.d.). Indent, on the other hand, tends to position young people as in need of help within the industry and needing to be granted access: ‘Indent has been set up to help young people (13 – 25) in NSW access drug and alcohol free all-ages entertainment. We provide: Funding for all ages events; Workshops and training; Advice, support, and resources’ (Indent n.d.).

Both The Push and Indent lead with music and music-making as opposed to the need to (re)engage and govern populations of young people. As such, there is the potential for young people participating to feel comfortable, valued, and ultimately, in control. The access to support networks and resources that both The Push and Indent provide speaks to the concept of social resilience (Bolzan & Gale 2012; Gale & Bolzan 2013; Ungar 2008). This was something that the

young musicians participating in this research acquire, and something which I explore in more detail later in this chapter.

The Site, the organisation run by youth arts worker Andy, also focusses on music itself as opposed to a desire to govern young people. When I met with Andy, I mentioned that ‘the thing that drew me to [The Site] was the fact that you’re musician led’. Andy responded:

‘...we play on the fact that we’re the cool guys. We don’t really care what they do or whatever. We’re not authoritarian really in any way. Really, we’re coming to them as, like a mate almost. And we’re working with them as a collaborator in a way. It’s kind of the way we frame it. We’re like ‘yeah, we’re working on this together!’ rather than being like, ‘you, do this now, you do this task, you have to do it or you’re not going to lunch’. It’s not that. It’s kind of like a trust and it’s a real positive engagement and rewarding for good work but we don’t really punish them. So, we take that out of the picture. So, there’s no discipline really. It’s more like, just real positive reinforcement the whole time and that’s it. That’s kind of how we work.’

The website for The Site also highlights that whilst they cater for young people ‘from marginalised & disadvantaged communities’, the focus is on ‘change, positive futures & the development of high quality Australian music with a unique identity’. The emphasis on music and working with ‘emerging artists’ sidesteps a focus on youth governance, as Andy told me:

‘I think the focus of the organisation was never to... we didn’t want to get caught up in the, umm, like in a different job. We wanted to go in and not get distracted in these workshops. We wanted to focus on a really direct outcome, and use that outcome to do other things. It’s kind of like youth work in reverse. But, I think if you are youth workers, you’re set back with a whole different kettle of fish, and you can’t actually do what you want to do. We work hand-in-hand with youth workers, so we don’t just try and absolve that issue – it’s a really important role. But we try and, you know, umm, just do our role which is quite niche and try and focus on that and not get carried away with, not get tied down by the youth work thing.’

In addition to the Playing For Life project referenced earlier (Peters & Bloustien 2003; Bloustien & Peters 2011; Bloustien 2007), there is also youth arts literature that advocates working *with* young musicians with researchers entering already existing youth led and dominated space.

Warren and Evitt (2010), for example, look at the role hip-hop plays in two distinct indigenous communities (Nowra in New South Wales and a community in the Torres Strait Islands). Instead of focussing in on specific programs run in these communities, Warren and Evitt tap into the existing networks of the young musicians in the area and ‘hang out’ with musicians as a means of iteratively developing an approach that builds from young people’s own qualitative experience (2010, pp. 146–147). The youth-centred nature of this work situates young musicians’ relationships with others as well as their music at the centre of discussion. As such, the role hip-hop specifically plays in indigenous young people’s lives emerges as prominent – it is a ‘glocal subcultural performance...and an oppositional musical form (Warren & Evitt 2010, p. 156).

Such organisations offer a significant insight into the lived experiences of young musicians participating outside of the youth arts model. As I encountered with each of the five young musicians participating in the Stage Two case-study interviews, in addition to experiences of vulnerability and resilience, all had significant aspirations to establish a career in music. In bringing to the surface these youth-centred conceptions of vulnerability and resilience, this work speaks back to the existing youth arts policy by suggesting more relevant and contextual frameworks.

I thus argue that, to ensure that a viable and sustainable music industry that engages young people builds across the country, organisations that take up the models offered by The Push and Indent should be replicated in each state and territory. Having said this, as with many arts organisations, however, funding is limited. Andy, the youth arts worker from The Site I spoke to highlights this, suggesting funding to be a ‘huge’ issue – *‘We have funding from a couple of philanthropic bodies, a couple of private bodies, but also government funding. We are faced with the challenge of some of the private ones drying up’*. According to their website, The Push is in a similar circumstance, with funding and support coming from both government bodies (Office for Youth and FReezA

Support Service) as well as ‘other music industry organisations to deliver our programs including Arts Victoria, the Arts Centre, APRA and many more’ (The Push n.d.). Indent, on the other hand, appears to be running a smaller scale operation and, according to its website, relies on funding from the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts (Indent n.d.). Funding thus remains an ongoing challenge in realising this vision.

1.3.1 Social Resiliency

One of the conditions of resilience, according to Ungar, is for ‘the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways’ (Ungar 2008, p. 225). Throughout my fieldwork, young musicians would consistently reference family, friends and music industry mentors who offered support and access to resources that assisted in the development of their craft. This ‘social resilience’ acknowledges and encourages new ways of accessing already existing social structures. According to Bolzan and Gale (2011, 2012; 2013), the traditional 'deficit model' suggests that ‘there is something missing that needs to be provided in order to develop resilience in the individual’ (Bolzan & Gale 2012, p. 504). Social resilience is a reaction to this dominant deficit model. In this perspective, resilience calls upon the utilisation of existing support structures to support young people to navigate vulnerability in an ongoing way as opposed to finding something that will ‘fix’ a particular situation. I build upon this understanding of resilience, combining it with young people’s own understandings and experiences of resilience, to help further redefine resilience as it applies to a youth music-making context.

For participant Julia, a young folk musician living with bipolar disorder, social resilience developed in various ways. The resources to which Julia had access from her already established

network equipped her with a certain confidence and level of expertise¹⁴. After discussing whether or not it was too late for her to release new music before the end of the year (the interview had taken place in October), she struck me as sounding knowledgeable and considered:

'So, we'll probably do it next year and do the whole 8 weeks of publicity before it. It's going to be really – it's a good plan – we got a good plan. And it's a good thing to tell the record companies and stuff, like they don't have to know that you're having or break or anything. It's just, you know, we just think it's better to release next year. And they'll be like 'oh, that's a great idea', you know, 'that's a smart thing to do'. So yeah, it's going to work out regardless and I'm really excited for next year.'

After I make the quip that she sounded as though she was on top of it all, she hesitated before revealing a whole outer supportive network that permeated much of her musical life. For a great deal of the time we spent together, much was made of the important role her collaborator and fellow musician Stuart played (at the time of the interview Julia had been experiencing a break in friendship with Stuart). Julia's mother as well as her manager also played an essential role in ensuring she succeeded in her music career:

'...Yeah, I have a lot of help [laughs]. I've talked to my psychologist and my psychiatrist and group about [music] and mum. Like mum knows all about it and yeah, I kind of see it as a positive thing. Because I know that it will work out – we're such good friends [her collaborative partner and her] that it's going to be fine. We both just more need some time just for our health in general. And umm, I know we're just going to be so much better for it. Because it's just, I'm thinking long jeopardy. I just really want to be able to do this for like the rest of my life...For a good- I want to tour and I want all these things and I know that this is going to be alright.'

For Julia, these support structures were deeply embedded into her everyday practice.

Social resilience tempers the neo-liberal focus on individual responsabilisation, as it seeks to employ a level of civic connectedness with qualities such as safety, trust and respect being

¹⁴ The concept of expertise is one that emerges in all participants and is something used to frame young musicians' experiences throughout this thesis. Please see Chapter 2 for a detailed account of how notions of expertise were reached within the fieldwork.

central. For Julia and other participants, leveraging social resilience was very much about finding new ways of accessing already existing structures. The very fact that Julia was surrounded by a support network was largely due to the existing network she had already developed due to her experiences of bi-polar disorder. Julia was a strong-willed and focussed young musician who knew that, within the context of her network, she could safely engage with her personal vulnerabilities as part of her practice¹⁵. Other participants also called upon these social resources as a means of developing a resilience. These stories emerge in later chapters.

1.3.2 Temporality

The notion of temporality is often overlooked within both popular music and youth arts discourse. The romanticised rags-to-riches story is one of linear transformation. A temporal understanding, however, allows a nuanced and less streamlined perspective to emerge. As Julia and I sat in that café, I still recall, in the depths of the dining area, the way in which she would, without concern or perhaps knowledge, lift up her arm, palm facing outward to get the attention of the waitress. With scars adorning the underside of both forearms, I realised that Julia herself knew exactly what she was doing, even as her actions appeared to contradict her own history. This living present, a ‘stretching between past and future as it contracts all past experiences and expects those yet to come’ (Loewen Walker 2014, p. 48), best depicts the experiences of my participants. Their ‘living with’ and continual negotiation of experiences of vulnerability challenges binary depictions of vulnerability and resilience, suggesting far more nuanced and complex understandings.

Loewen Walker provides the most detailed definition of temporality and becoming, positing that:

¹⁵ See Chapter 5 for details of how the personal infiltrates participant’s music-making.

‘In this sense, becoming constitutes more than an (anti-)identity claim; it expresses a temporality, a movement of an intra-active becoming, whereby rather than thinking about time as a chronological counting of moments—sets of before and after that are progressively directed towards a future—an intra-active becoming illustrates that time is a durational succession of change which apprehends any distinct ‘moment’ or ‘present’ as a becoming that is co-determinate with a live temporal frame’ (Loewen Walker 2014, p. 50).

As I sat with Julia in the back of that café, myself feeling more self-conscious than I perhaps needed to, Julia was enacting a self that was of that living present, whether conscious or otherwise. It would have been quite easy to develop a transformative ‘rags to riches’ narrative to detail Julia’s experience as she would often speak optimistically about her future and what she hoped to achieve. However, perhaps due to her experiences with bipolar disorder, I found Julia’s narrative to resist this traditional linear model. Although she may have reached times in her career which she saw as a success, there was an ongoing process where her identity and what constituted it continued to evolve and change in her everyday life.

The dominant transformation narrative of youth arts discourse often fails to incorporate the real lived experiences of the young musicians participating. As Harris argues, the preoccupation with ‘becoming’ suggests a focus on idealised understandings of youth (Harris 2012, p. 143). Sitting down with Julia and other participants taught me that not only was there variation between participants’ experiences of vulnerability and resilience, but there was also quite significant variation and contrast within each young musicians’ individual experiences. Their narration of the temporal nature of these experiences reveals conscious and unconscious contrasts in experience. These contradictions challenge the transformation approach used so heavily within youth arts scholarship. In addition, in acknowledging that young people are in constant states of becoming, a focus on the present state itself as opposed to the future point or becoming emerges as the focus.

This impetus towards a temporal theoretical frame for ‘youth’ can be found within different domains of youth studies. Woodman and Leccardi (2015) push against traditional understandings of participation amongst certain cultural groups, instead moving towards more temporal and fleeting attachments to cultural signifiers. This post-subcultural turn as expertly summarised by Bennett (2011), assumes young people to have the ability to pick and choose aspects of cultures that resonate with them. A temporal approach to understanding young people’s experiences centres the ‘cultural and symbolic practices of young people’ (Woodman & Leccardi 2015, p. 56). What I often found with Julia, as well as other participants, was that the way she interacted and spoke with me was very much dependent upon the time of day and the environment we were in. Her takes on her own experiences continued to change and evolve. This was of course partly due to the development of a sense of rapport between us. At the same time, the process of spending time with the young musicians enabled me to observe their shifting relationships to vulnerability. At times, it felt participants were taking steps backwards, contradicting earlier discussion and gestures, providing a window on the shifting terrain of vulnerability as it unfolded in relation to music-making.

Notions of time and temporality are intrinsic to young people’s transitions and their own planning for the future (Woodman & Leccardi 2015, p. 56). In considering the experiences of young people, temporality can be broken into three distinct areas (Woodman & Leccardi 2015, p. 61; Rosa 2013, p. 8). The first is the ‘everyday’, referring to the structure and schedule of an individual’s daily life. The second, ‘lifetime’ speaks to ‘transitions across the life course’ (Woodman & Leccardi 2015, p. 61) and includes considerations of an individual’s life as a whole. For young people, this might include questions around what job they should do, and when they might start to consider, for example, getting married and having children. Finally, temporality incorporates considerations of ‘generation’ which situates everyday time and lifetime in

comparison with other generations of individuals. Underpinning these three distinct temporal perspectives is a need to ‘repeatedly reconsider and work out’ (Rosa 2013, p. 8) how they relate to each other. This negotiation presented, at times, contradictory sets of experiences in the lives of my participants.

Dez was another participant whose interactions with vulnerability and resilience ebbed and flowed. It was difficult not to notice Dez as a character. A big, stocky young man of Turkish background, the way he dressed was very much part of his identity. As later chapters will more thoroughly explore, Dez used dress and hip-hop as a means of identifying in a way that was hopeful and optimistic. Seeing his role as being one of influence, dress became a symbolic representation of resilience:

‘You gotta look good, because you’re, you’re being an influence to other people, especially younger kids, like from whatever you do – even being an artist, like it’s a massive thing.’

As I outline in Chapter Five, Dez’s goal was to open his own recording studio, ‘*a community type thing with little kids and all that*’. The goal of the studio was to ‘*get them off the bad path that they go, just bring them in, you know, like, kind of what happened to me.*’ There was a resignation in much of Dez’s reflections however – after acknowledging that there was a certain negative stereotype associated with young men who wear gold watches and chains he was quick to point out that ‘*I got influenced by that so I can’t help it. It’s just the way it is.*’

With a strong personal desire to be a positive role model, Dez was clearly in a state of frustration with his role and position within his local hip-hop community. Image clearly dictated his own identity and he accepted that the way he dressed, often draped in small but noticeable chains and ‘bling’, was in contrast to the ‘good role model’ image that he saw as being so deeply embedded into how he participated in music. There was also what seemed a schism in how Dez led his life. He was committed to the notion of separating his personal life from his musical life. In

attempting to do so however, again, Dez put forward something far more complex and intricate. With a pervasive ‘rags-to-riches’ discourse dominating much of hip-hop culture (Smith 2003, p. 80), it was clear that Dez felt pressure to adhere to it all while appearing to know and acknowledge that doing so was an impossible task.

In placing value in these experiences, I advocate for the need to create and develop new discourses around how young people’s experiences are considered. In doing so, I aim to shift the focus of said work onto the young people themselves. I argue that amplifying the temporal, nuanced and subjective experiences that emerge through music-making positions young people’s experiences as points from which future dialogue can emerge.

Conclusion

This chapter has unpacked how youth arts discourse frames young people’s participation in music-making initiatives. The deficit model limits the understanding of young people’s experiences of vulnerability, directing their participation at engaging in mainstream education and work by moving from a vulnerable state to one of resilience, thereby framing their participation as normative forms of youth governance. The existing transformation model seeks to govern populations of young people through limiting their capacities, and essentialising aspects of their identity. Such a model relies on managing, regulating and governing young people deemed vulnerable or at-risk, through engagement with the ‘relevant cultural form’ of music to ensure they be transformed to a state where they are able to re-engage with mainstream work and education. As youth music professionals such as Andy suggests, however, the linear transformation narrative that pervades youth arts discourse fails to consider the messy, on-the-ground experiences of young musicians themselves.

Chapter One – On Youth Arts Discourse and the Transformation Narrative

As I outline in later chapters, the ways young musicians engage with vulnerability within their practice afford specific means of self-disclosure. In stark contrast to the framework of domain youth arts discourse, these experiences assert an alternative temporality; they are messy, multidirectional, and call upon a network of collaborators, managers, and support teams. As I outline in the remainder of this thesis, music-making for the young musicians participating in this research requires an ongoing and active engagement with vulnerability. In this way, the process of music-making and the enactment of the musician identity afford opportunities for young musicians to enact resilience.

Chapter Two

Methodology

I always think about these sort of things, like things I want to talk about – this is the sort of shit I want to talk about'

(Mark, 22, hip-hop producer).

In December of 2016 I sat in on a session about methodologies at The Australian Sociological Association Conference (TASA). I had completed my own fieldwork in January of the previous year and had written what I believed to be a final draft methodology chapter later that year. As I sat in this methodology session, another PhD candidate, Ben Lohmeyer, delivered a paper about setting interview boundaries and expectations with young people accessing a youth work service (Lohmeyer 2016). Lohmeyer was taken aback at how forthcoming and excited one particular participant was to participate, suggesting that young people themselves often have quite practical reasons for wanting to participate and tell their own story. As Lohmeyer argued, the agency of young people themselves often goes unnoticed in adult-led research scenarios (2016, p. 219).

Directly after this methodology session, I found a place to sit down and write some reflections on how, through hearing about another PhD candidate's experience of working with young people, I had begun to reassess my own. Below is a segment from those field notes:

One of his participants was very excited to participate and appeared to see the value in what Ben was doing. Afterwards however, the participant offered to sell Ben drugs. Ben was unsure as to how to treat it but suggested that the young person was just testing boundaries and engaging in risk-taking behaviours. Whilst I think there's a point here, I would suggest that for this young person's way of understanding the world, this was him extending a hand of friendship, albeit in a way that is risky. I found a similar understanding useful in understanding the behaviour of

Chapter Two - Methodology

Dez, my own participant, as he asked for a lighter for his cigarette after the interview. It also speaks to the approach Ben, and myself, use as researchers to create this 'version of friendship' which elicits this kind of casualness on behalf of participants.

A few months after completing my fieldwork – a year and a half prior to attending the TASA conference – I had travelled up to Sydney to deliver a paper as part of the Interventions and Intersections Postgraduate conference at Western Sydney University. The paper was on the role self-disclosure and researcher positionality had played in my own fieldwork. I had used this phrase 'version of friendship' in passing (Hartup 2016), simply as a way of understanding my own position as a researcher working with young musicians. It was a phrase that I felt captured my general approach towards working with young people, however, it had remained ambiguous. If it were a 'version', how was it similar to *actual* friendship? Why was I conscious of slightly differentiating it from friendship? Some days after writing the reflection above, these questions still splashing their way through my own thought processes, I opened a new *Chrome* tab, clicked on the Google Scholar favourite I often used when I was stuck with my thinking, and put in 'friendship method' into the search bar.

When conducting ethnographic research with young people who have experiences of vulnerability, it is essential that researchers call upon a range of methodological techniques and tools. Doing so helped to not only ensure that no harm or distress was caused towards participants, it also ensured participants felt comfortable enough to talk about their experiences in an honest and unguarded manner. While conducting this research, I deployed a level of reflexivity using self-disclosure as a means of establishing strong connections with participants. The approach used in this research is steeped in an ethic of friendship. My methodology borrows heavily from a methodological approach 'friendship as method' as coined by Lisa

Chapter Two - Methodology

Tillmann-Healy (2003), and was one of the early results that Google Scholar listed for me. Central to this approach is drawing out the similarities between ethnographic fieldwork and friendship (2003, p. 732). As Tillmann-Healy argues, both methodologies and friendships comprise similar practices, pace, and ‘natural contexts’ and is conducted with ‘an ethic of friendship’ (2003, p. 730). I had, without knowledge at the time, borrowed from this approach, leading me to interactions with participants that relied on a mutual generosity and a level of comfort and ‘ease’ in relation to both body and verbal language. In this chapter I build upon Tillmann-Healy’s initial approach and propose ‘version of friendship as method’ as a methodological frame in which to conduct qualitative ethnographic fieldwork with young musicians. This chapter will unpack the effectiveness of such an approach through presenting an analysis of the particular methods I used.

I utilise an ethnographic approach with a focus on narrative focussed semi-structured in-depth interviews with young musicians. As evidenced in Chapter One, it is these experiences that are often missing from the existing youth arts discourse. When ethnographic methods are used, they are often presented through a tightly coded thematic analysis focussed on modes of transformation (For example, see Barrett & Baker 2012; Barrett & Smigiel 2007; Baker & Homan 2007; Baker 2014; Wang 2010), or are missing young people’s own voices all together (For example, see Weinberg & Joseph 2017; Cheong-Clinch 2009; Eckstrom 2007). As such, I argue that it is essential to use ethnography in order to develop a ‘thick’ account of the lived experiences of young musicians’ practice, and examine, in-depth, the everyday processes of cultural production (Frith, 1992 p. 184).

I conducted two stages of fieldwork for this thesis. Stage One operated as a scoping phase, designed to inform the development of the methods used in the second stage of the fieldwork. As part of this initial stage, I conducted interviews with 13 young musicians from around

Australia, all of whom had experienced vulnerability. In this first stage of the fieldwork, I also interviewed two youth arts professionals, both of whom facilitate and run music-making initiatives for young people. In Stage Two of the fieldwork, I conducted a series of three follow-up case-study interviews with five of the young musicians who had participated in the initial scoping phase¹⁶. Questions were developed from data originating in the initial scoping phase of the research. In this chapter, I also detail the recruitment process, the various topics covered during the interviews, as well as ethical considerations and methodological challenges experienced.

2.1 Employing a ‘Version of Friendship as Method’

I was really looking forward to talking to you actually. I never really talk about- well I never talk about what my songs are about.’

(Julia, 18, folk singer-songwriter and guitarist)

I had ventured into the initial interviews armed with research skills and sensibilities that combined both a specific youth mental health focus as well as a set of experiences that came from time spent writing about music and interviewing musicians (Refer to the Preface for more details of these). In entering into research with young musicians who had an experience of vulnerability, I was conscious of the potential power imbalance between myself and the participant, especially as I was a researcher whose role was, at least in part, to ask questions that the participant might find difficult or potentially troubling to answer. I was also someone older who came to the research from an academic institution, and I was acutely aware that those young

¹⁶ From this point, the ‘final five’ participants who participated in the second stage of the research will simply be referred to as ‘participants’, unless otherwise stated.

Chapter Two - Methodology

musicians with whom I was to engage – young people with experiences of vulnerability who are deeply immersed in music cultures and music-making practice – may have equated this with a lack of understanding, further positioning them as the other and the object of fascination and intrigue. As Lohmeyer (2016) had argued, research with young people is often entrenched in deep adult-centric understandings of both young people's experiences and also the development of the research methodologies used to conduct research on young people. In understanding my own fieldwork as being similar to friendship, many of these inherent power imbalances were able to be dismantled.

The approach I used as part of my fieldwork proved to be effective. However, as established in the opening of this chapter, the reasons as to why only occurred to me sometime after. Calling upon aspects of Tillmann-Healy's approach (2003), 'version of friendship as method' is an approach that evolved iteratively during my fieldwork. In this work, I conducted ethnographic, qualitative research with young musicians that utilised an 'ethically friendly' approach. The reasons for the 'version' qualifier is, in large parts, for ethical reasons. Details of these ethical reasons are discussed below. The friendship that I encountered with participants was developed within the confines of the fieldwork only. Acknowledging the significant ethical concerns, research with young people, especially ethnographic work with vulnerable young people, should feel as natural as possible for both the researcher and the participant. As such, the interview component of the work comprised an informal, semi-structured discussion, resembling more of a conversation as opposed to a formal interview. In Stage One, the scoping interviews covered a wide variety of topics relating to the role both music-listening and music-making played in the lives of these young musicians. The case-study interviews that occurred during Stage Two were more thematically oriented, but still similarly conversational.

Chapter Two - Methodology

At times, the interview sessions employed an interactive interviewing method. Together, the participants and I explored conceptual ideas, often clarifying and occasionally rewriting questions (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 279). Approaching the interviews in this way meant that participants' perspectives and understandings of the topics we were exploring drove discussion. Interactive interviewing lends itself to the friendship as method approach, as it often involves 'multiple interview sessions' and is 'situated within the context of emerging and well-established relationships among participants and interviewers' (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 279). Doing so allowed me, as a researcher, to emphasise particular aspects of myself within the interview context as a means of ensuring a sense of rapport and interactivity. As I detail later in this chapter, my own self-disclosure performed a significant role in generating specific interactions with participants, often positioning them as the one with a set of expertise.

The phrase 'version of friendship' was one that emerged in discussions with my supervisors as well as other academic colleagues during and after my fieldwork. Friendship aligned with the ways I sought to understand the experiences of participants. This approach, as detailed below, initially began as one informed by a peer research model that seeks to place extra value and importance not only on young people's experiences, but also on enabling these experiences and perspectives to shape the overall research away from the traditional 'gaze' inherent in research with young people (Dentith, Measor & O'Malley 2009, p. 164). As an approach, 'version of friendship as method' reflects a broader move within the youth work industry towards working *alongside* and *with* young people as opposed to the 'mainstream research paradigm where researchers are objective experts who do research 'on' subjects' (Edwards & Alexander 2011, p. 270). During interviews with participants, my own line of questioning often moved away from pre-written questions, resulting in the participant themselves directing the flow of the conversation.

There are a few definitional questions which determine what constitutes friendship within a research context. Citing the ‘marginal position’ friendship occupies within much of Western culture, Tillman-Healy argues that friendship has no ‘obligatory dimensions’ and is completely negotiable (2003, p. 731). Although true, from an Australian perspective, the importance and ubiquitousness of what is colloquially referred to as ‘mateship’ in Australian culture (Morse & Marks 1985)¹⁷, suggests that friendship in fact denotes something more specific, and is something into which one quite deliberately enters. The young musicians participating in this research were all friendly in their interactions with me, and the fieldwork employed similar practices, pace and ‘natural contexts’ (‘going where participants are’ - Tillmann-Healy 2003, p. 735), all reminiscent of friendship. At the core of my willingness to enter research-based relationships with these young musicians was the prospect of eliciting particularly detailed and interesting stories. I did this by employing aspects of ‘friendship’ during the fieldwork process, focussing on my own self-disclosure and the impact this played upon the position of both myself and participant. However, the choice to employ these techniques calls up the need to clarify this kind of fieldwork as a *version* of friendship.

My own ‘version of friendship as method’, requires a level of participation on behalf of the researcher in the lives of participants that surpasses the traditional researcher-participant relationship. This slow evolution of friendship as it works in conjunction with method calls upon ways of being and interacting that demand ‘work’ done outside of the direct, formalised, ethnographic field. Having the opportunity to practice these more everyday aspects of friendships as part of method is one afforded by being able to stay in the field for a prolonged period. It is often suggested to PhD candidates that fieldwork should be completed within a

¹⁷ The difference between friendship and mateship has been one largely understudied within an Australian context. There is some research, however, in particular the social psychology literature (Morse & Marks 1985) that suggests the marked difference between the two can be brought back to level of intimacy. Friendship denotes a purposeful and intimate relationship, where mateship is more ubiquitous.

Chapter Two - Methodology

specific time-frame. Wanting to give myself space and time to connect deeply with my participants across a series of different encounters, I opted to conduct my fieldwork over a seven-month period. As I explain further in this chapter, during these seven months, given the quite disparate locations of my participants, being able to embed myself within their communities for an extended period was not feasible. Tillmann-Healy advocates for research to occur at ‘the natural pace of friendship’ (2003, p. 734). This ‘natural pace’ assumes that fieldwork should last as long as necessary. With funding requirements as well as other demands on time that face the modern early-career scholar, many qualitative research projects cannot afford such drawn out and immersive ethnographic environments. As Tillmann-Healy herself acknowledges, the structures and constraints of academic life mean that ‘not all researchers can afford to spend at least a year in the field’ (2003, p. 740) and an open-ended time frame is out of reach for many researchers. However, as this chapter advocates, there are aspects of the ‘friendship as method’ approach which can be called upon as a means of ensuring that similar benefits of the approach can come to fruition within the timeframe available to the researcher.

This ‘version of friendship as method’ model uses friendship as its ‘ethic’ but does not take for granted the relationship developed between myself and participant to be that of a friendship beyond the fieldwork. At the core of this approach is *friendliness*. Friendliness and its values of being open-minded, kind and supportive are aspects all qualitative research should aim to employ. This approach also acknowledges that inbuilt into friendship are encounters and scenarios where there is a level of uncertainty and unease. The move from stranger to ‘friend’ in the confines of the fieldwork took a level of persistence and patience, both on behalf of the participant and myself. As Bauman argues, as strangers my participants were ‘neither friend nor enemy’ and were ‘undecidables’ (Bauman 1993, p. 55). It was the qualities of friendship and the desire to share stories between myself and participant that moved the relationship from one of strangers to friends. When considering projects that work directly with young people, as I do in

this work, this 'version of friendship as method' ensured that whilst productive and fruitful, the necessary boundaries inherent in research with young people were still maintained.

Utilising this 'version of friendship as method' allowed for a specific set of experiences to emerge. As I demonstrate below, in doing so, I ensured that both myself and the participant were able to explore similarities in experiences (both personal and musical), allowing for us a 'shared status'. A shared status incorporates 'seemingly tangential talk' which often led to 'insights that would be inaccessible in a more formal environment and/or with a more formal researcher-researched relationship' (Sassi & Thomas 2012, p. 832). This shared, casual discourse encouraged participants to talk through the mundane aspects of their music production. At times, this meant that participants would interrupt themselves asking whether this was something I as a researcher was interested in. As I explore later in this chapter, speaking to me was often the first time participants had sat down with someone and spoken about their practice in such detail.

Central to this version of friendship was a sense of trust, rapport and an eventual comfort and ease in disclosing aspects of self that were of a more personal nature. This was largely a result of the use of self-disclosure, a tool I employed to build a 'shared status' between myself and participant. The following will detail how, using self-disclosure, I established common ground with participants, which led to the disclosure of more personal information.

2.1.1 Self-Disclosure

During interviews with participants, I also engaged in self-disclosure practices. I had close to 17 years of music education, with some of that time spent writing my own original music and collaborating with others. I also had experience writing about new Australian artists, similar to

the young musicians I interviewed. As participants told me their experiences of music-making as well as other experiences, I felt compelled to tell them of my own involvement in music, both as an 'ex-musician' and as someone who wrote about music. Self-disclosure builds on the notion of a shared status and involves working *with* the participant to share 'ideas, attitudes and/or experiences concerning matters that might relate to the interview topic in order to encourage participants to be more forthcoming' (Reinharz & Chase 2003, p. 79). In the context of my research, doing so meant that a method was developed that generated responses and data that were both detailed and reflective. The shared status, constructed through an approach like self-disclosure, helped to dismantle the rigid hierarchy between myself and the participant (Berger 2001). The conscious dismantling of these structures also helped to build a level of trust, rapport and ultimately a disposition of 'friendliness' (Swartz 2011, p. 58). Self-disclosure meant that participants were able to relate their own stories to mine. Not only did this establish an interactivity and exchange between myself and participants, but it was also conducive to both a productive and detailed set of discussions.

As a methodological tool, self-disclosure 'encourages participants to elaborate on their subjective experiences' (Liamputtong 2006, p. 72). In addition to helping to dismantle the hierarchy inherent within the researcher-participant relationship, in using self-disclosure as part of the fieldwork, I was able to position the importance of music and lived experience as central points for the interviews. Similar to Tillmann-Healy's (2003) initial contention, the act of disclosing aspects of my experience evolved during the time spent with participants. However, having my own set of experiences with writing about music out in the open from the outset established self-disclosure as a method from the very beginning of the fieldwork process. For some participants, who already knew of my own background in writing about music prior to recruitment, self-disclosure began at the point of recruitment (details on this recruitment can be found later in this chapter). My own 'version of friendship as method' was helpful during the recruitment phase as

it helped me gain entry to a community of participants, in the same way as a mutual friend introduces you to a new community of friends. Similarly, a key aspect of research is negotiating roles such as an expert, confidant, or student. Both the researcher and participant vacillate between these roles depending on what ‘the relational context warrants’ (Tillmann-Healy 2003, p. 732), and the relationship is experienced as developmental, moving from an initial ‘role-limited interaction to integration and stabilisation’ (Tillmann-Healy 2003, p. 732). Key to my own version of friendship was self-disclosure. Across the fieldwork, I found that through self-disclosure, participants not only expressed interest in participating, but also felt a greater level of comfort and trust. This was especially pertinent when it came to disclosing more personal information (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007, pp. 333–334).

Naturally, the move away from more traditional research methodologies attracts some criticism. Utilising the personal subjectivities of both the researcher and participant as part of fieldwork challenges the traditional methodological practices. In using self-disclosure practices as a researcher, I was conscious of not tipping the scale too far the other way in making my own experiences the focus of the work (Abell et al. 2006; Poindexter 2003). However, the nature of self-disclosure as part of the ‘version of friendship as method’ approach relies on this careful navigation of the developing relationship. Given discussions focussed on topics that both the participant and I knew about, I was conscious of not displaying my own ‘category entitlement’ (Abell et al. 2006, p. 235) where participants might interpret my own experiences as holding more weight than their own. This, in turn, has the potential to “‘wrong-foot’ the respondent in so far as it disrupts the normative question-and-answer format of the interview’ (2006, p. 237). In navigating this, I was careful in choosing what parts of my own story to disclose, and when. I would disclose aspects of my own story that I either found resonated or at times contrasted with the stories of the participants themselves. The ways these interactions emerged were analogous to friendship.

Inherent within self-disclosure practices are discussions that include sensitive topics, those that involve the ‘disclosure of behaviours or attitudes which would normally be kept private and personal...and/or which might cause the respondent discomfort to express’ (Wellings, Branigan & Mitchell 2000, p. 256). As many of the interviews with participants involved discussions of vulnerability, establishing a shared status through my own self-disclosure meant that participants felt comfortable discussing quite personal stories. These stories emerge throughout the remaining chapters.

Through self-disclosure and a general ‘friendliness’ that arose and evolved during the fieldwork, participants felt more comfortable in engaging with these vulnerabilities in discussion. As I have argued elsewhere, in disclosing aspects of my own story, I was able to ensure that participants were able to consider their own experiences in ‘different and more authentic ways’ (Hartup 2016). Participants were excited by the opportunity to talk about themselves and their experiences, especially through the platform of music-making. In addition, as the following will argue, self-disclosure involved a re-negotiation of status with participants often revelling in the opportunity to enact the status of an expert.

2.1.2 Expertise

Through the process of self-disclosure, participants were in a position where they were able to embody a particular level of expertise by claiming the identity of a young musician, working within the industry. This status was largely influenced by my own self-disclosure, specifically my own identity as an ‘ex-musician’ and as a music writer. A great deal of the fieldwork was focused on ensuring that participants felt comfortable disclosing their knowledge. Through my own self-disclosure practices, these experiences were brought to light within the context of the interview.

Much literature that seeks to work *with* young people as opposed to *for*, advocates for a level of empowerment in young people's experiences, using these experiences to guide and direct research (Fleming 2011; Wright 2011). Much participatory research with children/young people is premised on an explicit argument that their knowledge is a form of expertise (Fox et al. 2010, p. 623; Powers & Tiffany 2006, p. S79). These approaches are missing from a great deal of youth arts research, however. This is the approach to methodology that I use in this research.

The following will discuss more broadly the traditional conceptions of 'expertise', how they have been utilised within existing qualitative research, and how similar conceptions have been adapted into my own research.

While 'expertise' as a methodological tool is not common within youth arts research, there is, in addition to youth participatory research, also scholarship that conducts research within organisations or institutions, incorporating traditional conceptions of expertise. This research often understands those at the top of a hierarchical structure, such as a manager, as the expert (Collins & Evans 2008; Meuser & Nagel 2009). Such a framework, in turn, positions those towards the bottom of a traditional hierarchical structure as being without expertise and instead naïve and 'amateur'. In these contexts, the idea of expertise also implies that only through years of experience and career progression can such a status be attained, reducing the likelihood that those 'on the ground' (as opposed to those in managerial or 'behind the scenes' roles) can be recognised as possessing valuable experiences and insights. Such an assumption has particular ramifications for young people, as typically they are considered to be 'emerging' or new in the field, thus precluding their capacity for expertise.

Meuser and Nagel (2009, p. 25) offer an updated understanding of expertise, suggesting that not all conceptions of expertise assume a hierarchical understanding. A push towards a more

contextual, socio-cultural model sees Meuser and Nagel conceptualising ‘expert knowledge’ this way:

‘A co-mingling between expert knowledge of active participants and that of professional- scientific experts takes place, resulting in the formation of hybrids between formerly separated fields of knowledge and symbolic orders’ (Meuser & Nagel 2009, p. 25).

The methodology used in my own work utilises these hybrid understandings, and repositions the value placed in the experiences of young musicians. The experiences of young people in ethnographic research should not be sought out simply because they *matter*. The experiences of young people, especially my own participants, are laden with the specific expert knowledges of those actively participating on-the-ground. In addition to these participatory knowledges, participants also displayed understandings and ‘professional’ knowledge of the industry itself. This meant they were better equipped to make decisions about their own music careers as well as be in a position where they could offer advice to other young musicians starting out. As Meuser and Nagel posit, the expert is embedded within their respective ‘circumstances and milieus’ (2009, p. 25). My own research utilises these ‘hybrid’ forms of expertise.

This new understanding of ‘expertise’ does not simply refer to an ‘informant’ or someone with a set of experiences. As Meuser and Nagel suggest, what constitutes an expert and a ‘non-expert’, may ‘end up being used inflationarily’ meaning that ‘anybody might be seen as an expert – at least as an “expert of her or his own life”’ (2009, p. 18). What makes the knowledge possessed by an expert unique is that it is something that *because* of their set of experiences, they hold exclusively. Expertise in this context no longer relies on progression through a hierarchy. Participants all held a unique and specific range of expertise because of their position as someone in the beginning stages of their career. Through establishing themselves as early-career musicians (I unpack this in more detail in Chapter Five), participants had already navigated many

of the challenges experienced by those actively engaged in music-making in Australia. In learning from these challenges and developing specific sets of knowledges and value systems, the enacted the role of the expert.

Within research conducted with young people, there appears little mention of the role youth specific 'expertise' might play. One area of scholarship where the concept of expertise is starting to emerge is research conducted into internet cultures and the use of digital technologies. Such work often positions young people as the experts, holding relevant knowledges that, because of their set of experiences, is understood to be exclusive to the young person as opposed to the adult (Livingstone 2002, pp. 179–180). Critiques of what Prensky labels the 'digital native' – 'Our students today are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet' (2001, p. 1) – suggest that just youth in and of itself is not a determining factor in becoming an expert in the use of internet technologies (Hargittai 2010, p. 93). Similarly, not all young musicians are deemed to be 'experts' in their field simply because there are more opportunities for young people to engage in music-making (See APRA AMCOS 2015; Vella, Homan & Redhead 2016). Participants all exhibited particular knowledges around song-writing, use of instruments, recording techniques, promoting their music, and booking and playing gigs that meant they had an understanding not only of their own experiences but also of their local scene and the Australian music industry.

Within the broader context of the music industry, young musicians are very rarely considered to hold knowledge deemed important. Traditional notions of expertise within the context of the industry tend to refer to producers, engineers, record label representatives and even music journalists as the holders of specific sets of knowledges that accord them the role of expert.

What sets these traditional experts apart from young musicians is that often these sets of usually older individuals are not participating in the day-to-day practices of writing, making and playing

music. The youth arts domain, similarly, holds onto ideas of expertise that are entrenched in a separation of ‘workers’ and ‘clients’. The young musicians participating in my fieldwork, on the other hand, were given room to assume the role of expert through exploring and discussing with me these on-the-ground experiences. With ethnographic methodologies forging new and more inclusive practices of working alongside and with young people as opposed to for them, introducing ‘expertise’ as a tool to use as part of these approaches seems a natural next step.

Some participants knew of my own experience writing about music prior to their choosing to participate. Mark was a young musician whose collaborative work with rapper Jay I had written about previously. Tillmann-Healy’s method (2003), as well as my own ‘version of friendship as method’ suggests that this already established knowledge meant that ‘friendship’ within the confines of the fieldwork, developed at a more natural pace. Another participant, Ryan was also aware of the fact that I wrote about music. When I ask him how he had discovered the research, he tells me that it was through one of his mentors:

‘So she’s like, she posted [about the research] to everyone. And I’m like, Me, And All My Friends [the website I ran at the time of the fieldwork]...I’ve heard of that blog when I’ve been doing PR research of, like, blogs around. Because one of the things [my mentor] taught me to do was make like a book of contacts of all the websites. So you were already on my contact list and I was like, ‘oh great!’

Each participant displayed hybrid expertise (Meuser & Nagel 2009, p. 25), incorporating both on-the-ground lived experience and professional knowledges unique to musicians in the early stages of their careers. I use these specific experiences to direct my research. Because participants were able to enact the role of the expert, they were able to offer detailed insight into the wider concerns of the industry, especially relating to ‘early career musicians’. Participant expertise emerged through all interviews, especially the final interview, with participants discussing the reasons as to why, for example, some artists are more popular than others, the people in the

industry offering specific support to new artists, or how ideas of ‘career’ in a financial sense can emerge in viable ways. Through self-disclosure and the ‘version of friendship as method’ approach utilised, the knowledges and unique expertise of participants emerged, leading the way in which this, and future ethnographic work should head.

Whilst young musicians did inhabit this expert role, there were moments where they had difficulty articulating the specifics of their practice and what it afforded them. As the fieldwork continued, I came to term this the ‘I don’t know why’ phenomena. As I explore both in the following section and in subsequent chapters, this inability to describe the specific affordances of music itself appeared to be something unique to music as a creative expression. In the following section I provide a theoretical underpinning for better understanding these phenomena.

2.1.3 Making Sense of Experience

In 2004, the American philosopher Giovanna Borradori published a book of interviews entitled ‘Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida’. It was in Borradori’s discussion with Derrida, admittedly about terrorism and the September 11 terrorist attacks, that the best way of describing this ‘thing’ or ‘event’ occurs:

“‘Something’ took place, we have the feeling of not having seen it coming, and certain consequences undeniably follow upon the “thing”. But this very thing, the place and meaning of this “event”, *remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept...*’ (Borradori 2004, p. 86 emphasis added).

Within my research, participants’ reaction to this ‘thing’, or in this instance, a piece of music (either listened to or played), was understood to be intuitive but without a conceptual framework to explain it. There was a great sense that music allowed for, as participant Ryan called it, a ‘*completely limitless*’ exploration of self. For Ryan and other participants, engaging with music in a way that allowed for exploration into their own personal story was the only way of being able to

do so. Why this made sense to participants, however, speaks to the ineffability of music. It was another participant, Julia who, in fact, used the phrase '*I don't know why*' when speaking about why she found she could talk about vulnerability in a direct way in her music-making practice. As I establish in future chapters, music-making facilitates an intimate knowledge and relationship with self.

In spending considerable time with participants, I was able to develop a strong sense of friendship and rapport between myself and them. It was very much a 'version of friendship'. What this friendship led to, however, was something initially unintended in the work. The 'I Don't Know Why' phenomena that occurred, especially when participants were attempting to describe the impact music-making and listening had on their own sense of self and understanding of their situation, allowed for a sense of honesty and spontaneity in my interaction with participants. The following will detail how the methodology catered for this consistent finding as well as explore why such a finding is an important detail largely missing from much youth-focussed music study.

Utilising a 'version of friendship as method' meant that participants were afforded the chance to consider their practice in a new way. There is a tendency to explain this kind of finding as resulting from intervention based research, where the methodology is designed in such a way as to disrupt and purposefully intervene with current practice (Burawoy 1998; Wright 2011). My approach builds on Touraine's acknowledgement that as a researcher, it was not my role to intervene and interpret practice directly (Touraine 1980, pp. 11–12). Rather, in this work, I utilise participants' own interpretation of their practice as a means of directing discourse. My own 'version of friendship as method' sought to honour the everyday contexts in which young musicians engage in their practice, and the focus on the participants' own interpretation of practice proved beneficial. The ramifications of participants' reflections, however, proved less

obvious. The interviews themselves did allow for a space where participants could address their practice in new ways and were made to be more aware of the ways they went about making music.

The affordances made available through the methodological design, of which I introduce below, allowed participants to speak about their music-making practice with greater insight and consideration. This was a new experience for participants with many commenting that before I had spoken with them, they had not thought about their practice in such detail. As a result, participants would speak about their practice in differing ways. When I asked another participant Mark, a hip-hop producer, about whether the environment he is in shaped the sounds and beats he made, he answered: 'I feel like it does to an extent. Not really on a level that I understand.'

For Noah, an electronic dance musician who participated in Stage One of the fieldwork, participating in the research allowed for a new perspective on his practice. Due to various technical difficulties during our interview via Skype, I was only able to hear Noah, while he could see me but not hear me. As a result, I would speak the questions as I typed them using the messaging function within Skype and Noah would reply using his voice. In an email conversation following on from the interview, I joked with Noah that I feared my text might have come across as cold due to it being hard to translate spoken word into text. Noah very graciously replied, commenting on the effect the interview had had on his own thought processes:

'Thanks for having me. It was an interesting experience to say the least! Kudos on the questions, they weren't cold at all. Really made me think about what I do on an unconscious level.'

A month later, Noah followed up with an email containing more information about what we had discussed during the interview. In the email, he told me that a friend of his had continually asked

Chapter Two - Methodology

about one of his relationships, one that was the topic of a song of his we had spoken about. Although he refused to speak about the relationship with his friend, Noah told me of how he recognised how comfortable he felt speaking about the relationship with me instead, one month earlier. Music-making was a practice where participants directly engaged with vulnerability. In designing a methodology where these practices were spoken about in detail, I found that participants were comfortable and more forthcoming telling me about how they used vulnerability in their practice. The methodology actively engaged with that comfort and presented opportunities, often for the first time, where participants were able to gain a particular perspective on their practice. These new perspectives were not clearly defined, however. Some, like Noah, left the interviews being able to articulate this newfound reflectiveness. For others, it was simply the fact that although they were unable to articulate it, participating in the interview provided the opportunity to look at their work in a new way.

Methodologies are an aspect of academic research that continue to evolve throughout and beyond the research process. Original iterations of this chapter had been written just prior and during the fieldwork, and although I knew I would be revisiting them at some point to edit, at the time I had not thought I would be developing the chapter further some two years after the fieldwork had finished. Participating more broadly within academic life, through speaking to colleagues and participating in conferences and similar opportunities allowed for greater reflection on my own methodological choices. In discovering Tillmann-Healy's (2003) own personal methodological approach, I was able to understand the general friendliness I had naturally developed with my participants through a methodology framework. My own 'version of friendship as method' existed within the confines of the fieldwork itself, allowing for a natural ease to develop between myself and the participant. However, in doing so, I was still able to

maintain the ethical considerations unique to work with young people. In disclosing aspects of my own story, I entered into the fieldwork consciously dismantling the traditional hierarchical power relationship between myself and the participant. Self-disclosure as part of this ‘version of friendship as method’ meant that participants more readily claimed the identities of early career musicians and explore the particular hybrid expertise inherent within such an identity.

2.2 The Method

This research involved a two-stage ethnography, incorporating one-on-one interviews with young musicians all of whom had experiences of vulnerability. Stage One operated as a scoping phase and involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with thirteen young musicians from around Australia as well as semi-structured interviews with two youth arts professionals. Stage Two specifically involved a set of three interviews with five of the young musicians who participated in Stage One. For reference, this means that I spoke with the young musicians participating in Stage Two a total of four times (once during Stage One and three times during Stage Two). A full list of questions asked during both stages of the research as well as details about the interviews can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. As a way of ensuring the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were chosen for all participants (both young musicians and youth arts professionals) as well as their collaborators. Locations, song titles and band names have also been removed. Names of the organisations Andy and Nat worked at were also given pseudonyms. The fieldwork was conducted over a seven-month period between June 2014 and January 2015.

The data generated as part of stage one and stage two was analysed using discourse analysis to draw out key themes (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005, p. 263). However, the presentation of these analyses does not follow a simple thematic structure. Rather, I use this approach as a means of

uncovering the openings and spaces where contradictions and uncertainties became obvious. I do this as a means of asking what meaning that uncertainty has for participants' own practice. The data presented actively highlights the productive tensions inbuilt into participants' narratives.

The following section will provide detail as to what the method itself involved. Before introducing these two stages, however, I detail the recruitment process undertaken.

2.2.1 Recruitment

Recruitment for the fieldwork proved to be an evolving process. As detailed in the opening section of this chapter, the power relationship inherent in research with 'vulnerable' populations, and young people, in particular, can potentially inhibit successful recruitment campaigns. As such, great consideration was taken when devising the recruitment material used. I opted to not use the word 'vulnerable' on recruitment material as I felt it would have limited the kinds of young musicians interested in participating as it prescribed a specific value onto the young person. In using 'version of friendship as method', I entered into the fieldwork with a shared status, where the young musician participating did not feel as though their experiences were reduced to their 'vulnerability'. As I stress below, a large part of the rationale for this research work was to gauge the experiences of young musicians who had not actively participated in the traditional youth arts practice. After some rumination, the phrase used instead was '*diverse range of life experience*' as it felt broad enough to capture the more typical populations of 'vulnerable' young people (Blanchard et al. 2008, p. 35; Rickwood et al. 2014, pp. 2–3; Singh et al. 2011), as well as other young people who might not identify with these particular categories but still feel they have an experience worth discussing. In all recruitment material, this phrase was always qualified with the following (Please see Appendix 3 and 4 for full recruitment material):

Chapter Two - Methodology

This could mean things like living with a disability or chronic illness, being Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander, being culturally or linguistically diverse, being a migrant or refugee, or identifying as same sex attracted or gender diverse.

Using this language proved to broaden the net, capturing young musicians who fell into the traditional ‘vulnerable’ categories, as well as others who had lived a more ‘alternative lifestyle’. This included living in makeshift accommodation, starting a family at an early age or having lived and worked overseas early on in their careers. Using broad language to define vulnerability as part of the recruitment strategy meant that many more young people were interested in participating.

Often referred to as the ‘missing middle’ in contemporary youth studies (Roberts 2011; Roberts & MacDonald 2013; Woodman 2013), this approach ensured that young people who traditionally would not have participated in such research opted in. A major motivation behind accessing different populations of young people was to ensure that those young people who had not had the opportunity to have their own stories told were included. As Roberts and MacDonald (2013) suggest, in conducting research on youth practices, and understanding how these practices are influenced and shaped by gender, sexuality, race and other social stratifiers, ‘considering the marginalised middle in youth studies –the ordinary, the mundane, the everyday – with renewed sociological imagination seems an appropriate place to start’ (2013, sec. 1.4). Much youth arts research, however, appears to focus exclusively on existing programs that cater for young people who participate in youth arts organisations. Often due to their more acute markers of ‘vulnerability’, these populations can be over-researched, leaving a range of other young people out of the dialogue.

The recruitment itself occurred via various distinct means. I sought out both young musicians who participated in existing youth music-making initiatives as well as those young musicians who

created music outside of these formalised participatory structures. As a result of this approach, I focussed the strategy via two avenues. The first concentrated on accessing young musicians who participated in youth arts organisations. A range of existing youth music-making initiatives were contacted as well as the peak music bodies and their respective youth bodies in each Australian state and territory. Through my own extended networks within the music industry, I also contacted independent labels, music PR groups, and those music bloggers who, like myself, wrote about new and emerging Australian musicians. In addition, I included an advertisement for the research on my own music blog. Finally, some young musicians who I had established communication with prior to beginning the fieldwork through writing about their work were also contacted.

2.2.2 The Two Stages

Stage One

The first stage was designed, in part, to scope out the field. The process yielded 13 young musicians, all with differing experiences of vulnerability. The interviews as part of Stage One covered three key areas. We began by discussing aspects of the young person's musical biography. This included what they grew up listening to, how those tastes in music have changed over time, and who around them had helped to influence those tastes. Discussion then moved towards their own music-making process. Prior to the interview beginning, participants sent me a song they had written and were willing to talk about. Many of these songs dealt with significant personal issues and stories for participants. Together we explored the process undertaken in writing the song and what that song meant to them (a more detailed description of this process is below). A discussion about the role of technology in their practice helped to finish off the interview, focusing on how they would share their music online, the importance of different online statistical 'metrics' of success, and the role communicative technologies including mobile phones and social media played.

The young musicians who participated were between 17 and 29 years old and were from around Australia. Of the 13 interviewed, six were from Queensland, three from New South Wales, two from Victoria and two from Western Australia. All participants were located within or close to the major capital cities. Only two of the participants participating in this first stage identified as female (this is discussed in more detail in later parts of this chapter). The remaining 11 participants identified as male. This breakdown was representative of gender participation in the Australian music industry¹⁸. All participants had experienced some level of vulnerability. All identified as musicians, meaning that they wrote, played and recorded their own original music. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one and a half hours depending on the time available and how forthcoming the participants were. Nine of these interviews took place via Skype, with the remaining four taking place in person.

The youth arts professionals I spoke to during this stage, both, in addition to having extensive experience in the sector, were also respected musicians in their own fields. The first, Andy, was an electronic musician who had been DJing at nightclubs and parties around Australia and internationally for close to a decade at the time of the fieldwork. At the time of the fieldwork, Andy was the assistant manager of a major youth music-making initiative ('The Site') whose focus was on providing high quality recording opportunities to a range of young people. Andy assisted in the running of a range of different workshops that the initiative offers, catering towards young people from a wide range of backgrounds including includes remote workshops done within indigenous communities and juvenile justice centres as well as a weekly 'drop-in' recording studio based in a central location where young people could work with professional

¹⁸ According to musicians registered with the Australasian Performing Rights Association and the Australian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society (APRA/AMCOS), just 21% identify as female (APRA AMCOS 2014). Research undertaken by the Australian Council for the Arts suggest that 32% of those who identify their career as 'musician' are female (Australia Council for the Arts 2015).

musicians to record their own music. I also used this ‘drop-in’ site as part of the recruitment process.

The other facilitator interviewed as part of Stage One was Nat, a celebrated session and solo musician producing both folk and electronic music. At the time of the fieldwork, Nat facilitated a TAFE accredited music program (‘The Program’) for young people aged between 16 and 25. Students participating in the program could write, record and perform their own original compositions and covering multiple different popular music styles. The program catered to a wide range of young people but had a specific focus on engaging young people with experiences of homelessness, mental health issues and substance abuse as well as other family, work or education problems.

These interviews were undertaken at their workplaces. The interviews covered a range of issues from gathering an understanding of what was involved in the day-to-day running of an organisation, to the problems experienced as part of their practice. Discussion also covered how, through their own experience of working directly with young people, they conceptualised both ‘vulnerability’ and ‘resilience’ within the context of their work. The purpose of the interviews was to gather the experiences and ‘expertise’ of those adults based in the youth music-making sector. This ensured that I approached the second stage of the fieldwork not only with an indication as to how young musicians themselves experienced music-making practices, but also how, as a sector, programs are designed and implemented. Much of the existing literature focuses on assessing the effectiveness of these youth arts organisations. In gathering the expertise and insights of those working on the ground, I bring these into dialogue with the expertise and experience of the young musicians.

Chapter Two - Methodology

The scoping interviews with the 13 young musicians covered a range of topics, all exploring the intersection of personal experience, music-making, music-listening practices, the role of technology, and their ideas of their local music community. As mentioned above, part of the scoping interview also involved the discussion of a song written by the participant and sent to me prior to the interview. Incorporating this discussion into the interview allowed for extra insight into the participant's own experience and practice. It also acted as a pivotal point in each interview in that it was often the topic that participants were most forthcoming about.

Participants would also send me their public social media profile including their band profile and other information about their band or solo act. Participants were particularly honest when detailing the process behind the writing of the song. Through being able to listen to participant's own original music prior to speaking to them, I was able to gain an insight into their practice. This also helped ensure that the participant was prepared for the level of detail to be covered in the interview itself.

In addition to allowing for greater insight, by discussing their own music in detail, participants took on the role of 'musician' in a different context. Many participants informed me that one of the reasons they were interested in participating in this research was that it would provide them with some 'interview experience'. Given that many of the participants were interested in pursuing a career in music, discussing in detail how they went about writing a song and why they wrote it was deemed to be good practice for when they were being interviewed by music journalists in the future. It should be noted that all participants were aware of the difference in the purpose of conducting interviews in these different contexts. Please see below for a more detailed explanation as to this consideration.

In addition, each of the young musicians participating in the scoping phase received a \$20 iTunes voucher as a payment for the time they spent. These amounts were recommended by the Young

and Well CRC and also received ethics approval from the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. Incentives were seen as appropriate due to the expertise participants had exhibited during this phase of the work. In providing a voucher that the participant could use to purchase music, the incentive was also understood as a way of supporting the young person in their creative pursuit.

Stage Two

The three interviews I undertook with the young musicians as part of the Stage Two case-studies each covered a different topic. The first discussed some of the general findings that arose from the scoping interviews conducted during Stage One. The second interview involved a discussion around their actual practice, how they went about making a song and breaking down the process. This interview took place in the location where the participant made their music. The third and final interview dealt with the participants' own idea of music community and provided an opportunity to reflect on their local scene. Questions asked in Stage One of the research were asked again at the end of the final interview as a way of gauging how, through being involved in the interview process, their approach to their work and their own knowledge may have changed. Below I will introduce the young musicians who participated in Stage Two as well as detail the topics of each interview.

Stage Two Recruitment

The choice of which participants I would ask to participate in Stage Two was a deliberate and considered one. After some Stage One interviews, I immediately knew that the young person just spoken to would be a 'good fit' for the follow up work due to the kinds of experiences they told me about (based around vulnerability and music-making). For other participants, I based my decision on whether I thought there was an aspect of the interview that could be unpacked in

greater detail. What constituted a ‘good fit’ in the context of Stage Two was whether I felt there was more of the young person’s story to be told. If I thought they would be a ‘good fit’, I emailed participants asking if they were interested. All five participants emailed expressed interest, and over the following six months, three case-study interviews were conducted with each participant.

Below are small outlines of the participants, all of whom have been anonymised, who participated in Stage Two, complete with introductory data from participants themselves. Later chapters deal with some of these identifying factors as well as the role music-making played in navigating identity.

Stage Two Participants

Dani

Dani was a 23-year-old boy¹⁹ who made ‘post-grunge’ music and lived with friends in a share house in an inner-city suburb of a major capital city.

I’m 23, turning 24 in October. Umm, I grew up in [a major capital city], I’ve lived there all my life. Umm, mostly in the western suburbs, but some areas that aren’t quite...I’m renting with a couple of friends who are quite generous...basically I only pay the rent, I don’t pay the bills or anything which is nice! Otherwise I wouldn’t be able to afford to live here! Umm, I’m not studying, I’ve graduated from university. I graduated with an Honours degree in English literature and decided I didn’t want to pursue it after that. Just the academic system...it drags on you after a little bit...Umm, anyway, so I’ve been working and travelling since then.’

Dani also had experiences of mental illness, in particular bipolar disorder. Music-listening and making helped alleviate some of this pain, and also aided in allowing Dani to process these experiences.

¹⁹ Dani is a female-to-male transgendered young person. At the conclusion of the third interview, we had discussed preferred pronouns when in text (during the writing up phase). Boy was one of these pronouns.

Ryan

Ryan was a 24-year-old gay male who made ‘punk-y-grunge’ music. At the time of the fieldwork he had also begun creating electronic pop music and was living with friends in a share house in a suburb of a major capital city.

‘Yep, cool. Umm, so I’m 22. I’m 23 in like a month so...less than a month [laughs]. Umm, I grew up in [a country town]. It’s like, about an hour from the city, hour from the snow, and hour from the beach. So, it’s like, pretty awesome area [laughs]. I live in the eastern suburbs now. So, I moved about ... two years ago. Pretty much just for uni ... I’m going to go back and finish my [music business] degree, so yeah...It’s – I’ve failed quite a few units so I’ve gotta go back and do part-time so I’m also doing a sound production course. So, like, electronic composing... But I just stuck around here for music, cos there’s not much on out [back home] [laughs] Umm, there is a small sort of scene in [a local city], but it’s um, it’s really a recent thing that we haven’t had before that so...’

Music-making for Ryan allowed for a negotiation of identity, in particular his own experiences of queerness.

Dez

Dez was a young male rapper of Turkish background. He was the youngest participant at 17 years old and lived with his father and brother in a lower socio-economic suburb of a major capital city at the time of interview.

‘Umm, my name’s Dez, I’m 16 now, oh I’m 17 now – it was my birthday on the weekend...I’m from, I grew up in South East [suburb of a major capital city]...I grew up there and, umm, I moved to [another suburb] with my family and had to change schools and all that. From there I went to [the local high school] where I go to now, I’m in year 11. Planning on finishing my HSC.’

Dez's music-making practice began with traditional Turkish music as a result of visiting his grandparents. Through the discovery of American rapper Eminem at age 12, Dez's own music-listening and making practices firmly resolved around hip-hop.

Julia

Julia was a 21-year-old female folk-based singer-songwriter living with bipolar disorder. She lived with her mother and siblings in an inner-city suburb of a major capital city.

Well, umm, I'm 18 and I grew up here in [capital city]. Umm, yeah, went to school here – just finished high school last year and umm, yeah did pretty well at high school and decided not to go to uni. And yeah, I started...I was actually like a really like intense sportsperson for a long time...I did gymnastics. And so I did that until grade 10 pretty much every day. And then basically when I stopped that I started playing music...towards the end of grade 10 early grade 11 I started playing, and then playing gigs, and umm, and yeah, then I started studying it at school in grade 12 which is kind of late to start music.'

In addition to her own solo work, Julia had also begun a collaborative project with a friend working on electronic pop music.

Mark

Finally, Mark was a male 22-year-old hip-hop producer living with Asperger's, who resided with his parents in an outer suburb of a major capital city.

I was born in '92. I was born in the suburbs and then when I was about 5 or 6 we moved out to the country, so we were living out there till I was like 16. [I went to] a couple of different schools around that area. And then yeah, when I was 16 me and my parents moved up here – they run like a bed and breakfast sort of thing. I finished uni, I finished uni last year. I was doing a Bachelor of Music. Yeah, I was doing a Bachelor of Music – I did a couple of minor subjects. I was going to do a marketing minor but I got sick of it half way through so I did a bunch of bludge minors but yeah.'

Mark's own music-making practice involved collaboration with rappers from around Australia. His listening practices, however, were far more diverse, calling upon styles including jazz, classic rock, and 'world music'.

The Interviews

The first of the case-study interviews was designed to build upon key findings that came through in the original Stage One interviews. This interview also performed an important function by further establishing rapport between myself and the participant. Participants were made aware of the fact that the discussion would be revolving around some of the findings of the scoping interviews. This helped re-familiarise them with the research and gain an insight into the experiences of other young musicians in similar situations. Due to geographic location, four of these interviews took place via Skype. The other interview took place in person.

The second interview involved sitting down with the participant in their music-making space. A major component of this interview involved an adapted version of a 'technology walkthrough' where participants would show me how they went about writing a song. Walkthroughs as method can help 'illuminate the material traces' (Light, Burgess & Duguay 2016, p. 6) undertaken by a participant. This afforded opportunities to explore the mechanics behind music-making as a tool for self-disclosure. The specifics of the second interview evolved the more I did them and were largely dependent on the location of the interview. This led to more subjective and personal accounts from participants.

Four of these interviews took place in person and one via Skype. For Dani, this was a spare room upstairs in his share house. Similarly, for Ryan, it was a designated 'music room' in his share house, as well as a recording and rehearsal space where I was to observe his band practice. When I spoke to Julia, we spent our discussion time inside a specially designed soundproofed

room in her house that she used for both recording and rehearsing. The interview with Dez took place straight after a recording session he had had at The Site, the youth music-making initiative he participated in. The second interview with Mark, unfortunately, had to occur via Skype due to illness and extreme weather. However, Skype proved to be an adequate space for the interview, as I was still able to observe his music-making process through screen mirroring technology.

In the final interview, I spoke with participants about their music community and their local scene. Together, we explored the human connections made through music and how technology was used to facilitate these. To round out the final interview with participants, discussion turned to topics that were covered in the initial scoping interview as a means of measuring how the opportunity for participants to reflect on their music-making may have altered how they consider their practice. Again, four of these interviews occurred in person. The third interview with Mark again occurred via Skype due to illness.

The location chosen for each interview shaped the results. For the initial interview, as part of the scoping phase, conducting the interview via Skype proved adequate as it reduced any potential pressure or nerves felt in a face-to-face interview. While for Dez, the first interview took place in person, he was at The Site and in the company of friends and in a space where he felt comfortable. As the case study interviews began, I was conscious of conducting the first interview within a similar context to the scoping interview as a means of slowly re-introducing myself into the lives of the participant. While the first of the case study interviews with Dez did not take place at The Site²⁰, the choice of a mutually agreed upon local café meant that this initial time spent with Dez was in a familiar context. In order for the interview to mimic the natural

²⁰ The Site only operated one day a week, and Dez would often only attend if he had music he was interested in working on with a facilitator or recording a new verse to a track he had been working on.

Chapter Two - Methodology

rhythm of friendship, it was key that these locations for the first interview were similar to those of the scoping interview, as well as being familiar to both myself and the participant.

Once this initial rapport had been built with participants, the ‘friendship’ developed with participants in the remaining interviews was able to emerge. In order for the ‘walkthrough’ in the second of the case study interviews, it was essential that the interview take place in a location where the participant made music themselves. For Dez, Julia, Ryan and Dani, this occurred in specifically designed locations – either home studios or in the case of Dez, The Site. In addition, the second interview with Ryan culminated in a band practice across town, where I was to witness how the social aspects of band practice played out. The walkthrough with Mark took place online, via Skype. For Mark, because of the way he used music-making software, the use of screen mirroring led to interesting and detailed data. However, it may well have been more fruitful if I had physically been in the room with Mark, where I could have more closely observed his own practice. The location of the final interviews, similar to those prior, was mutually agreed upon, with participants often directing the way (this was especially the case in cities I had not visited before). This again meant that the location was comfortable for the participant. Again, for Mark, with the interview taking place via Skype, the location was again one still familiar to both him and myself.

Except for the second interview conducted with Ryan, which involved a two-hour band practice after an hour and a half spent in his music room, each of the interviews as part of Stage Two roughly lasted between one and two hours. Prior to me asking questions I had prepared, some time was spent ‘catching up’ with discussion often steered towards how their day had been so far. In addition, the first two interviews conducted with participants for Stage Two began with questions asking what they had been listening to or making lately. A focus on continually

developing this rapport and friendliness with participants was a consistent methodological tool used as part of the fieldwork.

At the end of the interviews, participants were again reimbursed for their time. Each of the five participants who participated in the case-study interviews received a \$100 iTunes voucher. Given the amount of time involved on behalf of the participant and the expertise shared, the amount was seen as an accurate form of reimbursement. Again, these amounts were recommended by the Young and Well CRC and also received ethics approval from the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

2.3 Considerations and Challenges

When conducting research with young people who have experiences of vulnerability, there are numerous issues to keep in mind. In part the 'version of friendship as method' approach employed during this fieldwork was a reaction to these specific sets of challenges unique to working with young people. However, as with any research project, there are inevitably a range of unforeseen challenges and considerations that arise during the fieldwork process. The following will detail the challenges experienced as well as the steps taken in working through them.

2.3.1 Blurring the Lines

Part of the 'version of friendship as method' framework used in this research was the use of my own experience as both an ex-musician and as a music writer within the fieldwork. Whilst this led to more robust and detailed data, it did pose several ethical considerations. Through utilising this self-disclosure technique and thus presenting an insider status, there were moments where the lines were somewhat blurred. Part of the appeal for participating in this project for young

musicians was the opportunity to practice their own interview skills. With all those participating in the Stage Two case-study work identifying as early career musicians, the opportunity to sit down with someone and talk about their practice and their influences was an appealing opportunity. Participant Julia mentioned in passing that participating in the work was good 'practice' for later on in her career. Acknowledging that although the interviews as part of the fieldwork involved more personal discussion than traditional music journalism interviews, participating in them allowed not only for her own story to be heard, but also as aiding her in her career.

When I sat down to interview the youngest participant, Dez, reiterating the purpose and context of the interview helped to steer conversation. The first interview I conducted with Dez as part of the initial scoping phase took place at The Site, the youth music-making initiative he was participating in. Sitting down on a couch with other young people and facilitators sitting close by, the lines began to blur. When noticing that I had my smart phone out to record Dez, some of the other young people asked whether I was from a radio station doing an interview with some up-and-coming rappers. Dez himself corrected the other young people, saying that it was not for radio but for research. At the end of the interview, however, Dez added:

'One more thing. Can I say shout outs to [The Site], shout outs to everyone here. Thank you! [laughs]. I'm out.'

Again blurring the lines, this in part was Dez stepping into his own rap 'persona'. These moments, although contributing significantly to the trust and rapport built between myself and participant, did occasionally bring up ethical questions. The friendship that had built between myself and participants relied heavily on self-disclosure practices, something that significantly informed this methodology. As Swartz details in her account of working with young people, 'I was afraid that their openness was perhaps because of a lack of understanding on their part, or even worse, due to their keenness for material benefit' (Swartz 2011, p. 57). Even though I

repeatedly spoke about the role of research and the need to maintain participant anonymity, I found that these moments of blurred boundaries were, in fact, participants displaying an authentic self, one that was afforded through their identity as a musician.

I was also conscious of not taking away these opportunities from Dez, as it was clear that rap and hip-hop and the specific set of expressions and language inherent were part of how he expressed himself in the everyday (a more detailed account of how this language came across in Dez's expression can be found throughout subsequent chapters). As I explore in later chapters, Dez also clearly understood how his own story might inspire and motivate other young people interested in hip-hop. This arose at later points as well with his asking later in the interview process whether the interviews would be available for other people to listen to. This was mentioned with a certain level of excitement, suggesting that other rappers could hear his story. I reminded him of the fact that the interviews will be de-identified and the purpose of doing so was to protect the identity of all young people participating in the research.

2.3.2 Ensuring Participants' Safety and Wellbeing

Another of the ethical concerns of this work was ensuring that participants felt safe and supported. As the interviews brought up participants' own personal experiences, it was likely that distressing or uncomfortable topics would arise. Whilst the research does deal with these kinds of stories, it was important for participants to feel safe when disclosing information. This issue was dealt with in numerous ways. First of all, when topics did get personal, as a researcher, I made sure that participants knew that they only need tell what they were comfortable telling. I also made mention again of the fact that the interviews would be de-identified which meant that any information such as name, band name, song title or specific geographic location would be either changed or omitted from publication. In addition, support services were included on the

Chapter Two - Methodology

participant information sheet and were also mentioned at the beginning of the interviews (Please see Appendixes 5 and 7 for a copy of these).

Much time was spent considering the sequencing of the questions asked in the interviews, again utilising similar practices, pace, and natural contexts that also occur within friendship. Interviews began with general introductory questions, designed to generate a level of rapport between myself and the participant. Questions about their own personal story were only asked once this rapport had been built. The original scoping interview was designed in order to get a general overview of participants' experiences. Some participants were incredibly forthcoming, revealing detailed, personal stories during this initial interview, whilst others chose to only disclose some of their story.

The sequencing of the case-study interviews was also carefully considered. Questions asked as part of the first interview were generalised so that should participants feel compelled to speak in detail of their own personal experience, it would be of their own accord. With the second interview dealing with participants' personal song-writing practice, the setting of the interview was essential in ensuring that participants felt as safe as possible disclosing their own personal story in relation to their practice. With three of the five interviews taking place within the young person's own home, participants felt more comfortable and had access to those around them such as parents, siblings or housemates should they have the need. As mentioned earlier, the music-making process interview with Dez took place at The Site. Should any personal discomfort have arisen during this interview, Dez would have been able to speak to his friends who were also using the facility as well as the facilitators running the space. The other interview with Mark took place via Skype due to illness and torrential weather. Mark therefore had access to parents. At this point also, it should be noted that in the case of those five young musicians participating in the case-study interviews, a level of rapport and trust had already been built up

between myself and the young person, meaning that participants were more comfortable. The final interview dealt with the participants' sense of music community and therefore dealt directly with participants' feelings of connectedness and community.

The end of the fieldwork was not indicative of an end of my relationship with participants. Whilst direct communication with participants had halted, I still did hold power within the relationship. Whilst much of the fieldwork was specifically designed as a means of ensuring the inherent power imbalances between the researcher and researched were dismantled, once the fieldwork was complete, it was I who was to use the stories participants had so generously shared with me to help shape my own thesis. Although this is simply part of engaging in formalised research within an academic institution, it should be acknowledged that while my own 'version of friendship as method' approach did go some way to reduce the power imbalance during the fieldwork, I was still left with the power once the fieldwork was complete.

As participants continued to engage in their own practice post fieldwork, I too continued to engage with their own story, often finding myself sitting with their own work, listening to their music and scrolling through their social media and music distribution profiles. Tillmann-Healy suggests that when we 'exit the field', researchers should not simply 'shut off the recorder (and) turn our backs' on participants (Tillmann-Healy 2003, p. 743). Withstanding the ethical implications of not halting friendship with participants once fieldwork had been completed, I found that finalising the fieldwork resulted in relationships that did not end in finite ways. Rather, they moved over into a more ambient relationship, ones that incorporated digitally mediated encounters through listening to music, scrolling through Facebook profiles and watching Instagram stories. Although a more structured and direct engagement with participants did take place once the fieldwork had finished – I had sent an email updating participants' on how their work was being used in my own writing and in conference presentations – my own

version of friendship as method resulted in relationships that continue, albeit with a reduced reliance upon one another.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for an ethnographic approach that privileges embedded, lived experience and dialogue with young people as a way of accessing and engaging with their on-the-ground lived experiences. This builds on research undertaken in youth studies that advocates working *alongside* and *with* young people, as opposed to *on* or *for*. The specific ethnographic approach I have taken, however, places emphasis on generating a deep understanding of the complex relationships between the music-making practices of young musicians and how they navigate and make sense of personal vulnerabilities. I achieved this through utilising my own ‘version of friendship’.

Friendship is something not typically considered as part of research, especially research with young people. As Lohmeyer (2016) established whilst delivering his paper, researchers have an ethical duty to ensure that both participant and researcher do not cross any boundaries.

However, when conducting research with young musicians with experiences of vulnerability, establishing myself as relatable, interested, and there to learn about experience was essential to ensuring viable fieldwork. Tillmann-Healy’s friendship as method approach (2003) is useful here as it helps to establish a relationship between the researcher and participant that does not reinforce the traditional power relations inherent in work with young people. Maintaining these ethical considerations, my own ‘version of friendship as method’ allowed participants to step beyond the categories adults often place them in, enabling them an agency to explore and navigate ideas and experiences alongside myself. This friendliness as it developed with each of the participants is showcased throughout the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter Two - Methodology

My methodology also uncovered phenomena that assisted in my own understanding of the particular role music as a creative form played in the lives of young musicians with experiences of vulnerability. As emerges in the remaining chapters, participants would often mention in passing that while they recognised music's impact, they were unable to articulate reasons as to why. As Derrida summates, this reaction is very much based on 'intuition without concept' (Borradori 2004, p. 86) and speaks to the ways in which music infiltrates the everyday practices of young musicians. In establishing a connection with participants that utilised self-disclosure practices and afforded opportunities for participants to enact an expertise, my own 'version of friendship as method' ensured that participants were able to surface experiences they had not given much thought to, but still had significant impact upon their practice.

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

The following details the ‘musical biographies’ of the musicians who participated in the Stage Two case-study work. Alongside a musical biographical graph timeline for each participant is a detailed account of the musician’s experiences with both music-listening and music-making and how these practices intersect with experiences of vulnerability. The purpose of this section is to provide a preface for how music-listening and music-making practices not only intersect with experiences of vulnerability, but also how they shape and develop resilience, are mediated through technology and emerge as individual practices within social and collective contexts. I present a detailed analysis of these biographies in Chapter Four as a way of further contextualising musicians’ experiences with vulnerability and resilience. This section also acts a means of better understanding how these biographies inform the individual and social experiences of music-making.

Dani's Profile

MAKING ?

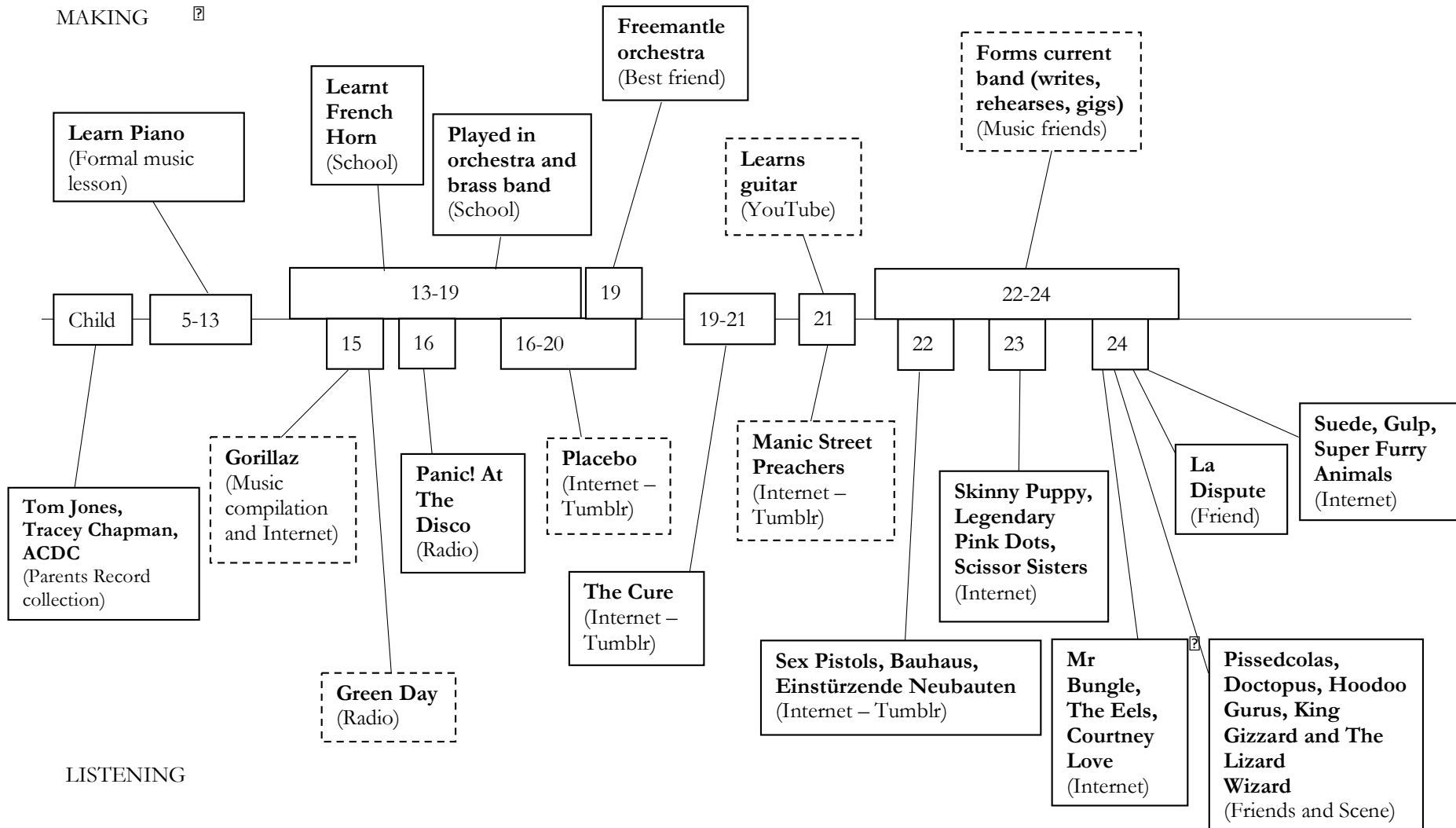


Figure 3. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Dani. N.B - - denotes formative experience

Dani

Umm, for a long time it didn't actually have much of a role and I think I didn't really click with anything for a long time. Like, umm, I was always a very imaginative child. Like I relied a lot on imaginary worlds and stories and things. And I used music to supplement that, but I would only listen to what my parents would listen to'.

Dani's parents' record collection consisted of Tom Jones, Tracey Chapman, and AC/DC. Dani described it as not having *'a lot of variety, and it was all a lot older than me'*. Although he dismissed these early listening practices, his early music-making practices proved to be more formative. He undertook formal piano lessons during primary school before moving onto learning French horn at high school. He joined the school orchestra and brass band whilst in high school before joining a major city youth orchestra, again playing French horn, but only *'because my best friend played trombone'*.

When I spoke with Dani, he fondly recollected the music he listened to during his teenage years. When he was 15, American punk band Green Day released their rock opera album *'American Idiot'* (2004). It was the first album Dani bought and the album's *'narrative and having that sort of rebel outlook'* was what appealed to him. During that year, Dani also discovered the English based *'cartoon'* rock band Gorillaz. After initially discovering them on a pop music compilation CD, Dani later sought out their album *'Demon Days'* (2005). The record was an important discovery for Dani and led to his seeking out online discussion groups focussed on the band. The following year, Dani discovered American pop-punk band Panic! At The Disco, telling me, *'I was attracted to the aesthetic and the idea of emo guys at that point'*.

The discovery of these bands that intentionally discussed vulnerability and went against an active masculine music culture led Dani to other alternative rock acts such as English band Placebo which Dani discovered via the online social networking and blogging platform Tumblr.

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

Although Dani told me he had not listened to the band in the same sort of ‘*religious*’ way for four years, prior to that, he listened to ‘*nothing but Placebo*’. Throughout our discussions, it became clear that the band significantly influenced his own music-making practice. From Placebo, Dani moved on to British post-punk band The Cure, also discovered via Tumblr.

Dani spoke in small interludes about his gender identity throughout the time I spent with him. These discussions would often occur when discussing the kinds of music he listened to. In initially identifying himself prior to the fieldwork beginning, Dani wrote the following:

Personally, I am a white, transsexual person with an androgynous gender identity, assigned female at birth and variously male or ‘intermediate’ on legal papers since transitioning this year. I am bisexual and have experience with mild, rapid cycling bipolar disorder (though I have been in a stable period for a few months now)’.

It was clear that listening to bands like Placebo and The Cure opened up Dani’s own personal exploration of identity and mental illness. Knowing of Dani’s own experience, specifically with gender identity, I had wondered what that process was like for someone who also made a form of music that has traditionally been heavily masculinised. In our final case-study interview, I brought up the story of Laura Jean Grace, the frontwoman of American punk band Against Me! who had, at the time of the interview, recently come out as transgender. I asked Dani whether Grace’s story resonated with some of his own experiences. He responded:

I feel like the approach that she has taken is not the approach that I would have taken. When I came out, I came out to a group of close friends, and then I was just, like, everyone else will pick it up. Like, if I just keep going down that route, people will pick it up. If I go, ‘oh, I prefer ‘he’’, well then people will gossip, and people will pick it up. I don’t want to make a show out of it.’

Music-listening afforded access to other people just like him. These practices gave Dani specific cultural reference points in which he could use to navigate his own experiences. In having access to these voices and cultural language, however, it also further affirmed an ownership he had over his own story.

Of all the bands Dani discussed during our chats, it was the Welsh alternative rock band Manic Street Preachers that had had the most profound effect. Again discovered via Tumblr, ‘Manics’, as Dani referred to them, helped him explore his own gender identity. They also informed his music-making practice. That same year, at 21 years old, Dani returned to live with his parents. His brother had been taking formal guitar lessons, although as Dani told me, *‘I think he’s in the same situation as I was with French born in that he just doesn’t really enjoy it’*. Dani picked up his brother’s guitar, a *‘horrible mustard Flying V’*, however, and searched online for different guitar tablatures for songs he had been listening to:

‘I looked up a couple of, umm, ‘How to read tab music’ and I just practiced and practiced and practiced. I practiced every day for at least half an hour.’

As Dani became interested in performance and song-writing, he again scoured Tumblr for bands and artists. Lead singers, such as John Lydon from English punk bands Sex Pistols and PiL as well as Peter Murphy from English post-punk band Bauhaus, influenced Dani’s own experimentation with performance. Blixa Bargeld from German industrial band Einstürzende Neubauten helped shape his approach to writing lyrics. At age 22, Dani started his band with friends he had connected with through his local music community. He shared the song-writing duties with the band’s bass player and over the next two years the band rehearsed, recorded and played gigs alongside other bands in their local scene. Importantly for Dani, the songs written were influenced strongly by other cultural forms such as film and novels. They also drew upon a broad range of musical influences including Canadian electronic industrial rock band Skinny Puppy, English experimental rock band Legendary Pink Dots, American dance pop band Scissor Sisters, as well as Manic Street Preachers and Placebo.

Dani’s approach to music-listening was broadly typified by *‘things that aren’t mainstream’*. This meant American experimental rock band Mr Bungle, American post-punk band La Dispute,

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

American grunge band Hole, Welsh alternative rock bands Super Furry Animals and Gulp, as well as English alternative rock band Suede. The album 'Electro-shock Blues' by American indie rock act Eels (1998), a record which documents the suicide of the lead singer's sister and his mother's lung cancer, played an essential role in Dani's understanding of what exactly could be done through song-writing.

Perhaps of most importance to Dani was the role his own music community played, and his own position in it. He often mentioned bands that his friends were in but would then offer clarification as to why he was not a fan of the bands' work. There were some local and Australian bands, however, which he did enjoy. These included local bands that his friends were in such as Pissecolas, a '*heavy, almost metal and drone influenced rock*' band; Doctopus, a '*sort of 'surf-punk band*'; the psych-rock band King Gizzard and The Lizard Wizard, a new discovery for Dani; and '*older Australian music*' acts like Hoodoo Gurus.

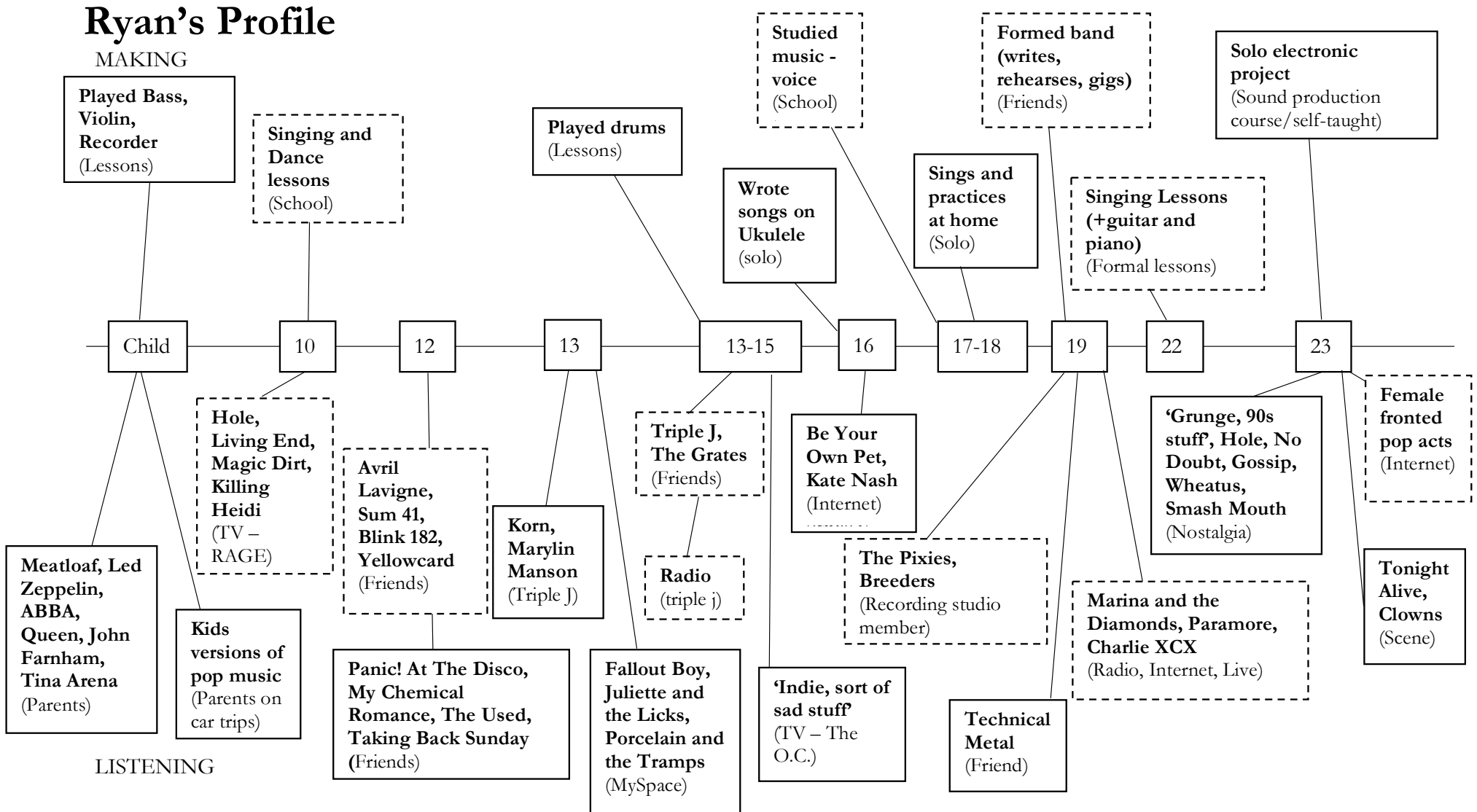


Figure 4. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Ryan. N.B - - denotes formative experience

Ryan

Ryan described the music he first heard as a child as just the *'Australian seventies bogan top-of-the-pops sort of stuff'*. By this he was referring to his parents' record collection, which although mainstream, consisted of a reasonably diverse range including classic rock acts like Led Zeppelin, Queen, and Meat Loaf, as well as pop artists ABBA, John Farnham, and Tina Arena. Ryan largely dismissed this early listening, however. Holding more significance were cassette tapes played on car trips to the snowfields where his parents spent some time working. Ryan recalled listening to *'a kid's tape'* on the hour-long drive, telling me, *'They redid, like, eighties classics like 'Girls Just Want to Have Fun' (Lauper 1983)'*, as well as, *'a couple of others but, like, made for kids'*. Commenting further, told me *'I loved that, I loved that.'* During this time, he also learnt bass guitar, violin and recorder.

At age 10, the Australian music television show 'Rage' introduced Ryan to various forms of alternative music. After watching a film clip from American grunge band Hole fronted by Courtney Love, Ryan recalled thinking, *'This girl is really cool.'* Similar too, were Ryan's recollections of other alternative rock bands he saw on Rage, including Australian acts like The Living End, Magic Dirt and Killing Heidi. Around the same time, he had also begun to sing, dance and take drama classes at school. He was adamant about not combining the three, however - *'I used to do, like, dance and singing and I loved drama and that sort of thing, but I hated musicals'*.

In his final year of primary school, Ryan and a friend *'both fell in love with [the Canadian pop-punk singer] Avril Lavigne, as you do!'*. From there, Ryan and his friends started listening to other Canadian and American pop-punk bands like Sum 41, Blink 182, and Yellowcard. These initial attachments later led to listening to popular emo punk bands like Panic! At The Disco, My Chemical Romance, The Used and Taking Back Sunday. Although it meant he had to make new friends, moving to secondary school meant that Ryan was able to use this alternative musical biography as a way to stand out, rather than feeling isolated. Through seeking out music tips

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

from his best friend attending another school, as well as students in years above him at his own school, he was able to use his own tastes as a way of differentiating himself from others:

‘So it’s like something to set me apart ‘cos I was, like, ‘oh it’s so cool, I know like, I’m gonna see Blink 182 on a Thursday school night, like...’

During this time, on the recommendation of his best friend and those in the year above him, Ryan also discovered the Australian youth radio station Triple J. In addition, he discovered a range of other punk bands by searching through the then popular social media platform MySpace (Fallout Boy, Juliette and the Licks, Porcelain and The Tramps). Once his friends *‘would cotton onto something’*, Ryan moved on to darker rock and metal artists like Korn and Marilyn Manson before settling on Brisbane indie pop band The Grates. For Ryan, The Grates, headed up by Patience Hodgson were his *‘biggest inspiration’*. He credited the band with drawing him away from *‘the darker sort of, like, Marilyn Manson’* bands and remembered thinking *‘oh, this is like happy and angry and I really like it’*. During these initial years of high school, Ryan continued to discover music through Triple J, recalling bands like Arctic Monkeys, The 1990s, and British India. American TV teen drama The O.C. also turned Ryan onto *‘indie, sort of sad stuff’*.

Ryan’s own music-making developed alongside these listening practices. Year 8 saw him take up the drum kit, an instrument he played for three years. He was 16 when he came to the realisation that *‘at a public school in the country, there’s already someone that can play drums and they’re better than me!’* He told me of another practical reason too – *‘just cos my parents got divorced and I had to hide them when we’re trying to sell the house, and I didn’t get to practise, and I completely fell out of practice’*. It was during this year where Ryan began to write his own original material. The songs came about whilst on holiday with his father and other adults. Being the only young person, Ryan would take his ukulele on *‘huge bushwalks’* and improvise his own music. Although he described them as *‘so bad...because I was listening to a lot of Kate Nash at the time, so it was all like stupid stuff’*, the songs made an impression on his subsequent practice:

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

But I still get those songs stuck in my head as well. So, I think once you got the melody, for me, you're there'.

It was a singing teacher that encouraged Ryan to take up voice as an instrument for his final years of high school. Without the prospect of drum kit and with Ryan already singing around the house alone, the teacher suggested, *'You have to sing 'cos there's no other instrument you can play in Year 11'.*

After high school had finished, Ryan studied music business. On the train to college, he met another student studying the same course and the two would talk about their love of 'technical metal' before deciding to start a band together with two other fellow students. He described the band as *'garage rock, punk and grunge...a mix of pop'* with a strong focus on the theatrical aspects of playing. Over the next four years, the band would enter 'Battle of the Bands' competitions, release an EP, as well play a sold-out launch show in celebration of its release at a major inner-city music venue.

During these early years of the band, Ryan's listening practices grew more diverse and his approach more focussed. Female artists like Welsh alternative-pop band Marina and The Diamonds, Hailey Williams (lead singer from American punk band Paramore), and British pop star Charli XCX were discovered through online music streaming services, at concerts, as well as via Triple J. As was typical of how participants would discuss their own experiences with vulnerability, Ryan's discussion of his own navigation of sexuality was deeply embedded into these discussions around artists. In identifying with queer and female artists, it was clear that these listening practices assisted in how he navigated his own personal approach to music-making.

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

When speaking about a song he had written that was primarily about observing others in relationships, Ryan highlighted the fact that, *'growing up in a town where there's no other gay people'* had positioned him as 'other'. It was in Ryan's initial email enquiring about the research where he first explores the tension he feels, especially playing a type of music that tends to be dominated by overtly masculine presentations of gender:

'I am same sex oriented and I front a grunge/punk band...I feel I could bring a different perspective to your studies as I am yet to meet another fem openly gay guy amongst the punk rock and metal scene here.'

In addition to these less overtly masculine influences, there was still a strong, more traditional punk influence in the music that Ryan and his bandmates made. With regards to finding a 'sound' that the band wholly identified with, it took someone working in the studio they were recording in to refocus the sound of their band:

'The first time we recorded some guy was like 'sounds like [American band] the Breeders' and I was like 'why have I – why have I heard that?' and we went back and listened to the Breeders and were like 'oh that's the Pixies'²¹ and we were like 'oh shit, like, that's it!''

As the band became more serious, Ryan sought out professional singing lessons with a voice coach: *'He completely fixed my voice, like so much!'*. As well as vocal training, the coach also introduced him to guitar and piano, the latter of which became the main fixture in his music room at home. Ryan also took a sound production course, and began a solo *'electronic project'*, incorporating various forms of musical technology, including a loop pedal, a Maschine (music-making hardware with associated software), and a microKORG (synthesiser).

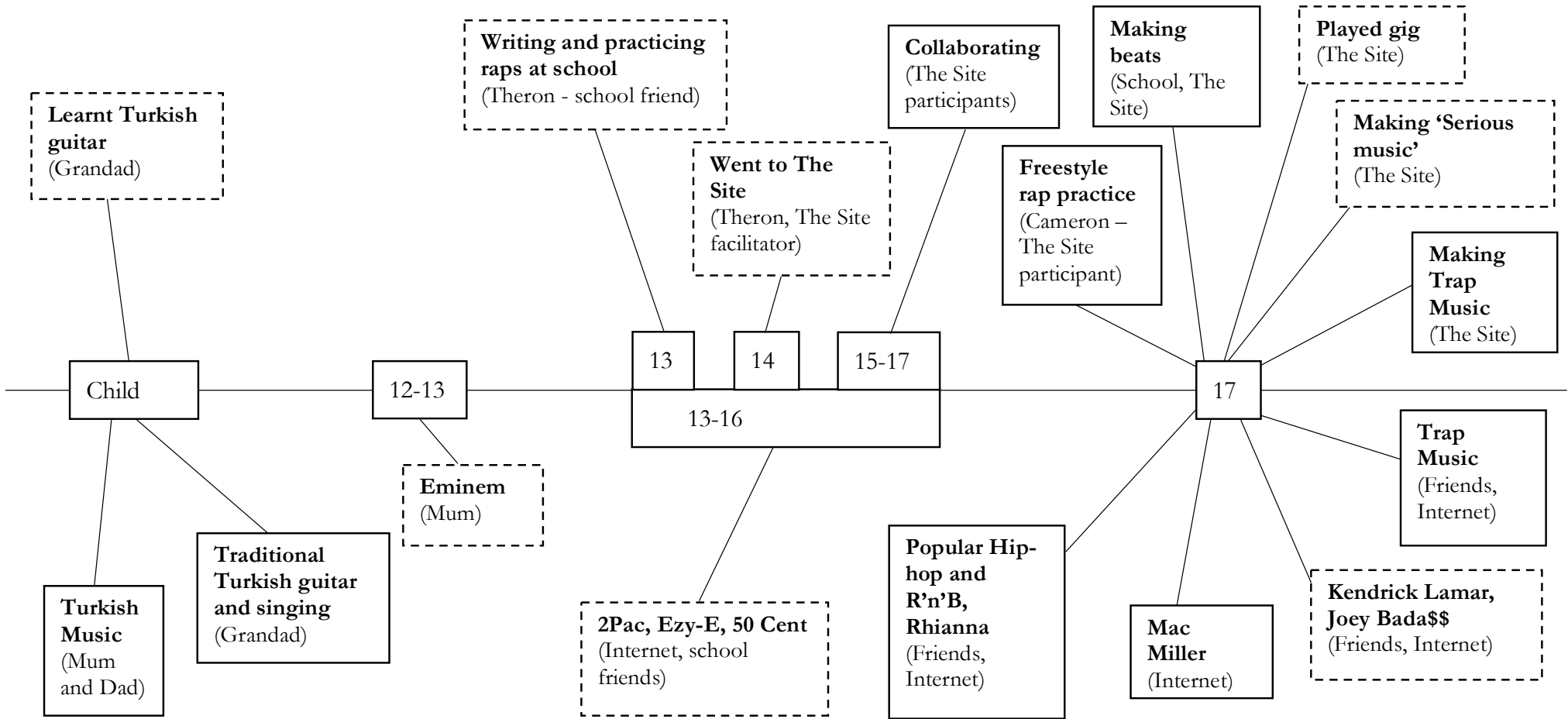
Ryan's listening practices further developed but still retained a focus on female acts. At the time of the interview, his listening practices incorporated new, mostly female artists as well as conscious reminiscing about music he listened to as a teenager. The music television show *Rage*

²¹ The Breeders were started by Kim Deal, who, at the time, was playing bass guitar in The Pixies.

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

still played an important role, allowing him the opportunity to revisit *'grunge, 90s stuff'* such as Hole, No Doubt and Gossip, all bands fronted by women. This *'going back'* also led to re-listening to pop-rock bands such as Wheatus and Smash Mouth. Current artists, all of which Ryan discovered online via music streaming services and social media platforms, included pop singers such as Taylor Swift, Tove Lo, and Tkay Maidza as well as alternative pop artists including Lykke Li, Foxes and Skye Ferreira. Ryan still continued to listen to punk music, however, with Australian bands Tonight Alive and Clowns playing a pivotal role. The eclectic nature of Ryan's tastes reflected his own inner tension of being a *'fem openly gay guy'* playing a music that has traditionally been dominated by a masculinised, heteronormative perspective.

Dez's Profile



LISTENING

Figure 5. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Dez. N.B - - denotes formative experience

Dez

'Yeah, my mum told me about the first hip-hop song', Dez told me a little while after first meeting. This discovery of hip-hop was the main impetus for Dez's own active participation in music-making. Prior to discovering the world of hip-hop and rap, however, it was traditional styles of music that shaped his early musical biography – *'Because, like, my mum and my dad were always listening to Turkish music, because my background's Turkish'*. His grandfather also played a key role. According to Dez, his grandfather was the first Turkish singer and guitarist to come to Australia. Each weekend he would visit his grandparents' house and as he told me, *'My grandad was always playing the guitar and singing. So, he would play, umm, like a Turkish guitar – it's like this massive guitar'*. This instrument, known as an oud, was something his grandfather taught him to play between the ages of 9 and 10.

Although Dez no longer played the oud, it was clear that his family, and in particular, his grandfather and mother, played an essential role in his own formative music-listening and music-making practices. Growing up within a migrant family from a lower-economic background meant that there was a fair bit of moving around during Dez's life. These moves were often accompanied by feelings of starting again, but also of missing out. Moving from one primary school to another meant that Dez was forced to repeat a year. *'It was kind of, like, hard growing up in a different school from all my cousins and stuff'*, he told me, before talking of the disconnection he felt after eventually returning to the suburb he had previously lived as a younger child:

'...I went back to my old friends and all my cousins and [they're] like, 'Bro, where you been? For all these years, where have you been? And then that kind of disconnected me from them too. So, it was just like 'oh, we use to be best friends'. Now there's a disconnection, you know. So, it was kind of like, it was hard.'

While he felt a disconnection from his extended family, it was clear that he felt a far greater connection with his immediate family. During our second interview, I reminded Dez of the fact

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

that he mentioned how his mother had, in early high school, introduced him to the American hip-hop artist Eminem. *'Yeah, yeah, yeah. My mum was the first...'* he informed me, later telling me that *'that was my first, yeah, first encounter with hip-hop music.'*

While there was a clear sense of connection between Dez and his family, these relationships were measured through the familial responsibilities Dez felt. Due to his family's economic situation, Dez was quite mindful:

'It's a bit hard, you know. I watch my little brother and he wants a new phone and I'm just like, 'we can't'. Like, we're still struggling now, you know. I been working and stuff, trying to help my dad – my mum and dad are divorced now. So, I'm living with my dad now, but I been trying to help with the rent and all this stuff, you know.'

It was through an engagement with rap music, however, where Dez saw his own future possibilities. It was during Year 7 at high school where he made his *'true friends'*. These were friends who also enjoyed hip-hop. Through his own research and spending time with these friends, Dez discovered other American hip-hop artists like 50 Cent, Ezy E and 2Pac. It was at this time where these participatory practices slowly began to lead into the early stages of his music-making. Dez's friend, Theron, a rapper and 'a really good singer' would sit next to Dez in class, where they would *'[spit] freestyles'* or improve new raps. It was in this setting also where he began the process of collaboration, assisting Theron by suggesting particular rhymes. This help was reciprocated as Dez worked on his own original music. Collaboration was something that would continue long into his own music-making practice.

It was Theron who introduced him to The Site. After attending The Site with Theron for a few sessions whilst in Year 8, and despite encouragement from facilitators, Dez gave it up shortly after. Of this initial experience, Dez told me:

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

I was all nervous – I was so scared. After school, we went, and I just sat there the whole day – I didn't say a word, I was so quiet.'

A year after, however, Dez returned. Remembering the earlier encouragement and support, he began to write more and record tracks whilst attending sessions. From the more casual collaborative making with Theron in the classroom at school, Dez went on to collaborate with other attendees of The Site during both practice and recording sessions.

Dez was 17 when I spoke to him and had been attending The Site for two years at that point. Still writing and recording, he would seek out any opportunity to sit and practice with friends. As I sat with him outside The Site after a studio session, he told me of sitting in the exact same spot 'spitting freestyles' with Cameron, another participant. His listening practices had also become more eclectic. Whilst still listening to popular hip-hop artists, he had also begun listening to R'n'B – 'just the famous people, like Rihanna and all that'. This broadening of his tastes also involved a desire to discover new artists, especially those making music which stood out.

'...this rapper called Kendrick Lamar, like this guy's sober – he doesn't do any drugs and he's all good. And like this guy's got the sickest flow ever man. He's so good! But when he raps, yeah, he might swear and stuff, but he doesn't talk about the bad things. So that's what I'm trying to get at, especially nowadays. That's what's important to me, trying to be like that.'

Dez made clear links between his listening and making practices. Alongside other American rappers like Joey Bada\$\$ and Mac Miller, the music of Kendrick Lamar was something that clearly inspired him in his own general approach to making hip-hop, culminating in a desire to make what he termed 'serious music'. Dez had also begun listening to a sub-genre within hip-hop called 'trap', a style typified by military style percussion. The lyrical approach of trap, however, did not sit well with Dez's own individual approach. Still, it inspired his practice:

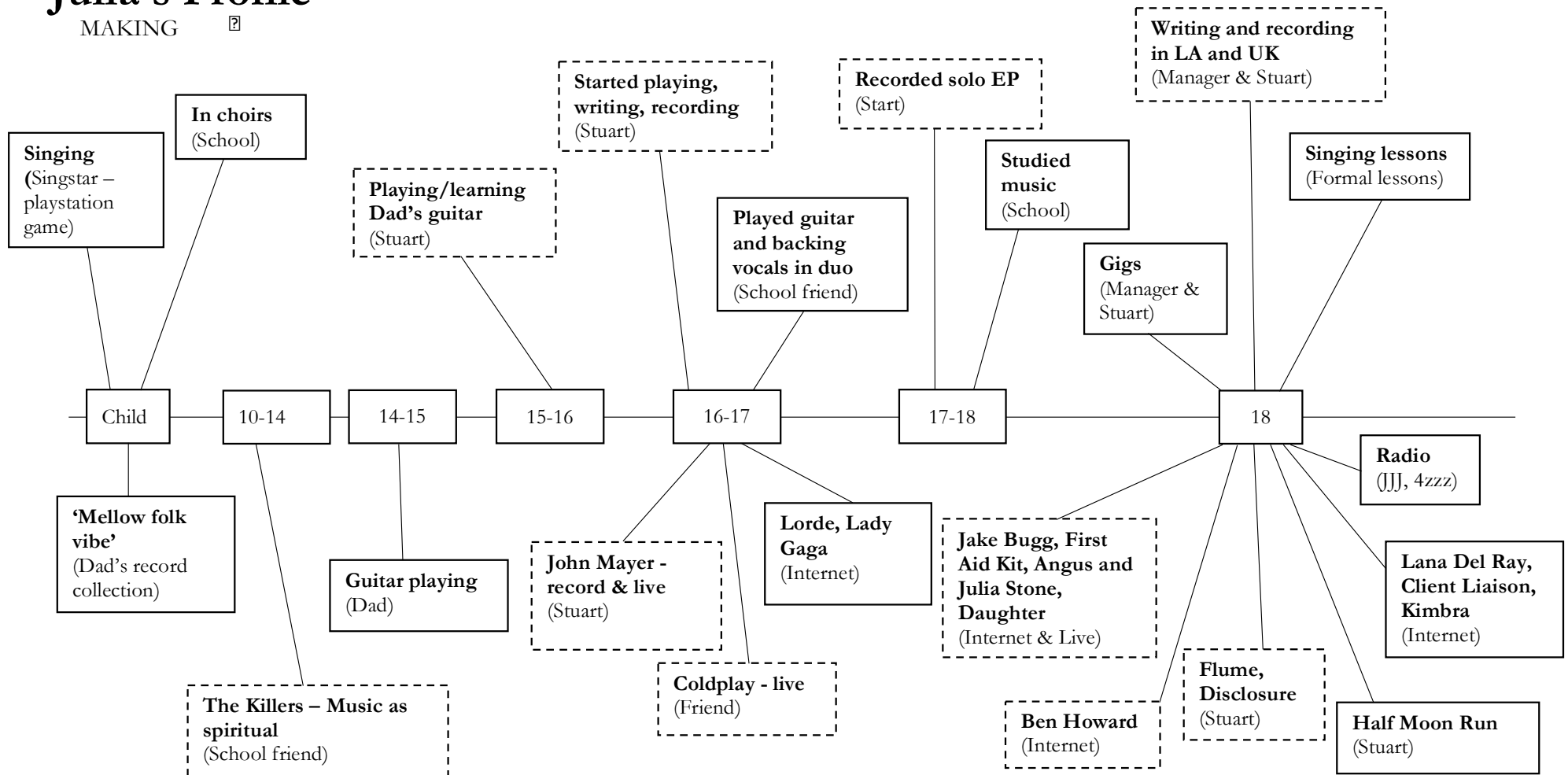
'Singing trap songs is all about money, money, money, money...I wanna get that type of flow, because everyone loves that flow nowadays. I wanna get that type of flow but write about real things.'

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

What propelled Dez's participation in hip-hop was his focus on making '*serious music*', as well as the musical education he gained through his participation at The Site and hip-hop culture more broadly. This participation culminated in the opportunity to perform at a showcase concert alongside other young musicians, an experience Dez told me was '*frightening at first but after a while it's the best feeling*'. Opportunities to learn how to make his own beats both at school and with a facilitator at The Site also became available. Dez's active participation in hip-hop had largely revolved around his friends, family and the various affordances of The Site. They were largely influenced by his own sets of life experiences too – '*my life wasn't the toughest life, but I did have some ups and downs, you know?*'

Julia's Profile

MAKING 2



LISTENING

Figure 6. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Julia. N.B - - denotes formative experience

Julia

Julia described the music she listened to as a child as *‘that kind of, like, mellow folk vibe’*. This meant artists like Norah Jones, Diana Krall and James Taylor, all records her dad played her. Music-making also began early for Julia through participating in her primary school choir, with her telling me, *‘I always loved choir, I always loved singing’*. In addition to formal learning, she taught herself through Singstar, a video game on the Playstation video game console, practising it, *‘Until I got, like, perfect scores!’*

It was between the ages of 10-14, however, where Julia began to use music-listening as a practice of self-discovery. With a school friend, Julia would talk about music – *‘old music and new music’*. American indie rock band The Killers quickly gained favour:

‘I went through a massive Killers phase and that’s what kind of started my love for music because I could listen to an album of theirs and then just, I don’t know... it’s kind of spiritual I guess’

At the time of the interview, Julia’s music-making practice relied heavily on both her voice and guitar. And although she mentioned that *‘it always would have happened’*, she had started to play guitar, in part, out of frustration. Julia’s father had picked up the guitar later on in life, when she was 14 or 15 years old. Her father became *‘obsessed’* with practising and would do so, often at 6 o’clock in the morning. Julia told me that initially, she *‘hated it so much! Because it used to wake me up!’*. However, what began as a *‘phobia to guitar’*, later turned into a love for the instrument:

‘Then one day, this was like a year later, I was just really bored one day and I was like ohh, you know, why don’t I just pick it up and I started playing his guitar and just never looked back pretty much! [laughs] It’s kinda weird how it happened.’

A friend of Julia’s, Stuart, taught her guitar and also passed on albums from artists that he thought she would like. One artist, popular blues guitarist and singer-songwriter John Mayer, was instrumental. His album *‘Continuum’* (2006) had a profound effect on Julia, although she was reluctant to admit it, *‘because it’s so girly!’*. She credited the song-craft and production used in

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

Mayer's music as opening up the possibilities as to what could be achieved with song-writing. In addition to the album, Julia also watched a live solo concert DVD from Mayer entitled 'Where The Light Is' (Franscoviak, Mayer & Jordan 2008). Watching the DVD sparked something in her: *'I was like, I have to do that! Like, I have to perform live.'* After telling me of the struggle in convincing her mother that *'this is changing my life right now'*, Julia remarked:

'I just remember feeling like so...determined that I was going to do this and I was going to play for people and yeah.'

With this new-found discovery, Julia spent the following year expanding both her music-listening and music-making practices. Seeing British pop-rock band Coldplay play live, with a school friend, further developed Julia's own desire to play music and the power of a live performance. Online, Julia also discovered other pop artists like Lorde from New Zealand, and Lady Gaga from America.

These life changing moments that Julia associated with music-listening, occurred alongside her own navigation of personal vulnerability. Through my interactions with Julia, experiences of vulnerability became initially apparent through quite physical ways through the scars on her arms. However, it took a discussion around song-writing for her to discuss her experiences with mental illness. After discussing the lyrical content of a song of hers that subtly referenced mental illness, she informed me that:

'...like I've had a lot of history with depression and not really depression but- well I figured out the other day actually that I'm actually bipolar. So, I went to the psychiatrist for the first time. That was like a huge step in the right direction I think.'

This revelation was one that permeated the rest of our discussions in subtle, indirect ways. Like other participants, these experiences of vulnerability were deeply embedded in Julia's own music-making practice.

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

At school Julia started a folk duo with a school friend. Her friend sang, and Julia played guitar and provided backing vocals and harmonies. The pair practised at lunchtime whilst at school until eventually they were given a leadership grant, money which they used to record an EP. Julia's friend, Stuart, produced the EP, with the songs all written by the other member of the duo. Julia initially wrote one song for the EP. However, Stuart advised against including it, much to the duo's surprise and confusion. Once the EP was finished, Julia came to the conclusion that although it was a collaborative project, as a duo, they '*didn't click that well*', summarising the project as being '*just, kind of, for fun*'. Within the next year, Stuart encouraged Julia to record an EP on her own. It was this release, which included the song that Stuart had advised against being on the duo EP, that led to her establishing herself as a viable artist. As Julia studied music for year 12 at high school and attended choir, music from the EP release received radio play on Triple J Unearthed, a national digital radio station focussed on unsigned artists. It also received play on Triple J. It was one of the songs from this EP that wound up in the hands of Julia's soon-to-be manager.

'That song was actually the song that my manager really liked. Because what happened, because he, umm, my manager and his work colleague- his business partner I guess, they get people sending them stuff all the time. And I just got to know him through, like, my uncle. My uncle like went to school with him, like 40 years ago or something!'

After leaving high school, Julia travelled overseas, first to Los Angeles for a month, where her manager was based. '*He had quite a few contacts over there*', Julia told me, which led to opportunities to '*[write] with different musicians, meeting different musicians, hearing about the industry, seeing it*'. After Los Angeles, Julia spent a further two months in the United Kingdom, staying with Stuart who had moved there. In Stuart's apartment, the two started a new '*electronic pop*' music project as a duo. The project was largely inspired by artists suggested by Stuart, including Australian electronic dance musician Flume and English electronic duo Disclosure. Upon returning to Australia, Julia continued writing and recording solo material, took up singing lessons with a local voice coach,

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

and taught herself how to use recording software Logic with the help of both Stuart and tutorials on YouTube. She also started to play solo gigs which her manager set up for her, as well as performing for the first time with Stuart as part of their electronic pop duo.

Julia often discussed her influences with me throughout our time together. Folk artists including First Aid Kit from Sweden, Angus and Julia Stone from Australia, English artist Daughter, and Canadian rock group Half Moon Run all influenced her own solo practice in some way. There were two artists, however, which at the point of our discussions, had been most influential. British folk singer-songwriter Jake Bugg, who Julia had seen play live earlier on in the year, created music that Julia had looked to emulate in her own song-writing. Another artist, English folk singer-songwriter Ben Howard, whose album 'I Forgot Where We Were' (2014) had just been released at the time of the fieldwork, was also a major influence:

'Umm, I haven't really listened to the full [album] yet. But that is definitely going to be, like my replay album for the next week! He's just like, he's just, like, unbelievable.'

With Julia embarking on both her solo folk work as well as the electronic pop duo with Stuart, her listening practices became more diverse, with some listening being done for 'research' purposes. These included artists like New Zealand fusion-pop performer Kimbra and Australian electronic pop duo Client Liaison as well both Triple J and the local community radio station. Julia also developed a love for American singer-songwriter Lana Del Ray, telling me that *'Production wise, it's some really cool stuff'*. Julia often acknowledged the impact a diverse range music has had on her life and her music-making practice, however, placed specific importance on the records her father had played her as a child – *'I guess looking back on that now, it does really influence my style.'*

Mark's Profile

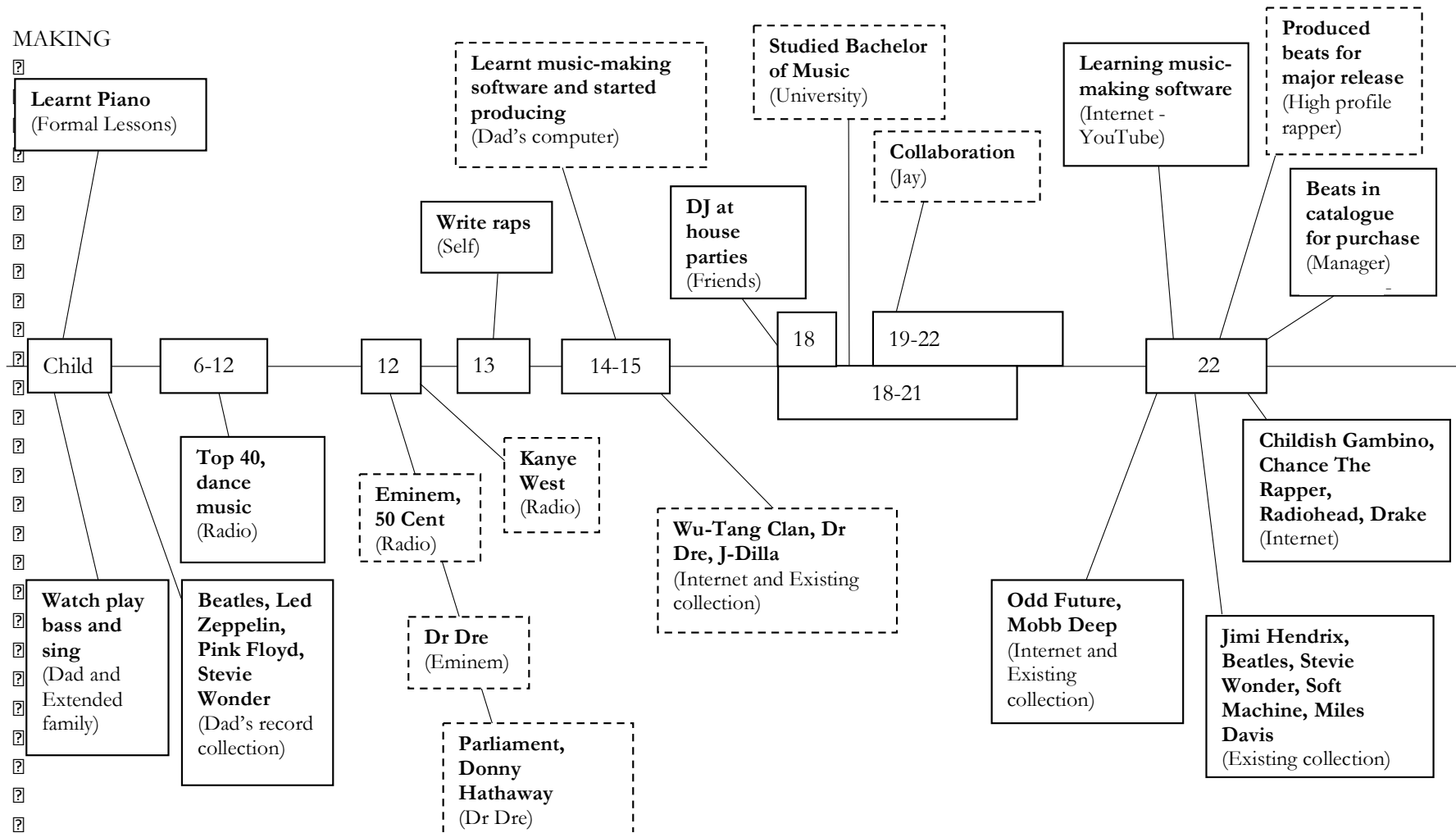


Figure 7. The Musical Biography Timeline of Participant Mark. N.B - - denotes formative experience

Mark

As a child, Mark was exposed to a great deal of music, both through listening to records as well as watching performance. Seminal British pop group The Beatles were a favourite for both his mother and father who played their records in the house when Mark was young. It was Mark's father, however, who had an extensive record collection that Mark listened to as a child. This included records from British classic rock bands Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd, as well as American soul artist Stevie Wonder. In addition to hearing records as a child, Mark would also watch his father play bass guitar and sing, often with his father's extended family playing instruments. Mark's only venture into music-making as a child was having piano lessons, something he, *'fucking hated'*. He told me, *'I had a really old teacher who'd just make me play nursery rhymes and shit'*. He soon clarified, that he *'always loved playing keys...but I just couldn't get my head around it at the time'*. The piano, and other keyboard instruments would later play a major role in shaping his later music-making practice, however.

Before discovering the world of hip-hop, Mark listened to *'whatever was popular, you know, top 40 charts, whatever, a bit of dance music'*. With the discovery of hip-hop, however, possibilities began to open up for him. At 12 years old, he began listening to American hip-hop artists such as Eminem and 50 Cent. Eminem's fourth album 'The Eminem Show' (2002) had a profound effect, leading him to further exploring the idea of music production.

I had a different appreciation for the beats and stuff. You know, listening to [‘The Eminem Show’] and I was like ‘Who’s this Dr Dre dude?’²² So, going back to Dr Dre’s old albums. And from there I found ‘how is he making these songs? You know, it’s based on all these old funk records, soul records, Donny Hathaway, Parliament and all that. And I was like ‘this shit’s crazy!’ You know? So, I sort of got an appreciation for that.’

²² American hip-hop producer Dr Dre was executive producer on Eminem's 'The Eminem Show'.

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

At this point, he also discovered another American hip-hop artist Kanye West, someone he continued to look up to and admire.

As Mark delved further into discovering hip-hop, he recalled the *'three albums that really got me into the idea of sampling and making music'*. These included hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan's album *'Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)'* (1993), rapper and producer Dr Dre's album *'2001'* (1999) as well as producer J Dilla's album *'Donuts'* (2006). In the next year, Mark experimented with his own raps, telling me that although he spent some time writing, he was always *'too scared to rap'*. With greater interest in the production side, he started to experiment with *'Logic'*, music-making software that was on his father's computer:

'I sort of gained an appreciation for sampling from hearing all this old stuff and hearing what people were doing with it and I was like, well, I wanna try doing this.'

This was a gradual process as Mark explored the capabilities of Logic as well as other pieces of software he discovered – *'it was just slowly gaining that appreciation and that knowledge that sort of got me into it'*. It still took him some time to feel confident about other people hearing his productions. His cousin encouraged him to put his music up online. When one of his beats got *'picked up by this artist'*, the prospect of letting other people hear his music became something Mark knew he needed to be doing.

During the first of the case-study interviews with Mark, and some time into a discussion around the impact music-making had had on his life, he casually dropped the following into discussion:

'Umm, I don't know if I've told you this, and if I haven't, like, this'll be, like, a big addition. I have Asperger's syndrome.'

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

Mark went on to explain:

'Yeah, so a lot of, like, a lot of people with Asperger's, they sort of hone in on something and that's all they want, that's all they do, that's all they think about. And, umm, like, I'm the same with music, man. Like, fuck all the other shit [laughs]'

Although his own experience with Asperger's did not 'get in the way of life, sort of thing', it did mean he 'didn't have a great time in primary school'. It was a shock when Mark first found out as a child, however, in doing so and learning about the symptoms, Mark found a way to use it to his advantage:

'And I'm like...you know, 'now that I know about this, I know a way that I can fit in'. So that I can see what I'm doing instead of sort of thinking about it a bit more. And now I see it as a fucking awesome thing, for me. Because if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be so focussed on perfecting what I do.'

Upon leaving high school, Mark attended a local university and undertook a Bachelor of Music. During his time at university, he would DJ at house parties. He also began an at first tentative collaboration with an interstate rapper, Jay. Mark had sent some beats through to Jay, but these were not initially embraced: 'He tried to be nice about it and get out of it'. Shortly after, however, the two added each other on Facebook. After Jay had 'spammed' Mark on Facebook, requesting he listen to a new song he had released, Mark again reached out to him:

'I was in a good mood, so I had a listen and I thought 'oh yeah, it's cool'. And yeah, I started talking to him saying 'I'm a producer. I'll send you some beats.' And I sent this beat called Startime...and he fuckin' lost his shit! Like, that was the first thing we ever did together, and it never came out and it's going to come out really soon. And yeah, we've been working since then, since late 2011...he's my main artist, man.'

Two years later, Jay released an EP, for which Mark had produced the music. Around the same time, a manager got into contact with Mark, asking to work with him.

Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories

Mark began to branch out and started to produce for a range of other rappers. He told me about how he was looking forward to people hearing his production on an album from a high-profile rapper: *'I can't wait for that shit to drop. I'm looking forward to having all the big-name rappers hitting us up'*. Alongside these higher profile credits, Mark continued making beats on his own, often teaching himself how to use new pieces of music-making software via YouTube. *'A lot of the time, it's all I'm doing'*, he informed me. These new beats often ended up online as part of a private catalogue, something his manager had encouraged him to maintain. Artists wanting to use a beat produced by Mark would get in contact with him for a link and password to listen to the beats. If they liked a beat, they could then purchase it.

Mark credits these opportunities to his own hard work, which, for him, is largely fuelled by how he understands the role Asperger's plays in his life. In directly engaging with his vulnerability, he was able to shift the focus:

'I definitely see it as a positive, man. I don't, like, in a way I guess I'm sort of taking something that's negative and turning it into a positive. You know, because I have this incredibly sharp focus on one area of interest.'

This interest in music-making was also heavily reliant upon his own music-listening practices. Because of his own extensive record collection and his ability to search out new music online, these practices have remained especially diverse. During our interviews, Mark constantly mentioned how American hip-hop acts such as Odd Future, Childish Gambino, Chance The Rapper and Drake, as well as older hip-hop acts such as Mobb Deep influenced his practice. Mark still actively sought out other kinds of music as well. This included *'more out there'* jazz artists such as English jazz fusion band Soft Machine and American jazz musician Miles Davis, particularly his album *'Bitches Brew'* (1970). English experimental rock band Radiohead also played a key role. *'Older records'* were also on rotation with Mark revisiting work from The Beatles, Stevie Wonder as well as American psychedelic rock artist Jimi Hendrix.

As this thesis progresses, the ways in which participants' vulnerabilities intersect with experiences of vulnerability will become apparent in various ways, both directly and indirectly. As Mark made reference to with his experiences with Asperger's, the ability for participants to reconstruct vulnerability into something that becomes a driving force behind the music, speaks to the autonomy inbuilt into the process of music-making. The remaining chapters explore how these practices live out, through intersections with technology, broader music-consumption practices, and the various ways the individual act of music-making emerges through distinctly social and collective contexts. They also speak to how, through a direct engagement with vulnerability, the identity of a musician, is in fact a resilient one for participants. Music equips participants with a cultural language with which they can explore and mine their own personal vulnerabilities through processes of self-disclosure.

Chapter Three

Technology and Self-Disclosure

'Be real to your fans and be real to everyone around you'

(Dez, 17, rapper).

As I sat with Julia in her large home studio, various forms of technology littered the space around us. Guitars and keyboards were placed up against the side wall and a MacBook Air and desktop computer with specific music-making software on them were set up on a large desk spanning the width of the other wall. A small 'control room', where Julia could manipulate the back-end PA system, was situated at the other end of the room. This home studio was where Julia brought a lot of her own musical ideas to life. It was also the location of our second case-study interview where we spent some time listening to and unpacking some of Julia's own original music. *'So this is one of my new songs...'* she told me walking back to her control room. *'I'm just going to go and turn on my surround sound'* she called out, her voice animating as she said those final two words. Walking back from her 'control room', she told me more about the studio set up:

'Yeah! It's good, because it means I didn't need to buy studio monitors. They're fairly expensive. So when Stuart [Julia's collaborator] was here, he brought his ones and then he bought these like \$900 ones or something which were actually a real bargain for what they were...But, still, like he spent all this money [laughs] on these massive ones and they just sounded so good.'

As Julia updated me on these different speaker systems and recording tools, she encountered a problem – there was no sound. *'This is pretty much what writing a song is all about – stuff doesn't work!'* she commented with a laugh. *'You're getting a real experience here!'*

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

After some time, Julia eventually decided to restart her whole system – *‘I don’t know a problem I’ve ever had that hasn’t fixed itself by restarting.’* Her long silences as she worked through the technology issues contrasted her usually excited and talkative self. Heading back to the control room, and after another long pause, she called out, *‘It was working today. I’m just going to...’* her voice trailed off. As she walked back in, the system restarted.

Logging back onto her computer, Julia started again – *‘Yeab, so I’m going to show you a song that...’* she began, before she noticed me rising out of my chair to get a closer look at her desktop screen. The image she used for her desktop wallpaper was a large square image divided into quarters with a Facebook logo in the top left quarter, and the Twitter logo in the top right. The bottom left had the Instagram logo and the bottom right and final square had the YouTube logo.

‘That’s to remind me to do my social media’ Julia pre-empted my unasked question. *‘It’s supposed to inspire me because it looks pretty, but I hate doing social media’.*

Julia quickly opened a finder window on her desktop ready to relaunch the music program that had proven problematic before. With the social media logos now blanketed with more exciting prospects of playing music, the reminders of engaging with social media were also shelved for another day. From that point, we went back into a discussion around her music. In the moment, I had not thought too much about how quickly that discussion around social media lasted, partly because in the third interview I had planned on spending some time on exploring digital platforms, social media and the effects of technology. However, this small aside was indicative of Julia’s broader attitudes surrounding social media technologies. It is also indicative of a less presumptuous understanding of young people and technology use, going some way to dispelling some of the panics surrounding digital nativism (boyd 2014; Prensky 2001). As I argue in this

chapter, generating young people's own sets of experiences and understanding the motivations and views behind these experiences challenge the digital native discourse (boyd 2014; Palfrey & Gasser 2011) as it illuminates the variances in young people's experiences. For example, for Julia, technology incorporated, '*natural, spiritual*' interactions when she was writing '*acoustically*' on her guitar. It also spoke to her interactions with production software and collaborators – '*it's like 'how do I get this sounding real and something I like, and we'd want to listen to?' kind of thing.*' Through considering technology as being at the core of Julia's practice (and other participant's practice as this chapter will detail), the notion of using self-disclosure as a means to connect with another emerges as a central underpinning framework in which to understand participants' practice. The smaller, incremental occurrence of using a '*little audio recorder that I stole off my step-dad*' which Julia was able to plug into her computer as a way of scrolling through previously used melodies, through to her frustration around social media, all serve the ultimate purpose of disclosing aspects of self as a means of connecting with an audience.

Technology is an important aspect of the music-making practices of the young musicians in this research. It is deeply embedded in music-making and mediates practice through its facilitation of intimate communication. Inherent in how technology is understood in this context is the relationship individuals have with mechanical artefacts (Verbeek & Vermaas 2009, p. 169; See also Ihde 1990; Heidegger 1996). Technology in the lives of participants refers to the social media tools, music-making software, the hardware associated with music-making such as amplifiers, mixers, speakers, as well as musical instruments. This chapter works through these various forms. What underpins these technologies are their ability to facilitate music-making and afford opportunities for self-disclosure. Simon Frith's paper *Art Versus Technology: The Strange Case of Popular Music* helps illuminate this approach. In it, Frith makes the point that 'recording technology enables new voices to be heard and to be heard in new ways' (Frith 1986, p. 278). Bringing to the surface these new voices goes some way to explain how my own participants

used technology to amplify their own voices. The affordances of technology in the context of music-making can be summed up through Frith's exploration of the impact the microphone had on changing the nature of popular music – 'to extend the possibilities of the public expressions of private feelings in all pop genres' (1986, p. 270).

Such applications of technology to facilitate a self-disclosure are central in the work of Tia DeNora, which in turn is largely inspired by Foucault's original 'technology of the self' thesis (Foucault 1988). DeNora's contention (1999) that music itself operates as a technology of the self suggests that music is operationalised in such a way as to elicit very particular behaviours and emotions²³. It is in this context that music takes on the qualities of technology, with the participant using it as a means of engaging in intimate relationships with themselves, bandmates and collaborators, and their audience. A large part of this discussion works through how social media technology, digital technology and technology hardware is used to facilitate these relationships. To do this, I call upon DeNora's music as a technology of the self thesis as well as an application of Frith's (1986) amplification of voices thesis.

This chapter will posit that technology specifically affords practices of self-disclosure that facilitate intimacy. Through presenting a historical account of technology as emerging within popular forms of music-making, the chapter will dispel the moral panics arising within much of popular media's considerations of technology. It will also propose a way of understanding technology's role that is reflective not simply of the various iterations of technology as relevant to practice, but one that is reflective of how, through technology, modes of self-disclosure and personal expression are advanced. As specified earlier, technology within the context of this chapter traverses boundaries, and includes the quite specific understandings of technology like

²³ I discuss DeNora's conceptualisation of music as a technology of the self in more detail in Chapter Four.

the social media and digital recording technology that Julia uses. It also calls upon understandings of technology that position the ‘instrument’ as both a form of technology and a physical extension of the maker’s body. Finally, the need to connect with audience, as marked through social media ‘likes’, streams, and downloads will be explored.

3.1 History of Technology within Music-making

A central concern of this chapter is how participants used technology to connect with their audience. The importance of this connection and the ways technology infiltrates these practices has underpinned discussion around technology and music-making throughout history.

Historically, technology has often held a controversial and at times morally contentious position within popular music. As this chapter advocates, however, often these moments in time advance the possibilities of what technology can afford with regards to processes of self-disclosure. This section will build upon initial work published by popular music studies scholar Simon Frith.

Predominantly a piece on the history of technology within popular music, Frith’s seminal ‘Art versus Technology...’ (1986) work begins with an account of the role the ‘electrical microphone’ had on styles of popular singing (1986, p. 263). Microphones had allowed male singers to sing softly, which heralded ‘a new sort of male pop star’ (1986, p. 263). These new styles, however, were deemed to be too ‘sentimental and ‘effeminate’ (1986, p. 263) for the then BBC. Although controversial at the time, the introduction of the microphone supported the development of a new musical language, labelled ‘crooning’. ‘Crooning’ itself would go on to be seen as a rather sexualised form of singing. This new singing style, and the intimacy that emerged using technology, set the pace for a different relationship with technology when making music.

Through the microphone being used as part of music-making, other forms of technology also slowly started to be incorporated within practice, all the time broadening the language musicians have access to.

These new technological advances have always allowed for intimate forms of self-disclosure through music. Within youth culture and popular music culture however, technology is also seen as sparking sites of concern or panic. Within popular music, these moments of panic are often associated with stark moments of potential change. For example, from a music-making perspective, both the advent of the microphone and Bob Dylan's 'going electric' at Newport Folk Festival in 1963 led to musicians facing criticism because of the different 'sound' they were making. More recently, with the advent of computers and digital music-making software, concerns about 'authenticity' have arisen citing the popular discourse that those making electronic music are not 'real' musicians as they are not using 'real' instruments (Lamb 2011). Because of the 'synthetic' nature of electronic music and its emerging sub-genres, there is an assumption that they are not authentic.

These panics have also surrounded the releasing and distribution of music. The introduction of music television (MTV) in 1981 in America saw a significant change in the involvement of major record labels further dominating the music industry (Shuker 2013, pp. 188–189). Similarly, the arrival of Napster, the free file-sharing service in the early 2000's, caused major panic within the music industry. Major record labels and the industry on a whole were seen to be losing economic capital as a consequence (Carter & Rogers 2014). The advent of online music stores such as iTunes and later streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music also brought panic from both artists and the industry, through the perceived loss of economic capital.

The level of access to music that technology has afforded has also been met with criticism, suggesting that consumers are not properly connecting with artists due to the fact that the world of music is available in the palm of our hand via mobile devices (Strachan 2017). From a consumer perspective, Strachan calls this a 'quasi-utopian virtual landscape in which the

traditional barriers for entry to the music industry and the control of distribution have been eroded’ (2017, p. 22). Of importance here, especially in the ways music distribution has evolved since the beginning of online digital technology, has been the ‘democratising effect’ it has had on consumers’ ability to find and listen to music that holds some significance for them. The ability for young people to access and find meaning through music²⁴ speaks to the ‘democratisation of technology’ (Hracs 2012; Hracs, Seman & Virani 2016; Leyshon 2009; Taylor 2014).

In 1981, before the introduction of these new digital communication technologies that have become so intertwined with current everyday music-making practices, Simon Frith put forward the following:

‘Rock music, like other works of art in an age of mechanical reproduction, is not made by individual creators communicating directly to an audience – record making depends on a complex structure of people and machines’ (Frith 1981, p. 52).

In an era where rock music was in a significant state of change, this remark illuminates how technology impacts upon the immediate artistic integrity of a piece of music. To discuss this notion of mechanical reproduction inherent within these ‘complex structures’ of the early 1980’s was suggestive of a scraping away of one of a key aspect of the music-making process – the social interaction musicians had with both collaborators and audience. Technology was conceptualised in very specific ways within these structures – it was deeply embedded in the machinations of the major record label system. Although over time, technology’s role within the process has changed, it has always been intrinsically linked to the relationship between the musician’s musical output and their audience. This approach also implies a passive involvement on behalf of the creator, suggesting that once they have written and/or played the song, the piece was out of their hands. This passiveness also suggests that the ‘makers’ are simply cogs in

²⁴ A detailed account of this meaning-making process can be found in Chapter Four outlining the musical biographies of the young musicians participating in this research.

the early machine of music production. Although this mechanical process still exists today, it is predominantly the domain of major record labels, a territory largely out of reach for most early career musicians, and one not participated in by my participants.

With a great deal of music-making in the current day occurring outside of these industrial mainstream models, record making no longer depends solely on these complex structures of people and machines. Instead, through digital technology specifically, ‘rock music’ as well as other forms of popular music *is* made by ‘individual creators communicating directly to an audience’ (Frith 1981, p. 52). For a great deal of participants, the ability to upload a song to a music distribution platform like YouTube, Soundcloud, Bandcamp or Triple J Unearthed allowed a greater sense of control over their music, and afforded a greater level of interaction between themselves and the audience through the removal of the traditional ‘complex structures of people and machines’ (Frith 1981, p. 52). The hurdles inherent within traditional mechanical reproductions are flattened out, offering a streamlined relationship and possibility of self-disclosure. However, this ‘democratisation’ still determines how young musicians stand out (Maalsen & McLean 2015). As I argue, vulnerability becomes amplified through this ‘democratisation’ as a means of ensuring the young musician is noticed.

3.2 Technology, Determinism, and Democracy

Modern technology in the lives of young people has for some time been seen through an ‘extreme binary’ (boyd 2014, p. 24), either viewed as being universally ‘good’, or universally ‘bad’. In recent years, a utopian view of technology has emerged where the ‘democratising’ capabilities of technology have gained traction. The ‘democratisation of technology’, as initially coined by Friedman, refers to the ‘enabling of more and more people, with more and more home computers, modems, cellular phones, cable systems and Internet connections, to reach farther

and farther, into more and more countries, faster and faster, deeper and deeper, cheaper and cheaper than ever before in history' (1999, p. 47). Such a perspective is deeply embedded in a technological determinist view on the role of technology in everyday life. The notion that 'social progress is driven by technological innovation, which in turn follows an "inevitable" course' (Smith 1998, p. 38) has been widely criticised, however, as it removes any prospect of autonomy on behalf of the individual (Selwyn 2012, p. 83; Smith, Skrbis & Western 2013, pp. 100–101). The 'democratisation of technology' and technological determinism offer an overly romanticised perspective that assumes a utopic perspective which tends to overlook young people's 'relatively mundane forms of communication and information retrieval' (Buckingham 2008, p. 14). As I have found, however, for participants there was a far more complex interplay between the democratisation and supposedly determinist qualities of technology. Technology amplified possibilities for reaching and connecting with others, activating processes of self-disclosure.

Through this democratisation lens, within the context of music, there is an assumption that both the amount of people opting to make music as well as audience size increases. This levelling of the playing field that technology enables, however, is open to critique. Built into a conclusion like this are assumptions around people's access to technology, the ability and skillsets of users, as well as the impact particular social stratifiers like geographic location and gender play (Maalsen & McLean 2015). The 'digital divide' has long been a prominent concern within discussions around young people and technology use (Harris, Straker & Pollock 2017; Livingstone & Helsper 2007; Loges & Jung 2001; Warschauer 2004). Buckingham suggests that the 'relentlessly optimistic view' that a great deal of the utopian discourse suggests ignores the fact that for many young people, there still lies a gap 'between the technologically rich and the technologically poor, both within and between societies' (2008, p. 14).

The utopian approach, largely promoted via popular press, has been disrupted within both youth studies literature (boyd 2012; Cammaerts 2008; van Dijck 2013, 2009) and popular music studies (Carter & Rogers 2014; Maalsen & McLean 2015; McCourt & Zuberi 2016). Within the context of music, avenues for this potential democratisation lie both in the hands of consumers and of makers. In their edited collection *The Production and Consumption of Music in the Digital Age*, Hracs, Seman and Virani (2016) explore the various ways technology throughout each of the music-making stages, with specific focus on recording, working, playing, distributing, and promoting and consuming. These practices, especially as they are mediated through technology, have long been met with moral panic. From the perspective of a consumer, the past two decades have seen a significant change in both music formats and the ways in which music is transmitted from the maker to the consumer. Such shifts have been largely thought about as being responsible for the economic downfall of the recording industry (Carter & Rogers 2014; Kjus 2015), as well as suggesting that the music itself as it moves through this process loses some of its artistic value. Largely because of this ‘democratisation of technology’, the number of individuals making music has risen (APRA AMCOS 2015; Vella, Homan & Redhead 2016). Access to technology and the associated music-making software and hardware affords possibilities for self-expression. I argue that for young musicians with experiences of vulnerability, these opportunities to engage in creative expression are especially important. However, with an increasingly crowded space, it also has the potential to further problematise the role of technology in how young musicians present themselves.

All participants used digital distribution platforms as a means of releasing and ultimately promoting their music. One platform prominent with new and emerging Australian musicians, and one that all participants used to varying degrees, was Triple J Unearthed. The platform, run by the national youth radio broadcaster Triple J, aims to be the place to ‘discover the best new Australian music’ and seeks to act as a ‘valuable first step for Australian musicians trying to find

an audience' (About | triple j Unearthed, n.d.). Unearthed predominantly runs as a website where artists can upload their music and consumers can stream and download it. They also have a digital radio station where artists that use the website get the opportunity to be played. Recent research investigating Unearthed conducted by Maalsen and McLean (2015) suggests that although, on the surface, there appears the opportunity for young emerging musicians to be heard, the music and potential careers of musicians are still framed through key aspects of identity (2015, p. 3). On the surface, a platform like Unearthed seeks to democratise the Australian music scene. Instead, as Maalsen and McLean argue, it operates as a space where dominant forms of independent music 'coalesce to produce spaces that do not realise the potential fluidity that digital spaces might otherwise allow' (2015, p. 2).

According to Maalsen and McLean (2015), the ways in which a service like Unearthed engages with stratifiers such as gender and location further fetishise aspects of identity. Identity, however, has long been at the centre of popular music (the sub-cultural movements as explored through work published by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies is a useful example to keep in mind here - see Cohen 2002; Hall & Jefferson 2006). In my own experience of using the Unearthed platform as a source of new music, I would agree that Unearthed has typically run on essentialised identity markers – hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine identities are often presented by bands on the platform and often promoted via the service through social media and their website (Maalsen & McLean 2015, p. 4). Essentialised presentations of identity are not only part of how cultural gatekeepers such as Unearthed present young musicians. They are deeply embedded into youth identities, especially those of young musicians, and the ways they present themselves to the world. As I argue in this thesis, these identity markers, which often involve experiences of vulnerability, are inherent in music-making. Focussing exclusively on the ways gatekeepers may amplify these vulnerabilities dismisses any agency on behalf of the musicians themselves. It also fails to consider the fact that vulnerability (specifically experiences

of discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic background) and the ways they manifest in musical style, has been, since the advent of rock and roll, a key calling card for practice.

Access and use of a platform like Unerthed demonstrates how various aspects of identity can become amplified through similar digital platforms. However, for young musicians, an engagement with identity markers such as gender, sexuality, mental illness and socio-economic background is central to their practice. Technology in this context facilitates the process of self-disclosure. When I spoke to participants about what platforms they use and which they prefer, discussion often led to an exploration of the affordances provided by each.

For Ryan, a service like Unerthed acted as an entry point for potential audience:

'Unerthed's really interesting because...you can only have three tracks which is good in a way cos it limits what you put on there...Umm, but I – I really like Unerthed and I always use the Unerthed page, because you can download it straight away for free. Umm, the mixes we have up there are like, completely mastered so – you're pretty much getting a free track from the EP. And umm, it gives you like, a quick bio and an image, and a general feel for your band on a really, like, neutral page.'

Dez's engagement with online music platforms involved a far more integrated approach:

'I post my music on YouTube. From YouTube, I usually share it to Facebook so then my Facebook friends can like see it and stuff. And then sometimes I get my friends to share it and stuff. Umm, my Soundcloud, sometimes I would post some stuff. Umm...right now I only have one song on that but, soon I'm going to have, hopefully post some music up on that. I also got one track that's pending for the Triple J Unerthed High (competition).'

For Julia, as I explore in more detail later in this chapter and in Chapter Five, a service like Unerthed was integral in gaining popularity and fans, helping her envisage herself as a career musician:

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

I wish I could just write the music and perform it and then have someone else do all this other stuff for me. Hopefully one day! Because I have no idea what I'm doing in terms of marketing, or just anything. Umm, but I just, I put my stuff, like, yeah, on Triple J Unearthed and Bandcamp and iTunes.

I put one song up [on Unearthed] last year and that did really well. Like, I got in the charts, the top 100 charts. I think I got 40 or 50 or something. And I entered it in, umm, Triple J Unearthed High and I did pretty well in those charts as well. Like I got featured and I got interviewed on radio and I got a few airplays on the radio.'

Of all the participants, it was Mark who relied most heavily on digital music platforms. Due to his role as a hip-hop producer, uploading his beats to services like Bandcamp, YouTube and Soundcloud afforded him access to his main collaborator Jay as well as other potential opportunities:

'...a lot of it is umm (collaborator) Jay...most of the stuff I work on with Jay. Like he will usually put it up on Bandcamp, he'll have it on iTunes, all that sort of shit as well, YouTube, Soundcloud. That being said, I do use Soundcloud. I post beats very rarely, but I use it as a private link for artists...so when someone, say [a major rapper] hits us up and says 'I want some beats' we send them a link to this website, you know I got a domain for it and everything and give him the password and it's a Soundcloud of all the beats. And you know, he needs the password to get into it and check it out.'

As I detail in later chapters, all participants considered the importance of marketing their music. Platforms such as Unearthed, Soundcloud, Bandcamp and YouTube afforded opportunities for participants to establish themselves and act as key spring boards for potential careers. In conjunction with social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, these digital music platforms allowed space for young musicians to develop themselves and their craft. As the above data alludes to, decisions to use these services were often carefully considered and planned, and were done so as a means of collaborating, gaining fans, as well as establishing a potential career within the industry. Dani's decision to not have any public online music distribution platforms when the band began, also spoke to how he saw technology as assisting in

an eventual career in music. When I asked him during the scoping interview about whether he had posted his band's music online, he answered:

'Umm, we haven't yet. My intention is to use Soundcloud for that... [the band] was never a band to reach the charts or anything, it wasn't a band for a career. It was always a band for, umm, the comparison that I make is you know, if you're looking for a job and you think you'd really like to be a barista and you look around and all the coffee places are like 'oh, we're hiring barista's but you need to have experience' and no one is going to take you on if you don't have experience right? So, this is the equivalent to making your own coffee shop, so you can get experience as a barista! ... Since none of us had been in bands, it was something to try that interaction. Umm, I am leaving the country in September and I intend to try and start another band and maybe something a lot more serious then, and this experience is valuable to me and as is having recordings of the stuff that we've done and putting them online so that other people can access them when we're going through that process again. Yeah, so Soundcloud looks like the venue for us at the moment.'

The scoping interview with Dani had taken place at the beginning of July 2014. By the time I began the case study-interviews with Dani, it was the end of September, and in the intervening time, he had started a Soundcloud account for his band, uploading live demo recordings that he and his bandmates had done. However, the band had broken up by the end of that year. With identity front and centre of both musicians' experiences and their song-writing practice, through employing particular affordances made available through the use of technology, participants were able to strategically position themselves, especially in the early stages of their career. Dani, and other participants' careful deliberation around uploading their music online also illustrates how technological reproduction impacts the 'aura' and 'authenticity' of a piece of music and the musicians making it.

3.3 Aura and Authenticity

Calling upon Benjamin's (2008) initial ideas around how technology impacts upon the reproducibility of 'aura' and 'authenticity' within art, it is important to acknowledge that the aura,

or as Bloustien, Peters and Luckman (2008, p. xxvi) suggest, the ‘uniqueness’, in fact remains.

Technology has meant that the aura once inherent within music itself has instead ‘disseminated and dispersed into other cultural forms’ (Bloustien, Peters & Luckman 2008, p. xxvi). The aura, as Benjamin defines it, is that indefinable middle space, often referenced by my own participants as manifesting within the ‘I don’t know why phenomena’. Benjamin argues that aura is less based ‘on quality, use value, or worth per se than on its figurative distance from the beholder’

(Benjamin 2008, p. 14). With the desire for a long career in music-making a central theme when I spoke to participants, what made both their music and their musician identity ‘stand out’ was this aura. The song is then imbued with the aura, through the ‘semiotic indefiniteness’

(Hesmondhalgh 2013, p. 16) within music’s sonic capacity, as well as other cultural products an artist may share such as social media profiles, imagery, and interviews.

Authenticity, too, frames key understandings of how technology is perceived as part of music-making. Live performance is no longer the single dominant domain for presenting ‘authenticity’.

Through reproducibility, and a shifting of technology’s dominance as part of music-making practices, ‘the authentic is now the recorded’ (Bloustien, Peters & Luckman 2008, p. xxvi). Due to the impact of new digital forms of technology, considerations of a concept like ‘authenticity’ or as participant Dez would put it ‘*be[ing] real*’, are worth unpacking. As with aura, authenticity is something that, through technology, continues to be reproduced in different ways. Benjamin’s contention that technological reproduction ‘devalue(s) the here and now of the artwork’

(Benjamin 2008, p. 22) and creates ‘an inexplicable void’ that turns the recorded performance ‘into a mute image that flickers for a moment on the screen then vanishes into silence’ (Benjamin 2008, p. 31) fails to consider how through different technologically mediated contexts, art, and in this case music, is often able to be seen in a new and different light. The interaction with the audience is what determines the ‘here and now’ of the work.

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

Technological reproduction provided opportunities for participants to connect with their audience. From a live performance perspective, technology operated through the musical instruments used as part of performance, affording musicians opportunities to present different modes of authenticity. These new interpretations were a central part of Julia's practice:

I love the first time I play a song live. That's a really cool experience – just to see audience reaction. And then I also love playing songs that I've been playing for years, umm, especially one's that I'm really proud of. Every time I play it's kind of a different experience. It's a different audience, different scene. I think I, yeah, it sounds kind of clichéd but I think I, depending on what mood I'm in and what is happening at the time, I relate to my songs in different ways.'

Within a contemporary context, music is continuously being reproduced. And, as I demonstrate throughout the rest of this thesis, the recorded performance and live performance simply offer two very different experiences for both the audience and the young musician themselves. As participants suggested, the aura, or uniqueness inherent within the music being made continues to be experienced by the artist and audience, often coming into its own *between* the musician and the audience.

As music writer Marcus Teague posited when exploring the importance of music performed in a live context:

'...the best moments in live music happen when the script is high jacked. When control of the situation falls out of the band's hands and levitates somewhere between it and the crowd' (Teague 2012).

Technology has continued to alter how aura and authenticity occur within artistic practice. However, I argue that through technologically mediated music-making practices, both aura and authenticity are dispersed and experienced in different ways. The aura and authenticity of music, as amplified through its interaction with audience was best summed up by participant Dez: *'be real to your fans and be real to everyone around you'*. As I explore in Chapters Four and Five, the music

made by participants continued to generate authentic and ‘real’ moments between the artist and the audience.

3.4 Intimacy

In the preface to this thesis, I quoted British popular music scholar David Hesmondhalgh as suggesting that music can be ‘both intimate and collective at the same time’ (Taylor n.d.). This intimacy refers to a tight bond or understanding between both collaborators and audience. Using Simmel’s (Simmel & Wolff 1950) initial contention of intimacy as referring to an almost exclusive sharing between two participants, the experiences of those who participated in this research help to reconceptualise what these ‘participants’ look like as well as add relevant contextual understandings of the sorts of connections formed. The transactional nature at play within intimacy suggests that both parties, be it the young musician and the audience, or the young musician and the collaborator are on an equal level and both offer something significant to the relationship (Giddens 2013). As Simmel contends, intimacy exists as part of the ‘affective structure’ of a dyad and is centred upon ‘what each of the two participants gives or shows only to the one other person and to nobody else’ (Simmel & Wolff 1950, p. 126). As this section will detail, this exclusivity is something inherent within music-making, and technology. Using Frith’s understandings of technology as facilitating intimacy, the relationship established between the musician and collaborator and/or audience suggests a dependency between the two parties. In fact, the following uncovers four distinct forms of intimacy as occurring within participants’ music-making practice. These include interactions with famous musicians through being a music ‘fan’²⁵, interactions with existing music through remixing and sampling, working with other musicians via direct collaboration, and through interaction with audience. Where music-making

²⁵ I unpack the concept of fandom in more detail in Chapter Four.

becomes uniquely intimate is that for participants, there was a willingness to disclose personal aspects of self exclusively within song.

It is musical technologies that specifically enable this connection between the young musician and their audience or collaborator. These intimacies were experienced across the music-making process. For example, Dani suggested that through the affordances provided by technology, and in this case social networking and blogging platform Tumblr, a connection between himself and other friends involved in the industry as well as prominent musicians was established:

‘Umm, I don’t follow many [artists] on Tumblr. Umm, although almost all of the music that I’ve been exposed to from Placebo onwards I’ve come into contact with via the internet and via Tumblr... Umm [laughs] anyway, there’s a band called The Chameleons – they’re a post-punk band, a new wave band from the 80s. They’ve been revived by one of their members as Chameleons Fox. Umm, I don’t listen to them but I follow them on Tumblr and I do this because one of my friends is a big fan and he went to one of their concerts and had a photo taken with one of them and it ended up on their feed – it was hilarious! Anyway, it’s because he took this photo and put it on Tumblr and captioned it like ‘they see me rollin’ or something and this formal page reblogged it and was like ‘it’s fans like you that keep music alive!’ and [laughs], anyway, they followed me, and they must’ve followed me via his page and that was pretty bizarre so I just followed them back and it’s fine- it’s nice!’

The ability for technology to facilitate these connections between a music fan like Dani and a prominent and formative band, was clearly important, and something in which he attached great meaning to. As he mentioned, much of his new music discovery occurred Tumblr, and it was through this platform and other communities he had generated online where Dani was able to establish connections with others, often affording him access to be ‘seen’ for the first time²⁶. These connections, facilitated through technology, illustrated how music shaped participants’ experiences. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Four, these personal connections with artists as

²⁶ The opportunity to be ‘seen’ simply through listening to and connecting with particular musicians held enormous value for participants. It is something I unpack in greater detail in Chapter Four.

facilitated through technology are given specific meaning through the social contexts in which they emerge.

This intimacy emerges through other means as well. During the second interview with participant Mark, as he began to detail the process of beginning work on a new track, I took note of just how many different beats he had in his ‘Ableton’²⁷ folder. As he scrolled through the folder, a process that took around half a minute, he commented: ‘*Yeah, I don’t know if you can see this, but this is my Ableton folder. That’s, like, all beats.*’ ‘*Oh, wow*’ I reply. ‘*That’s a lot of stuff in there!*’ It was this music that Mark would use as part of his sampling practice.

Mark: Wait till you see my iTunes man! [both laugh] [clicks onto his iTunes]. This is all the artists [scrolls through again]. Like...that’s ‘A’ [Mark spends 4 or 5 seconds scrolling through ‘A’ – this continues through to C]. I actually, you see that, umm, I got 3,923 albums in my iTunes.

Michael: Oh wow, that’s a fair amount!

Mark: [laughs] I actually have a lot more as well!

Due to the musical form Mark worked with, he was in the unique position of being able to source his sounds from an almost limitless supply of existing music through the practice of sampling. Mark was able to hear and reinterpret this music and position it within a distinct, new context (Schloss 2014), affording him an intimate connection to both the music as well as the musicians responsible. As Schloss suggests, hip-hop production, and sampling in particular, can be understood as an exemplar of the ‘postmodern pastiche, with all its attendant theoretical implications: juxtaposition of disparate aesthetic systems, blank parody, fragmentation, lack of historicity, and so forth’ (2014, p. 65). Mark’s process of taking existing sounds, most of which were not originally from hip-hop music and positioning them in a hip-hop context not only

²⁷ Ableton Live is a software music sequencer and digital audio workstation (DAW). Mark uses it to create his original ‘beats’ through sampling and remixing sections of existing music to create his own.

allowed for a repurposing of sound, but also afforded Mark the ability to become a director of sorts, accessing the language of music as a means of articulating a sense of self. In having access to this limitless range of music, Mark could showcase his own attachments to musical genre and style. Through the practice of sampling and beat-making, he was able to disclose these aspects of self (these attachments are detailed in the Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories section and Chapter Four).

For Dez too, technology afforded a greater sense of intimacy with audience. Whilst he acknowledged the connection he had with his friends, for Dez, music and the technology that allowed for this connection afforded him an intimate relationship with audience:

'Yeah like, because right now it's like, umm, how do I explain it, right now I just have people liking, like my friends, they just listen to the song and be like 'ok cool, you're doing your own thing'. But I wanna get that connection with people, you know what I mean? I wanna see, like, I wanna have like people saying, 'ohh, I feel the same way. Can you, like, hit me up' you know? I'm free whenever, I'll give people advice, I like doing that stuff, so like, I'm not trying to act, like, big or nothing, but I like helping people out, you know.'

In addition to the intimacy Dez feels with his friends and collaborators, he was also projecting a hope for intimacy with an 'invisible audience', (boyd 2010, p. 49) where because of technology, both parties (Dez and his audience) are not visible to each other, and are not present at the same time. My contention that technology-aided processes of self-disclosure lead to intimate connections between the musician and collaborator or audience, was partly inspired by the aforementioned article from Simon Frith, 'Art Versus Technology: The strange case of popular music' (Frith 1986). Throughout the history of popular music, musicians have been provided opportunities to disclose aspects of self with their collaborators and audience in new, personal ways. Similarly, emergent work conducted within the technology studies field suggests that digital technology provides immediate and intimate feelings of connection (Hillier & Harrison 2007; Senft 2008). My work does not directly deal with the traditionally intimate romantic or sexual

relationships that the work cited does. However, as the following section explores, when understanding the experiences of young people with experiences of vulnerability, digital technology plays a significant role in facilitating intimate connections.

Technology aids an intimate connection between two human actors, or a human entity in the case of audience or multiple band members. These intimate connections between fans and musicians, musicians and other musicians through sampling, musicians and other musicians through direct collaboration, and musicians with their audience, all mediated a music-making practice that enabled processes of self-disclosure to emerge. The intimate relationship between these two actors is mediated through the relationship between the human actor and the technology (Fels 2000). As I detail in the following section, for my own participants, digital technologies or musical instruments assumed a bodily extension role (Alerby & Ferm 2005; Davies 2003; Richardson & Third 2009). As an embodied instrument, the connection between person and object in this instance helped mediate the intimate connection between the musician and their audience or collaborator.

3.5 Technology as an Extension

There is extensive literature within the music education field that advocates for the teaching of the instrument as an extension of the body. Through this understanding, musical instruments become more than just objects used to play music with. As Alerby and Ferm contend, ‘Through our body we are in a living relation to a music instrument... and it is by our bodily being-in-the-world that the [instrument] takes on meaning’ (Alerby and Ferm 2005, p. 181). The instrument becomes a part of the overall creative system at play, ‘continuous’ (Davies 2003, p. 114) with the body.

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

The act of playing music also becomes embedded into the overall creative system. No longer is it simply the fingers, for example, connecting with the instrument, the essence of the overall experience being conveyed is *felt* through the whole body. The extension becomes more than just a corporeal embodiment, extending the physical boundaries of the body. As Davies suggests, ‘this expansion is emotional and personal, as well as physical, to the extent that the instrument provides the player with new means for expressing her ideas, personality, and passions’ (2003, p. 114) Through this personal, emotional and physical embodiment of music-making, technology and technologies can allow musicians the opportunity to disclose aspects of self that led to intimate connections with their audience or collaborators.

For participant Dez, the young rapper I met at The Site, his interactions with both the mechanical technology and ‘instrumental technology’ such as his voice, were intrinsically linked to his understanding of the role of music-making. This embodiment of music-making offered the opportunity to ‘step into’ an aspect of his life. Just prior to our first chat as part of the case-study interviews, I had briefly sat in on a studio session where Dez was recording vocals for a new song he had been working on. After the studio session had finished, we moved outside, and sat midway down a set of large concrete steps overlooking a basketball court. It was here where I opened up to him about a conceptual issue I was working through at the time.

By this point, Dez and I had built a substantial level of trust, and it was clear through his interaction with me that he was interested in how I was considering his practice. I wanted to see whether what I had been working through conceptually resonated with someone living it. In observing Dez in the studio, I had begun to get a clearer idea as to exactly how Dez *lived* hip-hop, specifically as a form of self-expression. After a bit of back-and-forth, I asked:

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

'So, I'm really interested in, especially with rappers and singers, how they see their voice as an instrument...and maybe if we can just start to talk about how you see your voice acting as an instrument?'

Without pause, Dez answered:

'Yeah, I see my voice as an instrument in a way of emotion to be honest. Like, without your voice, you can't express yourself.'

In writing up these interactions with Dez, I found myself excited by how the conceptual ideas were beginning to take hold. These moments of realisation initially frustrated me, however. This interview with Dez was the first of the case-study interviews with any participant where this discussion of technology acting as an embodied part of creative expression took place. However, he was also the last participant I spoke to as part of the case-study research. Having participants detail the ways in which they used technology as part of their music-making practice was a major part of the second of the three case-study interviews. It took until my discussion with Dez, however, to explore my thoughts about technology acting as an extension to the body. As the conceptual work developed in tandem with this fieldwork, the questions and discussion slowly evolved. Sitting on those concrete steps with kids playing basketball in the distance, Dez and I sat and spoke some more about exactly what was going on when he was in the studio, behind the microphone and rapping:

M: Yeah, I guess the question I'm trying to grapple with, especially in relation to the voice as an instrument, like, you can look at a guitar, and it's actually separate to you-

D: Exactly, it's something you play.

M: But when you pick it up, it becomes part of you.

D: Yeah!

M: And part of how you express yourself.

D: Yeah.

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

M: But with your voice, it's-

D: It's a part of you.

M: Yeah, but do you see your rapping voice as something separate that you connect to when you're in the studio or connect to when you're writing?

D: Yeah, yeah, definitely man. Like, especially the whole rap persona thing. Me being a rapper, like there's normal me, and then there's rapper me when I'm in the booth and I'm ready to work and when I'm recording. Yeah. That's what I'm trying to-

M: [laughs] Yes!

D: Yeah, I get you man! I understood the question then!

M: I am definitely going to quote that man! Instrument as persona – that's great!

D: [laughs]

M: Thank you! I think you've finally helped me get down exactly what this is!

[both laugh].'

This persona was evident early on in my interactions with Dez. As I sat down with him in a quiet cafe during our first chat as part of the case-study work, I got the distinct impression that I was clearly in conversation with a rapper. Below is an excerpt taken from field notes I took after this interview.

The way Dez talks and the way he always uses his hands and fingers, it's like he's always spitting (rapping). There's a rhythm and a pulse to the way he talks – he speaks like a rapper does. There's a constant flow and shape and rhythm to the way he speaks. His index finger of his left hand is used to point to his head (near his eyebrow). Then he'll reference from that. It's as if he's showing me that he's thinking and then talking from that. He has adopted some of the similar expressive tropes from hip-hop language and expression into his own everyday life.

The affordances facilitated through Dez's engagement with hip-hop culture and the resulting interaction with the microphone and the studio slowly began to emerge within the mundane, everyday aspects of his life. Dez appeared to have adopted similar expressive tropes from hip-

hop language and expression – speaking using both his hands and fingers to gesture points and utilised them in everyday conversation, loosely moving between ‘*rapping me*’ and ‘*normal me*’ (I explore this in more detail in the Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories section and Chapter Four).

These direct interactions with technology occurred across the music-making practices of participants. From digital technology devices (laptops, tablets, and mobile phones), the various functions of these devices (email, social media, music-making software), to musical instruments, these applications acted as embodied extensions of the creative young person, helping to communicate self-disclosure practices. Within these interactions, the form of technology becomes ‘transparent’ and ‘recedes from the user’s awareness, such that the liminal gap between hand and instrument goes all but unnoticed’ (Richardson & Third 2009, p. 149). This complicates popular romantic notions that broadly detail technology, particularly portable devices and social media, as a way to stay connected in a disconnected world.

Technology was deeply embedded within the everyday practices of participants. However, the ways in which participants engaged with these technologies varied depending upon levels of access, digital literacy as well as their general perspectives on technology. As the opening account with Julia highlights, the general anxieties surrounding young people’s use of social media are in no way universal. Such a claim would be wholly deterministic, reducing any kind of agency on behalf of the young person. However, as an embodied practice, engagement with technology allows for specific and purposeful practices of self-disclosure due to its ability to facilitate these intimate connections. Technology in these contexts became transparent, with it simply acting as the facilitator of self-disclosure. There were times in young musicians’ practice where the affordances of technology were much more apparent.

3.6 Technology, Metrics and the Social

When designing the interview schedule, I drew upon previous experience I had working with musicians. In my previous role as a music writer, I had received many press releases sent by music publicity professionals representing musicians as well as the occasional musician representing themselves. Many of these press releases would explicitly state how many streams or downloads the song, film clip or album they were promoting had had. These numbers were a way of showcasing not just how many times the piece of music had been played, but also the *amount* of audience that the artist had built. Similarly, musicians themselves would take time on their social media profiles to thank their audience for helping them reach a certain milestone in the amount of likes or followers. These numbers provide very practical feedback for artists. As I discuss in Chapter Four and Five, these statistics allow musicians opportunities for both establishing a connection with audience and building a potential career.

I had wondered whether my own participants had worried about these numbers and whether they factored in when visualising their potential careers. I would often preface this discussion with participants with an exploration of how they might tangle these numbers up with sense of self, stating ‘...*it's not a dirty word, but it's related to your ego I suppose and how you see yourself*’. For participants, these numbers alluded to an aspect of the work I had not yet considered. Informing a lot of my initial thinking was the notion that technology helped facilitate self-disclosure practices through music-making, affording them the opportunity to navigate stories of personal vulnerability and establish a resilient self in the process. An intrinsic part of this practice, however, was a connection to audience. These statistics, although simply numbers, gave participants ways to measure and understand their audience.

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

The importance of these statistics is not adequately understood within scholarship, especially in relationship to young musician and audience. The advent of web 2.0 technologies such as Facebook and Twitter has led to some research which seeks to understand how the intimate parameters of such services facilitate connections between famous or well-known individuals and their audience (Baym 2012; Beer 2008; Marwick & boyd 2011). This work has often moved into the realm of musicians and audience, as Chapter Four will examine in more detail. This existing literature tends to focus on already successful musicians, and as the above 2008-2012 timespan suggests, tended to occur during a time when traditional social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were at the height of their success. Little focus seems to be placed upon the amount of people engaged, as there is an assumption that once ‘successful’ or known, the number of individuals who form the musician’s audience matters less. However, for my own participants who did not have an established audience via digital forms of engagement, these numbers did play a role, not only in establishing a connection with their audience, but also in adding a quantifiable and easily measurable value to the prospects of establishing a career in music-making.

As has been established, technology has had a profound effect on not just the practices of young musicians, but also on the state of the music industry. As Baym suggests:

‘The recording industry is reeling from the activities of online audiences and what once seemed irrelevant is now at the center of rethinking how to make music making and its associated professions sustainable’ (2012, p. 287).

There is no doubt that, especially in a web 2.0 era, digital technologies have significantly altered the ways audiences form around particular artists or styles of music. With these new forms of audiences emerging, the artist themselves are also called upon to utilise the practices of self-disclosure that such digital technologies afford as a means of establishing and maintaining a

connection with their audience. Since this Baym (2012) article was published, social media itself has shifted, utilising more immediate forms of communication typified by visual elements such as short video and images as seen in platforms like Snapchat and Instagram. With the nature of these connections with audience changing, the affordances made available through the use of these platforms still in large part determines the success and sustainability of a musician.

During my first chat with Dani, we briefly covered the role social media platforms played in his practice. Over Skype, I reminded Dani that he in fact already told me how many likes he had on his band's Facebook page. To this, he commented:

'Yeah, 19! [laughs] My mother liked it! It was so- alright, so she has this Facebook account- she doesn't post anything on it, she just uses it to stalk other family members. So I didn't tell her what mine was, but at some point I must've mentioned the name of our band so she looked it up and she followed it. I'm like, you can't do this! I don't want you to find my page! My page is linked to this. Please unfollow it! So we did have 20 likes a while ago!'

Although Dani later told me that having 'only 19' likes was 'a bit embarrassing', he was quite pragmatic about the role these kinds of statistics played in shaping a career in music-making. Speaking of his frustration at how his friends pushed their own bands via Facebook, Dani mentioned:

'Every couple of months I'll get, you know, 'Andy invites you to like his new page' and you're just... Basically I believe that unless I actually like the band and I wanna keep with it, I'm not going to like it – I don't care if you're my best friend.'

After confidently informing me that 'I have over a hundred friends – I could quite easily get the likes', Dani clarified how he saw these statistics informing aspects of career. For Dani, the number of likes a band has on Facebook, assists in a band's ability to perform live – 'until we're actually performing regularly, I don't feel like there's a lot of worth in (having a higher amount of Facebook likes)'. It also indicates a quantifiable status of a band:

Chapter Three – Technology and Self-Disclosure

'You can tell – this is again from reviewing and things – you can tell sort of the rank that a band is at in the local scene via it's- 200 is just a regular – like anything between 100 and 200 is a regular touring band. Umm, one of the bands that I like...has over 500 and it definitely reflects their position within the local scene. And they are very popular, they're regarded as one of [the scenes] best at the moment in their genre. As soon as you get over 1,000, 2,000 you're looking at more national bands, and over that international stuff.'

Peppered throughout our discussions, Dani would often make reference to other cultural pursuits he was engaged in. The specific knowledge garnered through music reviewing and writing allowed for Dani to approach his own music career with a level of on-the-ground expertise.

For those participants who had been engaged in their own original music-making for longer, the number of views on a track or likes via social media still played a deterministic role. Sitting with Dez, I asked whether he had taken notice of the views his YouTube clips and streams of tracks on his Soundcloud had received and whether he felt these numbers mattered:

'Umm, it doesn't really matter, but I do care about it to an extent. But it doesn't matter. Right now, I'm still in high school. I still got my whole life ahead of me. So, I don't really care. As long as someone can relate to it you know. As long as there's that one person knows, that one person knows how I feel, or I know how they feel – that's the main point really. As long as they get the message, yeah, that's what I care about.'

Dez added:

'They matter, but, like I said, not to a massive extent. Yeah, how do I say this, like you can have a million views but not one person will understand what you're trying to say. Or you could have a hundred views, or a thousand views and everyone could be a real die-hard fan (and relate to it). That's what really matters in the end. That's what I really care about.'

This candour was something common to all participants. The link between the quantifiable determinants of a sustainable career and a qualitative interpretation of how these numbers impacted upon a sense of self was an aspect that has been largely unexplored in the current

literature. There has been some exploration of the role Facebook ‘friends’ play in the lives of young people (Croom et al. 2016; Greitemeyer 2016; Livingstone 2008). However, with these musical projects acting as separate distinct entities, their associated social media profiles are approached with an informed pragmatism. Participant Ryan took a similar, although practical approach:

‘...it’s always like a big surprise that someone somewhere’s got our music [laughs], and umm, yeah we just celebrate it, like – I think to say that – like using your ego ... and not caring about it and being like ‘oh I’m in it for the music’ is kind of stupid because if you’re in it for the music you want to have a career in the music and...like I see nothing wrong with – like wanting to make money from music – I think that’s – that’s the – the common goal of every band. So, we always check out like, who’s liked our posts and, who’s downloaded this and where it’s being streamed, like, one time it was streamed in Germany and we were like ‘awesome’ like I have no idea who that is but that’s really cool’

The connection these numbers had to the prospect of these young musicians developing potential careers in music-making underpinned much of the discussion.

The potential implications and immediacy of these numbers had a profound effect on Julia.

Although not keeping track of them a great deal herself, she did tell me of the impact statistics had had on her collaborator:

‘He gets very, umm, I guess down when people don’t respond to his music. Because it’s so much effort that you put in. It’s so much money and time, and yeah, it’s pretty much, just everything that you have and then when people don’t listen to it or download it or buy it or view it on YouTube, it can be really disheartening. Umm, I try not to let it, just like, get to me.’

Much has been written around the role statistics play in determining audience participation, which I explore in Chapter Four. There is, however, little existing literature detailing the impact specific sets of ‘numbers’ (through likes, downloads, streams, etc.) have on young musicians understanding of their practice. The psychology literature has long linked the use of social media with perceptions of self and self-esteem amongst young people (Burrow & Rainone 2017; Kross

et al. 2013). There is also emerging literature detailing the role these tools play on establishing an audience of fans (Click, Lee & Holladay 2013).

These numbers are not always deterministic in the ways explored above, however. For Ryan, although he saw the social media numbers and overall digital engagement as determining a potential career as well as the ways he engaged with audience, there were some anomalies that arose when he positioned the online engagement against his band's live shows:

'We are really excited when it's like 'your song's been downloaded fifty times' and we're like – we only have twenty people coming out to our shows...there are so many family and friends who wouldn't use Unearthed, say. So it's always like a big surprise that someone some where's got our music (laughs)'

This mismatch between the offline and online musician identities was something that each participant navigated in specific ways. For Julia, as the opening account of this chapter alludes to, there was a clear difference between the online self and the offline self. For Dani too, although engaged in the online setting, the offline do-it-yourself approach to music-making he and his band utilised was in contrast to what, for him, felt to be a restrictive online approach. For Mark, the statistics associated with his social media and music distribution platforms were specifically intertwined with potential success as a career musician. For Dez, the online and offline drew a clear link. This lies in the fact that for many young hip-hop artists, social media and other music distribution platforms are where audiences are reached, much more than in an offline context. Due to the accessibility of technology, especially for electronic musicians and rappers, the project often becomes something that builds from the bedroom as opposed to the band room. These questions of identity, expression and career as mediated through technology are all explored in further detail in the remaining chapters.

Conclusion

Young musicians' engagement with technology complicates the existing discourse surrounding young people and technology. In the lives of my participants, technology as it applies in various capacities, was seen as a means of further facilitating processes of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure was a key part of their practice. Technology, in its various guises, facilitated this. The advent of digital technology has meant that for many young people, the prospect of creating music feels possible. With greater levels of access to music-making software as well as distribution platforms, technology affords opportunities for young musicians not available before. I argue that the common mythologies surrounding young people and technology (that it is wholly utopian/dystopian, or technology is deterministic) are misguided, and, as evidenced by my participants, the ways in which young people themselves engage with technology varies greatly.

This chapter has focussed on specific conceptual areas in which an engagement with technology proves to be significant for young musicians' practice. Through outlining the various conceptual understandings of technology in application to participants' music-making practice, I have established how technology in its various guises and applications afford processes of self-disclosure. What binds technology and music-making together is self-disclosure. It has done since the advent of the microphone. The final two chapters draw upon work established within this chapter as a way of further illuminating how, through technology-mediated practices, self-disclosure emerges as a central tenant of music-making.

Chapter Four

Narrating the Self Through Music

'...it was interacting with The Cure firstly that alleviated a lot of the depressive feelings I was feeling at the time [laughs]. Umm, music is very important to me in that sense.'

(Dani, 24, 'post-grunge' singer-songwriter and guitarist)

Youth arts literature, and, specifically that which seeks to understand how music-making in an organised workshop setting impacts upon the lives of 'vulnerable' young people, tends to diminish or elide the individual stories of attachment to genres and artists that young musicians develop. The musical biographies of young people incorporate important meaning making practices, including musical discoveries, fandom and participation in music subcultures. In this thesis I capture the nuanced and in-depth stories of young musicians, especially those with experiences of vulnerability. This chapter focuses on how these listening and broader participatory practices inherent in the music-making process shape and intersect with participants' practices. In direct relationship with Chapter Five, in this chapter I uncover how these participants' making practices are intertwined with their listening practices and participation in music cultures, calling upon concepts of musical discoveries and affective and memorable reactions (DeNora 1999; McCourt & Zuberi 2016; Nowak 2016), fandom studies (Duffett 2013a, 2013b; James 2015; Sandvoss 2005), and the post-subcultural turn (Bennett 2011) in the process. I conclude by introducing the concept of social authorship (Toynbee 2001, 2000).

In drawing out the various formative aspects that contributed to the music-making practices of participants, this chapter forges new ground for youth arts scholarship. I unpack how listening and consumption practices shape and influence the making practices of young musicians with

experiences of vulnerability. The existing youth arts literature has yet to provide an effective analysis of the formative music-listening and making practices of young musicians experiencing vulnerability. When musical biographies are sought out in the existing scholarship, it occurs within analysis of both consumers and listeners (DeNora 1999; Driessen & Jones 2016; Lincoln 2005), with little reference to how these practices inform making practices. This chapter acknowledges the significant input subcultural research has had on the ways young people form attachments and participate in specific music cultures (see Bennett 2011; Cohen 2002; Hall & Jefferson 2006). However, such scholarship fails to adequately consider two key points, specifically the lack of focus on music itself as well as the tendency to cast broad categorical definitions of young people whilst not factoring in individual agency and autonomy. In this chapter I use the concept of musical biographies to ask how do young people discover music and develop an affinity or ‘fandom’ for particular genres or artists? Furthermore, what role do these listening and consumption practices play in young musicians’ own practices of self-disclosure and music-making and how do these practices assist young musicians in navigating personal vulnerability?

As I will demonstrate, my analysis of young musicians’ listening, and participation in music cultures, establishes the pivotal role music-listening plays in their lives and music-making practices. For some young people, attachment to an artist or a genre establishes a belonging and camaraderie to the artists they listen to as well as other young people with similar experiences. Musical discoveries and memories can help young people navigate some of these threads of attachment. Additionally, through a participation in fandom and music cultures, these attachments become meaningfully embedded into young people’s day to day experiences. My own participants sought to emulate the experiences of music-making that the artists and genres they listened to afforded them. As established in Chapter Two, using the self-disclosure practices embedded into music-making as a means of communicating directly through self-disclosure

practices with audience is an important part of practice for participants. Connecting with an audience in such a way performs a reciprocal role, with participants' music emulating the rich music histories that have informed their own practices.

4.1 Musical Discoveries as Affective and Memorable Reactions

In a special issue of *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture*, various popular music scholars detail the role 'discovery' plays in individuals' music consumption. The issue, published in 2016, uses the impact of digital technology on music-listening practices as a springboard, analysing how 'discovery' occurs across music consumption practices. In the introduction to this special issue, McCourt and Zuberi critique how, in mainstream music and digital technologies discourse, the use of nature metaphors such as 'the stream' and 'the cloud' (2016, p. 124) perpetuate a utopian and democratic agenda, which often 'obscure the gravity, frictions, and conflicts in music's economies' (2016, p. 124). For young musicians, these discovery practices often emerge from the use of digital technology. However, the process of discovery also incorporates and, in some cases, is limited by specific socio-cultural influences. Digital technologies construct the act of discovering music as fluid and 'unending' (Nowak 2016, p. 138). However, as I outline, the social 'milieus' and technological affordances (Nowak 2016, p. 138) mediate young musicians' consumption of music.

Discovery is paramount in the identity construction of young musicians for a number of reasons. Firstly, discovering particular artists or genres of music can lead to the 'recipient' practising fandom. For young musicians with experiences of vulnerability, participating in active fan cultures affords opportunities for meaning-making as well as the development of community. In

taking a step back however, it is clear that the ‘discovery’ of music artists or genres often marks the springboard from which young musicians are then able to dive into fandom.

However, what constitutes ‘discovery’? Nowak suggests that the scholarly discourse surrounding discovery within popular music studies has to this point focused heavily on the ‘conditions of its emergence, be it social or technological’ (Nowak 2016, p. 137). However, exactly what a discovery looks like is, according to Nowak, ‘poorly theorized’:

‘To put it bluntly, *when* is a discovery? Does it occur the first time a consumer hears music that is *new* to them? Or is it when the music is accessed, listened to, and included within one’s repertoire of preferences? Behind these questions lies the idea that music discoveries can somewhat be grasped upon as a particular moment of interaction that occurs in the everyday lives of consumers, which can be seized by researchers’ (Nowak 2016, p. 137, original emphasis).

If discoveries are focussed on memorable reactions to the discovery of something new, I argue that they also play a key role in the musical biographies of young musicians. In this sense, ‘discovery’ is the springboard for participation in music cultures through attachment to music sub-cultures or participating in fandom. There are clear relationships to fandom especially with discoveries often leading to the development of fandom of an artist (Duffett 2013b, pp. 101–102). As I outline in later parts of this chapter, discoveries play a pivotal role in the eventual music-making practice of each participant, particularly through specific kinds of discoveries – musical epiphanies and rediscoveries (Nowak 2016, p. 142). As Nowak argues, however, there remains little focus on the act of discovery itself.

According to Nowak, discoveries must be ‘memorable’ (2016, p. 142). They involve ‘affective responses that individuals experience in interaction with music and which “leave a mark”’ (2016, p. 142). This notion of affective responses draws upon work conducted by Tia DeNora (DeNora

1999, 1986, 2004). DeNora posits that music acts as a technology of the self and provides a ‘scaffolding for self-construction’ (1999, p. 31). What makes these discoveries memorable is the impact they have on the understanding and organising of self. Music’s stranglehold on ‘all things personal’ (1999, p. 32) places greater focus on how music-listening intersects with ideas of self and identity. DeNora states that ‘music is a cultural resource that actors may mobilise for their on-going work of self-construction and the emotional, memory and biographical work such a project entails’ (1999, p. 32). Such examples of this can be found in the experiences of participant Dani and Ryan, which I outline in further detail below, who, after listening to artists presenting both feminine and queer outlooks, were better able to understand their own set of experiences and identity. According to DeNora, music-listening is used as a means to derive meaning from particular situations or experiences.

For my own participants, music-listening not only helped organise their everyday life, but it also afforded opportunities to lose (and find) themselves. For young people, the actual practice of ‘getting lost in’ the music can act as a momentary catharsis, a way of understanding and positioning external troubles or concerns in a safe and constructive space²⁸. Not only does music-listening allow young people a self-conscious articulation of emotion and self (DeNora 2004, p. 53), it also gives them a chance of ‘integrating emotional and aesthetic control: creating the setting for the appropriate display of feeling (whether to oneself or to others)’ (Frith 2012, p. 98). The development of these music-listening habits early in life also inform the latter music-making practices of young musicians, particularly in relation to their choice of genre.

In documenting the formative listening practices of my own participants, it is important to pinpoint these moments in time, as they often mark the beginning of their involvement with

²⁸ I discuss this practice in Chapter Five.

music. So, it is here where I return to the role discovery plays in the lives of young musicians. The following section uses Nowak's initial contention that discoveries are 'memorable and involve 'affective responses that individuals experience in interaction with music and which "leave a mark"' (2016, p. 142). Specifically, I focus on two aspects of Nowak's conceptualisation of discovery – epiphanies and rediscoveries (Nowak 2016, p. 142). As I outline below, both epiphanies and rediscoveries played key formative roles in participants' practice. Through the discovery of music, the affective responses merge into embodied responses. Both epiphanies and rediscoveries act as clear reactions to music, and in the case of young musicians, they both act as a means of the artist realising their exact practice.

4.1.1 Epiphanies

Epiphanies were essential in participant's musical biographies. According to Nowak, the moment of epiphany 'makes individuals remember the conditions of discovery over time' and 'exemplify how affects must be the primary variable upon which any definition of music discovery can be suggested' (2016, p. 143). Epiphanies allowed participants a moment to discover the possibilities a particular song, artist or genre afforded. Each of the participants highlighted key junctures in their musical biography, where due to a key discovery, they felt compelled into specific epiphanic self-realizations. Epiphanies act as 'turning point experiences', and leave 'enduring impressions on a person's life' (Wainwright & Turner 2004, p. 319) through moments of confrontation and reflection (Wainwright & Turner 2003, p. 6). This 'turning point' narrative signifies how epiphanies underpin and are often the instigators of musical biographies.

As mentioned in the Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories section, for participant Dez, this turning point occurred in listening to American rapper Eminem at the time he began high school:

Chapter Four – Narrating the Self Through Music

I remember ‘oh, this song’s sick! I love this. I love the beat!’ Yeah, ever since then it’s been influencing my life, changing my life.’

When I sat down to chat with Dez for the first time, he was quick to recall this musical discovery epiphany. Dez had, at that point, been living with his mother and his brother in a lower-to-middle class suburb of a major capital city. Right from the afternoon when his mother played him a song she had heard on the radio that day, Dez had been immersed in rap music.

‘She was playing it and then I heard it and I was like ‘oh, who’s this?’ and she’s like ‘Eminem’. And I’m like ‘Eminem? Who’s that? Is that the food?!’

The conditions that led to this particular discovery for Dez were still remarkably vivid, as he was able to remember some five years later what had happened. As highlighted by Nowak’s concept of discoveries, social structures and networks are essential in the music discovery process. In this instance, it was Dez’s close relationship with his mother that led to his epiphany. Nowak stresses that epiphanies occur when the individual is able to recollect the scenario in which the revelation took place (2016, p. 143). For all participants, these epiphanies led to shaping the eventual style and genre they pursued as a musician. They also present a complex intertwinement showcasing the various ways these social networks, and in the case of Dez and Julia, who I will introduce below, parents and close friends, play in shaping these practices.

For Julia, the discovery leading to her own musical epiphany was hearing American popular blues rock artist John Mayer. Julia’s collaborator Stuart passed on Mayer’s third album ‘Continuum’ (2006), recommending that Julia listen to it. Julia recalls: *‘I listened to it and I pretty much, like, cried!’* At this point, Julia had been playing guitar for a year but had not necessarily considered a future in writing songs and performing. Although she suggested that admitting to liking Mayer was a little embarrassing, she acknowledged how determined it made her feel to pursue writing her own music and performing live. Part of this determination also resulted from watching Mayer’s ‘Where The Light Is’ live DVD (Franscoviak, Mayer & Jordan 2008):

Chapter Four – Narrating the Self Through Music

I remember I was just like sitting in my lounge room watching it on Blu-ray and I just, I was just kind of like, Mum came home from work or something and I was just like 'Mum', like, 'you have to watch this! Like, this is changing my life right now'. And she was like 'ok, it's just a concert!' But I just remember feeling like so...determined that I was going to do this and I was going to play for people and yeah'

As Julia recollected the situation, she was able to tell me, in vivid detail, the scenario that led to this epiphany. The decision to call her mother in an attempt to convince her of the power Julia felt whilst watching the DVD emphasises the meaning Julia had attached to the experience. Julia later experienced similar epiphanies in a live context whilst watching the English rock band Coldplay, further cementing her desire to pursue live performance as a key aspect of her practice.

Other participants also had epiphanic moments which went on to strongly inform their music-making practices. For both Dani and Ryan, epiphanies were not simply related to a realisation that they needed to write songs and perform. For both of these participants, their individual epiphanies, sparked by particular artist discoveries, led to the realisation that young people 'like them' could also write and perform their own music. For Dani and Ryan, the 'queer' outlooks (De Boise 2014; Peters 2010; Taylor 2012) of some bands afforded them the capacity to see music-making as something in which they too could participate. For Ryan, these bands included Panic! At The Disco, Fall Out Boy and, Porcelain and The Tramps. For Dani, they also included Panic! At The Disco, as well as Gossip, Placebo, The Cure and, Manic Street Preachers. Dani spoke in great detail about listening to the British rock band The Cure, telling me that *'the detail and delicacy of a lot of their music'* was something he hoped to be able to emulate at some point. The lead singer of that act, Robert Smith, *'is a man who is cute and sweet and playful'*, which for Dani allayed some fears he himself had of presenting differently. The knowledge that the lead singer of a band he had listened to *'a lot of...between 2010 and 2012'* presented in a way that was different to the traditional masculine ideals of rock music not only meant Dani felt included, but also that he could be accepted for who he really was:

Chapter Four – Narrating the Self Through Music

‘...this is an ok thing to be, this is someone who has achieved things that you admire, and someone that you admire who is also ‘this’, so you’re allowed to be this! [laughs] And again, it sounds ridiculous, but that’s the way that it is.’

As has been argued throughout this thesis, music creates spaces where young musicians can construct a sense of self. These constructions often involve processes of self-disclosure. With the advent of the post-subcultural turn (Bennett 2011), young people now have access to multiple sites of identity construction (Furlong & Cartmel 2006, p. 60) and are more likely to pick and choose from a range of different musical styles and genres. As a result, there is a tendency for these attachments to overlap and bleed into each other, producing often blurred and ever-evolving identity markers. For Mark, hip-hop, and the various components embedded within his music-making practice, allowed for a staggered multi-stage development of his biography marked by various cultural signifiers. Epiphanies often occurred as a result of engagement with these cultural signifiers. For Mark, epiphany struck with the realisation that not only was music an emotionally resonant form, but was also something that he could do:

‘Yeah, you know, when I started out I didn’t think I was amazing, but you know, seeing these guys and yeah, sometimes you’d hear a record and you’d be like ‘that’s not that hard to make man! You know, I could do that!’ So it’s sort that, like ‘I could do that shit’ [looks confident and smiles].’

Eminem was Mark’s introduction to the world of hip-hop. Growing up with a musical father, Mark’s approach to listening and consuming music was different, however. *‘I sort of worked my way backwards’* Mark told me, *‘instead of, umm, just sticking to what was popular at the time’*. From Eminem’s record, Mark discovered the work of producer Dr Dre. From listening to Dr Dre’s records, he found himself asking, *‘How is he making these songs?’*, before elaborating:

‘You know, it’s based on all these old funk records, soul records, Donny Hathaway, Parliament and all that. And I was like, ‘this shit’s crazy! You know?’

For Mark, these epiphanies were less marked out than for other participants, as the idea of making music was encouraged from an early age. Mark still remembered the hip-hop records that made him consider making his own music, however:

I was thinking about this the other day – there are like three records that really got me into the idea of sampling and making music. They were Wu-Tang’s first album²⁹, Chronic 2001 by Dr Dre³⁰ and Donuts by J-Dilla³¹. Like, they’d be the three that got me interested in not just listening to rap but actually making, you know, looking for samples.’

These epiphanies were clearly seminal in ‘shaping’ and ‘influencing’ the practices of the young musicians participating in this work. Through the consumption of records, participants were able to explore the practices of the artists behind them. Epiphanies operated as significant ‘turning points’ where participants were able to imagine themselves as music-makers after hearing a piece of music for the first time. It is here where I turn to another aspect of Nowak’s theory of ‘discovery’, that of rediscoveries, which involves a memorable reaction when listening to already known music.

4.1.2 Rediscoveries

The notion of rediscoveries also permeated the listening practices of participants. According to Nowak, rediscoveries involve ‘interpreting known content in a different fashion’ (2016, p. 143). For participants, this reinterpretation of music, dependent upon the context, can instil a sense of affirmation in their practice. Not all participants spoke of rediscovering music they had consumed at an earlier point. However, for those who did, not only was it nostalgic (see DeNora 2004, 1999, 1986), it also contributed to the development of their music-making practice. In addition to providing participants with an added confidence in their practice, rediscoveries also

²⁹ Wu-Tang Clan 1993

³⁰ The official title of the album is ‘2001’ (Dr Dre 1999), however is the follow up to Dr Dre’s first album The Chronic (Dr Dre 1992)

³¹ J Dilla 2006

afforded participants the opportunity to pinpoint a sense of original, helping them mark out their own musical biography.

Four of the five musicians recalled their parents' record collections as having an impact upon their later musical biographies. These early memories were often the first musical memories participants recalled, as exemplified by Mark's story. In Mark's eclectic approach to hip-hop and music-making, the diverse range of artists he listened to as a child including The Beatles, Stevie Wonder and Jimi Hendrix informed his practice. As I explore further in Chapter Five, Mark actively drew upon the music of his childhood in the sampling practices that underpinned his music-making. The notion of rediscovery was not simply limited to specific artists. For some participants, it was the rediscovery of a genre, especially genres that were contemporary representations of genres they listened to as children. For Julia, the recent discoveries of contemporary folk artists like Ben Howard as well as First Aid Kit and Angus and Julia Stone built from the '*folk, mellow vibe*' of artists like Norah Jones, Diana Krall and James Taylor that she listened to as a child. These newer artists acted as rediscoveries, affording her opportunities to revisit a genre of music that, at the time of the interview, took on more meaning and had directly influenced her own practice.

There were some experiences where the concept of rediscovery recalled more than just music. For Dez, listening to the music he was exposed to as a child did not directly elicit the qualities inherent within rediscoveries. The traditional Turkish music that his Grandfather played him as a child was not necessarily 'memorable' and did not lead to 'affective responses' or 'leave a mark' (Nowak 2016, p. 142) later on in his life. However, the experience of listening was steeped deep within the social contexts of the time. Music operated as a soundtrack for all participants, and for Dez, this soundtrack held a close relationship with family. This kind of nostalgic agency of music recalls the aforementioned work done by Tia DeNora (2004, 1999, 1986) who suggests that

music acts as a means of organising thoughts, and often affective reactions. For Dez, and for other participants, music afforded access to remembering the social and familial associated with specific music.

In addition to this nostalgic agency, re-listening to music that participants heard as a child or teenager helped reinforce a sense of self. In the case of Ryan, returning to artists that were popular during his teenage years gave him confidence in his current practice. For example, he would often speak about the role Australian music television show ‘Rage’ played in his early listening practices:

I think because I was so different to everyone by the time I was like 10 I think, that was probably it, I was listening to mostly mainstream pop up till that point and anything that was on Rage. So, I had kind of a good understanding of, like, Australian rock. So, Living End and stuff were sort of around then doing stuff – that was kind of cool.’

It was also during this time where Ryan discovered the band Hole and the band’s frontwoman, Courtney Love. ‘I just remember listening to Hole, when I was like ten years old and it was on Rage,’ he told me. It was Love herself, however, that initially sparked an interest: ‘I was like ‘this girl is really cool!’’. Ryan found himself often revisiting bands he listened to as a teenager. When I sat down with him for the fieldwork, he would reference the work of Courtney Love as well as ‘a lot of grunge, nineties stuff’ continuously. These listening practices could be clearly heard in the music that he and his band created. Ryan himself suggested:

I always feel like it’s umm, the three like defining genres that like, control it are garage rock, punk and grunge, umm, and we’re also like a mix of pop.’

Ryan’s discovery and rediscovery of grunge acts and ‘Australian rock’ helped affirm his own music-making practice. Through these new contexts, he was able to add new dimensions to how he interpreted these rediscoveries. These interpretations also impacted his own music-making practice. For all participants, discovery practices – particularly epiphanies and rediscoveries –

resulted in significant and contextual meanings associated with specific musicians and genres. When engaging in music-making, participants called upon these contexts to shape and inform their own practice.

4.2 Musical Biographies and Fandom

In an interview conducted for the online music magazine Pitchfork, prominent music journalist and essayist Jessica Hopper spoke to Carrie Brownstein, singer and guitarist of the ‘riot grrrl’ band, Sleater Kinney. During the interview, conversation turned to the topic of how fandom shapes one’s sense of identity and belonging.

‘...When I was young, being a fan allowed me to feel seen at a time when I felt very small. I did not feel seen by the family that I was growing up in, and fandom allowed me to posit myself in a situation where I felt seen because of the love I was projecting out. You know, it’s so much more about having a conduit, you know, through which to love than actually to be loved. So, you know, so expressing that love and feeling like it was already giving me something in return which was that it was making me feel alive and I- it allowed me to have certain feelings and just allowed me to kind of process the confusion of my life. Like, I felt a stability that I felt I hadn’t really felt. Umm, also there’s a sense, later, of just community, so that you coalesce with basically other lovers, you know, lovers of this entity, you know, whether it’s in this case music. And through that, you know, you feel a shared wonder, and I think that’s a really beautiful feeling. It’s kind of like being held. And so, I think through that, it then, at some point I also wanted to be a participant in terms of actually playing but for a while, and still, I think fandom is something that I hold in a very sacred place. Because it always feels like an incessant curiosity and a desire to understand and a desire to connect either with the piece itself or with the other people that are experiencing the same sense of affection’ (Pitchfork 2015).

There is some conjecture in the academic literature as to how to define fandom. Fandom has been treated as a facile object of study over time, with it often being ‘delegitimised’ (Lewis 1992, p. 2)³². Fandom has also been described as a pathology, leading to specific moral panics tied up in excessive consumption practices. In opening his text, ‘Fans: The Mirror of Consumption’ (2005), Sandvoss introduces the song ‘Stan’ by American rapper, Eminem (2000). The song itself reads as an aggressive satire of the moral panic surrounding fandom, with the protagonist in the song, Stan, killing his wife and child because his favourite rapper Eminem would not reply to his fan mail³³. Sandvoss goes on to dispel this panic myth in his text, suggesting that this panic is simply an overreaction to ‘fears over media effects on to the imagined ‘Other’ of psychologically and socially inept fans’ (2005, p. 2). Fandom has, in the news media at least, been met with varying degrees of hesitancy, as well as moral panic.

As such, even within popular music studies and fandom studies, there appears to be little agreement on exactly what constitutes fandom³⁴. For the purpose of this section, I incorporate explanations from both Henry Jenkins (2003, 2006; Jenkins et al. 2009) and Mark Duffett (2013a, 2013b). Both Jenkins and Duffett situate definitions of fandom deeply within the social contexts in which they often arise. I use Duffett’s definition of a fan as someone who is ‘a self-identified enthusiast, devotee or follower of a particular media genre, text, person or activity’ (Duffett 2013b, p. 293). Fandom involves:

‘a fascination with music, various romantic and folk ideologies, an emphasis on the star system, a tendency of fans to form social communities, to pursue shared concerns, and to follow characteristic practices’ (Duffett 2013a, p. 21).

³² An example of this is Shuker who casts a distinction between between “serious’ devotees or *aficionados* of particular musical styles or performers’ and ‘teenyboppers’ (Shuker 2013, p. 213).

³³ Since the song’s release in 2000, ‘stan’ is now used to describe avid fandom, that which tends to be obsessive (see genius.com/discussions/131735-Whats-the-difference-between-a-fan-and-a-stan)

³⁴ Lisa A Lewis devotes the opening three chapters of her edited collection ‘Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media’ (Lewis 1992) to this task of defining fandom.

Jenkins argues that fandom can be defined ‘by its refusal of mundane values and practices, its celebration of deeply held emotions and passionately embraced pleasures’ (Jenkins 2003, p. 289). Here I would like to add that fandom not only incorporates a shared experience between fans, but it also, in less direct ways, incorporates a shared experience between the artist and the fan. Participating in fandom allows young people ‘to be seen’ and facilitates moments of self-realisation in having access to different ways of being. In the following section I call upon both scholars’ work and situate their contentions within the context of the fandom practices of my own participants.

The musical epiphanies that participants experienced often led to participation in fandom. As alluded to earlier, Dez’s epiphanic moment when he heard Eminem for the first time also inspired his fandom. A knowledge and admiration of Eminem as well as other artists proved key to Dez’s ability to comprehend and process particular situations he had faced. As illustrated by the interview with Carrie Brownstein, fandom involves a fanatical intake of knowledge and facts to do with the artist. Dez consistently mentioned Eminem during interviews for this project, clearly admiring how Eminem explores his own life through his lyrics as well as the technical dexterity showcased on his later releases. He was also quick to tell me about the American rapper Kendrick Lamar – *‘this guy’s sober – he doesn’t do any drugs and he’s all good. And like this guy’s got the sickest flow ever man’*. For all participants, fandom provided a sense of camaraderie, a joining together of people in a community that centred around a love of a particular artist. Through engaging with other fans and the subsequent immersion in the specific music cultures, participants narrated how they had developed a sense of self that was forged in the culture, community and language of fandom.

Although fandom is key to shaping young people’s own musical biographies, there appears to be little literature that directly deals with the link between young people’s participation in music

cultures and fandom itself. As Duffett posits, ‘fandom is a link between that ordinary, mundane world and somewhere else’ (2013a, p. 7) and although he acknowledges the supposed facile focus on celebrating stars and commercial culture, he argues that fandom in fact challenges these assumptions:

‘Indeed, pop fandom tends to suggest that music appreciation, music making and stardom can be closely interlinked, and that the mundane and democratic can occur *within the world of culture and meaning established by icons* and their genres, myths and legends. Even if popular music studies needed to reject the most obviously commercial culture in order to claim its full academic credentials, for many of us, pop’s superstars—from the Beatles to Lady Gaga—remain a *lingua franca*.’ (Duffett 2013a, p. 7, original emphasis)

These practices were often mediated through technology, with all participants citing the role television, radio, streaming services and social media played in both the discovery of music and the resulting fandom. Technology’s impact on these participatory practices inherent within fandom also suggests a democratisation (Duffett 2013a, p. 21). Technology has made fandom visible, and via the opportunities the myriad different networks and digital means of connection afford, the act of participating in fandom becomes more accessible than before.

In participating in fandom, young people are granted access to a community of others, likeminded both in their devotion to similar artists and genres as well as potentially in personal biographies. This sense of camaraderie between young people, especially those with experiences of vulnerability, is fundamental in the development of an understanding of self and in the development of resilience, as it calls upon the supportive and collective resources needed to adapt and succeed when faced with new situations. Devotion to particular musicians and genres does not merely suggest an inspiring mobilisation of fans (Duffett 2013a). It also speaks to a fan’s connection to those ‘other people that are experiencing the same sense of affection’

(Pitchfork 2015). Much can be said about the effect these fandoms have on participants' sense of self and connectivity.

As I detail below, the objects of fandom afforded participants access to guides and support as to how to best live their lives as well as fostering conceptions of trajectories and upward social mobility. My research acknowledges the importance of popular music studies looking into the role particular popular music stars and popular music in general plays in shaping fandom.

Through this, I contend that in participating in fandom, young musicians are able to focus on how these knowledges impact upon their own lives and afford processes of self-disclosure. The 'object of fandom' - the artist themselves, as well as the text produced (Duffett 2013b, p. 297) – 'is intrinsically interwoven with our sense of self, with who we are, would like to be, and think we are' (Sandvoss 2005, p. 96). As I outline below, for my participants, participating in fandom impacted upon their sense of self, especially those that looked towards particular artists or genres to find meaning.

4.2.1 Readymade, Accessible Fan Cultures

In accessing fan cultures, participants had distinct ways of identifying with key aspects of said cultures. This was, in part, due to the relationship between their object of fandom and the genre of music the participant created. It also, to varying degrees, however, depended upon the participant's own personal story. Music offered access to an aspirational status for all participants, however it was most pronounced in Dez. For Dez, hip-hop allowed for an association with style and a way of communicating that felt direct. The culture and support network that came with this association allowed for him to build his confidence. The traditional social mobility narrative that hip-hop and rap music propagates (Smith 2003) gave Dez access to a constructive personal narrative.

Dez strongly believed in the ‘rags-to-riches’ story of social mobility that was central to hip-hop. It offered an aspirational trajectory for Dez. Identifying strongly with these ‘rags-to-riches’ stories (Smith 2003, p. 80) prominent in many hip-hop artists narratives, the language and associated culture afforded to Dez meant that he was able to develop his own sense of self and individuality through drawing upon different elements made available to him. Hip-hop culture, in particular, plays into this notion of social mobility for many artists - this image of the hip-hop mogul as an aspirational, socially mobile figure provides a particular role model for many emerging and young artists (Smith 2003). Participating in hip-hop fandom for Dez afforded an articulation of self and the opportunity to better understand his own experience and strive to become a better individual. For both Mark and Dez, hip-hop offered a ready-made, fully developed culture they could step into, accessing the resources that the culture afforded. In unpacking his favourite records, Mark was able to practise fandom through engaging with his own musical biography via his sampling practice. Hip-hop as a genre offered a very tangible and immediate form of creative expression³⁵.

The gender of artists also impacted on how participants practised their fandom. Dez was drawn to male hip-hop artists. This was in part due to Dez’s own gender and the style of music he made. As a genre, hip-hop is limited in this respect – heteronormative productions of gender, with specific focus on the male gender are favoured and privileged within hip-hop (Lane 2011, pp. 775–776)³⁶. For both Ryan and Dani, identification and attachment to artists who did not present a heteronormative masculinity enabled a feeling of connection. It was clear that because of their own experiences with both gender and sexuality, the non-masculine voices as presented

³⁵ It should be pointed out, however, that similar romanticisms were attached to other forms of popular music during the sixties (Faulk 2016) and seventies (Widgery 1986).

³⁶ There are significant pockets within the hip-hop community that support and nurture female artists as well as smaller but equally as significant pockets supporting gender queer artists, such as bounce culture (See Miller 2012) and ballroom culture (See Bailey 2013).

via their favourite artists meant that they were both able to access music as a means of understanding self.

Through the time spent with Ryan, it was clear he felt a natural affinity with strong female voices. Ryan presented this initially with some practical reasoning:

I'm really getting back into No Doubt again, like crazy how it's worked out gain. Umm, I listen to a lot of female singers as well because I have quite a high voice, and, umm, it's just something I've always identified with'

He followed this up, however, with qualification. Ryan's assessment of his voice was correct – he did sing in higher registers. Jennex argues that for gay men, the female vocalist acts as a 'primary locus of investment' (2013, p. 353). In a discussion of 'queer listening to queer vocal timbres', Bonenfant suggests that for those who identify as queer, listening practices involve '(reaching toward) voices that we think will gratify us' (2010, p. 77). Whilst accessing a voice that resonated with Ryan's own queer identity was clearly important, his participation within fandom involved more than simply identifying with vocal range and timbre. Ryan's later comments further accentuated the fandom he had developed, predominantly around female fronted bands:

I think having role models like that [who use] more lyrical content about the lyric writer's life. So, I really like, umm, Beth Ditto from the Gossip. She's had a similar sort of story to me. Not quite as – mine's not as dramatic as hers at all, but [laughs], like other musicians who have, like, a similar life to me is where I get lyrical inspiration from'.

Identifying with a musician's personal story in addition to their voice and lyrical content allowed Ryan access to stories just like his own. And it was female artists and their perspectives who resonated with Ryan, via their voice, lyrics and personal story. This practical nature, a trait he acknowledged himself, was largely responsible for him becoming a fan of an artist like Marina and the Diamonds, the solo project of Welsh pop singer-songwriter Marina Diamandis. Ryan was quick to tell me about the role Diamandis's first album entitled 'The Family Jewels' (2010)

played. As the conversation moved towards a discussion around listening practices shaping making practices, Ryan suggested that it has been a slow process. However, when he was first starting out, Diamandis was a big inspiration.

'Do you know Marina and The Diamonds?' Ryan quickly asked me, clearly interested in telling me about her. *'Yeab'* I said. Ryan continued:

'She's, like, a Welsh pop singer...I remember, umm, it was like first year uni and I was still, like, finding out, like, what music I liked and what I was going to do with life and whatever, and umm, her whole first record was just about, like, finding who she was musically and going and doing it.'

This strong connection with Diamandis meant that Ryan further investigated her and the music she made. He did this particularly through reading interviews³⁷ with her, again immersing himself in more than just the artist or the songs. Participating in Marina and The Diamonds fandom provided Ryan with a sense of purpose, through identifying with the life narrative of Diamandis herself:

'...and I love her backstory. Because she says she didn't start making music until like 22 and everyone was like 'oh, you make music? Like I didn't know you make music' And she was like, 'Yeab, I do' and now she's like a pop sensation'

Ryan's 'fannish' actions were largely lead by an interest in the personal narrative of an artist. It was this personal narrative, however, that in conjunction with his music-listening and consumption choices suggested an exploration of self and personal vulnerability.

Whereas for a participant like hip-hop producer Mark, it was almost exclusively the text that determined his fandom, for both Ryan and Dani a great deal of their fandom was drawn from

³⁷ Many interviews were published online during Diamandis's popularity (See Nialler 9 2009)

‘objects’ in the broader sense³⁸ (Duffett 2013b, p. 297) and not just the text itself. When the conversation turned to performance and playing music in a live setting, these artists played a key role in shaping how Ryan presented on stage with a focus on injecting his own masculinity back into the femininity that he drew from:

I really, really dig Jen from Tonight Alive. Umm, I think her whole like dress and her ethics on life – I think she’s a great person and is a perfect front woman. Umm, I also noticed as well that a lot of female performers will wear shorts on stage whereas it’s kind of taboo for men to show their legs on stage unless they’re in a hardcore thing. Umm, so I’ve made a point of wearing the shortest shorts I can find on stage, just to make everyone pay attention. Umm, and it feels really good. I love it. I love wearing shorts in my normal time so I’m like well everyone can deal with this! [laughs] Umm, what else? There’s a few others. The whole- I think like Polar Bear Club and Be Your Own Pet, so Jemina Pearl and umm that sort of, like, rock’n’roll look is kind of cool. And I think I like to make it look like you’d see a bunch of guys playing, but like more feminine because I’m...that’s who I am.’

For both Ryan and Dani in particular, their musical tastes often traversed the boundaries of specific musical style or genre. For Dani, music, and fandom in particular played a pivotal role in being able to articulate experience. He informed me of his deep love for Welsh band Manic Street Preachers. This fandom was an ongoing project however, taking until Dani was 21 for his fandom to permeate deeply enough into his own actions. ‘It was through the Manics and through the death of one of my friends that I finally turned around and went alright I have to, like, actually act on these feelings that I’m feeling’ he told me over Skype during our first interview. Dani went on to tell how gender, and in particular non-binary and androgynous representations of gender, impacted upon his own ideas of self. He elaborated:

I think it was in my Placebo phase that I started to explore, sort of, gender, and alternate genders through the internet. But it’s only been the last three years that I’ve actually taken steps to change my appearance and my body to something that I’m more comfortable with. And it’s made a huge

³⁸ Object in the context of fandom studies refers to ‘the specific person or text attracting a fan’ (Duffett 2013, p. 297). According to Duffett, ‘object’ in this context is derived from attachment theory as prominent within psychology scholarship.

Chapter Four – Narrating the Self Through Music

difference in my life I guess. Although I am much more attracted to the idea of Richey Edwards who is like the main mouthpiece for the Manics, or was, there's definitely an aspect to, which, like Nicky Wire – he's a transvestite/crossdresser. He's written a couple of songs of feeling womanly or feeling feminine as well. And, so, on the idea of challenging that and challenging his audiences by doing that, the revolutionary aspect of violating gender norms which I find really attractive as an idea and something that I could easily engage with.'

Participating in these fan cultures performed multiple functions for Dani. Not only did it allow for a sense of connection with an artist, it also helped Dani, and other participants, articulate their own personal experience, using the language made available through the distinct objects of fandom. Listening and participating in fandom around bands such as Placebo and Manic Street Preachers gave Dani the opportunity to directly engage with his in vulnerability, giving him access to potential narratives for himself. In the case of Ryan and Dani, participation in fandom allowed an engagement with notions of gender and sexuality. Similarly, for Dez, his participation in hip-hop was in relation to gender, albeit in a far less direct manner.

It is useful here to see the ways in which participation in fandom builds from Nowak's conception of 'epiphanies' (2016, p. 142). With epiphanies acting as turning points in these young musicians listening and making practices, fandom acts as a means of stepping into these epiphanic moments, with participants exploring themselves and engaging in process of self-disclosure through the object of their fandom. Both musical discovery scholarship and fandom studies very much emphasise the 'object' (Duffett 2013b, p. 297) itself as a calling card for collectivity. The cultural product and its maker is a key focus of this literature and one that I adopt in spotlighting the importance of musical biographies in the lives of young musicians who have experiences of vulnerability.

4.3 (Post)Subcultures

In conceptualising these broad collective movements as centred around specific genres or styles, the following also calls upon an existing body of literature, that although not focusing on the ‘object’, still sets specific groundwork for how and why young people attach themselves and associate with genres and styles. This subcultures scholarship (see Bennett 1999; Cohen 2002; Hall & Jefferson 2006) has a long and extensive history in framing youth experience. The following section explores the role various theoretical moves subcultural studies has taken. It also illuminates how, through a post-subcultural lens, such scholarship affords effective ways of understanding how young musicians participate in music cultures. In doing so, this section also documents the failings of the scholarship, and how the aforementioned discovery and fandom literature help to complement the subcultures framework. As the previous sections have discussed, the social contexts in which practices like fandom and musical discovery occur intertwine with these individual acts.

The most influential sub-cultural scholarship emerged in the 1970s, produced through the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)(see Cohen 2002; Hall & Jefferson 2006). The concept of subcultures, can be defined as ‘smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks’ (Clarke et al. 2006, p. 13). According to this initial work from the CCCS, subcultures are typically linked to those young people who come from either lower or middle-class backgrounds and are commonly seen as a reaction to dominant mainstream culture. This reaction is manifested through particular activities, beliefs and values, language, artefacts and physical spaces. Whilst subcultures have boundaries, there is little preventing a young person from moving into or out of particular subcultures or even identifying with more than one subculture at the same time. This fluid

attachment to subcultures is all the more prominent through access to communication technology (Bennett 2014, pp. 95–96, 2004b, p. 163).

As engagement with music cultures continued to evolve, the term subcultures grew to be contradictory (Bennett 1999). According to Bennett, this was due to the fact that the term had lost its original meaning as describing a population of young people who were reacting to political oppression. Increasingly too, using subcultures as an accurate framework for understanding populations of young people became an issue of measurability. It became difficult to empirically categorise the division between what was deemed the mainstream and what was deemed a ‘subculture’. Bennett suggests that what were initially dubbed as ‘subcultures’ by the CCCS were instead good examples of ‘unstable and shifting cultural affiliations which characterise late modern consumer-based societies’ (Bennett 1999, p. 605).

As a result of this initial critique, new approaches building upon the initial subcultural research have come about. Appropriating Maffesoli’s original concept of ‘tribes’, neo-tribes is positioned as a potential solution (Bennett 2005, 1999), offering a chance to theoretically frame the way in which young people’s preferences in music and style change and remain fluid over time. The neo-tribes approach details a ‘certain state of ambience, a state of mind’ (Maffesoli, 1996, as cited in Bennett 1999, p. 605) and is expressed through appearance and form. Using this, Bennett contends that a neo-tribes approach is better suited to looking at youth culture, as opposed to the subculture approach, due to the fact that a young person’s identity is more likely to exhibit a form of ‘late modern sociality’ (Bennett 1999, p. 599) and be fluid in nature. Such a framework affords an accurate portrayal of young people’s attachment to culture, especially as it acknowledges young people’s own agency in being able to pick and choose aspects of culture that work for them. However, the neo-tribes perspective does not factor in the specifics of music itself as a cultural form.

From the neo-tribes perspective grew a more specific approach, the ‘scenes’ perspective (Bennett 2004a). This approach positioned music as the focal point for attachment. Bennett’s initial understanding of ‘scene’ as an analytical tool stems from Straw’s original definition of a scene as ‘actualiz[ing] a particular state of relations between various populations and social groups, as these coalesce around specific coalitions of musical style’ (Straw 1991, p. 379). The strength of the scenes perspective as an analytical tool is that it not only addresses music consumers, but also music-makers. Its strength lies in looking at how both consumers and makers interact and inform each other’s practices. Bennett also contends that unlike earlier iterations of the scene perspective (Straw suggested two categories: local and trans-local), analysis of music production and consumption occurs within three mediated contexts: local, trans-local, and virtual.

This ‘post-subcultural turn’ has resulted in a range of new conceptual approaches (Bennett 2011). Both the neo-tribes and scenes perspectives go some way to providing a better understanding of the role music and resulting community plays in young people’s attachment to particular genres of music or artists. Both perspectives provide a comprehensive overview through which to understand the structural reasons individuals group together. They also identify that that members of multiple classes make up the demographics of these collections of individuals. Though the reasons for these attachments have evolved, moving from overtly political acts of resistance to less direct, political and nuanced modes of participation, the literature does help understand the ways broader social and structural concerns influence young people’s participation in music cultures.

However, the tendency to cast populations of young people into broad categories leads to key criticisms. The first, as Bennett suggests, is that both the scenes and the neo-tribes perspectives tend to wash over any of the structural inequalities including gender, sexuality, and race that may

affect a young person's participation with a particular style or genre (Bennett 2011, p. 494).

Bennett also argues that due to the different conceptual approaches that have arisen within the post-subcultural framework, the notion of post-subculture has become fragmented. I suggest that the tendency to want to label and categorise collections of young people overrides the specific attachments of the individual themselves. Young people's attachments to musical *genres* (as opposed to the singular genre) are fluid and more complicated and complex than even both the parameters of 'scenes' and 'neo-tribes' allow for. As I have detailed in this chapter, attachments to musical genres also intersect with the subjective navigation of personal vulnerability.

Importantly, Bennett argues that:

‘Although post-subcultural theory has presented credible arguments as to how and why the collective cultural affiliations of youth can be seen as changing in ways that embrace new, more fluid and interchangeable dimensions, little data exist to suggest what kinds of collectively endorsed aesthetic, cultural and other lifestyle discourse and practices inform these’ (Bennett 2011, pp. 503–504).

I extend Bennett's point here, in suggesting that similar to Frith's call for a focus on the 'actual people who write songs (and) who are symbolic creators' (1992 p. 184), greater focus needs to be placed on the actual practices that inform these attachments to music cultures.

As Bennett also points out elsewhere, a great deal of the discussion around subcultures has largely been bereft of music itself (Bennett 2004a). For my own participants, the aesthetic and cultural practice of music itself was the motivation behind how they attached themselves to these loosely formed cultural collectives. Both the music discovery scholarship and the fandom studies literature add rigorous theoretical underpinning to the substantial subcultural research. As outlined in both this chapter and the Participant Profiles: Musical Trajectories section, the ways

my own participants engaged in music cultures follows a post-subcultural approach, incorporating fluid and temporal practices (Bennett 2011, 1999; Muggleton 2000). These post-structural ideas situated around attachments to genres of music and artists assist in better describing young people's movements between styles as well as suggesting a political underpinning for these choices.

As the aforementioned accounts from Ryan suggest, the parameters of genre and style often played less of a role, meaning that his participation in music could traverse the confines of specific genres and styles. This fluid and post-subculturalist approach to understanding young musicians' participation in music cultures allows access to a wider range of music in which to pull from and be influenced by. The post-subcultural perspective is useful here in contextualising attachment to genres of music and artists. These practices are deeply political acts, although are far more personal than the original social and economic forces at play during the sub-cultural movement of 1970's Britain. As evidenced in earlier parts of this chapter, participants not only consumed music for aesthetic reasons, they did so also as a means of navigating and articulating personal vulnerabilities. With the neo-liberal project forcing upon vulnerable young people a resilience or peril attitude (Evans & Reid 2014), a post-subcultural understanding provides room for young people to enact resilient musician identities when faced with different situations.

Although heavily critiqued (Bennett 2011; Blackman 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2005), 'post-subculture' as a conceptual framework for understanding young people's participation in music cultures has proven fruitful to my own research. In doing so, I reframe and ultimately give weight back to this 'post-subcultural' turn. I argue that in the lives of young musicians with experiences of vulnerability, identities heavily rely on fluid and temporal associations with cultural forms and the communities that emerge around them. These 'temporal', 'multiple' and 'fluid' forms of attachment are built upon long standing and developing biographies. For

participants, notions of epiphanies and rediscoveries underscore the meaningful attachments to specific artists or genres. I also argue that this ‘post-subcultural turn’ in fact validates notions of resistance prevalent amongst young people as it speaks to the ways in which young people access and gather information in the modern digital age. As covered in Chapter Three, and as supported by recent work (McCourt & Zuberi 2016; Nowak 2016; Pearson 2010), digital technology deeply permeates through these practices, assisting in discovery, fandom, as well as participation in multiple music sub-cultures. The young musicians participating in this research find reassurance in having the ability to pick and choose – to ‘sample’ - aspects of culture that work for them. These music-listening and participatory practices also inform young musicians’ own music-making practices.

4.4 Introducing ‘Social Authorship’

In this thesis, I shift the focus towards unpacking how musical biographies, including musical discoveries, fandom, and sub-cultural participation influence the music-making practices of young musicians. The multiple ‘fields’ of music (to borrow from Bourdieu) made accessible to my participants informed and shaped the habitus utilised in their practice. Bourdieu’s claim was that an individual’s education, knowledge and experience with a particular cultural text increases the likelihood that said individual will more actively engage with a cultural text and derive some enjoyment and benefit from doing so (Bourdieu 1984, p. 5). The cultural capital acquired through these listening and participatory practices equips participants with specific and multiple knowledges that then shape their making practice. This section utilises Toynbee’s theoretical approach of ‘social authorship’ (2000) as a means of capturing how these biographies operate in dialogue with the processes of self-disclosure that emerge through participants music-making practices. The purpose of this section and the is to ask how the musical biographies of

participants as established in this chapter are drawn upon in young musicians' own music-making³⁹.

A social author, according to Toynbee:

‘...stands at the centre of a radius of creativity, but the range and scale of voices available to her/him/them will always be strongly determined by the compass and position of the radius on the musical field’ (2000, p. 46).

Toynbee asserts that social authorship works by calling upon and reconstructing a selection of ‘symbolic materials from a historically deposited common stock’ (2001, p. 3). Social authorship calls upon the Bourdieuean concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘field’ (Toynbee 2000, p. 36). Habitus, in referring to modes of cultural production suggests a subjectivity in practice (Bourdieu 1984). In relation to music production, the role of habitus holds ‘a principle of invention produced by history but relatively detached from history: its dispositions are durable, which leads to all sorts of effects of hysteresis’ (Bourdieu 1993, p. 87). Within the context of music-making, habitus can be defined by ‘the way it disposes musician-agents to play, write, record or perform in a particular way’ (Toynbee 2000, p. 36).

In building from this theoretical starting point, this thesis advances a socio-cultural approach to understanding music-making practices of young musicians. As I have outlined in both this chapter and in Chapter Five, the practice of music-making occurs through a personal lens that is embedded deeply within social and community-based practices. In contrast to Barthes’ original contention of the death of the author (Barthes 1976)⁴⁰, the author, or musician are in fact skilled

³⁹ In Chapter Five, I draw this link out further.

⁴⁰ Barthes’ essay, ‘The Death of The Author’ (1976) explores in detail the specific value placed upon the ‘author’ of a piece of creative work, arguing that it is the text itself that allows for interpretation, not the author (Barthes 1976, p. 142). It is the text that allows readers to see a mythology, a romanticism, and an expansiveness in possible voices (Barthes 1976, p. 147). There is great value in the text itself, and as I introduce in Chapter Five, the prospect of audience being able to interpret the next in new ways becomes one of the many reasons young musicians engage in practice. Barthes’ contention, however, that ‘the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author’ (1976, p. 148), fails to consider the impact phenomena like fandom plays in the relationship between the music-maker and audience. The text does hold specific value in this relationship. It is impossible, however, to remove the author from this relationship. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, the author imbues particular meanings and experiences into the music itself. The text is an object of the author.

Chapter Four – Narrating the Self Through Music

practitioners calling upon various cultural texts, or as Toynbee refers to them - musical fields (2000, p. 46), as well as other influences (both personal and cultural) to create texts that open themselves up to multiple and possible voices. As this chapter has showcased, young musicians' musical biographies assisted greatly in the development of their own skills and knowledge in music-making.

The concept of social authorship involves three key elements of creative practice. Toynbee refers to the importance of the text, as well as the audience in this relationship. He also points to the critical role of the musician themselves:

‘We can agree that the musical text is an amalgam of possibilities - possible voices, that it is, from the field of musical works. But on the other hand, we still have the social necessity of organization - the putting together of voices with aesthetic intent’ (2000, p. 46).

The skilled practitioner is able to ‘organise’ music using, what Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin terms, ‘heteroglossia’. Heteroglossia, according to Bakhtin, refers to multiple ‘voices’ or different kinds of speech which are seen to co-exist and be in conflict with one another. A text itself may display ‘another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way’ (Bakhtin, Wright & Holquist 1981, p. 324). Such a concept is easily adapted across to the field of music-making. Within the context of social authorship, participants communicate these multiple voices through the aesthetics of song structures, choice in instrumentation, lyrics, and how each song sits in relation to their body of work. Examples of these can be found in Chapter Five.

The concept of habitus greatly shapes the subjective and unique approaches taken to music-making. The ‘field’ of music shapes how young musicians’ practices manifest and evolve, going some way to determine the sorts of practice young musicians engage in. According to Bourdieu, fields can be defined as ‘structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on

their position within these spaces and which can be analysed independently of the characteristics of their occupants (which are partly determined by them)' (1993, p. 72). Within the context of music, fields call upon specific laws and ways of doing things inherent within particular musical genres or styles (Toynbee 2001, p. 9, 2000, pp. 36–37). Music-making as a practice therefore utilises both habitus and field as musicians with particular knowledge and understandings engage within the boundaries and rules of particular genres to produce content that moves the genre or field forward.

In developing this notion of the social author, both habitus and field are vital:

[Bourdieu's] concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' provide for a fully social, yet highly articulated, account of cultural production, an account which shows how music-making is located both in its own particular domain and in larger social relations at one and the same time' (Toynbee 2000, p. 36).

In combining Toynbee's social authorship contention with a focus on the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia, this chapter focuses in on how the various fields of music participants engage in unfold through the skills involved in their music-making practices. As the final chapter explores in detail, social authorship is clearly on display in the ways in which participants actively engage in writing their own original music, calling upon a range of genres and artists and personal experience to shape their own unique practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focussed on the musical biographies of young musicians with experiences of vulnerability. In doing so, I refocus the existing discourse away from the categorical, top-down structural approaches to understanding how young musicians engage with music, and instead bring to the surface the detailed, nuanced musical biographies of young musicians. The

Chapter Four – Narrating the Self Through Music

role popular music plays in young people's processes of documenting and articulating self has long been a focus of youth studies (Lincoln 2005; DeNora 1999). Due to the ways music pervaded the everyday practices of my own participants, it is with a renewed focus that I draw out these articulations in this thesis. This pervasiveness is nowhere more evident than in the levels of access to popular music young people now have. In being able to draw upon different kinds of music, and as mediated through technology (as explored in Chapter Three and this chapter), young people engage in post-subcultural attachment practices due to their effectiveness in the articulation of self. In doing so, engagement with popular forms of music helps facilitate self-disclosure practices.

As has been discussed in this chapter, academic focus upon attachment to music styles or genres is sometimes perceived to be facile and trivial. Occasionally, focus on these 'facile and trivial' aspects are also met with a presumptive moral panic. For young musicians with experiences of vulnerability, however, engaging with popular music allow access to similar stories and experiences which affords them the opportunity to feel connected, welcomed and accepted. These personal, individual stories that emerge in discussions of musical discoveries and fandom complement the categorical approach of subcultural studies. Music-listening plays an essential role in young people's identity practices. For young musicians with experiences of vulnerability specifically, it informs self-disclosure practices through the formative and continuing experiences with musical discovery, fandom, and participation in music sub-cultures. It also informs how young musicians articulate and disclose self through music-making practices.

Chapter Five

Musical Practices and The Social

As I walked into Ryan's 'music-room', I noticed a collection of different musical instruments, pieces of technology and other cords and equipment scattered around. The floor had a navy-blue carpet and was contrasted by bright, cream coloured walls, amplified by the late afternoon sun beaming through the window. In the far-left corner, behind some guitars and amps was an ornate Victorian era fireplace, largely used as a storage area for a drum machine and other cords. The rest of the room was littered with other musical instruments and equipment with both electric and acoustic guitars resting up against the wall, music stands, guitar amplifiers, as well as some leftover drum kit equipment sitting in cluttered corners.

We quickly sat down, in the corner closest to the door, with Ryan on a chair turned away from an electric piano and facing me, ready to talk. I asked Ryan how long he had had the space for.

He responded:

'Ah, three years, from when we moved in. The drummer who was in the band use to have her drums in here. And so, the rest of the space kind of got filled with junk and we we're like 'we have so many music instruments, let's make it a music room', which has been awesome. Because I learnt to play the piano a year and a half ago – just chords. So, having a[n] [electric] piano around – and it's weighted as well [this refers to the weight in the keys when they are pressed so that they resemble an actual piano] – has been awesome. So, it's not mine, but it's been handy as to have around.'

It was clear that the piano was the centrepiece of the room for Ryan. Although positioned in the corner with one of the two mattresses used for soundproofing nestled between it and the doorway, it was the one space in the room Ryan had obviously spent some time tidying up and maintaining. It was this spot where a major part of the interview took place. I continued:

Chapter Five – Musical Practices and The Social

M. Ok cool, so since we last spoke five days ago, can you tell me what you've been up to music-making wise?

R. Umm, no, nothing! I haven't done anything the past five days apart from refixing the music space, making it a little cleaner so that I can do stuff. And umm, yeah, just organising this drummer that was meant to audition tonight. So, I haven't done actual writing at all [laughs].

M. Yeah, so you've still done music related stuff, just not writing.

R. Yeah, more like organising.'

The second of the case-study interviews was designed to capture how participants went about writing their music. Conversations moved from the practical tools participants used as part of their practice, through to how they went about constructing and writing a song. By the time the second interview took place, participants were comfortable and forthcoming with stories about their practice. I began these interviews with questions about whether they had written any new music since the last time we spoke, before proceeding into a brief discussion of what the interview itself entailed. Although I had explored elements of vulnerability with participants in earlier interviews, it was during the second interview where these vulnerabilities were clearly on display.

That cold November evening spent with Ryan proved instrumental as it shaped the ways in which I understood how both the social and the individual were experienced by participants. In particular, it brought into focus the role of song-writing practice, collaborative practices and career aspirations. Using these foci as a framework, this chapter investigates how young musicians use self-disclosure to navigate vulnerability and resilience through these individual and social contexts.

5.1 Music-Making and Social Contexts

The youth arts literature argues that for young people with experiences of vulnerability, participating in a youth arts program or engaging with a creative practice moves the young person from a vulnerable state to one of resilience (Baker and Homan, 2007; Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Eckstrom, 2007; Rimmer, 2012; Wang, 2010). As I have detailed in this thesis, however, vulnerability sits in dialogue with resilience, with resilient factors only emerging through an engagement with vulnerability. In doing so, my participants were able to claim a resilient musician identity. This thesis builds on this reconfigured framework of youth experience. In presenting the experiences of the young musicians participating in this research, I suggest that music is an individual act. However, it is given meaning through the social and collective contexts in which it occurs.

This focus on the practice itself, and specifically what informs practice, has been largely missing from much of the academic literature. As Simon Frith argues:

‘...one of the things that has been astonishingly neglected in cultural studies is the processes of cultural production, not with reference to its political economy but with reference to the actual people who write songs (or romantic fiction) who are symbolic creators. What is their relationship to their work? How does it relate to consumption?’ (1992, p. 184).

In addition to this plea, there is a vast body of non-academic literature that amplifies the personal and individual narratives that emerge in music cultures. Although at times harking back to the mythology of the tortured artist, popular music criticism and journalism suggests that through music-making, musicians are engaged in purposeful and individual acts of self-disclosure and discovery (Caramanica 2016; Eells 2012; Frank 2017)⁴¹. These profiles, appearing in

⁴¹ This literature does occasionally tend to romanticise the social trappings of fame, with stories of drugs, women and tour busses (Heaf 2015).

prominent publications like GQ magazine, Rolling Stone and The New York Times, all pay tribute to the individual's musical biography. They honour the background of the individual and intersperse that with detail of the musician's practice. As explored in Chapter Four, there is a strong body of scholarship that unpacks the political and structural reasons for young musicians' practices. In this chapter, I acknowledge this body of literature and consider it an essential part of shaping understandings of young musicians' practice. I bring individual stories similar to those that dominate the popular music press into dialogue with the existing body of academic scholarship.

Within academic scholarship, David Hesmondhalgh has been at the forefront of calling for music itself to be understood as both private and public (2013). The notions of the private intimate experiences of self – 'this is who I am, this is who I'm not' – and the public collective experiences – 'this is who we are, this is who we're not' (Hesmondhalgh 2013, p. 2) – feed into the ways in which individuals experience music. This constant and evolving dichotomy between the social, community aspects and the personal, individual aspects that surround music-making and music consumption prove to be both subjective and nuanced. Hesmondhalgh himself breaks what could be argued to be distinct and contrasting ends into two accentuated points in his book 'Why Music Matters' (2013):

‘...music often feels intensely and emotionally linked to the private self’
(2013, p. 1),

and:

‘...music is often the basis of collective, public experiences’ (2013, pp. 2–3).

As Hesmondhalgh has said in an interview about the book, 'It's that double sided nature of music that's so interesting to me, that it's both intimate and collective at the same time' (BBC Radio 4 n.d.). This coalescence situates participants' personal and individual experiences of

music-making in dialogue with the collective and social contexts in which they emerge. In this chapter, I take Hesmondhalgh's initial contention further, arguing that in understanding music-making as a social act, the personal and individual processes of self-disclosure inherent within practice are given meaning through the social and collective contexts in which they emerge.

5.2 'Astonishingly Neglected'

In the early stages of my candidature, I had become fascinated by the notion of music being a social act, and whilst individuals are involved in these processes, it was within these social and collective contexts where meaning lay. After conducting the fieldwork and writing up these ideas, I came to the realisation that although the social provides a context for these music-making practices, it is the individual who ultimately does the 'work'. In surveying the existing literature, it became clear that these 'cultural processes' are still 'astonishingly neglected' (Frith 1992, p. 184). The lack of existing research conducted on the individual music-making practices of young people has been, in part, 'due to a sociological bias' (Bennett 2001, p. 136), which favoured consumption as it funnelled into the prominent youth studies discourse of resistance. This bias still exists, especially within youth arts literature.

In addressing original texts documenting sub-cultures⁴², Bennett points out that 'the CCCS applied subculture more directly to youth style rather than music' (2004 p. 224). It is only in the last 20-30 years, however, where music has emerged as the focus of much subculture discussion (See Thornton 1995; Cohen 1991; Finnegan 1989). When music is included in research about young people, it is often through a focus on the 'socially apparent, and visually 'spectacular', effect of music consumption on young people' (Bennett 2001, p. 136). Music within these

⁴² These texts grew out of the CCCS and included: Stanley Cohen's 'Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers' (2002) and Hall and Jefferson's 'Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain' (1993).

discourses has been seen as a tool used in a ‘semiotic guerrilla warfare’ (Bennett 2001, p. 136) that fuelled the class struggles of 1970s Britain (Clarke et al. 2006; Hebdige 2012). Bennett quite rightly suggests that although music-making practice has often been seen as not as significant as consumption practice, it still does assist youth scholars in understanding the ways in which issues such as ‘local identity, self-awareness, gender and ethnic relations and forms of economic life’ (2001, p. 137) operate in young people’s everyday experiences.

This thesis contends that the pieces of music participants make, in fact, showcase the various social implications of their life worlds. This insight can only be gained through an analysis of the individual and personal practices utilised by young musicians. Due to the scope of this thesis, I have been able to provide a full reflection of the music-making process, from the formative listening and participatory practices through to the performing and releasing of original music. For this reason, this chapter details the actual making practice involved in putting together an original song. My participants are indeed ‘social authors’ (Toynbee 2000, p. 46) and make music and songs largely inspired by existing consumption and participatory practices. They also make music steeped deeply within personal experiences of vulnerability. Later in this chapter I detail the role music and song-writing specifically play in allowing for self-disclosure practices.

There is some popular music studies literature that explores how music-making acts as an important source of self-expression. In Simon Frith’s (1992) gentle and extensive summation of the importance of work conducted by Ruth Finnegan (1989) and Sara Cohen (1991), he offers the following:

‘Both Finnegan and Cohen describe the remarkable energy and creativity of people who would, in other circumstances, be described as uncultured, idle, and unskilled. The young musicians of Milton Keynes, Liverpool, and every other British town are, in fact, capable of deploying complex and subtle means of both individual and collective expression, and they

create around themselves a system of symbolic action which is essential to the ways in which young people come to make sense of the social world and their place in it, come to terms with (and perhaps oppose) dominant media and educational discourses, come to define their own aesthetic and ideological values. Music, in short, is not just something young people like and do. It is in many respects the model for their involvement in culture, for their ability to see beyond the immediate requirements of work and family and dole' (Frith 1992, p. 177).

These experiences, specifically the processes of making sense of their place in the world, how their life stories exist alongside the existing youth narrative discourse, and the development of specific aesthetic and ideological values, contribute significantly to unpacking the reasons as to how young musicians use music-making as a means of engaging in self-disclosure practices. As Frith suggests, these practices are expressed through both individual and collective expression. Similarly, young musicians also use music and its associated sonic and semiotic indefiniteness as a means of understanding self. This process of self-disclosure, however, is given space to occur within the contexts of community, social networks and collaboration. As Frith suggests, these practices are contextualised through both individual and collective forms of expression. The following sections use this framework as a means of examining my own participants' accounts of deriving meaning and purpose from song-writing practice, their collaborative music-making practices, and how they confront a neo-liberalised workforce.

5.3 Practice and Purpose

Prior to starting the first interview, I asked participants to send me a song they had written and were willing to talk about. Discussions uncovered the specific music-making practices of each participant as well as the ways self-disclosure emerged through their practice. Each participant spoke of how music-making specifically afforded opportunities to process and project self. In this section I explore how musical and personal biographies inform practice, as well as outline

what this practice looks like for participants. What underpins participants' experience with music-making and song-writing is, as Ryan puts it, the 'limitless' nature of creative expression that it affords. The approaches participants used as part of their practice differed greatly, however. I will detail these discussions as well as offer reflection on the purpose of engaging in these specific practices.

Music's ability to generate emotional reactions from both makers and listeners invokes the Derridean idea of 'intuition without concept' (Borradori 2004, p. 86). All participants mentioned a deep reverence for music itself as being able to provide something that other forms of artistic expression could not, although all were unclear as to what it was about music that gave them this. When incorporating the work of Nussbaum, Hesmondhalgh suggests that other forms of cultural expression, such as theatre, have particular tangible elements that automatically connect with the emotion of the individual consuming that form⁴³ (Hesmondhalgh 2013, p. 16; Nussbaum 2003, p. 272). Music, on the other hand, engages with a far less tangible aspect of identity. The 'distinctive language' (Hesmondhalgh 2013, p. 16) music uses to transmit this emotional response utilises distinct forms of creative expression. Listeners do not just find themselves responding to lyrical content, if indeed the piece of music contains any. They are also reacting to a sonic force that at the same time draws upon cultural reference points and personal memory. Music's specific ability to connect with audience speaks to its 'distinctive language' as well as its ability to put forward a 'semiotic indefiniteness' that gives it a 'superior power to engage with our emotions' (Hesmondhalgh 2013, p. 16).

A few weeks earlier, during our first interview over Skype, Ryan had informed me of the reasons music-making offered something different from other creative forms:

⁴³ A piece of theatre, for example, clearly depicts a scenario that members of the audience may have also experienced.

'So umm, especially with drama and graphic design ... they're like umm ... people in graphic design, you're sort of told what to do, or you're given structure. And it's sort of the same in drama because you're given a character – you're given a basis to come up with your character - but it's still really limited. And I find just like making – maybe if like I was a session musician or something it'd be the same – but, because I'm doing, sort of our own thing it's completely limitless and I really like that.'

This idea that music allowed for an infinite freedom in expression appeared an important part of each participant's practice. Four of the five participants spoke about other creative practices that they also engaged in. Perhaps the most prolific was Dani, who, in addition to writing original music, was writing a novel, wrote music criticism, and made zines which included his own writing, photography and artwork supporting his local music scene. When I asked Dani about music as a form of creative expression and whether he believed there to be some sort of mystique or mystery at the centre of music-making, he replied:

'I think so, yeah. I think that music is incredibly powerful in so far as sound and music can influence your emotions pretty instantly or relieve them or express them...I listen to a lot of music which is specifically designed to make you feel uncomfortable. For instance, this industrial band did an album which is all like surgical sounds for, like, an hour, and it's a wonderful album but it's designed to make you feel horrible [laughs]. For instance, umm, one of the reasons I really idolised the Cure is that I feel like their songs encapsulate an emotion no matter how stupid the lyrics might be. Umm, for instance 'Catch' is one of those songs that's the stupidest song but umm, but it captures that idea and feeling perfectly.'

This sense of mystery, as explored in Chapter Two detailing the 'I Don't Know Why' phenomena, was also mentioned by Julia. When I asked whether she found music-making offered a new language in which to explore personal issues, she explained that although she felt comfortable presenting aspects of her own story in her music, she was unclear as to why music afforded this opportunity:

'It does. Yeah, it's umm, I don't know. I don't know why I write about [mental health]. It always seems to- maybe it's because I never, yeah, it's something that people don't like talking about and so it's easier to just sing about it.'

For Julia, her music was deeply personal, and was often used as a means of processing her experiences with mental illness or loss. When discussing one of her songs, she mentioned:

I kind of wrote the song about seeing the other people in my family and just other people in general who, who get sad and get down and then just kind of- it's kind of a depressing song, like I kind of was in this place where I'd see, like, my dad and I'd see him at what, like, 50 something still getting these really down periods and my grandparents still battling this. And seeing myself and being, like, is this going to go on for my whole life kind of thing. And it's just kind of this thing of like, umm, yeah, it's not going to get better.'

The song title plays with the idea that for Julia, and those in her family, mental illness had become so embedded into their everyday life. *'It's just kind of this thing'* she mentioned, with resignation – *'...it's not going to get better. Like, I'm in a different place now but...yeah'*. As Julia's music worked through quite difficult and painful ideas, the practice itself acted as a way to compartmentalise her experiences. In doing so, she was able to give room for these experiences to evolve and live on, in an external but controllable space:

'Yeah, it's pretty cool to be able to write a song and, umm, say what I'm feeling at the time or whatever and just kind of be- it's just a picture of where you are at, at that time. It's not, like you don't have to finish everything with a set end to it because it's a process. Yeah, it's freeing in the way that no one can really come up to you and be like, 'oh well, that didn't have a good conclusion'. Like, it's just, 'I don't know what you're singing about' and even if they do it's like, well, they'll never know if their assumption is real- is right.'

The process of song-writing allowed Julia to transfer individual experiences of mental illness away from herself and into song, where they were able to live on within a form that could be manipulated, tailored and controlled. In transferring these experiences across into song form, she was still able to maintain a privacy around herself and her music. As artefacts, songs allow participants to engage in a kind of established temporality, setting these songs aside as reflections of what they were *'feeling at the time'*. Alongside Ryan's contention that music-making afforded a limitless language, Julia's experience of music-making allowed her access to a freedom. Engaging

in music-making meant that Julia could understand and navigate individual experiences, which in turn, contributed significantly to her wellbeing.

Julia was quick to highlight how the ‘semiotic indefiniteness’ (Hesmondhalgh 2013, p. 16) of music-making meant that she could engage in a purposeful ambiguity in her music:

It’s kind of about- I guess I write so that it’s, so that the audience can make their own, umm, they can relate to it in their own ways. Like I feel if you tell someone what it’s about, they’re just going to be thinking about your experience when that’s not really...like I feel like I listen to other songs because I can relate to it in my own way.’

Dani also referenced this sense of purposeful ambiguity and called upon a variety of different cultural forms in order to shape and develop his music. Frequently pointing towards literary work such as film and fiction, he was able to present this ambiguity through offering a different approach to music-making when compared to other participants. The song that he chose to discuss uses the film *The Virgin Suicides* (Coppola 1999) as a key reference point. In the film, the protagonist led her sisters in a suicide pact which eventually culminated in their deaths by various means. This included the protagonist herself, who locked herself in the family car and died from carbon monoxide poisoning. Although Dani made no direct reference to the film in the song, there was a subtle reference in the last line, using it almost as a means of sharing a secret:

It appealed to me to write an up-beat song, or something with up-beat lyrics which alluded to something pretty disgusting, for instance, suicide. Umm, so in the end [the lead character] was the one who —she locks herself in the car, umm and runs the accelerator until it fills up with gas and she kills herself. Umm, so that last line ‘I hit the gas’ was alluding to that, and I wanted it not to be obvious that that was what it was about, but still that is what it’s about.’

As with Julia, Dani was drawn to tenebrous and melancholic ideas. ‘I’m attracted to that sort of image of beauty I suppose...self-destructive beauty’ he told me, highlighting the importance of engaging in a darkness within his song-writing practice.

In his landmark text, 'How Music Works', the musician and writer David Byrne, best known as lead singer and guitarist of seminal New Wave band, Talking Heads, talks of the ways in which playing music in public 'was a way of reaching out and communicating when ordinary chitchat was not comfortable to [him]' (Byrne 2012, p. 38). Byrne also goes on to suggest that, in addition to the ability 'to "speak" another language', music-making also afforded the opportunity to enter into conversations he was at the time too nervous and shy to enter into in reality (2012, pp. 38–39). This notion that music allowed for musicians to enter an expansive, indefinite semiotic universe is key to the development of this research.

Although a talented guitarist and lyricist, Dani qualified his own understanding of the 'I Don't Know Why' mystique suggesting that there was a great sense of craft and skill behind music which '*creates a very specific emotion*'. With this in mind, he did acknowledge the limits of his existing skillset:

'I feel that I'm not on the level of expertise personally to umm, I suppose put into emotion my intent like that. Anything that I create which creates a very specific emotion like that would be an accident. A happy accident, but it's not something I can do intentionally at this point in my life.'

Such an acknowledgement speaks to Dani's obvious frustration that his own participation in music-making itself did not mimic his engagement with the broader music culture. With Dani's music falling into the punk and post-punk realm, having 'musical ability' or 'musical potential'⁴⁴ was not an important factor (Leichtman 2010, pp. 185–186). Through his music criticism, zine making and general participation in his local music community, Dani was already heavily

⁴⁴ Such analysis forms the large music psychology cannon (See Hallam 2010; Hallam, Cross & Thaut 2016; Hallam & Prince 2003; Hallam & Shaw 2002), one that is focussed on the categorisation of levels of ability. This PhD research is less focussed on the measurable ability and more so on the approach taken, regardless of their proficiency in their instrument. Additional literature also suggests that a lack of formal training can also lead to experimentation as there is not a familiarity with the rules and expectations of that instrument - see Mellor 2008; Folkestad 2006.

involved in music. In writing about music, Dani saw firsthand the affective and emotional responses music could bring out. The emotional work of his own song-writing, however, required more of him, which he felt to be an added pressure.

Although there have been key pieces of literature linking music-making cultures and youth studies (See Bennett 2005, 2001; Bloustien & Peters 2011; Thornton 1995; Hesmondhalgh 2009), there has been limited literature that discuss the impact being engaged in music-making has on the lives of young musicians with experiences of vulnerability. Whether young musicians themselves choose to directly engage with some of these personal and vulnerable stories within their practice, is a question that arose in much of this work. It was a question that partially grew out of a chat I had with Andy, from The Site. When I had asked what it was he thought his organisation offered those young people participating in terms of song-writing, Andy suggested that there were two sides:

‘...in the situations we do bring on these young people I suppose comes from a background of...all of those disadvantaging factors are pretty much left at the door. When you come into the setting we’re all talking music which is a language we all know. And then you’re kind of resolving...like you’re reducing it all down into these real kind of primal things and it’s not about that disengagement, and it’s not feeling sorry for anyone. It’s kind of this process, and we’re getting this job done together. So, I think it does actually reduce those factors, but in a micro way...So they’re feeling ‘oh someone’s not feeling sorry for me right now’. It’s like ‘we’re here to do this and we don’t care about that anymore.’

Due to the limited amount of time available during my first chat with Dez at The Site, I was unable to spend time running through the making of a specific song. During the interview, however, we did discuss his approach to writing lyrics. As established in Chapter Four, the aspirational ideas of social mobility embedded into hip-hop culture allowed Dez access to a specific cultural language he was then able to use as part of his own practice. Maintaining an honest outlook, albeit through a positive lens, underpinned his approach to making music.

'I think I'm more of a realism person, so I'll rap about what I see, what I have seen, what I've been through. Like I've got a song, ... a song that I wrote about what I want to see... Oh, it goes, umm, 'I see strange melodies, birds chirpin' so nice, clouds full of sunshine'. Like, I see all this happy stuff, but I don't actually see because I made that song in the winter, so it's like, that's what I'm trying to say. I'm a bit of both, but I think I'm more on the realistic side recently. Because nowadays I been making a lot of more realism type of things that real life people can go through.'

Dez's lyrics largely represented this idealised version of self - the lyrics themselves actively engaged with his current situation as a means of identifying and establishing the state at which he would rather see himself. From an American perspective, Smith suggests 'these typically adolescent renditions of the world are utopian in their frustration with the pauperized and hyperscrutinized status of black and Latino ghetto residents and politically familiar because of their frequent lyrical homage to twentieth-century black empowerment iconography and rhetoric' (2003, p. 81). Although it should be pointed out that hip-hop culture has splintered somewhat (Dez referenced the work of rapper Kendrick Lamar who has been described as the saviour of hip-hop, skewing the genre towards a socially conscious, personal and political bent⁴⁵), the notion of rap culture providing a cultural language in which to openly explore and engage in an upwardly mobile version of self remains relevant and appealing for those starting out.

These social and collective aspects of music cultures intertwined with the individual and personal practices participants engaged in. Like Ryan's need to engage in personal song-writing practice within the context of his band practice, Dez, too, was driven by what seemed an external communal force. As the youngest musician to participate in this research, Dez portrayed an outlook that perhaps mimicked someone older and with more experience in music-making. He

⁴⁵ Kendrick Lamar is a hip-hop artist who gained a great deal of 'cross-over' success. His music has remained political and 'conscious' and is largely steeped in personal experience (See Lynskey 2015; Ahmed 2014 for details).

recognised that the potential impact he could make with his own music was as much about him as it was about others:

'...with music, you can reach other people, like, besides your friends. Because when you talk to someone, yeah, it's between you and them. But with music, you can express yourself more. And like, other people that you might not even know, behind closed doors they can be feeling the same thing as you. That's why I like making music.'

All five of the participants used their personal experiences as a way of shaping their own music practice. The ways in which they did varied greatly and was largely dependent upon the style of music through which they chose to express themselves through. For example, Ryan noted that, while many in the punk scene consider it 'self-absorbed to write about your life', for him, it made sense:

'I think it's like the perfect thing to do [to write about your life], so a lot of our songs on the first record were about like, not feeling adequate being around people who could play their instruments.'

Ryan's own music resembled a mainstream approach to punk rock. His ability to pick and utilise aspects of punk rock, emo culture, and female-led pop music, however, showcased fluid and post-subculturalist identity practices. This meant that Ryan could call upon a range of cultural influences as part of his practice. As Toynbee suggests, the various cultural implications shaping these changing genres spark the 'development of musical style-communities which are both representative of subordinate interests and inventively hybrid at one and the same time' (Toynbee 2000, p. 112). At the cornerstone of this new inventiveness lies a varied set of possibilities for self-expression.

In addition to these new sets of possibilities, the space Ryan had created for himself also offered a 'safe' and constructive means of compartmentalising his experiences:

'You're dedicating this piece of time to like, thinking about something, and when you combine it with music you can think about it in a different way, especially when you're writing lyrics and

you're trying to continue that thought process through a four-minute song, maybe you've only got 30 seconds of stuff you've thought about and you have to think of more ways to weave it into lyrics.'

The practicalities of popular song-writing shaped Ryan's music-making practice. The act of song-writing afforded a framework to operate within, allowing feelings of identity and relationships to be worked through and managed within the confines of a 'four-minute song'. Within these confines, Ryan and his band still showcased a contrast in the kinds of songs they would write. 'We sort of mix it up' he would tell me, moving 'between having really silly songs, and, like, more serious songs...'. During the first interview with Ryan, the song we spoke about worked through a topic that he deemed to be serious.

'[Serious song is] like, more about, like, this huge issue for me about different things I think of about relationships and, yeah, it's just sort of shaped by everything that happens around me...'

Before we had left for his practice session at the recording studio, I was able to observe some of these practicalities in action. As Ryan divulged to me how these personal and individual stories emerged through his song-writing, he was struck by the way in which the tropes of song-writing afforded him the opportunity to broaden his own ideas. The accessibility of the pop song form also meant that Ryan saw the value in engaging with audience:

'Like, you might have had one problem that when you're writing it you're trying to rhyme things and make it all work and you'll maybe notice that that problem is relevant to a whole bunch of other problems and you can relate it to more people.'

This realisation that music could connect to audience was something that Mark also mentioned. The song I discussed with Mark, a collaboration with rapper Jay, was one I was already quite familiar with, having written about it, and the EP release it came from, on my music blog. His main collaborator, Jay had been creating innovative party style hip-hop for a few years already. The collaboration with Mark was a recent endeavour and had already received some coverage both among the online music blog community as well as via national radio station Triple J.

As a piece of music, the track offered an accurate display of how the music he made drew upon his own listening practices as well as exhibiting some sort of personal story. I began by asking Mark about the importance to him of the song:

'...that's one of my favourite songs I've done with [Jay], if not the favourite. Umm, yeah, nah, there's a bit of a dark side to that. Also, more or less, that whole EP. It was made late last year, and this was when I was, umm, I was in the last month of uni, and that EP was not only a [Jay] project but it was also a final assignment for me. Yeah, so there's a lot of shit behind that. You know, there's kind of umm, even though a lot of things we'd had ready to go for a while, some of it was rushed but I was amazed at how that went. And also, I was...I was having...I was in a pretty dark place at the time as well. So, I wasn't really feeling amazing.'

The track itself came out of a rather mundane moment waiting in class at university:

'I made that beat in class. I was doing a minor in game programming or something, game programming for idiots! Like, simple shit! I was sitting around for ages waiting for the teacher to come around and check out my work...and I was like, oh, fuck this. So, I was just like, open Ableton and tinkering around on there and, oh, this is dope, I'll send this to [Jay]! So yeah, that's when I made [the track] ...or I started making [the track] in class.'

It was only in hindsight that Mark was able to see how the individual process of music-making was reflected back at him through the form of song. This was music that for Mark directly represented a form of hope and positivity that his participation in hip-hop culture afforded:

'Yeah, it was dark days, but I look back on it now and I'm really fucking proud of it. It's just like getting through that, and getting everything done by the deadline is, you know, I reckon it's amazing.'

Mark was an artist who had already achieved a great amount in terms of receiving media coverage and being played on radio. This established audience played a pivotal role in how he understood his role as a musician, telling me that *'the response was definitely relieving'*. It was clear that this audience feedback reinforced his own confidence in his practice:

‘The response to the project itself was relieving to me, it made me feel better about myself at the time. Because I was pretty fucked. And it’s sort of like, well, I put in all this effort and it was a fucking shit time, but, you know, people are loving it. Some people weren’t able to decide what their favourite track is, and it’s like, well, that’s a win! [laughs]’

Given Mark’s role as a producer, how he assigned meaning to his practice differed from the more personal meanings other participants were able to place on their music. Part of the reason I conducted follow up interviews with Mark was because the way he expressed his sense of self seemed less direct to the untrained ear. Unlike other participants, Mark expressed his own sense of self purely through sonic means. The song referenced above, for example, showcased a drive and propulsion in its sound with obvious calls to the bass-heavy, drill beat hip-hop that informed his practice. As opposed to other participants, Mark was far more pragmatic about how he went about making music, choosing instead to see his practice as merely a means of showcasing his own skills. It was only through hindsight, and being able to see the finished work where Mark could understand the personal and emotional impact his practice has on him personally.

Through this collaboration, and in particular by Jay offering his own perspective through lyrics, Mark was able to see the process undertaken when creating the track through a new perspective, imbuing the process with a new sense of meaning (I explore this in more detail below). For all participants, the self-disclosure practices embedded into music-making allowed for quite personal and individual experiences. As the following section showcases, however, it is through collaboration where these practices are brought to life.

5.4 Individual Expression through Collaboration

When Ryan and I arrived at the recording studio, we made our way through a series of corridors until we reached a large soundproofed room with a mixing desk, separated by a thick pane of glass, overlooking the space. It was in this room where I met Ryan’s bandmates. They were

without a drummer for this practice session, an issue that shaped the rest of the session and my role in it. It was not until after close to 45 minutes of catching up that the band picked up their instruments to work through a new song. Part of this time early on was spent discussing plans: *‘Are we going to do another practice this week?’* asked one of Ryan’s bandmates. Later in the session, they worked out plans for auditioning other drummers, *‘We were meant to get whatshisname to come down, weren’t we?’*. For most of the time however, the three of them spent time talking about living arrangements, moving in and moving out of share houses and viral videos that they saw on YouTube during the previous week. The session was as much a social occasion as anything else. Music-making had brought the three of them together.

Before they began, Ryan explained to me:

‘Normally it would be like a group of us and Josh would play something, and I’d start to try to madly write something down until we can nut out something and then that’s how a lot of the songs are made.’

He added, during the band practice, that:

‘Usually the lyrics are the last thing, or they happen, like during, so they’ll all keep playing and Josh will make some guitar. Eventually we’ll have all these parts, but we just have to cut it down into the structure of what it is.’

During this session, Ryan spent significant periods of time hunched over on the ground, crouched on his knees and head and hand deep inside a book full of lyrics in development. Using the energy of the room, he was able to engage with his own personal vulnerability through lyric writing whilst in the presence of his bandmates. The rapport and trust he had built with his bandmates afforded him a comfort and a way to access his vulnerability which put him in a position to write. In both Ryan’s individual practice and his band practice, music not only acted as a tool for personal self-disclosure, but it also operated as a means of connection. As I sat down to listen to the recording of Ryan’s band practice, I remember noticing how the second

half of the session was full of long moments of silence because of Ryan's having his head in his book, with his phone close by, writing. Ryan only lifted his head to contribute to the occasional discussion about work situations and new music.

For all participants, collaboration meant that their own personal ideas were brought to life. Collaboration manifested in different ways and was specific to the participant and the style of music they made. For Mark and Dez, the role of collaboration was an inherent part of hip-hop, with Mark as a producer needing to collaborate with rappers, and Dez as a rapper needing to work with producers and singers. Julia's experience of collaboration emerged within the context of her electronic project with her producer Stuart. Ryan was the front person for his band, meaning that discussion, more often than not, turned towards how he worked alongside his band mates. Dani also spoke about his band mates and the roles they played in the process of writing new music.

When Dani discussed those he collaborated with as part of his band, they were often spoken about with a deep reverence. The support offered to Dani as part of his music-making practice inadvertently gave him a sense of confidence in his practice. Speaking of the broad song-writing practice employed in relation to one of the early songs his band put together, Dani told me:

'[I] found a couple of chords that sound really nice together and thought alright we'll go with that. Umm, James [guitarist in Dani's band] has criticised me since – he's criticised me a little bit – umm the bridge section. Umm, the next three songs I wrote basically used the same chords. And he was like these are basically the same so I'm like alright alright! [laughs] So I had to really push myself for that one!'

Like Ryan, Dani took on the role of front person. He informed me that '*music doesn't come to me naturally*' and that it often required '*deliberate effort and construction*'. With the initial recording and construction of the song occurring solely on Windows Sound Recorder – '*terrible but it does the job*'

– as well as a guitar notation program called Tabs – ‘a shitty knockoff version’ of Guitar Pro – Dani would then take the song to the band.

It was in the rehearsal room where most of the collaboration happened for Dani’s band. He would approach the band with the initial recording and a general idea as to what the song sounded like as well as the parts each member would play. Although, as Dani told me:

‘Umm, in my case I can’t be bothered putting together a bass line, I trust Kathy’s [bass player in band] ear so I go, look you just put something together I’m quite happy to do that. Umm, the drums – we tried just lots of different styles with it...umm, and Janet was asking [recording studio worker] – like we were going, like we need to change it so that it’s different during the bridge but we don’t know what to and Janet was sort of speaking to him about it and he, like showed her, a different way to drum. So that’s what we used there. Umm, he’s like you can have that one for free [laughs]’

Collaboration for Dani operated quite organically, with members of his band, and others within the band’s vicinity, contributing freely to the song-writing process. For other participants, collaboration necessitated more specific roles with the responsibilities of each collaborator clearly defined.

In Julia’s practice, what began as a friendship and producer/artist relationship with Stuart, grew into an equally shared collaborative project. As I covered in Chapter Four, Stuart played quite a formative role in Julia’s own musical biography. Julia collaborated with Stuart via his production of her solo work as well as in their more recently formed electronic pop duo. For Julia, these were projects steeped in a desire to share and complement each other’s work with their own original ideas. Julia informed me that as the electronic pop duo, they shared keyboards and production duties. However, in a live setting, Julia was the focus: ‘well, the gig we did I played, like I used Ableton, and I played electric guitar, and I sang. And I did a few vocal loops, that kind of stuff’. The collaborative nature of the electronic pop duo also offered up significant opportunities for

success. As has become increasingly popular for electronic pop music, the role of the ‘feature’ artist can often propel a song. For Julia, this meant plans to release a double single with one of the tracks featuring Stevie, a prominent singer-songwriter in the Australian folk music scene:

J. Because it’s with Stevie – did I tell you this?

M. Oh, I know we spoke about Stevie before...

J. Yeah, I forgot to tell you. Our second single that we’re actually releasing now, but anyway, our second single, he did the vocals for it.

M. Oh cool!

J. Yeah, so it’s Stevie and Stuart – Stuart produced it all and did all the crazy shit that made it cool and Stevie did a sweet as melody. And like Stuart changed a few things as well. So, they worked on that one – I didn’t really have a part in that one. But we’re still doing it under [the band name] with a feature artist as Stevie. So we were going to put those two on the double single and then because Stevie’s already had so much Triple J play, it would be such an advantage for us.’

In this context, collaboration was very much about strategy, with the choice to work with an already prominent artist a careful and considered one. Within a pop context too, collaboration has become a mainstay, especially for electronic music producers. If one is to look at the pop music charts in America, production teams like the duo that Julia is part of very much rely on other artists for success (Amorosi 2017; DeVille 2016; Molanphy 2015)⁴⁶. Working with a feature artist was often based on aesthetic decisions, as it was a technique used in the popular music that participants themselves had listened to. For the participants who did collaborate in such a manner, however, working with a ‘feature’ artist was also understood as a matter of necessity for their career. This understanding of collaboration as something necessary for the success of a project was also inherent within hip-hop.

⁴⁶ According to American pop music publication Billboard, in June of 2017, pop superstar Justin Bieber made history by being part of the number 1, number 2, and number 3 songs on the American charts. The number 2 and 3 songs were produced by high profile electronic dance music producers (See Trust 2017)

The personal significance of Mark's practice for himself lay in the collaborative work he did with Jay. Through Jay placing his own lyrical take on the music Mark provided, Mark was then able to interpret his own story in new ways. I asked him about the importance of the song, and in particular, the role Jay's lyrics play:

'...yeah, lyrically, umm, it's also talking about that...it's a recurring theme in a lot of [Jay's] songs, it's that sort of, waiting to get on, waiting to have your moment sort of thing. And also sort of the frustration you feel not getting the recognition. Because, you know, I honestly feel like [Jay] should be a lot more recognised for the songs he does. You know, I honestly feel like if fucking Triple J sleeps on the next bunch of songs we send them, they're slipping. I'm sounding a bit like Kanye right now! But yeah, I share that frustration man.'

Collaboration played an essential role in shaping how Mark considered his music-making practice. Through my role as a music reviewer, I had already come across some of Mark's work via conversations with Jay. Jay had collaborated extensively with Mark, and through this work, both had built a reputation as prominent figures within Australia's new underground hip-hop scene.

Mark held the unique collaborative partnership they had built up in high regard:

'Like, he's got a lot of really old beats of mine, and I don't tend to revisit old ideas that often, but he'll go through it and be like 'you remember that beat?' and I'm like 'not really!' Coz you know, I'm an artist, I'm always trying to outdo what I did last. I'm always thinking towards the future and he's like, nah man, this old beat though and I'm like alright! But then he'll get on it and it'll just make sense. So it's like, alright. I get you now. But I find it funny – every time I see [other prominent rappers] or whatever they're always like, man, he always fuckin' gives [Jay] the best beats. And I'm like, no! No man! Everybody gets the same beats. It's just that [Jay] hears something in it that you don't. So yeah, it's like a chemistry thing I think.'

Collaboration provided opportunities to broaden the approach taken to music-making. This was something that Dez also grappled with in his practice. Through attending The Site, Dez was able

to collaborate with a range of other young people as well as established artists. As a rapper, collaborating offered him an opportunity to broaden the style of hip-hop he made. Because of the standing The Site had within the music industry, young people attending were often provided with opportunities to work with both local and international touring artists.

I also want to get like, I want to broaden out my thing. Like, umm, this guy from Brisbane came, came into The Site a couple of weeks ago... He's pretty cool, he's pretty cool...He made a beat for me right and he makes more party hip-hop type of stuff so I want to try and broaden...'

As established in previous chapters, Dez had developed a sense of camaraderie and support that was largely a result of participating in The Site. Because of this strong community, the opportunity to collaborate with others emerged as part of his participation.

As is suggested in the popular music press, there are often strategic decisions made as to who takes the role of the lead artist, and who is the 'feature' artist. In an article published in *Variety*, Mike Caren of Warner Music Group states that 'Hip-hop is about community, culture and innovation, all which can be conducive to features' (Amorosi 2017). In the same article, David Penn of a service called Hit Songs Deconstructed suggests, amongst a range of possible impacts, that the 'feature' can:

'Provide a song with an additional element that heightens its impact – such as: a specific vocal characteristic (for instance: a featured artist providing a sung Pop or R&B chorus vocal in a song that contains rapped verses by the main artist), or a narrative enhancement (a featured artist in a male/female duet that provides one of the characters with a unique voice, thus heightening the impact of the storyline)' (Amorosi 2017).

This ability for a song to be 'enhanced' was most relevant to my participants. For Dez, in particular, the prospect of adding 'narrative enhancement' and complementing the work of his collaborator was key to a song's viability. Discussing a song he worked on with Cameron, a fellow participant at The Site, Dez told me:

Chapter Five – Musical Practices and The Social

It's a little Tupac thing. And he told me what to write about – he gave me a topic. I wrote to it and then I listened to his version, right? And on the Monday, I was like 'nah, I gotta change mine'. And I went back and changed it, and when I spat it, he loved it.'

I followed up with Dez to ask what it was about his verse that he felt he needed to change after hearing Cameron's. He answered:

Like, it was, like, he was talking about, umm, like, living in poverty and growing up and stuff. And I was talking about we're searching for better days. I was talking about, like, all this other stuff...It didn't fit, yeah. Because it's a collaboration, it needs to relate, you know? And so, I rewrite it and I was talking about all this stuff, same as him. Actually, I wrote a line and it ended up being similar to one of his lines in it. And I'm like 'oh, okay!' I didn't even know, you know? ...And then, yeah, and then something clicked, and we got a girl on it and she did the same thing and related it to our thing. And yeah, the song's pretty good. I don't know where it is, but he needs to upload that!

For Dez, collaborating with other young people in similar situations afforded him a sense of camaraderie. Working within a collective setting such as this, also encouraged to Dez to improve his own individual practice and hone his craft, improving Particular to The Site was the impact facilitators played in providing encouragement and opportunities for collaboration. There was one facilitator specifically who played a key role in fostering a sense of confidence in Dez:

'That's why me and [the facilitator] have this connection. I remember when I first came in, [he] would help me write songs. And it was like ever since that day, he knows how much, how far I've come. He even says it – he's like 'bro, you've come so far in a very short time'. And ever since then I'm just, all these people, all these little people have had a massive impact in my life...All these little things play a massive part.'

This collaborative nature of Dez's own musical biography was something that remained consistent from his musical discoveries as an early teenager alongside his friends in the classroom, right through to the present day working in the studio working with other rappers and producers. Dez recognised the importance of these collaborations. At the end of the first interview with him, he made a point of referencing the support and confidence generated

through collaboration – ‘*One more thing - can I say shout outs to The Site, shout outs to everyone here. Thank you! [laughs]. I’m out.*

Ryan felt a similar sense of trust, rapport and support with his bandmates, which opened opportunities for self-disclosure through his music-making practice. As I sat in the practice session, however, I witnessed how, these opportunities were hampered by the lack of a drummer. As Ryan became frustrated with his song-writing, he himself offered to drum as a way of helping the band work out the verse and chorus of the song they had been working on. However, doing so took Ryan away from his own lyric writing. After a short while, frustrated, Ryan laughed out ‘*I don’t know timing. This doesn’t help!*

It was at this point where I offered my own drumming services – ‘*I don’t mind!*’ I began.

R: *Do you want to have a try?*

M: *Yeah.*

R: *Sick! Do it!*

As I played along with Ryan’s bandmates, I had inserted myself into the scenario. I had made a judgement based on the fact that Ryan was clearly frustrated that without a drummer they were unable to fully realise their ideas. With Ryan back on the ground, hunched over and scrawling lyric ideas into his notebook and phone, I found myself witnessing the effect social and community aspects had on his own individual practice. The relief felt when I offered was consolidated when Ryan mentioned to me after a quick playing through of the verse, ‘*Yay! That actually helped heaps!*’

To his bandmates, it was clear that Ryan was somewhat invigorated by having a full band play. ‘*So, it would be the same thing throughout? With just a bit of variation in the chorus?*’ he asked his

bandmates, clearly seeing a direction for the song. This was later followed up with more affirmative comments such as *'I like that intro a lot'*. Collaboration as part of the music-making process allowed for shared experiences. The practice itself brought together personal engagements with vulnerability and placed them within a supporting community of other musicians. Through these social contexts, the individual music-making practices of each participant came to life. As Hesmondhalgh suggests, music has the capacity to be 'both intimate and collective at the same time' (BBC Radio 4 n.d.). Through collaboration specifically, a greater sense of purpose and a validation in practice emerges.

5.5 Career Goals in a Precarious 'Flawed Market'

'If you want to have a fun job, you got to put in the work in doing a shit job until it eventually seesaw's and balances out'

(Ryan, 24, punk/grunge singer-songwriter and guitarist).

For young people with experiences of vulnerability engaged in creative practice, there is a tension that positions their own practice against the increased need to be competitive and entrepreneurial (Kelly 2006). This tension is only amplified within the context of careers. The need to be creative and use music as a form of self-expression is essential to the lives of young musicians. As some participants told me during the field work, without music, they did not know where they would be. This personal need to create music that assists in their understanding of the world is further complicated by the requirement that young people must take responsibility for their life at as early a stage as possible. This inherent pressure for young people to obtain work and to provide for themselves is not a new idea. However, with the further casualisation of the workforce and the precarious nature of what is now termed the 'gig economy' (Hook 2015),

it is an everyday reality for young people. It is especially stark for those engaged in creative practices. Writing about this tension, McRobbie elaborates:

‘Professed ‘pleasure in work’, indeed passionate attachment to something called ‘my own work’, where there is the possibility of the maximisation of self expressiveness, provides a compelling status justification (and also a disciplinary mechanism) for tolerating not just uncertainty and self exploitation but also for staying (unprofitably) within the creative sector and not abandoning it altogether’ (McRobbie 2004, p. 5).

Young musicians feel *compelled* to create ‘their own work’, something deeply personal achieved through expressive engagement with a cultural form. However, in addition, I argue that young musicians with experiences of vulnerability also feel they are *required* to produce this kind of work in order to propel their own life chances. At the core of this requirement are processes of self-disclosure – young musicians, especially those with experiences of vulnerability, feel required to mine their own experiences in their production of popular music. None of the participants I spoke to were at a stage in their lives where they were able to make a living from their music. Some participants worked other jobs, whilst others were fortunate enough to still be living in the family home, and able to put more time into their practice. All, however, saw a career in music and being a musician as something they had to do.

There has been some research exploring the role of do-it-yourself (DIY) careers in the lives of young musicians and those involved in music. In work conducted by Steven Threadgold, DIY is used as one of the different subcultural categories of musicians that exist. Threadgold explains, by using the national youth radio broadcaster Triple J to differentiate these categories:

‘While in some circles Triple J is seen as ‘alternative’ or ‘indie’, in [the DIY] scene it is viewed as no different from the ‘mainstream’... This distinction is important as the influence of Triple J has grown to the point where it is a virtually gatekeeper of economic success in the Australian music market...’ (2015, p. 60).

Having such a differentiation is still useful. As has been established in previous chapters, there was a blurring of the lines for the young musicians participating in this work, especially in the ways they identified and participated stylistically. This post-subcultural form of attachment made pursuing a career in music-making feel like a possibility due to the various modes of engagement to which participants had access. This fluidity legitimised traditional forms of participating in the music industry such as getting a manager as well as working with record industry mentors. They operated as viable options for getting their foot in the door.

The support networks that emerged, specifically as participants considered music-making as a career, highlights the importance of community. This social resilience (Boeck, Fleming & Kemshall 2008; Gale & Bolzan 2013; Bolzan & Gale 2012) equipped participants with a sense of place within the music industry. For some participants, this support network came in the form of other young musicians in similar positions. In interacting and generating support from people like themselves, participants like Dani, Mark and Ryan were able to enact the entrepreneurial self in specific ways that was of benefit to their careers. For other musicians like Julia and Dez, social resilience appeared to manifest in a multifaceted and multilayered way.

Regarding this approach, Andy, the workshop facilitator at The Site, mentioned the following:

'We've met different groups of kids and then their friends have heard about it and brought all their friends and it's a space for them to come, work one on one with our facilitators, focus on their music, write their music, finish music, get it out there as a whole kind of 360 approach. Like we'll set up a Soundcloud, we help them try to figure out a name, a Triple J Unearthed profile. All those kinds of things. That is for emerging artists who might have the aspirations of becoming a career musician.'

This '360 approach' refers to record deals where the record label has control over the various revenue streams a signed artist may have. These typically involve 'the four cumulative nineties of a 360' (Marshall 2013, p. 84), including recordings, publishing, merchandising and touring. In

Dez's case, although The Site did not hold any financial control, the overall support system was still in play. The Site also helped musicians participating in their workshops obtain gigs as well as radio play. The fact that Dez stepped into an established network that had resources at the ready, meant that he was able to see the potential in pursuing a career in music. For Dez, The Site helped lay the ground for an independent approach to music-making, where the individual themselves are in full control of the music they make, and the methods in which they release it.

The Site operated as a space where young people who felt compelled and required to make their own music, could access the space and the resources to do so. These were young people from a diverse range of backgrounds, the majority of whom tended to be from lower-socioeconomic or culturally diverse backgrounds. The Site operated on the notion that a great deal of young people who had experiences of vulnerability, or as Andy put it '*disadvantaging factors*', would feel compelled to make music.

Dez himself felt a desire to build on the kinds of ideas put forward by The Site. After spending some time discussing what being engaged within The Site had afforded him, Dez offered:

I'm thinking of, I don't know – it's just a dream, it's just a dream, but I want to open up my own studio – that would be so cool. That would be...that's when I would be like 'yeah, that's it, that was so cool'. That's the ultimate dream. Like, opening up your own studio and like, doing kind of what [The Site] does. I wouldn't charge much money, like a community type thing with little kids and all that. Get them off the bad path that they go, just bring them in you know like, kind of what happened to me. You know, like, all that stuff. It would be good.'

When I asked him whether he saw it as an opportunity to give back, he agreed but remained pragmatic in the way he considered it.

It's like what they did to me, I can do to other people. I can pass it on you know. Like, I'm talking way ahead though. First, I want to be something, you know.'

Dez was able to pull from an existing network of both peers and mentors. As mentioned in previous chapters, The Site, as opposed to other youth music-making workshops, situated itself within the music industry rather than operating within the broad field of youth work. As a result, those participating were not only given an opportunity to develop their ‘craft’ and practise their song-writing. They were also given the opportunity to establish a strong support base from which participants like Dez could begin to develop potential independent careers.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, I did not envisage that career aspects would be something I needed to consider. As my own focus moved away from traditional youth work programs using music as a form of engagement, I began to understand how for many young musicians, music-making was not simply something they engaged in. It was instead a question of identity. As scholars such as McRobbie (2004) suggest, creative work can afford opportunities for young people, especially those who feel there is something within them that needs exploring. The ways participants spoke of career was quite varied, from Dez telling of great plans he envisaged for his future, to Dani’s less direct hinting towards a DIY career. There were also mentions of more formalised entry points into the industry, with both Mark and Julia telling me how they had begun working with managers who were assisting them in their careers. Of the five musicians who participated in the case-study interviews, a career felt most possible for both Mark and Julia.

When we first met over Skype, Julia was quick to give me a run through of how she started out in music and where she saw her career at the time of the interview. Throughout our time together, I was continually reminded of just how determined she was. The idea of making her own music emerged quite late on in the piece – *‘Yeah, towards the end of grade 10 early grade 11 I started playing, and then playing gigs...then I started studying it at school in grade 12 which is kind of late to start music!’*

After beginning our chat with the proclamation that, *‘I was actually like a really like intense sportsperson for a long time’*, Julia appeared to have been able to skilfully move from one pursuit to the other. The speed at which she took up music, however, did feel difficult at first:

‘...you know how some parents make their kids learn piano or whatever it is? My parents never did that – I never even started playing until I was 16 or 15. So, I found that really difficult, because, I don’t know. Obviously like it’s still young but it was still really difficult to pick up.’

Nevertheless, after a short while, Julia began to tick off a few early career milestones.

‘...just before year 12 I recorded an EP with a friend of mine [Stuart] who was kind of teaching me a bit at the time and he’s a really good friend of mine now. And umm, so he helped me produce that...’

Stuart had continued to collaborate with Julia right up until I met her for the first time face-to-face during the case study interviews. She mentioned that through working with Stuart, the notion of a career in music began to feel possible:

‘...he had a lot of faith in me, and basically, that’s the reason I kind of did [the EP]. He really pushed me to do it. And so, I did that and put it up on Triple J Unearthed and stuff like that, and then half way through grade 12, umm, like I got some airplay on Triple J and Triple J Unearthed. And from that I had a manager contact me. He’s been my manager since then. I was just extremely lucky because he’s a really great guy. He’s basically just made sure that everyone that I’ve dealt with has been up to scratch and good...But, umm, yeah, I’ve just been really lucky because he made sure that I was on the right track and yeah, I’ve just been working with him since then, doing a lot of gigs this year, writing, did a bit of travel at the start of the year, umm, that was awesome!’

Having received play on the national youth broadcaster early on in her career, it was clear that a stable and sustainable career was something Julia clearly envisaged herself having. The dominant do-it-yourself discourse (Threadgold 2015; See also Bennett 2018) was skewed by Julia’s entry into the industry through more traditional means, as evidenced through working with a manager. In establishing these key aspects early on, Julia ensured that a career was not something she would eventually reach; it was something she was already in the beginning stages of. This is

important to highlight as it is in contrast with other dominant discourses suggesting a ‘pathways’ model of work (Bloustien & Peters 2011). Such discourse assumes a transition model of youth which, as I argued in Chapter One, in turn has the effect of reducing the capacities of young people. Through calling upon her own support network, including her collaborators, and family (Julia’s mother supported her financially and her uncle introduced her to her manager), Julia was able to step into a career as a musician from early on.

Geraldine Bloustien and Margaret Peters in their otherwise excellent and detailed account of young people’s creative practices use language like ‘employment pathways’ and ‘career pathways’ (Bloustien & Peters 2011). Such language is concerning for a few reasons. It is in stark contrast with the realities of working in the creative industries, that of precarious and, at times, rare paid work. It also suggests that there is an end of the path, a point where music-making becomes a fully-fledged career. This is also in stark contrast with the majority of artists, especially musicians working in Australia. According to research published by the Australia Council for The Arts, the average income for a musician in Australia is \$19,300 (Throsby & Zednik 2010, p. 51). However, the median annual salary for a musician is \$7,200 (Throsby & Zednik 2010, p. 52). Although most participants had goals of only working in and making a career solely in music, all acknowledged that this was quite idealistic.

As I have advocated, discourse surrounding young people, especially those within the creative industries, needs to begin with the young person themselves. More often than not, particular traditional career paths, again mimicking the transition model of youth, are positioned as the norm. This, in turn, positions young musicians as a deviant population. It also suggests that for young musicians with experiences of vulnerability there is a need to take be personally responsible and resilient despite significant structural barriers. What this research and future research should work towards is an understanding that although traditionally, there have been

particular linear ways of developing a career, in modern times, as a result of the neo-liberal agenda, these precarious and unstable notions of career and work must be seen as the norm.

The ways participants introduced aspects of their career during the interviews was often through their own volition and acted as a reflection on how they saw their potential career at the time. As my conversation with Mark moved towards which artists he was inspired by and was interested in working with, we began talking about new Australian hip-hop artists and the prospect of working with them. It was during this discussion where Mark mentioned that he had his own manager:

I was pissed because I just found out about this dude and I told my manager 'Man, ay, umm, yo, we gotta get some beats to this guy'. And he's like 'No one's ever heard of this kid man. He's only got 500 fans', and I'm like, 'nah, I'm telling you man, I'm telling you!' And then two days later he gets signed up with, umm, I can't remember the name – some touring company. And he was just in ACCLAIM Magazine just before and I'm like 'man, it's a good thing I don't listen to my manager that often!' [laughs]

When I asked Mark about how working with a manager came about, he, like Julia, had not sought one out himself. Whilst there was clearly a great deal of hard work put in from both Julia and Mark as musicians, it was clear that not all young musicians need do everything themselves:

'Oh, [my manager] just bit me up. He just bit me up late last year. And yeah, it's sort of just been a trial period thing at the moment. But, umm, it's going alright. I got to get onto him about getting onto new artists and making him work!'

Mark felt the need to still 'hustle' for work though. His knowledge and desire to 'make something' of a career in music meant that he had control over where his career was heading. Through establishing himself as a hip-hop producer, he slowly gained access to a network of individuals and resources. Acquiring this social and cultural capital meant that Mark began to consider his career in different ways:

I've been talking to Jay and you know, definitely when I move...like I'll probably start DJing for him. Because supposedly, my manager doesn't take a cut of performance gains, so it's pretty sweet! [laughs]'

Establishing a network was also something Ryan had spent a great deal of time working on, enabling him to envisage a career. Situating himself within this broad music industry community was made possible through participating in a youth music industry mentoring program⁴⁷. The day after a music industry conference we had both attended, Ryan and I sat together in a city café for our final interview and spoke about how he understood his own role within the broader music industry. I began by asking Ryan:

M. Do you feel as though there's a strong music community around you? And maybe if you want to actually think about what music community actually means because I'm sure it would hold different meanings for different people.

R. Yeah, umm, I think, umm, well in my opinion there's music communities and then there's the music industry. And I feel like a lot of what [the music industry conference] was, it was the music industry with elements of different music communities around...'

The music industry conference was co-organised by the youth music mentoring program of which Ryan was a part. As a result of his involvement in the mentoring program, he was given the opportunity to help organise and run the conference. For my participants, the development of a career as a musician heavily relied on a network of supportive individuals. As we sat together in the café, I had thought that Ryan may be a bit tired of hearing about careers and the state of the industry. I hesitantly asked him: *'Especially after [the conference], do you feel as though music-making can be the dreaded 'career' word for you?'* With his typical practical approach, Ryan answered:

'Yes, yes, yep. And I think it's a long road [laughs] for any musician. Longer than a lot of other careers...Which is umm, especially, like I've been reading a lot of stuff about being in your young twenties and how you got that 'what am I doing?' type thing going on.'

⁴⁷ Young people were able to apply to be a part of the mentoring program. Participants could apply to participate in various streams including performance, technical production, marketing and publicity, event management and music business operations. They were also mentored by key specialists from their respective fields.

Ryan spent time setting out the particularities of being a young person looking for work, acknowledging the precarious nature of the workforce, especially the creative industries. He, like many young people, was conscious that creative work was often not seen as a ‘real job’ (Error 2015) and not something people in their early twenties should be pursuing as a career:

‘And like it’s kind of hard being this young age and comparing yourself to everyone who’s maybe like buying a house, they’ve finished their doctor’s degree and they’re going to be a paediatrician or something. And you know, you’re still making music and working a really crap job, because it does take a really long time to develop as a musician. Well, now it does anyway. And I think that just makes it really hard to consider it as a career because it doesn’t feel like a career.’

In admitting to himself that he would have to ‘tough it out’, Ryan was able to approach the notion of a creative career in a practical manner, proclaiming that *‘anything’s a career if you want it to be, you just got to work really hard at it’*. At this point, Ryan relayed some advice he overheard at the conference, again reiterating his practical and, what he thought to be realistic, approach to what he called a *‘flawed market’*:

‘And he was just saying, like, ‘life is life’. If you want to have a fun job, you got to put in the work in doing a shit job until it eventually seesaws and balances out... Yeab, so I think I’ve sort of realised now that you do need a second job to seesaw it out, but, like, don’t let that throw you off. Because I think a lot of musicians do get thrown off by that.’

The particular cultural capital accrued by Ryan and other participants illustrates just how knowledgeable participants were about the industry. When it comes to discussion about the industry, although participants were at the early stages of their music-making career, they were very much experts in their field. What this means for potential lifelong careers in music is dependent upon a whole range of other industry-based factors. There is no doubt, however, that for the young musicians who participated in this research, a career is something that they feel a personal requirement to pursue. In this personal obligation to express themselves through music and ‘make something of themselves’ is a reliance upon the social and community structures that have built around them over time.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have drawn out the micro-processes involved in young musicians' music-making practices. This chapter in particular has answered calls to focus in on 'actual people who write songs (and) who are symbolic creators' (Frith 1992, p. 184), and to unpack how, through social and collective contexts, these practices emerge as ways of navigating personal experiences of vulnerability. Music-making proves to be a multilayered coalescence of both individual, personal methods of practice and collective, social experiences. At the centre of practice is an individual desire and need to engage in processes of self-disclosure, and to use music-making as a means of showcasing a personal vulnerability. Through engaging with others, however, these individual practices are brought to fruition, helping participants realise the potential of what they do. In this chapter, I have showcased what were once understood to be 'astonishingly neglected' practices. In doing so, this chapter, as well as this thesis, complements the existing body of youth arts and youth music literature with a comprehensive understanding of how, through social contexts, young musicians with experiences of vulnerability use music-making as a form of self-disclosure.

This chapter has used the experience of Ryan as a structuring device. That November evening spent talking about and playing music provided a significant insight into how I saw the relationship between the social and individual aspects of practice. The experiences that Ryan speaks of, however, are common to all participants. Music affords the ability to engage in self-disclosure practices. This is done by way of granting access to a limitless sonic and semiotic language and providing tools where young musicians are able to project and disclose experiences of vulnerability into a form that can be manipulated, tailored and controlled. This means that the song, and an aspect of the young person continues to live on through engagement with collaborators and audience. The importance of collaboration, as well as having access to a strong

Chapter Five – Musical Practices and The Social

and extensive support network, solidifies how participants understood their practice and what they could do with it.

Conclusion

Midway through 2005, I sat at a grand piano in a rehearsal room at the music school where I was studying. Accompanied by a drummer, guitarist, and bass player, and without a smart phone or any other form of digital recording technology on hand, I played through and committed to memory the chord progressions and melody lines of a song that allowed me a direct engagement with self-disclosure. It was a piece of music that, for me, worked through heartache and mental health issues I had experienced. During my fieldwork some 9 years later for this thesis, with focussed music-making far behind me, I found myself reflecting upon this rehearsal as I spoke with the young musicians who participated in this research. My new understanding of the affordances of music-making as a means of facilitating processes of self-disclosure – an understanding my participants helped me develop – meant that I was now able to more thoroughly process my own experiences. Similarly, for participant Julia, music-making meant that she could put into story her family history with mental illness. For Dez and Ryan, it provided them direct ways of disclosing their thoughts about their own place in the world. Music-making allowed participant Dani to carefully explore ideas of self through an engagement with the literary value of music as well as the sonic and ‘semiotic indefiniteness’ (Hesmondhalgh 2013, p. 16) that music affords. For participant Mark, music-making practice utilised an extensive musical biography to propel ideas of self in less direct, but more sonic means. The semiotic and sonic indefiniteness of technology-aided music-making for young musicians with experiences of vulnerability afforded opportunities for self-disclosure.

In this thesis, I have posed significant questions across various practice settings. These have included discussions of how young musicians draw on vulnerability as part of their music-making practice, how young musicians music-listening are intertwined with music-making practices, and how the social contexts in which practice takes place inform and shape young

Conclusion

musicians' experiences of music-making. My work tells of how these discourses need to shift, to better represent how young musicians experience them. Such a shift has the potential to interrupt how both youth arts programs and youth research is conducted. In addition, this thesis has also drawn out significant theoretical findings, ones that better conceptualise youth experience. The following will detail these findings, situating them within the context of the existing scholarship and youth arts practice.

Non-linear Music-making

One of the key factors that shaped this research was attempting to understand how the existing, although limited, tortured artist narrative was enacted in practice. This narrative depicts a romanticism commonly applied to popular music, that the author of an original work must have experienced some level of emotional torment or struggle to create a piece of art. In gathering and presenting the practices of my participants, my research adds an empiricism to this romanticism, and draws out the reasons why people who may feel 'tortured' or be struggling might use music as a form of creative expression. Vulnerability was very much tied to music-making practice for the participants. The tortured artist narrative is also an idea that should not necessarily be shied away from, as, in many cases, it does help to provide a narrative arc for young musicians' participation in music-making. These narratives, however, play out in complex and non-linear ways.

Youth arts discourse as presented through both on-the-ground programs and academic scholarship was a key driving force behind this research. However, much of this discourse tended to focus on youth being considered a transition state, or in some cases, as a stage of life that is in deficit. In addition, many of these programs are designed as means of governing populations of young people deemed to be at-risk due to structural inequality. Often, in the

Conclusion

process, young people's own voices and experiences are very rarely heard (For example, see Weinberg & Joseph 2017; Cheong-Clinch 2009; Eckstrom 2007). Or, as I demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, when they are included, they are often presented through a tightly coded thematic analysis focussed on modes of transformation (For example, see Barrett & Baker 2012; Barrett & Smigiel 2007; Baker & Homan 2007; Baker 2014; Wang 2010). What I have done in this research is challenge this approach to youth arts analysis, generating on-the-ground, narrative-led data which complicates the dominant discourse. I approached this work intent on answering Frith's call to focus on the micro-processes involved in practice. To interrogate these pieces of evidence, I employed multiple areas of literature as a means of supporting this new discourse.

My means of capturing these experiences was through utilising an adapted version of Tillman-Healy's 'Friendship as Method' approach. My own methodology employed a similar ethos; however, it was adapted to be appropriate and ethically responsible when working with young people with experiences of vulnerability. Underpinning my methodological approach was self-disclosure, an aspect of the work that helped to mimic the stages of friendship. Through disclosing my own experiences with music-making, I established a shared status between myself and the participant. This, in turn, gave room for participants to step into the role of experts. The fieldwork employed similar practices, pace and 'natural contexts' ('going where participants are' - Tillmann-Healy 2003, p. 735) of friendship. However, it was not a methodology designed solely to empower young people. Instead, it was one designed to generate on-the-ground retelling of their experiences of music-making, which afforded participants an opportunity to realise their expert role.

This thesis has documented how young musicians use both musical and personal biographies to develop and shape their practice. It has also established new ways of considering how young

people 'live' vulnerability, creative expression and resilience, re-contextualising them due to the way they are lived out in practice. Through these analyses, self-disclosure also emerged as a continuous and deeply embedded aspect of young musicians' everyday practice. It was one that proved integral across the participants' music-making. Finally, this thesis proposes new ways of understanding music-making as a concept, unpacking how the processual nature of practice continues to evolve and repeat itself often in non-linear ways interplaying with young musicians' experiences of vulnerability. The following section will detail these findings and consider how they impact upon the broader youth arts discourse.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure became a central concept for analysis within three distinct settings in this research. When I began to consider how self-disclosure functioned in this research, it was within the context of methodology design. Using such a technique during my interviews helped to establish a shared status between myself and the participant, one that led to the emergence of detailed narratives. However, as the interviews and data analysis continued, it became apparent to me that due to the sharing nature of self-disclosure, sharing personal narrative led individuals to become much more self-aware of their story. In this sense, self-disclosure was an extremely personal practice. As much as it was about establishing a connection within the interview setting, I also found myself navigating my own story and becoming comfortable with my own experiences with vulnerability in new ways. Building from this notion of self-disclosure being an intrinsically personal practice set within a social context, I also argue that similar experiences occur in both music-listening, and music-making.

In Chapter Four, I discussed how the listening practices participants engaged in often resulted in specific personal epiphanic moments. Be they issues of sexuality, gender, class, or mental health,

Conclusion

the music-listening practices participants engaged in facilitated self-disclosure practices that afforded them a more intimate understanding of self. Music is imbued with musicians' own knowledge and understanding of the world, as well as vulnerability. It contains stories and experiences of individuals who are just like the listener. As participants slowly turned their hand to music-making, self-disclosure again emerged, this time as a central part of their making practice. Within song-writing, participants used some of the self-disclosure practices that occurred during their listening practices, using the form itself to shape, tailor and control the ways in which vulnerability infiltrated practice. Across all three forms of self-disclosure, as they arose within this research, was a direct engagement with vulnerability.

As my participants' experiences suggest, music is experienced within social and collective contexts. Self-disclosure relied heavily upon the other party involved in these contexts, which in many cases was the audience. There were multiple levels at play within these disclosure practices. For many participants, there was great meaning found in knowing that their music was reaching a range of other young people who may be in a similar position to them. This ensured that although music-making remained an extremely personal act, the knowledge that the audience was there to listen to it ensured participants felt they were not alone. Participants also felt their practice was validated within these settings, especially once they had released their music. Through both playing live and receiving feedback online, young musicians could navigate personal vulnerability in a safe, comfortable and supportive way.

Within a youth arts practice setting, self-disclosure has, to date, not been a concept readily engaged with. Given music's relationship to 'all things personal', it is not surprising that vulnerability is an aspect inherent within both music-listening and song-writing. Music operates as a constructive force, affording safe and tailored means of engaging in self-disclosure. Youth arts organisations need to be employing self-disclosure across the board, specifically through

acknowledging the personal navigational power inherent within music-listening and how young musicians themselves, especially those with experiences of vulnerability, utilise it as part of their song-writing practice. Self-disclosure is also an approach that should be taken by facilitators and other music professionals working directly with young musicians. In employing self-disclosure, a closer and trust-based relationship can be built between the young person and the practitioner. Doing so also acts as a means of moving away from the transformation model, ensuring an alternative way of understanding and working with young people who experience vulnerability.

Vulnerability, Creative Expression and Resilience

In this thesis, I have captured the ways vulnerability, creative expression and resilience are lived out in young musicians' practice. I have demonstrated how the complex interplay between creative expression and vulnerability is further amplified by the neo-liberalist responsabilisation agenda. When placed into a youth arts context specifically, a focus on vulnerability has often resulted in it being positioned as something that holds back the young person. Resilience has been positioned as a state to strive for. What I have uncovered is that whilst vulnerability does suggest experiences that can be troubling for the young person, engaging with creative expression can, in fact, shift their perspective. For participants, engaging with personal vulnerability and disclosing these vulnerable experiences through song, meant that they were able to enact a resilient identity, one that was directly built upon this engagement with vulnerability.

As I began reading literature that discusses the effectiveness of youth arts programs, it became apparent that many were built on a linear, directional model, with transformation being the key framework through which to comprehend young people's participation. The model on which these programs are built situates vulnerability as a marker, placing young people with vulnerable

Conclusion

experiences into a category that confirms their eligibility to participate in a youth arts program. Programs then exploit the ‘cultural relevancy’ of music as an engagement tool, employing it as a means of ensuring young people move out of a problematic population, and into one that is under control and surveilled by adults. Resilience within this model is understood to be an end-point, a state deemed to denote success and adulthood.

The on-the-ground experiences of young musicians who use music-making to engage with vulnerability, in fact, showcase an experience that is non-linear, and in many instances, multi-directional. Participants’ interactions with vulnerability and resilience are heavily reliant upon both time and the various social contexts in which they arise. In this setting, music performed a two-fold role, one where it embodied both a confidant and a vessel through which young musicians could navigate ideas of self.

There are significant ramifications for youth arts practice, especially in considering the ways both vulnerability and resilience are lived out. This thesis is not necessarily about advocating for the eradication of existing youth arts programs. In fact, engaging with ‘vulnerable’ young people can prove to be beneficial. What I do advocate, however, is a better understanding of how vulnerability intersects with creative expression. Creativity should not simply be understood through the lens of the skills it can provide to ‘apprentice-citizens’. Instead, greater focus needs to be placed on what these creative practices look like. Focus also needs to be placed on better understanding what it is the young person gets out of their practice whilst in the act of creating the work. The focus on upskilling and situating creative skills against a much larger ‘life’ backdrop, I feel largely misses the point of what creative work can achieve. In focussing on what these creative practices look like, as I have done in this thesis, it becomes clear how resilience is deeply embedded into the practice of music-making through an engagement with vulnerability.

Music-Making

In this research, I have consciously focussed on covering all aspects of music-making. As such, music-making incorporates the music-listening and consumption practices that inform song-writing, the song-writing practice itself, as well as the process of rehearsing, recording, and releasing a piece of music through digital and live means. This in part has built upon Small's notion of 'musicking' (1999), as introduced in the Preface of this thesis. I also argue that because of the various aspects of music-making, the practice itself does not occur in isolation. Music-making is a continuous and evolving practice that feeds off other music to create more music. The young musicians participating in this research were very much social authors in this context.

The listening practices engaged in by participants proved to offer a complex scaffolding on which they could articulate notions of self and engage in self-disclosure practices. Without these musical discoveries and participation in fan communities, participants would not have the cultural capital needed to become the social authors of their own work. Alongside their experiences of vulnerability, listening and participating in music fandom also meant that participants could navigate personal experiences through being able to listen to and identify with other creative people who have used music-making to explore similar experiences. These experiences should be an integral part of how research with young people engaged in creative practice is conducted.

The steps taken by participants once a song is recorded also suggest a contextual interpretation of their practice. While there were incredibly personal processes undertaken by participants when writing their music, the music only came into existence once it had been received by the audience. It is the audience which gives life to the song. Participants were made aware of these

Conclusion

audiences by various means. The statistics made available to them through social media and music distribution platforms, the feedback received via social media or email, and the direct feedback received from audience members at a performance all proved to validate participants' experiences. They were also clear indicators as to the potential of having a career in music. Interactions with audiences afforded participants opportunities to reflect on their work and the role their practice played in their own life. These interactions with audience are showcased throughout this thesis. It is in these moments where participants were afforded an opportunity to see how their practice could be used as a constructive force in their own navigations of personal vulnerability.

Defining music-making in the way I have in this thesis captures music as it was experienced through participants' practices. For participants, music became a flowing force, interpreted in distinct ways at specific times by particular people. Within a youth arts context therefore, such a definition assists in a better understanding of both what shapes practice, and what practice affords. The focus within youth arts programs on transitioning through skills development is but a happy by-product of young people's engagement with music.

Future Considerations

In this research I have presented work that is wide in scope. It is an approach that specifically looks to position the relationships between each stage of music-making as integral to practice. In situating the work within the context of young musicians' relationships to vulnerability and resilience, this thesis also operated as a critique of these concepts. Documenting the music-making practices of young musicians in such detail is a project that, at many times during this work, felt ambitious in its breadth. Future scholarship should build upon this work, zooming in on the specific practices involved in music-making, and continue to unpack these practices.

Conclusion

In Chapter One, I detailed how youth arts programs seem to be in continuous need of funding, with some needing to obtain financial backing from music organisations and other non-government funding opportunities. Organisations like The Site, and industry organisations like The Push, are sadly exceptions to the rule with regards to structure and overall ethos. The general approach of governance and control of populations of young people deemed to be ‘at-risk’ still dominates much youth policy, both arts related and generally. This thesis is not a direct analysis of the policy discourse or the issues experienced within the youth arts sector – such a project is outside the scope of this dissertation. What I do propose, however, is for more youth scholarship that shifts the focus away from adult-led, top-down approaches to policy. By showcasing youth voice and positioning it as not simply important, but also integral to forwarding youth scholarship, this thesis purposefully moves away from the existing adult led-discourse.

In this work, I have found that when provided with a cultural form they are genuinely interested in and may have previous experience with, young people are able to exercise a great deal of agency. This is only amplified when in the company of other young people who are engaged in similar practices. While some youth arts programs exist where the young person does not necessarily have experience in the cultural form of music, there are programs such as The Site and The Push where the young people participating are genuinely interested in pursuing music as a way to creatively express themselves. This challenges how we understand youth arts programs more generally: moving away from the governance and ‘transformation’ agenda so many of them utilise, to an approach where the cultural form itself is not only the focus but also operates as a way for the young person to understand themselves. It also means that programs themselves can focus on music with facilitators stepping into the *‘cool guys’* role, as Andy suggested.

Conclusion

I advocate in this thesis for youth arts models to replicate approaches that organisations like The Site and The Push utilise, ones that favour and position music at the front and centre of their organisation. These frameworks should also incorporate considerations of the full gamut of music-making (from listening practices, through to releasing music and performing music, as well as interactions with audience), and the intersections music-making initiates between vulnerability and resilience. Ultimately, as I have argued in this work, what brings these processes together is self-disclosure, a practice that is central to all aspects of music-making. It also helps young musicians negotiate experiences of vulnerability to enact a resilient self.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Schedule Scoping Interview

Please note that these are indicative questions.

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Things like your age, where you live, whether you attend school or uni?
- Can you tell me about what got you interested in making music?
- Where do you draw your inspiration from?
 - Do you seek inspiration from other musicians?
 - Do you draw upon personal experience and observing what's going on around you?
- How would you describe the kind of music you make?
 - Genre's can be quite limiting, but if you had to, what genre would you describe your music as being?
- Thanks for sending that song through earlier. Can you tell me what process you went through in making it?
- What issues do you deal with in your music?
- How do you use technology as part of your music-making?
 - Do you follow artists online? Which ones? How do you interact with them?
 - Can you tell me about your set up? What software/hardware do you use? Did you teach yourself these?
 - Do you post your music online? What's the decision process when it comes to this? How often? Do you know how many downloads/streams your tracks get?

Youth Arts Worker Interview

Please note that these questions are indicative questions.

- Can you introduce yourself, your current role, and what previous roles (if any) you have had working within the youth arts sector?
 - If you've only worked within [your youth arts program], then can you tell me about what led you to working here?

- Can you tell me about how your current role at [your youth arts program] differs from some of the other work you've done in the sector?
 - Are the young people you worked with from a different background?
 - Are young people involved in the services in different ways?

- Thinking about some of the programs you run, how are young people involved?
 - What do young people typically do during your workshops/programs?

- Thinking about the step before that, how do you first engage young people in your services?
 - Via partner services? What percentage of young people just call up etc. and ask to be involved?

- What would be some of the main issues/problems you face as a youth arts facilitator?

- What effect do you think being involved in an organisation like this has on the young person?

- Ok, so my work looks at the ways in which the concepts of vulnerability, creativity and resilience are conceptualised within the youth arts academic literature. Something I'm really keen to get an understanding of is whether these current understandings are actually accurate for those working within your sector on the ground.
 - Within the academic literature, there appears to be a rather flat understanding of vulnerability. It's usually positioned as something that is negative and some go as far as suggesting it's something that needs to be overcome. Thinking about your own experience of working with vulnerable young people, can you tell me about your own meanings of vulnerability?

 - Similarly, there is also a rather flat definition of creativity with the youth arts literature. It is usually positioned as a 'fix'. Once again, thinking about your own experience, can you tell me about your own meanings of musical creativity?

 - Finally, resilience is often positioned as an 'end-state', and a state that can only be reached once vulnerability has been overcome via the employment of creativity. Thinking about your own experience, can you tell me about your own meanings of resilience?
 - It could be that resilience is not a concept that you've encountered within the sector...is wellbeing one?

- With these three concepts in mind, why do you think young people engage in your service?

Appendices

- In general, do you think creativity is something that can be taught to young people? Do you feel as though your service develops and teaches creativity, or do you think it is a skill that is dependent upon the environment you are within?
- What effect do you see your organisation having on the young people you work with?
- Do you think the skills they learn as part of being involved in your organisation set them up for situations they may face outside of this context?
 - Are they learning skills that aren't just music related?
 - How have you seen this?
- What role do you see music and engaging in a music-making practice having on the young person's engagement with vulnerability and resilience?
- Are there any other questions/comments you wanted to make?

Case-Study Interview 1

[PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE ARE INDICATIVE QUESTIONS]

Ok, so this discussion is really just about following up on some of the points that came through in the earlier interviews. For some of these questions, it might be that we focussed on them in some detail earlier on, and for others we might have only briefly covered them.

- What have you been listening to lately?
- Have you played any shows since we last spoke? How did they go?
- Can you tell me about playing a show? What's the day like preparing for it and what usually happens on the night?
- A lot of musicians speak about finding their identity through listening and making particular styles of music. When you were younger, what role did music play in helping you figure out who you are?
- Thinking about the type of music that you make now, do you feel as though you identify with the ideas and aesthetics of that style?
- For some young musicians, music-making provides an opportunity to deal with and explore personal problems in a safe way. Others on the other hand use music-making as a way to escape personal stuff. Do you identify with either of these methods?
- Last time we spoke a little bit about reaching other people with your own music. What impact does knowing people are listening and identifying with your music have on you?
- If you weren't playing music, what do you think you'd be doing?

Case-Study Interview 2

[PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE ARE INDICATIVE QUESTIONS]

- Can you tell me about what you've been up to music-making wise since we last spoke?
- Can you tell me about the process of collaborating with someone? Do you find that your own ideas and vision for a song are complemented by the others own ideas and vision?
- When you make a song, do you draw inspiration from your idols or others creating the same sort of music would go about it?

Next up I'm going to get you to show me how you use technology as part of your music making. This could be you recording something with your phone and uploading that to some music software, or just creating something on Ableton for example.

- Let's pretend we're writing a new song. For this exercise, I want to stress that the quality of the song itself isn't the important part! I'm interested in the steps you take when writing something new and how you use technology as part of that process.
- We will then spend time beginning to write a song. Questions that might accompany this are:
 - What do you do if you hit a problem with the program?
 - Once you've done the original idea, do you then add more instrumentation?
 - Do you find yourself experimenting with different effects, plug ins, or recording techniques?
 - I imagine this process is a little different to how you would usually go about creating a new song. Can you recall the last song you made and the process you went through in terms of making that?
- Can you show me what you do when you upload a track?
 - Was this process similar to the process you went through with your previous work?
- Can you show me what you do when you're ready to share a track online via your social media profiles?

Case-Study Interview 3

[PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE ARE INDICATIVE QUESTIONS]

- Thinking about the music you were into when you were younger compared to the music you're into now and the music you make now, how do you think your tastes and style has changed over time?
- Do you feel as though there's a strong music community around you?
- Can you tell me about the role those around you play in supporting your music-making?
- Can you tell me about some of the connections you've made through music? Have those been important to you?
- Is there someone in particular that you look up to and has offered advice and support?
- Thinking about this music community and your place in it, how has technology been used to connect with others?
- Do you try and keep up on new trends and new ideas within your scene?
- In the last interview we spoke a little about collaboration. In the past when I've spoken to musicians about collaboration, people have mentioned the fact that not only did it open them up to a new way of doing things, but it also made them feel more confident in their own music. Can you tell me about how you feel about collaborating with others?
- Do you feel as though music-making can be a career for you?
- Do you feel as though you are part of the music industry at the moment?

Appendix 2

Interview Details

Interview	Participant	Location	Time
STAGE ONE			
Scoping	Mark	Skype	June 16 th 2014
Scoping	Maz	Skype	June 19 th 2014
Scoping	Ryan	Skype	June 23 rd 2014
Scoping	Ash	Skype	June 24 th 2014
Scoping	Vincent	Skype	June 25 th 2014
Scoping	Dani	Skype	July 2 nd 2014
Scoping	David	Skype	July 16 th 2014
Scoping	Dez	The Site	July 22 nd 2014
Scoping	Noah	Skype	July 22 nd 2014
Scoping	Cameron	The Site	July 28 th 2014
Scoping	Bob	Café	July 29 th 2014
Scoping	Julia	Skype	August 6 th 2014
Scoping	Dylan	Café	August 7 th 2014
Youth Arts Worker	Nat	Office Space	June 11 th 2014
Youth Arts Worker	Andy	Office Space	June 24 th 2014

STAGE TWO			
Case-Study 1	Dani	Skype	September 30 th 2014
Case-Study 2	Dani	Home rehearsal space	October 3 rd 2014
Case-Study 3	Dani	Café	October 4 th 2014
Case-Study 1	Ryan	Skype	November 5 th 2014
Case-Study 2	Ryan	Home rehearsal space & rehearsal/recording space	November 10 th 2014
Case-Study 3	Ryan	Café	November 16 th 2014
Case-Study 1	Dez	Café	December 15 th 2014
Case-Study 2	Dez	The Site	January 19 th 2015
Case-Study 3	Dez	Café	January 23 rd 2015
Case-Study 1	Julia	Skype	October 21 st 2014
Case-Study 2	Julia	Home rehearsal/recording	October 23 rd 2014
Case-Study 3	Julia	Café	October 24 th 2014
Case-Study 1	Mark	Skype	October 20 th 2014
Case-Study 2	Mark	Skype	November 2 nd 2014
Case-Study 3	Mark	Skype	November 12 th 2014

Appendix 3

Recruitment Material (Scoping Phase)

Musicians needed! Can you help?

If you're a young person (16-25 years old) and make original music then you might be able to!

I'm a PhD student at the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney. My research is looking at the importance of music-making in the lives of young people aged between 16 and 25 who have a diverse range of life experiences. This could mean things like living with a disability or chronic illness, being indigenous or Torres Strait Islander, being culturally or linguistically diverse, being a migrant or refugee, or identifying as same sex attracted or gender diverse. As I'm sure you're aware, lots of young people are looking towards music-making as a way of expressing themselves.

My research will involve sitting down with you either in person or using a video chat (Skype, Google Hangouts, Viber or FaceTime) and having a discussion about the importance of music-making for you, where you get your inspiration from, and how you use technology as part of that music-making process. The interviews will last one hour max and you'll be reimbursed with a \$20 iTunes voucher as a thank you for your time.

The research is part of the Young and Well CRC's Research Program Connected and Creative and is supervised by Associate Professor Amanda Third and Associate Professor Alana Lentin.

If this sounds like something you or someone you know would like to participate in, then please contact me via the details below:

Mob: 0431 XXX XXX
e-mail: m.hartup@uws.edu.au

Michael Hartup
PhD Student
Institute for Culture and Society University of Western Sydney
Building EM, Parramatta Campus

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The approval number is **H10634**.

Appendix 4

Recruitment Material (Stage Two Case-Study Interviews)

Hi _____,

I hope you're doing well. I wanted to thank you again for helping out with the research. I think we uncovered some really interesting stuff.

I'd be really interested in conducting a series of follow up interviews with you. There would be three interviews, all designed to get a better understanding of your music making practice and what role that practice has in your life. They're designed to last between 1 and a half to 2 hours. They would take place face-to-face at locations that are mutually convenient. I'd ideally like to conduct these interviews over the next few months (October – December). There will also be what we call a textual analysis. This will involve me listening closer to your music and having a look at your fan pages on facebook/twitter and your music distribution profiles.

If you are interested in participating you will be sent a new Participant Information Sheet which has more information about the interviews and textual analysis, as well as a new Consent form. Like last time, you will need to have a read of both and sign the consent form and send it back to me.

If you are interested, then please let me know what possible days and times work to meet within the next week.

If you'd prefer not to do the follow ups, then I completely understand. I do feel as though you may be able to offer a real insight into music-making however! Any other questions, then please feel free to shoot me an email.

The research is part of the Young and Well CRC's Research Program Connected and Creative and is supervised by Associate Professor Amanda Third and Associate Professor Alana Lentini.

Thanks again,
Michael

Appendix 5

Participant Information Sheet – Young Musician (Scoping Phase)



Research Project Title: Young People and Music Making Practices.

Hi,

My name is Michael Hartup and I am a PhD student at The University of Western Sydney in Parramatta. My research is looking at the importance of music-making in the lives of young people aged between 16 and 25 who are from a diverse range of life experiences. This could mean things like living with a disability or chronic illness, being indigenous or Torres Strait Islander, being culturally or linguistically diverse, being a migrant or refugee, or identifying as sexuality or gender diverse. As I'm sure you're aware, lots of young people are looking towards music-making as a way of expressing themselves. This research is about understanding your own experiences of making music, how you use music to express yourself and what effect this has on your sense of wellbeing.

The research is part of the Young and Well CRC's Connected and Creative Research Program. The research is being supervised by Professor Amanda Third and Professor Alana Lentin. The project has received ethics approval.

What is required?

You will be asked to participate in one interview, approximately one hour in length. If you live in or around Sydney, the interview will take place at a location convenient for you. This could be a local café, youth centre, your home or your recording studio if you have access to one. If you live in another part of Australia, then the interview will take place via an online video chat (Skype, Google Hangout, Viber, or FaceTime). In the interview we'll discuss the role music-making plays in your life. The interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder.

After the interviews have taken place, they will be transcribed into a word-processing program by myself for analysis. All your responses will be treated as confidential, which means that in all publications, you will not be identifiable.

What will you receive?

By participating in this research you will be helping to put forward your own understanding of the role of music-making in the lives of young people. You will also receive a \$20 iTunes voucher as a thank you for your time.

Will the study involve any discomfort to me?

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary. In the interview we will talk about how you use music to express yourself personally. If the conversation brings up anything you feel uncomfortable about, then please consider accessing one of the following services: Lifeline (ph: 13 1114), Kids Help Line (ph: 1800 55 1800), ReachOut (www.reachout.com) or Beyond Blue (www.beyondblue.org.au). Contact details for these services will also be offered to you again during the interview.

Interested in participating?

Great! You will need to be a young person aged between 16-25, be making your own original music, and be from a diverse background and life experience.

You will also need to send through a sample of your music. This could be either as an mp3 or as a link to your soundcloud, bandcamp or triple j unearthed page. This is so that I can get an understanding of the music you make and how you use online technology to get your music out there. If you don't have a soundcloud, bandcamp or triple j unearthed profile, then a link to your facebook or twitter profile is also ok. All of this information will only be used as a way to inform the interview we have.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Thank you for your interest in this project!

If you have any questions about the research, please email me at: m.hartup@uws.edu.au

Mr Michael Hartup
Mobile: 0431 XXX XXX
Email: m.hartup@uws.edu.au

Please retain this sheet for your information.

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The approval number is **H10634**.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on tel +61 2 4736 0229, fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome

Appendix 6

Consent Form – Young Musician (Scoping Phase)



Research Project Title: Young People and Music-Making Practices.

- I have read the information sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.
- My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular question in the study.
- I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Information Sheet.
- I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I consent to being audio recorded during interview sessions with the researcher.

Please note, if you are under the age of 18, a parent or guardian is required to sign this form.

Participant's Name:

Participant's Signature:

Date: / /

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Appendices

Parent or Guardian's Name

Parent or Guardian's Signature:

Contact details:

Appendix 7

Participant Information Sheet – Young Musician (Stage Two Case-Study Interviews)



Research Project Title: Vulnerable Young People and Music Making Practices.

Dear _____,

Thank you for participating in my research project on the music-making practices of vulnerable young people. Your participation was invaluable. I'd like to formally invite you to participate in a follow up series of interviews as part of the same research. The interviews will cover what we spoke about in the initial interview but in more detail.

What's involved?

This time around, you will be asked to participate in a series of three interviews, approximately one and a half to two hours in length. Last time, if you were outside of Sydney we spoke via an online video chat. This time however, the interviews will take place in person, face-to-face. The interviews will occur once every three to four weeks, however, the exact time and location will be one that is convenient for you. All interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder.

Each interview will cover a different theme.

- In the first interview we will follow up on some of the key ideas we covered in our initial discussion.
- In the second interview we will discuss how you make music. We'll have a chance to talk about some of the music that you like, and how you go about making music yourself. This interview will also include a 'technology walk-through' which will involve you showing me how you use technology when making music and how you use online services to share your music online.
- In the final interview, we'll chat about your local scene, the people around you who make music, and those you look up to.

After the interviews have taken place, they will be transcribed into a word-processing program by myself for analysis. All your responses will be treated as confidential, which means that in all publications, you will not be identifiable.

This part of the research will also involve what they call a textual analysis. This will involve me keeping an eye on your social media and music distribution profiles to get an understanding of how you use digital technology to engage in the music making process. This will start 1 week before our first interview and will finish at the completion of our last interview.

What will you receive?

By participating in this research you will be helping to put forward young people's own understanding and perspective on the role of music-making. You will also receive a \$100 iTunes voucher as a thank you for your time. This is in addition to the \$20 voucher you received as part of our earlier interview.

Appendices

Will the study involve any discomfort to me?

Any discussion about personal things will be done within the context of music-making. However, if you do feel distressed at any point, please consider accessing one of the following services: Lifeline (ph: 13 1114), Kids Help Line (ph: 1800 55 1800), ReachOut (www.reachout.com.au) or Beyond Blue (www.beyondblue.org.au).

Interested in participating?

If you're interested in participating, you will need to sign the accompanying consent form. Please also send through a link to your social media profiles and music distribution profiles.

Thank you, once again, for your interest in this project!

If you have any questions about the research, please email me at: m.hartup@uws.edu.au

Please retain this sheet for your information.

Mr Michael Hartup
Mobile: 0431 XXX XXX
Email: m.hartup@uws.edu.au

Appendix 8

Consent Form – Young Musician (Stage Two Case-Study Interviews)



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – YOUNG PEOPLE

Research Project Title: Young People and Music-Making Practices.

- I have read the information sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.
- My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular question in the study.
- I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Information Sheet.
- I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I consent to being audio recorded during interview sessions with the researcher.

Participant's Name:

Participant's Signature:

Date: / /

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Appendix 9

Participant Information Sheet – Youth Arts Workers



PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET – YOUTH ARTS FACILITATOR.

Research Project Title: Young People and Music Making Practices.

Hi,

My name is Michael Hartup and I am a PhD student at The University of Western Sydney in Parramatta. My research is looking at the importance of music-making in the lives of vulnerable young people aged between 16 and 25 with a particular focus on how young people themselves experience vulnerability, creativity and resilience within the context of music-making. The research aims to explore young people's perspectives and experiences as a way of informing current youth arts practice. To inform these interviews however, I am spending time talking with facilitators of youth music-making initiatives to get an understanding of some of the issues faced in engaging young people in these programs. The research is part of the Young and Well CRC's Connected and Creative Research Program. The research is being supervised by Professor Amanda Third and Professor Alana Lentini. The project has received ethics approval. The approval number is **H10634**.

What does the study involve?

You will be asked to participate in an informal, semi-structured interview, which will last no longer than one hour. The interview will take place at a time and location convenient to you. We will discuss any issues you see as major in engaging young people as well as your own understandings of the concepts of vulnerability, creativity and resilience within a youth arts context. You will be encouraged to reflect upon your full experience as a youth arts worker, and not just on the experiences you have gained in your current position.

The interview will be recorded using an audio recorder. Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary.

After the interview has taken place, it will be transcribed into a word-processing program by myself for analysis. All your responses will be treated as confidential, which means that in all publications, you and your organisation will not be identifiable.

What will you receive?

At the completion of the interview you will receive a summary of what was discussed in the session. An executive summary of the research will also be provided within 12 months. Upon request, a copy of the thesis can also be provided.

Will the study involve any discomfort to me?

There are no likely significant social, legal or professional risks in participating in this project. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and the interview will be held in a time and location convenient to you. All information will be stored securely and remain confidential.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw any time without giving a reason and without any consequences

Interested in participating?

To participate in this research you will need to be currently working within a youth music-making initiative.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Thank you for your interest in this project!

If you have any questions about the research, please email me at: m.hartup@uws.edu.au

Please retain this sheet for your information.

Mr Michael Hartup

Mobile: 0431 XXX XXX

Email: m.hartup@uws.edu.au

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The approval number is **H10634**.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on tel +61 2 4736 0229 fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome

Appendix 10

Consent Form – Youth Arts Worker



Research Project Title: Young People and Music-Making Practices.

- I have read the information sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.
- My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular question in the study.
- I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Information Sheet.
- I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I consent to being audio recorded during the interview with the researcher.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: / /

Researcher's Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Contact details: _____

