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Young People, Music and Political Participation : From the Cultural Politics to the Political Cultures of Young People

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**YOUNG PEOPLE, MUSIC AND POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION: FROM THE CULTURAL POLITICS TO THE
POLITICAL CULTURES OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

By

Benjamin Taaffe

**A Thesis submitted as Partial Fulfilment
of the requirements for the Award of
Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Sociology and Anthropology**

**At the Faculty of, Community Services, Education and Social Sciences,
Mt Lawley Campus,
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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This study of young people's participation in politics seeks to investigate some of the areas where music and politics intersect in the lives of young people. From a broad interest in young people's participation, the relationship between young people, music and political participation will be explored. An initial account of the relationship between music and young people's political participation in advanced industrial capitalist societies such as Australia will be established. This relationship has previously received little academic attention. Dominant views of young people that suggest they are not interested in politics, or that they are irrelevant to political decision-making, deny young people's ability to participate. The established literature in the field of young people's political participation is limited in that it operates within a narrow framework which excludes most young people's activities and behaviours. It is apparent that many young people are excluded from formal political participation in contemporary advanced industrial societies. It is thus hoped that this study may help inform future research into the political participation of young people, through the identification of a broader framework for the understanding of young people's participation and politics.

In the absence of in-depth fieldwork this project is heavily based upon a critical analysis of current and past literature in fields of study including youth studies, cultural studies, music, politics, civic identity, social movements and the various spaces between these fields. Knowledge of events and activities is also drawn from journalistic accounts and less formal sources such as music websites, flyers and album sleeves. Through reconsidering the dominant discourses and theoretical frameworks within which young people's political participation is conceptualised, a broader conception of political participation is offered. The significance of young people's own perspectives of politics and participation is emphasised. The importance of considering both local and global influences upon the form and content of young people's political participation is stressed.

It is argued that young people's use of music, through both production and reception, and with varying degrees of intent and specificity of meaning, should be interpreted as having political relevance and as contributing to the form and content of young people's collective and individual political identifications. Contemporary political institutions and discourses need to broaden their scope to include the multiple and diverse modes of political expression and participation found in numerous places. Differences in the type of participation favoured and the issues most relevant, based upon age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, physical ability, culture, style, taste, or any other sources of difference present in society, need to be valued and negotiated fairly in decision-making processes. If governments in advanced industrial societies are to achieve higher levels of participation in their democratic political systems they need to come some way towards accepting forms of participation that occur through music. They also need to encourage the processes that facilitate the construction of politically active identifications associated with young people's use of music.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief, incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or contain any defamatory material.

Signature....

Dated.....5/12/04.....

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INTRODUCTION

Your question is: why am I so interested in politics? But if I were to answer you very simply, I would say this: why shouldn't I be interested? That is to say, what blindness, what deafness, what density of ideology would have to weigh me down to prevent me from being interested in what is probably the most crucial subject to our existence, that is to say the society in which we live, the economic relations within which it functions, and the system of power which defines the regular forms and the regular permissions and prohibitions of our conduct. The essence of our life consists, after all, of the political functioning of the society in which we find ourselves. So I can't answer the question of why I should be interested; I could only answer it by asking why shouldn't I be interested?

- Michel Foucault, in response to a question posed during a debate with Noam Chomsky (Foucault & Chomsky, 1971)

It seems that music is a very important part of life for many young people – far more important than politics often is. There is no need to conduct a study to determine the general preference of young people for participation in cultural activities involving music over participation in political activities. The preference for music would clearly blast politics off the stage and it would certainly dance it off the floor. However, at certain points, the two may not be so easily distinguishable. This study of young people's participation in politics seeks to investigate some of the areas where music and politics intersect in the lives of young people. Certainly, in much broader terms, culture is important to any understanding of politics (Crothers & Lockhart, 2000), but the exact relationship between young people, music and politics is less clear and has received little academic attention. Aside from my own personal interest in and passion for music, music strikes me as one aspect of many young people's lives that is of great importance and is highly relevant to their everyday experiences. At the same time, music seems to have a particularly strong potential to connect with political issues relevant to young people's

needs and perspectives. Music's potential in this regard is demonstrated by the association between music and politics in multiple historical contexts. These associations, between diverse musical genres and a variety of political issues, have been well documented (see Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Garofalo, 1992; Pratt, 1990).

The aim of this study is to establish an initial account, and further the understanding, of the relationship between music and young people's participation in politics. This relationship will be assessed within the context of advanced industrial capitalist societies such as Australia. The age group of interest, which I am referring to as 'young people', is by no means considered a homogenous or easily definable group. Many prominent studies in the field of youth research within advanced industrial societies identify the ages of 13 to 25 as an appropriate range for the consideration of young people's political participation at this specific historical juncture (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). This conception of young people, however, says as much about the local dominant discourses of youth and the social and political contexts within which it is conceived as it does about the diverse range of people who might find themselves within this category. Nevertheless, the conditions and experiences shared by groups of young people because of such conceptions are very real and worthy of consideration.

This study represents an exploration of the resources that young people in advanced industrial societies have for engaging in political deliberation about issues concerning their lives, and of the forms such engagement takes. It is hoped that the perspective presented can offer new ideas about young people's position in relation to politics. In particular, young people's ability to resist, challenge or change those aspects of society that might cause them disadvantage, and their ability to engage in those areas of politics most important or relevant to their lives will be given most attention. The significance of this study ought to be understood in light of the condition and experience of many young people in the present context of corporate globalisation amidst the dominance of neo-conservative politics. In many advanced industrial societies, young people seem to face the effects of such conditions more than many other groups. This study is also significant at a

conceptual level for the fields of research into youth, political participation and music. It hopes to give recognition to the efforts of many young people in expressing political views and exercising influence. Previously, such efforts have often been ignored and/or denied. It is thus hoped that this study may help inform future research into the political participation of young people, through the identification of a broader framework for the understanding of young people's participation and politics.

Unfortunately, the fieldwork essential to establishing precise accounts of cultural or music-based forms of political participation is well beyond the scope of this research project and there will be no such accounts given. In the absence of in-depth fieldwork this project is limited to the consideration of research already conducted in related fields of study. It is influenced, no doubt, by my own observations of activities and events involving young people in Perth, Western Australia, and my experiences as a young person deeply involved in local cultural activities and very interested in politics. Despite this interest in politics, as a young person it is difficult to find effective outlets for political expression or gain a sense that my interests and view point matter, or could be heard in formal political institutions as they currently stand. Accordingly, the following discussion of issues related to young people's participation in politics and their use of music is heavily based upon a critical analysis of current and past literature in fields of study including youth studies, cultural studies, music, politics, civic identity, social movements and the various spaces between these fields. Knowledge of events and activities is also drawn from journalistic accounts and less formal sources such as music websites, flyers and album sleeves.

CHAPTER 1

The Paradox of Young People's Participation

There is an apparent paradox that one faces when embarking upon an investigation into the political participation of young people – it seems that young people experience much lower levels of participation in politics than older groups in society, but, at the same time, they are found to be much more likely to participate in political movements. Indeed, they have featured prominently in such movements throughout recent history and into the present. They have been well documented as civil rights activists, freedom of speech fighters, feminists, environmentalists and anti-war protesters over the past half-century or so, and more recently, huge mobilisations of young people have been involved in coordinated anti-globalisation demonstrations and some of the largest public demonstrations in history against the continuing United States led wars against middle eastern countries and their people. 'Apathetic' is one word often used to describe the groups of young people from which the young participants in these actions have come. Uninterested and self-absorbed are two others – evidently something does not add up. Is disenfranchisement chosen on the basis of some cynical self interest, or is it a cynicism born of disenfranchisement? Ideas about young people's political participation would seem to require some reconsideration.

Youth Apathy & the 'Lost Generation'?

In the contemporary literature relating to young people's participation in politics in advanced industrial societies such as Australia, there is an abundance of studies and commentary about the low levels of civic and political participation among young people (Blackhurst, 2002; Burfoot, 2003; O'Toole, Marsh, & Jones, 2003). In Australia, despite compulsory participation in voting for those over the age of 18, it is still found that young

people are most likely to enrol to vote incorrectly (*Rock Enrol*, 2004). In the slightly broader terms of party participation, political interest and understanding of the political system it has been repeatedly found that young Australians are sorely lacking (Vromen, 2003a). International comparative studies have found Australian young people display some of the lowest levels of political interest and knowledge (Hahn, 1999; Mellor, Kennedy, & Greenwood, 2001) The majority of the studies of political participation frame such lack of participation as a problem for the democratic process. Many seek to explain it in terms of disengagement, apathy or a lack of political knowledge, usually offering strategies to resolve the problem (Beresford & Phillips, 1997; Cowan, 1997; Damon, 1998).

Discussions of disengaged young people, 'youth apathy' or the 'lost generation' (Damon, 1998; Kimberlee, 2002, p.87) have been common and some have proposed that a new generation of young people simply do not care about politics (Cohn, 1992; Eckersly, 1995). Vromen (2003a) found that three government reports on Australian political behaviour in the past 10-15 years and much of the academic literature have purported that "young people are apathetic, disinterested in and not very knowledgeable about formal political processes" (p.81). Furthermore, researchers have argued that young people are generally oriented more towards their own self-achievement than to broader social commitments, and concerns have been voiced that individualist trends such as gaining private wealth are taking precedence over the idea of the commonwealth (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Jonsson & Flanagan, 2000). As Putnam (cited in Vromen, 2003a) explains

[Generation] X-ers have an extremely personal and individualistic view of politics. They came of age in an era that celebrated personal goods and private initiative over shared public concerns. Unlike [baby] boomers, who were once engaged, X-ers have never made the connection to politics, so they emphasise the personal and private over the public and collective (p.79).

Arguments based on rational-choice approaches have indicated that such disengagement and self-interest is 'rational' behaviour and should be expected (Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 1995). However, these findings

represent an interesting contradiction to broader longitudinal research into the political values of people in 'post-industrialised' societies, which indicates that people generally have more reason to be interested in politics in the 'post-industrial' age (Inglehart, 1988, 1997). They also fail to account for the highly apparent political participation that does occur among some young people.

Nonetheless, the general perception that continues to be found in much of the academic and government discourse, and certainly in mainstream media, is that the younger generation "have checked out of politics and community involvement, preferring to disengage completely" (Cowan, 1997, p.193; Vromen, 2003a). This can be seen as a shift from the general perception of young people as politically active and radical during the period of spectacular youth participation in the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s – that of the young 'baby-boomers' (Altbach & Laufer, 1972; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Indeed, as the grand social movements, including the youth movement, faltered and were seen as coming to an end (Freeman, 1983; UNESCO, 1981), research in the field subsided and seemed to change its focus from understanding and negotiating the new force of young people as political actors, to concerns about the lack of participation and civic involvement of young people (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Sears, 1990).

Additionally, both Australian and international studies of the media have found that young people are most often portrayed as victims and as deviant, not as oppressed, resistant or politically active (Cushion, 2004; Kimberlee, 2002; Sercombe, 1991; Vromen, 2003a). As Cushion (2004) states, "conventional media wisdom insists young people are simply not interested in politics" (p.1). In his analysis of the British media's coverage of recent antiwar protests he argues that, even when young people's acts of political participation are portrayed when participation is clearly taking place, they are represented as "passive, consumer-led individuals"; as misinformed and irrational; and as "not concerned with forming a united front but establishing a personal identity and creating a private space" (Cushion, 2004, p.6). Similarly, media coverage in Perth of a student antiwar protest in 2003

organised by youth activist group 'Books Not Bombs' (www.booksnotbombs.org.au) focused heavily upon the issue of students wagging school, and a lone incident in which one young protester set fire to the Australian national flag and was apprehended by police (Barrass, 2003; Stevens & Hewitt, 2003). The intention behind this act is not known, as the young protester's view was not given any consideration in the flurry of media coverage this incident received. However, his actions were automatically portrayed as thoughtless rebellion, much like vandalism, rather than a principled protest against nationalism and its attendant military adventurism. Therefore, it seems young people are constructed as non-political in the dominant contemporary discourses – as lacking a role in politics.

The Exclusion of Young People From Participation

Certainly, many young people have been and still are saying that they are not particularly interested in participating in politics. In a comparative study of six major western democratic societies, Australian students indicated the least interest in politics (Hahn, 1999). In a review of political surveys, and discussion of his own involvement in youth politics in Australia, Healy (1999) reports:

Recent surveys tend to support a view that young people have a healthy cynicism for pretty much anything to do with politics: politicians' ethics, how seriously politicians take their views (or anyone else's), what the future holds for young people. In 1996, for example, a national survey found that the majority of young Australians expect a poorer quality of life in 2010 than now and predict the 21st century to be a 'bad time of crisis and trouble' rather than 'a new age of peace and prosperity' (p.200).

However, it does not necessarily follow that young people do not wish to participate in politics. It might also be that conditions they experience preclude them from gaining such an interest.

Recent studies that do account for such participation of young people as is occurring identify barriers to widespread participation among young people such as social exclusion and alienation, and frustration with formal political structures (Blackhurst, 2002; Cowan, 1997; Kulynych, 2001;

Schlozman et al., 1995). Frazer and Elmer (1997) give an account of the exclusion of young people from political participation:

When young people do act politically they are, like many adults, disabled or rebuffed by organisational structures or by the fact that their demands cannot, within existing power and authority, be met. They find their voices marginalised or muted, their demands neutralised and redefined, their organisations reorganised (p.189).

Findings of a Victorian investigation into young people's role in the environmental movement illustrate this process of exclusion. In this study, relatively few young people were found to have ongoing commitment to the organisations that make up the environmental movement (Youth Research Centre, 1991). It was found that several barriers operate to limit young people's access to the organisations involved in the environmental movement (Youth Research Centre, 1991). The barriers identified included modes of decision-making; the types of activities available for participation; and the costs involved in doing so. In situations where such barriers were less prominent, or non-existent, it was found that participation occurred at significantly higher levels (Youth Research Centre, 1991).

Congruently, other studies have shown that formal politics as it exists in contemporary western capitalist democracies is something that takes place away from the everyday lives of most people, and most especially young people (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Martin, 1999; Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 1999). Flanagan and Sherrod (1998) describe this as a "marketplace democracy" (p.449), where young people are seen as consumers of government rather than participants in civic life. Some go so far as to suggest that young people are the group most excluded from political participation in western democratic societies (Arvanitakis, 2003; Bell, 2003). In Australia, research has shown that most young people doubt that governments care about what they think, believe politicians to be dishonest, and see the major political parties as incompetent (Ellis, 2004; Healy, 1999, p.200). Indeed, such views are more consistent with the longitudinal research into political values of Inglehart (1988; 1997), as mentioned above.

At the same time, it could be observed that in most advanced industrial societies, in which I have argued young people are excluded from political participation, there are policies and programs aimed at involving young people in the conventional political process. There is a growing body of work that argues in favour of an increase in young people's participation in the decision making processes of established political systems and other organisations through conventional means (Brennan, 1996; Burfoot., 2003; Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). Youth representatives, youth affairs councils, youth consultation processes and the youth arms of major political parties, such as the Young Liberals Party in Australia (www.youngliberals.org.au), can be found to differing extents across western democratic societies. Additionally, the importance of civic education and community involvement for young people was stressed in many studies of their political participation throughout the 1990s and governments across the western world responded with a strong movement towards civic education in school curriculum and youth programs (S. E. Bennett, 1997; Brennan, 1996; Hahn, 1999; Matthews, 2001; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997).

However, these attempts to incorporate participation into the pre-existing structures and conventional forms of politics are viewed with scepticism by many. In a study of such attempts in the United Kingdom, Matthews (2001) found little demand for these types of participation from young people themselves. He argues "that many youth forums are flawed and inappropriate participatory devices, often obfuscating the voices of many young people in local decision making" (Matthews, 2001, p.299). Some have considered such attempts to encourage participation within the existing structures and institutions to be suspect to claims of control or manipulation. Within these structures and institutions positions of power are monopolised by the older generation (Sercombe, 1998). Young people are incorporated into powerless positions within the social and economic structures. In his discussion of youth participation in Australia, Ewen (1994) argues that the move to incorporate young people into the conventional participatory practices is motivated by the desire to contain young people's catalytic and

radical potential – “absorption through participation” (p.16). He notes that these attempts are most common in places where the youth movements of the 60s and 70s were strongest (Ewen, 1994).

Vromen (2003a) explains that the institutionalisation of compulsory political or civic education into the secondary school curriculum and through government programs results from the view that “young people have not been successfully socialised into Australia's political culture” and as such they need to be taught more about conventional politics (p.81). However, it has been found that there is very little qualitative research to support such responses (Vromen, 2003a). They rely, instead, upon assumptions about the causes of young people's lack of interest in politics and about what counts as ‘proper’ or ‘real’ participation. Discussing similar problems in the United Kingdom, O’Toole, Marsh and Jones (2003) suggest:

Too often, concern about youth political disengagement is focused on an impending future crisis of political participation and on the failure to induct young people effectively into ‘adult politics’, rather than on the failure to engage with young people and with the issues that affect and concern them. Overall, if there is one lesson our research suggests, it is that political literacy cuts both ways: perhaps government should listen more (p.359)

Rather than incorporating young people into adult dominated politics, on the basis of preconceived ideas of what makes for participation, it seems that qualitative research is needed to come to a more productive and realistic understanding of young people's political participation.

Finding Participation

What little qualitative research that has been undertaken recently, both internationally and in Australia, suggests that young people are in fact very far from being the apathetic and disengaged individuals that they are perceived as (Ellis, 2004; France, 1998; Vromen, 2003a). O’Toole, Marsh & Jones’ (2003) research concluded,

that young people are very far from being politically apathetic. They are, in fact, highly articulate about the political issues that

affect their lives, as well as about the disconnection between these and mainstream politics (p.359).

Australian research has also found that young people show very strong interest in specific single political issues such as immigration policy reform, the environment, reconciliation or an Australian republic (Beresford & Phillips, 1997). Healy (1999) discusses the cynicism in young Australians as about only what they see as "official" politics. He argues that otherwise young people have a far better understanding of social issues and of attitudes towards them than they are given credit for. He identifies among young people a far greater willingness than the rest of the population to take political action on issues close to their hearts and states that this willingness is ignored and denied. He also identified early signs (in 1999) that this social consciousness is starting to, or at least has a great potential to, turn into a mass political consciousness (Healy, 1999). Recently, some have gone further to express the opinion that the present generation of young people are more politically motivated than any group before them. As quoted in Vromen (2003a), Hill writes, in a recent article for the Sydney Morning Herald;

If you had to stereotype Gen Xers as political beings you could say: they want more power and influence than any generation before them; they get frustrated when they can't control their future the way they'd like to; they are pragmatic; they want a government that's workable and gets points on the board; they are not overly satisfied with major political parties; they are attracted to 'symbolic' issues such as reconciliation, the republic and the environment; and they are very sceptical (p.79).

Whether or not one holds the view that young people possess the highest motivation for participating in politics compared to any other group, it is clear that young people's ability and motivation to participate in politics is most often severely understated, and is certainly unrecognised in any effective way in the conventional political domain.

Indeed, higher levels of motivation to participate, and scepticism about the present state of politics and avenues for political participation, seem to be a likely finding when one takes into account the growing array of social and

economic pressures upon young people in western democratic societies of the present globalised/postmodern era. A widely held view is that changes as a result of the process of globalisation and the prominence of neo-conservative politics contributes to this exclusion from political participation, affecting young people more significantly than other age groups (Arvanitakis, 2003; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Global barriers to communication, cultural exchange, travel and trade have been broken down through the gradual processes of globalisation (Arvanitakis, 2003; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Thus young people are exposed to more diverse and numerous cultural and social groups. Also, resulting changes to the labour market have created far fewer opportunities for secure employment in entry-level jobs. Similarly, there are fewer opportunities for those with less formal education, whilst education becomes increasingly inaccessible to many young people due to privatisation (Arvanitakis, 2003). Due to the prominence of neoliberalism (or economic rationalism as it is more commonly known in Australia), increased market-based governance of social relations and the erosion of civic entitlements have been linked to the alienation of young people from society and politics in advanced industrial societies, including Australia (Bessant, Watts, & Sercombe, 1998; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998) – it might often seem to them that whilst being required to work as hard as those generations before them, young people are getting less in return for their efforts.

Identifying the fracturing of state boundaries and the growing power of transnational corporations as characteristics of globalisation, theorists argue that state-based parliamentary politics is becoming irrelevant to young people (Burbach, 2001; Burgmann, 2003). Discussing the implications of this process for political participation, Burbach (2001) argues that conventional political parties,

are no longer relevant or able to facilitate change because they have been discredited, destroyed, or have fallen under the sway of international capital. Due to the compromised state of political parties and leaders, traditional politics is increasingly viewed as a spurious arena of activity by large swaths of the globe's population, especially by the youth, which has become apolitical or practices a new 'anti-politics' (pp.9-10).

Politics confined to state institutions and structures are not suited to dealing with the range of global issues affecting young people. Frazer and Elmer (1997) argue that these conditions of exclusion that young people experience assert an oppositional political role. They explain,

as a mixture of so-called market logic and governmental authoritarianism is imposed in institutions of civil society and state alike, the only process by which such exertions of power can be challenged are themselves political (Frazer & Elmer, 1997, p.189).

This establishes young people's role in politics as one oppressed by political structures and dominant views of politics, and as such, one of resistance to such oppression or exclusion. Therefore, rather than rendering young people apolitical or politically irrelevant, it can be seen that exclusion from political participation acts only to assert the political aspect of young people in such circumstances. As Pandit G, social activist and member of electronica/dub group Asian Dub Foundation, explains: "This context of struggle and being a warrior and being a struggler has been forced on me by oppression. Otherwise I would be a sculptor, or a gardener, carpenter – you know, I would be free to be so much more" (Otchet, 2000a, p.48).

The prominent position of young people in many social change movements and actions in response to the important political issues affecting them supports Frazer and Elmer's (1997) argument. Studies from the United Kingdom and Eastern Europe show that when important issues arise, young people have repeatedly constituted a significant proportion of the efforts to tackle them (Wallace, 2003). Their resistance to various sources of oppression and exclusion from conventional political participation can be found in young people's attempts to influence political decisions outside of the conventional arenas for doing so. Issues including globalisation, environmental degradation, human rights, sexism, refugee rights and war are taken on by a significant proportion of young people. Indeed, young people can now be seen as recently constituting the most significant proportion of some of the largest acts of mass political protest ever seen. The antiwar demonstrations across the world leading up to the American, British and Australian invasion of Iraq were said to be the largest and most widespread

of their kind. With turnouts well into the millions in some major cities and in the hundreds of thousands all over the world, young people featured prominently (Cushion, 2004; Grey, 2003; Hancock, 2003). Young people's leading role in these types of political actions show further evidence that, in general, young people desire and are capable of a more direct and influential role in political processes.

Conclusion

Constructions of young people as non-political ignore two important and quite obvious truths. Firstly, they ignore young people's lived experiences of political issues, such as those associated with the processes of globalisation. Secondly, they ignore certain types of apparent political activity in which young people do often participate. Such constructions are right to raise concerns about the lack of young people's participation in established modes of participating – voting, party participation, conventional political interest and understanding of the political system are crucial to the systems of political representation in democracies of advanced industrial societies such as Australia. If these conventional modes are seen as the limit to the types of activities young people might use to participate in politics, then very little participation is apparent. However, this view represents a very narrow conception of political participation. Within this view, notions of apathy, individualism and self-interest are sometimes used to explain the lack of participation among young people, but have little evidence in their support. Rather, it is suggested that constructions of politics and young people, and inflexible structures of participation act to exclude them from participating in formal politics and prevent their political development. Therefore, a broader understanding of political participation in relation to young people's experiences is needed.

CHAPTER 2

The Political Participation of Young People Reconsidered

Ideas about what counts as political participation are of central concern in this discussion. By a narrow definition it would seem that young people are not participating in politics. In a broader sense, political participation may take a range of forms which might facilitate the wider inclusion of young people in politics and political processes. In a reconsideration of political participation, the concept of the 'political' itself must be rethought and the history of political discourses in advanced industrial societies considered. Mainstream and dominant ideas of the 'political' in contemporary academic and government discourses of young people's participation have been highly influential. In their own activities and efforts to resist exclusion from political participation, young people themselves suggest broader conceptions of what might be considered political. It is through these suggestions that one might begin to identify the connection between music and political participation.

'The Political' & Discourses of Participation

To start with, a usefully broad definition of the 'political' is given by Agnes Heller (1991). She points out that the 'political' denotes a sphere, or domain, in which deliberation occurs, and that it signifies a quality shared by those objects that enter into that domain (Heller, 1991). Tracing the idea of the political to its roots, Swift (2001) explains,

Aristotle thought that 'man is a political animal', by which he partly meant that what is special about human beings – what distinguishes them from other animals – is their capacity to come together collectively to deliberate and decide how they are going to organize their society (p.64).

Other ideas of what exactly constitutes the political give varied and contested accounts of what type of deliberation is considered political – deliberation

about what, by whom and by what means? (Crick, 2000; Held, 1991; Swift, 2001). From the well known feminist view that “the personal is political” (Swift, 2001, p.5), to Max Weber’s perspective in which power and authority are the focus, or to a broader understanding where all social experiences are potentially political (Nash, 2000), it may well be that only such loose definitions as Heller’s (1991) can operate to define the concept in general.

Hence, it is the idea of the deliberation itself that is at the centre of the concept of ‘the political’ in this study – the discursive contest that takes place in order that the reasons for or against any decision or course of action are weighed up, carefully considered or completely ignored before being acted upon. Generally speaking though, such deliberation, to distinguish it from any other act of non-political deliberation, must be concerned with the order or form of the social environment that one wishes to live in and has been convincingly argued as such (Crick, 2000; Vromen, 2003a) - though it is accepted that this concern may manifest in any number of specific possibilities or actions and is highly dependent upon context. Indeed, it is such questions as ‘deliberation about what, by whom and by what means?’ and the contexts in which they have been asked, that are an important part of the subject of this study.

There has been a multitude of academic fields dedicated to and answers proposed to these questions. In relation to young people, the field of research into political participation can be seen as having emerged during the late 1960s in American literature, with roots in the research of political participation and in early behavioural research of young people in the 1950s and 60s. Early political theory and research conceived of political participation as limited to issues of nation state governance, viewed voting as the primary means by which participation occurred, and ignored the actions of young people (Keniston, 1971; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba & Nie, 1972). The content of the political domain – that which is to be deliberated – was seen only as issues and ideas concerning the maintenance of social order by the nation state. Early youth theories and research generally conceptualised young people as a single cohesive group, who inhabit a transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood, characterised by turmoil, irrationality

and apathy – they were generally considered as irrelevant to political participation (Bessant et al., 1998; Bucholtz, 2002; Soares, 2000).

With the development of theories about the political and the role of the state, such as liberalism or socialism, discourses of the political came to be concerned with other functions of the state such as welfare provision and economic intervention as well as maintaining law and order, and with the limits of these functions (see Ashe et al., 1999; Pierson & Castles, 2000). Through this, the distinction between the political and the social began to be broken down – the state was seen to have a role in intervening in social conditions such as poverty and freedom (Martin, 1999). Issues that were once excluded from the dominant political domain include racial equality; gender equality and those issues related to what feminist theorists have called the private sphere; freedom of speech; and environmental conditions and costs, to name a few (Ashe et al., 1999). However, the assumption that the modern state and its functions form the extent of that which is political remained prominent, as it continues to today.

With further changes in the socio-economic and political contexts, and the development of different ideas about politics and society, young people were able to force their way into the discourse of political participation during the sixties in a wave of organised collective activities across some of the larger western democratic societies of the world (Altbach, 1973; Bone, 1977; Palocz-Horvath, 1971). The attention of political theorists was firmly captured by student activity and the civil rights movement, shortly followed by the feminist and antiwar movements, in the United States. (Freeman, 1983; Keniston, 1971), and by near revolutionary activities led by young people in Paris and Prague (Palocz-Horvath, 1971). Young people were no longer considered as irrelevant to discourses of political participation and a swarm of related research activity ensued.

In the Australian literature, even though significant anti-war, feminist and Aboriginal rights movements were established in Australia (Burgmann, 2003; Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2000), there is much less evidence of attention given to young people's political participation. In an analysis of the movement towards youth participation in Australia from the 1960s, however, Ewen

(1994) identifies this period as central to the establishment of young people as significant actors in the political process. He writes of the Australian government's response to the international youth movement of the 1960s as fitting into the broader international response of "absorption through participation", a reaction aiming for the containment and assimilation of these potentially disruptive youth (Ewen, 1994, p.16). Generally, the 1960/70s was a period where young people's political participation was given considerable international attention in academic and political discourses.

Following this period of heightened attention given to issues of young people's political participation, significant changes in the form and direction of the discourse began to take place. A very important shift was occurring in the way that young people were conceptualised – theories of both political participation and youth moved from viewing young people as a single, coherent and identifiable group and began taking the huge variety of experiences of the younger generation into account (Arvanitakis, 2003; Bynner, Chisholm, & Furlong, 1997; Wyn & White, 1997). Although differences in participation levels and patterns based upon ethnicity, gender and socio-economic position had been discussed in some early studies (Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba & Nie, 1972), it became apparent that most studies of young people in the past were more accurately studies of only a small portion of the young people from only a few places. A report published by the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) states:

These young people were urban, middle-class, and generally university students. Geographically, they were generally confined to North America and Western Europe, although significant student mobilizations of the period also occurred in the cities of Latin America and Asia. Rural youth, working-class youth and vast categories of the uneducated, underprivileged and seemingly mute elements of the younger generation were not discussed in hundreds of studies seeking to explain youth in the 1960s (1981, pp.13-14).

Thus, the scope of the field of research into political participation broadened to include different groups of young people in varying contexts – cross-cultural studies became more prominent and research into differences in

political participation based on ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and location was given more emphasis (Hahn, 1999; Inglehart, 1988; Mellor et al., 2001).

However, some of the earlier dominant understandings of politics, young people, and their political participation continue to pervade much of the contemporary discourses of political and youth theory and certainly continue to inform dominant political structures and governments in particular. The forms of participation that are studied most prominently are somewhat telling of the dominant contemporary understanding of political participation present in established discourses of youth and political research. For a long time, politics has been understood as only relating to the state and its activities or associations (Martin, 1999). By far, young people's participation is only being considered in terms of political activity as a function of citizenship and in relation to conventional politics – in terms of voting patterns, party membership and/or civic activity (eg. community service participation, voting, etc.), or at best, in terms of the organised movements working to challenge such structures and conventions (Ewen, 1994; McAllister, 1992; Youniss et al., 1997; Youniss & Yates, 1999). As Frazer and Elmer (1997) state, "political choice on the part of the citizen has overwhelmingly been understood in research as choice at the ballot box" (p.188).

Additionally, most Australian research ignores young people's own experiences of politics and political participation (Geraldine Bloustien & Peters, 2003). This is considered a serious omission seeing as young people are the intended users of many policies and programs, and especially seeing as they are the ones who will have to live with political decisions the longest (Geraldine Bloustien & Peters, 2003). As identified by Vromen (2003a) there is a lack of qualitative exploration of their experiences. That is, researchers are continuing to look for and measure youth participation in the very same places that they have already exhaustively searched, and found almost nothing. As such, many areas of apparent political activity have not been given due attention in the contemporary field of research, especially in relation to young people (and least of all with an Australian focus).

Contemporary Framework for Understanding Political Participation and Young People

Participation

In recent studies, political participation is being discussed in terms of political knowledge, political attitudes and values, and in terms of the form, duration, and effect of actions taken, or not taken. Frazer and Elmer (1997) offer a suitably broad contemporary framework for political knowledge and attitudes in their discussion of the direction of youth politics research (p.171). They argue that the politically involved are distinguished by sheer political knowledge as well as political beliefs or attitudes. They see political knowledge as often too narrowly conceived of as general knowledge of the accepted political domain in which one is situated. A less limited conception, they state, is

to include knowledge about the practice of politics in all its forms and senses - insight into alternative ways for accomplishing things through political action, understanding the languages of politics, knowledge about interests groups in political arenas, their power base and their ideological stance and so on (Frazer & Elmer, 1997, pp.177-178).

Frazer and Elmer (1997) see political beliefs and attitudes as varying along two dimensions – the content of belief or attitude and the degree to which they are formed at all. They argue that a political attitude would range from highly apparent, intelligible, coherently organised and relatively stable to unstable or incoherent, lacking in clarity, or not existing at all (Frazer & Elmer, 1997). Furthermore, other studies have identified two types of political beliefs – economic political beliefs and cultural political beliefs (Raaijmakers, Verbogt, & Vollebergh., 1998). Raaijmakers, Verbogt and Vollebergh (1998) suggest that economic political beliefs include an individual's attitudes about economic decisions or variables, and that cultural political beliefs relate to socio-cultural factors. In addition to knowledge and attitudes, and perhaps to a greater extent, one's political participation also varies according to the degree to which one's actions are political. That is, if the activities they are

involved in are considered to be political or to have political relevance, then participation should be seen as taking place.

Youth

Numerous discourses of youth, of what it means to be classified as a young person, are apparent across a variety of theoretical perspectives and the idea of youth differs across different social, cultural and historical contexts (Bucholtz, 2002). In regards to young people's experiences of politics and participation, many similarities are apparent, however, in their experiences within advanced capitalist industrial societies, such as the impact of the social, economic and political structures of any given society upon these experiences (Coles, 1997; Roberts, 1997). From a sociological perspective, Frazer and Elmer (1997) suggest youth, "is a period which embraces a related set of transitions in economic, interpersonal and political roles" (p.178). From a developmental perspective, Flanagan and Sherrod (1998) suggest that the years between 14 and 25 are the most appropriate for examining the development of a young person's political identity. It has also been suggested that young people are the group most excluded from political participation in advanced capitalist industrial societies (Arvanitakis, 2003; Bell, 2003; Blackhurst, 2002). As discussed earlier, it is suggested that they face the pressures of a globalised labour market and a trend of deregulation and privatisation of social and economic institutions more than any other age group.

It has been demonstrated that any age-based category of people in Australia is by no means a homogenous or static group and experiences of young people must be numerous and diverse (Wyn & White, 1997). Thus, such similarities of experience must be due more to the construction of the youth category in established discourses than any real common features or similarities that might be shared by the diverse range of people who at different times and in different contexts will be placed into this category. Bucholtz, (2002) points out the numerous difficulties in reaching a universal definition of youth and argues that many different context-dependent views exist and that these views are contested and changing. She argues that the concept should be conceived of as what she calls a "shifter" (Bucholtz, 2002,

p.529) – that its specific meaning shifts according to the context in which it is communicated. As Bucholtz (2002) states, “the referential function of youth cannot be determined in advance of its use in a particular cultural context, and its use indexes the nature of the context in which it is invoked” (p.529). Therefore, when we talk about the shared political or economic experiences of young people in a certain ideological or cultural context we are saying as much about the context itself as we are saying about young people’s experiences.

Young People’s Political Participation

There is much work beginning to emerge internationally, including some Australian studies, which are challenging the established conceptions of young people and politics, and are critical of the current state of politics in Western democratic societies. Established conceptions of young people in political discourses have been found to individualise and decontextualise young people’s identities, omitting their subjectivities, and failing to grasp “the multiplicity, fluidity and context-dependent operation of youth identities and identifications” (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997, p.121). Research conducted in the United Kingdom has begun to explore how young people’s political participation is determined by the structures that define and limit what counts as political and as participation. In his qualitative study of the relationship between young people’s rights and responsibilities, France (1998) discusses this perspective and notes that rather than passively accepting the definition imposed upon them, some young people actively create new forms of political practice and, in some cases, new political identities. A more diverse range of views about the most effective way to conceptualise youth participation, which relate more realistically to the fragmented and diverse range of young people’s experiences, is beginning to emerge. Nash (2000) suggests that,

wider definitions of power and politics are needed to encompass the formation, contestation, and transformation of identities and institutions across the social field, if fluid, fragmented, and fast changing contemporary social relations are to be understood (p.2).

In an analysis of the decline of young people's membership in unions within Australia, Palmer (1990) came to the conclusion that a deconstruction of the concept of youth is needed to understand this phenomenon accurately. He argues that, of the contesting explanations for the decline in youth union membership, none adequately take account of the multiple influences on the diverse experiences of many different young people. In particular, "the material impact of class, gender and 'race' relations and the importance of locality and ability in determining who joins trade unions" needs to be much better understood (Palmer, 1990, p.151).

In her more recent article about youth participation in Australia, Vromen (2003a) sharply criticises the existing field of literature on young people's political participation and the current Howard government as lacking relevance to, and failing to account for, the ways that young people actually practice participation. She argues,

we need not accept claims that there is a 'crisis' in the political and civic engagement of young Australians. Instead, we see that the traditional ways of seeing participation can be broadened to be more inclusive of this generation of political actors (Vromen, 2003a, p.96).

In line with the current state of this field of research internationally, it seems little is known about young Australians' resources for engaging in conflictual relationships outside of organised movements and conventional means (Frazer & Elmer, 1997). Vromen goes on to argue that young people's efforts to participate in forms of individual and collective activism should be considered in government and academic discourse as valid and productive forms of participation. She cites their willingness to participate in boycotts as an important finding (Vromen, 2003a, p.96). Similar findings have been reported in studies conducted in the United States (Olander, 2003).

The international emergence of 'new social movements', in which young people are playing a vital role, has fuelled further efforts to challenge conventional ways of thinking about politics and participation. At a time of the growth in the power and prominence of private multinational corporations and an apparent invasion of young people's cultural lives through branding,

mass-commercialisation and commodification, new social movements are an alternative form of political participation to the questionable state-based, corporation friendly political parties of the present. Single issue and identity politics form the content of these new types of movements. They are seen as “corrosive of older class, gender and national loyalties and identifications which organized the cultural life of older generations” (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997, p.124) – changing from the old form of social and political divisions to a new array of singular elements from which any number and combination may combine to constitute young people’s experiences more accurately at any point in time. Indeed, young people in advanced capitalist industrial societies especially, are exposed to an exploding array of diverse cultural forms resulting from “the growing influence of diasporic cultures spawned by the newer generations of ethnic minority groups” (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997, p.124) and by new possibilities for cultural production and communication offered by new technologies. Zygmunt Bauman (2001), a sociologist who has specialised in postmodern identities, recognises this when he states:

Our dependencies are now truly global, our actions however are, as before, local. The powers which shape the conditions under which we confront our problems are beyond the reach of all the agencies invented by modern democracy in the two centuries of its history; as Manuel Castells put it – real power, the exterritorial global power, flows, but politics, confined now as in the past to the framework of nation-states, stays as before attached to the ground (p.149).

State politics based upon the old social divisions has thus become insignificant for many young people. A new, postmodern, politics has begun to take place, offering much more relevance and new forms of participation to many young people (Burbach, 2001).

For example, one of the most important, and certainly the most well known, manifestation of these new forms of political participation is the anti-globalisation movement. The anti-globalisation, or anti-corporatism movement as it is sometimes known, has caused a huge impact on global politics in recent years, with its globally youth-based following and drive (Burgmann, 2003; Harden, 2002). Popular analyst of the anti-globalisation movement Naomi Klein (2001) has argued that because of the multi-faceted

and complex nature of the issue of globalisation, a multi-faceted and decentralised movement against globalisation has arisen. Explaining one large-scale demonstration, she states, "People went to Quebec City looking for lots of different things. It was incredibly chaotic and decentralized. It wasn't one protest or two protests: It was hundreds of protests" (in Cooper, 2001). Commenting upon the most well known of the anti-globalisation demonstrations in Seattle Burbach (2001) states,

The established political parties were largely absent in the streets of Seattle. Present was a potpourri of organisations with no singular political platform or philosophy ... Politics in the postmodern age is 'de-centered,' with a wide variety of groups coming together on any given issue to challenge the established order (p.2).

Multifaceted and interconnected issues associated with global processes are seen to be the source for a cohesive but diverse movement against corporate globalisation in which young people and youth based organisations around the world are figuring prominently (Arvanitakis, 2003). Australia is no exception. Numerous movements against diverse but interconnected issues, such as refugee rights (www.reran-wa.org), unjust and illegal wars (www.nwawa.org, www.worldpeaceforum.org.au), and corporate globalisation (www.s11.org), are addressed by a network of organisations and movements with a very strong component of young people. Indeed, the S11 protest in Melbourne against the World Economic Forum in 2000, with around 20,000 people involved, was among the largest and most successful anti-globalisation demonstrations Australia has seen (Burgmann, 2003).

Similarly, emerging throughout the late 1980's and 1990's a dynamic and diverse youth movement has been identified in the United States (James & McGillicuddy, 2001; Martinez, 2000). Mass mobilisations of young people as well as numerous smaller-scale campaigns around numerous issues relevant to the lives and rights of young people have been documented.

Young people around the country are writing laws, getting school clinics built, creating youth-run centers, educating the public about propositions that impact their lives, defeating curfew laws, changing school curricula to make them more reflective of our diverse communities, working to stop dumping

and other forms of environmental racism, and, in the process, becoming players in city halls, school boards, and state capitals around the country. Young people are learning how to be citizens by revitalizing democracy (James & McGillicuddy, 2001).

The assortment of websites for youth organising and communication around issues affecting their lives points to the breadth of this movement and its growth around the world (see International Youth Parliament: www.iyp.oxfam.org; Youth Action Network: www.youthactionnet.org; Free Child Project: www.freechild.org; Listen Inc.: www.lisn.org; California Fund for Youth Organizing: www.tidesfoundation.org/cfyo.cfm; Wire Tap Magazine: www.wiretapmag.org; Just Act: www.iustact.org).

Martinez (2000) tells the story of one particularly inspiring example of this movement taking place in the United States in 2000. In response to a proposed ballot measure named Proposition 21 that would further criminalise youth in the state of California, numerous youth collectives and organisations, and thousands of young people organised and acted to aggressively fight its approval. The proposition would give police and state prosecutors greater power to apprehend and imprison young people, for longer periods and based upon less substantial evidence, in a context where youth crime rates had been steadily dropping and Californian schools were among the most poorly funded in the country. Young people coordinated a series of demonstrations, protests, marches, school walkouts, picket lines and sit-ins around the state. Key roles in these actions were taken by women and men as young as 14:

Third Eye Movement in San Francisco was not unique in having its liaison with the police conducted by a 15-year old (mentored by a young Chicana) and media relations handled by a 17-year-old. In Los Angeles it was 14-year-old Sommer Garza of YOC who handled media for a major demonstration (Martinez, 2000)

Despite the powerful resistance, the proposition was still passed, though the actions against it achieved an increased public awareness and managed to force several key funding bodies to withdraw support.

The emergence of new social movements represents a challenge to dominant ideas about how young people participate in politics. They demonstrate clearly the motivation and aptitude with which many young people are engaging in political action through movements outside of conventional political processes. Questions such as in which groups do young people's sense of commitment and obligation develop are offered entirely new answers from the decentralised nature of these new types of movements. Geographical and ideological boundaries can be overcome and a cohesive movement maintained. Participation that is independent from the conventional political institutions of parliament, organised parties, or trade unions can be achieved. As Nash (2000) states, "it is possible to re-think politics as a possibility for resisting power and transforming social practices outside the dominant institutions of the state" (p.19). Therefore, it seems that politics itself must change to accommodate the new ways of identifying and acting politically, or risk being left out of the realm of significance.

However, this is not to say that the influence and relevance of the old forms of social divisions such as ethnicity, gender, class or age is diminished. To go too far along the line that structural divisions are no longer pertinent to the experience of young people is as much to reduce their experiences away from meaning through individualism as any purely structural view does through universalism. Supporting this view, Roberts (1997) argues that the determining power of social origins and ascribed social statuses over young people's destinies remains strong. As part of a discussion of the European context of youth participation he states,

Social class origins, and attainments during compulsory education even more so, remain excellent predictors of outcomes. There has been no diminution of these long-standing inequalities in labour market life chances. There are still huge inequalities associated with gender and ethnicity though in these cases the strength of the relationship has changed, albeit for some ethnic minorities, and for women in some social classes, more than others (Roberts, 1997, p.59).

Importantly, as Bauman (2001) warns, dismissing the determining power of social divisions or structures puts one in grave danger of losing sight of the collective solutions to the broader social problems that are experienced by

many different young people. He recommends that the many complex dependencies, which are invisible from the vantage point of individual experience, need to be brought into view for an understanding of the collective challenges faced by many in today's world. Therefore, the social divisions identified above, and all other identifiable or potential forms of social division or structures, can be understood as forming part of a field of social influences – the social field – from which any number of factors may influence and interact to shape the contexts in which individual political identities develop and are lived out.

If the positions young people currently hold in relation to politics are to be understood, a view should be taken with a concern to document the diverse range of numerous youth experiences or discourses, not just those highly visible or problematic youth cultures, and not just those traditionally viewed as the most significant (Bucholtz, 2002). Mørch (1997) explains that “societal conditions are represented both as a set of rules and as resources which facilitate different forms of action” and “the individual both draws on and changes social conditions” (p.246). Thus, a view should be taken with attention given to young people's own construction of their political identities with the resources available to them in the cultural context in which they exist – their agency. As Vromen (2003a) states, “Research on political participation ought to be inclusive of participation undertaken around the issues [and activities] that we already know young people to be interested in” (p.81). Indeed, young people's demonstrated ability to critically engage with such social and cultural resources should be acknowledged and built into an understanding of their political identities. Finally, in the present global context, a special interest should be taken “in how identities emerge in new cultural formations that creatively combine elements of global capitalism, transnationalism, and local culture” (Bucholtz, 2002).

Conclusion

The current field of research into young people's political participation is best understood in terms of contesting discourses of youth and politics, in which government and academic discourses, as well as young people's activities

and political acts, influence the complex and changing meanings of the 'political' and the realities of young people's participation in politics. The multiple, fluid and interacting contexts and influences, to which young people's political behaviour and experiences are relative, render any definitive conception of political participation quite useless. Rather, useful conceptions remain open to new and changing forms of deliberation and action negotiating the order and forms of multiple and complex social contexts in which young people exist. Vromen (2003a) defines participation as representing "an expression of individual agency in the political arena" and argues that "the recognition of individual agency is therefore integral to the recognition of the variety of participatory experiences that individuals can and do have" (Vromen, 2003a, p.81). As well as individual acts, collective expressions of agency by groups of individuals with shared experiences or needs, and with complex interdependencies, within the 'political' arena need to be considered and are perhaps more significant.

As collective activism often threatens the authority of the state, a continuing tension exists between collective actors (even those acting in the form of boycotts) and governments that militate against a construction of their activity as valid and productive. Studies are now beginning to emerge that do take open perspectives on political participation allowing for the construction of unconventional and collective modes of participation as valid and productive. These studies allow for both individual agency and complex local contexts at play in young people's experiences of political participation. This allows them to go beyond the conventional understandings of political participation, and of politics in general, opening up new avenues for research and understanding of potential (and existing) arenas of political participation for young people. In the following chapter I will attempt to explain how young people's cultural activities, specifically, their use of and association with music, may well be one such avenue.

CHAPTER 3

Post Modern Identity Politics (Or Apolitics?) – From Cyberpunks to Satanists, Riot Grrrls to Rev-heads, Goths to Gangsters, Home-boys to Hippies, and Ravers to Rock-a-billies.

If the conventional arenas for participating in politics are proving out of reach of young people, or irrelevant to them, then it would seem that useful places to look for new ones would be those most within their reach and those of most relevance to their lives. Studies that give attention to young people's own experiences and perspectives of these factors are having the most success in finding new avenues for research and understanding of potential (and existing) arenas of political participation for young people (Bynner et al., 1997; Sørensen, 1993; Vromen, 2003a, 2003b). However, these studies tend to overlook young people's cultural identifications and activities, including those associated with the production and reception of music. If young people's cultural activities, which pervade their everyday lives, and in which a great deal of importance is placed and energy invested, could be linked to participation in politics, then perhaps a greater understanding of how young people relate to and attempt to participate in politics will emerge. Indeed, there seems to be a long-standing association of informal musical and political discourses involving young people. Through exploring cultural practices, then, as a new arena for political participation even further from the dominant conventional conceptions, but closer to the real experiences of so many young people, the depth and potential of this association can be revealed.

Music-Based Youth Cultures & Cultural Politics

It is nothing new to be discussing the politics of culture or the cultural aspects of politics. Many perspectives hold that culture is central to any understanding of political discourses and activity (Crothers & Lockhart, 2000;

Finlayson, 1999) and that political issues are central to cultural formations (Carrington & Wilson, 2004; Young, 2002). What is new, however, is drawing a link from cultural politics and importantly, a link from the young people's own experiences of cultural activities and identifications, to the discourses of young people's political participation. In relation to contemporary political discourses, where for the most part, young people's experiences have been ignored, culture should be seen as an important concept for understanding the systems of meaning in which political discourses take place. Among other views, culture can be broadly defined as "the collection of learned assumptions that we bring to the daily practice of interpreting the meaning of our reality and ourselves" (Heaven & Tubridy, 2003, p.152). Unquestionably, culture is something that people begin to engage with at a very early age, and it is something that we are influenced by from birth, and perhaps even before, to the end of our lives. It is said that culture defines "the rules (both formal and informal) by which politics takes place and who participates in it" and that it frames the context in which politics occurs in the way that it influences beliefs about, and the organisation of, community, authority and conflict (M. H. Ross, 2000, p.43). Therefore, those dominant discourses of young people and politics that can be seen as excluding young people from political participation should be understood as cultural constructions. Thus it would seem to follow that a challenge to such rules and modes of participation should come upon cultural grounds, or through cultural forms.

Young people's cultural experiences, youth cultures, or youth subcultures as they have often been conceptualised, have been given extra attention over the cultural experiences of older generations in general. The idea of a separate 'youth culture' is said to have been first used by Talcott Parsons as early as 1942 (Wulff, 1995, p.3). Since then, it has been given much attention and, through the work of the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (the CCCS) at the University of Birmingham throughout the 1970s and 80s, it has formed the basis for the growing field of cultural studies internationally (Bucholtz, 2002). A vast array of cultural activities have been recognised and been given a great deal of attention. A great deal of debate about the significance and implications of such cultural activity has been

generated. From 'moral panics' to outright confusion, the reactions have been varied (Cohen, 1980; Springhall, 1998; Thornton, 1994). The CCCS had begun to study the prominence of young people's participation in what they called music and "style-based" subcultures in terms of the social conditions in which they existed, and the responses of young people to these conditions (A. Bennett, 1999, 2000). Numerous subcultural forms have been identified and discussed extensively – Cyberpunks and Satanists; Riot Grrrls and Rev-heads; Goths and Gangsters; Home-boys and Hippies; or Ravers and Rock-a-billies. In the numerous youth cultures identified, music is central to the activities and identifications of their members and binds various, sometimes very different, local scenes around the world. In fact, I have struggled to find evidence of a youth culture that does not have some connections to music in any way or form.

Discourses of Culture & Identity Politics

Subcultural Politics

It is from the early work conducted at the CCCS that the contemporary discourse of the politics of cultural forms has developed. Hall and Jefferson's classic collection of studies *Resistance Through Rituals* (1976) exemplifies this body of work. They explained subcultures and the behaviours associated with them as collective symbolic responses or resistance to the conditions of class. Informed heavily by the ideas of theorist Antonio Gramsci, a set of ideas about youth culture was developed, concerned largely with "describing the extent to which a given cultural formation can be said to serve the perpetuation of ruling class hegemony, or to oppose that hegemony" (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999, p.158). Music was seen as a vital component of the formation of deviant identities through which such opposition or resistance was expressed. It was also argued that such resistance, however, did little or nothing to change the very structures of class that were supposedly being resisted – it was no "subcultural solution" to class inequality, unemployment or educational disadvantage (A. Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004, p.5). What was achieved, it was argued, was some alleviation of the problems involved with such structural disadvantage at a local level in the form of "cultural

space” – both physical and psychological space for recreation, friendships and leisure, and “for the collective expression of subcultural identities” (A. Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004, p.6).

These early class-based perspectives of the CCCS quickly bore heavy criticisms on several fronts. In keeping with the dominant discourses of their time, they were accurately viewed as reducing the diverse cultural experiences of young people to an overly simplified and generalised, and largely unfounded, idea of class resistance (see A. Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000). Middle and upper class subcultural members seemed to be ignored in depictions of working-class resistance. They also excluded the experiences of young women (see McRobbie, 1991) and ignored significant differences in ethnicity and locality (see Amit-talai & Wulff, 1995; A. Bennett, 2000).

Accordingly, subcultural theories broadened to include ideas of patriarchal hegemony and dominant forms of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality as the structural forces to which subcultural forms were seen to respond, though issues of ethnicity continued to be ignored (Carrington & Wilson, 2004; Sharma, Hutnyk, & Sharma, 1996b). In a general account of the role of popular music and youth cultures in young Australian’s lives, Cassidy (1991) talks of the music-based cultures as important areas of struggle against any number of hegemonic forces in the differing Australian contexts. She notes their tendency to “stretch society’s codes on sexual mores, dress and most of all, behaviour”, explaining how they “are in effect breaching the consensus within society and are seen as a threat to the dominant ideology” (Cassidy, 1991, p.36). Addressing the absence of consideration of young women’s cultural experiences in the work produced in the CCCS, Angela McRobbie (1991; 1994), a CCCS theorist herself, has produced a series of contributions to the field, asserting the ability of young women to use cultural activities such as fashion and dance as forms of resistance against dominant ideas of gender and sexuality. A broader range of influences upon youth subcultures was gradually brought into consideration.

Post-Subcultural Theory – Apolitical Identities?

With the rise of postmodern theories and a changing global context towards conditions of post-modernity, the way youth cultures are conceived has continued to change and new youth-centred cultural forms have developed. With a strong influence from analyses of the emerging rave scene in the United Kingdom during the early 1990's and its rapid dispersion across the Western world, 'post-subcultural' theory has become the latest incarnation of the original CCCS work (see A. Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004). Initially, youth cultures' politically subversive potential was thrown into question and new accounts of subcultural activity given. It was argued that "Gramscian accounts of subcultural struggle were redundant in a context within which pleasure had replaced politics" (Carrington & Wilson, 2004, p.67). Some argued that the identification with fashion and music-based styles in various youth cultures allowed by the new modes of post-war youth consumption was better understood as a break away from traditional class-based identities, towards alternative consumer-based self constructions instead.

Sarah Thornton (1995) developed an influential model based upon Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' which identifies elitism and exclusivity rather than oppositionality as driving most youth culture. As Gilbert and Pearson (1999) explain, 'subcultural capital' is thus "the accumulated set of shared terms, values and knowledges according to which subcultural groups distinguish themselves from outsiders" (p.159) and according to which hierarchies within subcultural groups are established. Furthermore, Bennett (1999) advised that Michel Maffesoli's concept of "neo-tribe" should be used for a better account of young people's social and cultural relations usually described as subcultures. In his work, *The Time of the Tribes*, Maffesoli (1996) argues that in contemporary Western contexts, where cultural and social boundaries have been distorted and fragmented by the processes of globalisation and as societies become increasingly consumer orientated, social relations and associations no longer fit the fixed or static notions of class, gender, ethnic or geographical based identities. Rather, such relations should be seen as temporal sites of collective identifications based upon

emotional or symbolic links rather than structural ones in which people continually reconstruct their identities accordingly and through which they express multiple identities over time. As Maffesoli (1996) states, the neo-tribe is "without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form" (p.98). Bennett (1999) explains the neo-tribal association as "a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships" (p.600). He argues that the various interactions and cultural identifications of young people fit much more easily into such a concept.

In light of such views, and with theorists weary of the strong criticisms posed against the structuralist accounts of subcultural hegemonic resistance, the tone of most subcultural theory changed. An Australian study of skateboarders' use of inner-city space in Melbourne identifies a skills-based hierarchy of "street skaters" in terms of Thornton's 'subcultural capital' model.

[W]hile the street skating does transgress normative understandings of how city space should be used, it is not motivated by what by the often idealised "resistance" which plagues some of the subcultural analyses (Snow, 1999, p.24).

Similarly, the reception of the rave scene as it hit the United Kingdom and various other locations in advanced industrial societies could be read as an example of a new apolitical tone of the cultural theory at this time. Indeed, it is from her discussion of this scene that Thornton (1995) developed the 'subcultural capital' model. In his discussion of Sydney's underground techno scene Chan (1999) states,

techno subcultures seem to revel in their hedonism, their impermanence, their diversity and their constant rush forward to the future. These traits are often read as an indication of the successful depoliticisation of young people (Chan, 1999, p.65).

The subcultures of the past, long established as sites of resistance to the ruling class hegemony, or to hegemonic identities, were rethought – perhaps they weren't actually resisting anything at all? Perhaps they weren't even subcultures?

Though both Thornton and Bennett's work represented important criticisms and developments of the established conceptions of subcultures, they seem to carry with them a strange sense that young people's cultural activities should not be conceived as political in any sense. Important influences such as class or gender are played down and, particularly in Thornton's analysis, are replaced with the ideas of cultural status and consumer driven identities. In this sense, they can be seen as one-sided in their analysis, ignoring the diverse contexts in which youth cultures may operate. As Gilbert and Pearson (1999) note, Thornton's argument "tends to imply that all cultural practices are equally apolitical; however 'radical' a group may consider their particular practice to be, in truth they are merely trying to accumulate subcultural capital at the expense of the unhip" (pp.159-160). For some reason, findings of hedonistic or pleasure seeking attitudes and motivations for cultural activities were assumed to be exclusive of more socially bound motivations, not to mention political motivations.

In Bennett's use of neo-tribe there seems to be an assumption that, due to the fragmented and fluid nature of young people's contemporary cultural associations and their consumer oriented identities, political expression and activity is left behind in the world of fixed identities and homogenous cultural groups. Of Maffesoli's conception of neo-tribal sociality, Sweetman notes:

Maffesoli plays down the continuing importance of factors such as class: while such structural characteristics may no longer offer a secure and stable sense of identity, 'we can still talk about class, gender and ethnicity alongside neo-tribers' (Sweetman, 2004, p.87).

Emotional links are considered exclusively over ideological bases for connections between young people.

Such assumptions are also present in contemporary government and media discourses of youth culture and echo the discourses of young people's political participation discussed in chapter 1. They should be seen as central to an understanding of how young people's cultural activities can be conceived of as politically relevant, and of why they are presently ignored as

such in the dominant discourses that shape young people's lives. As Finlayson (1999) states,

the mass media are not just neutral observers but are major participants in politics in their own right, locked into competition with other powerful ideological agencies such as the churches, educational institutions and the family (p.152).

Media driven 'moral panics' about the recreational, social and sexual behaviour of young people over time have been well documented (Cassidy, 1991; Cohen, 1980; Kohn, 1998; McRobbie, 1994; Thornton, 1994), and have often been used to justify the oppression of youth cultures and prohibition of cultural activity. The music young people might listen to and the various associations with music-based styles – such as dancing, moshing, drug-use (both legal and illegal), graffiti, clothing, make-up, hairstyles, types of speech, and any number of conceivable cultural expressions – have been subject to repeated concern and criticism through the mass media across advanced industrial societies (Sercombe, 1999; Springhall, 1998). Headlines such as, "Teen Addicts Selling Sex" (Hodder, 2000); "MP Urges Youth Spray-Can Ban" (Gregory, 2003); or "Foley Considers Ban on Mosh Pits" (Franklin, 2001) are common. However, positive commentary or any mention of many of the valuable outcomes of such activities for young people is almost totally absent.

Numerous government responses to new or unconventional cultural activities show their operation according to assumptions that cultural activities of young people are exclusively apolitical, immoral, unproductive, to be feared and in need of control. For example, we see legislation in the United Kingdom aimed explicitly at prohibiting "gathering[s] on land in open air of 100 or more persons (whether or not trespassers) at which amplified music is played during the night" and more specifically, where "music includes sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats" (United Kingdom Criminal Justice And Public Order Act 1994, cited in Gilbert & Pearson, 1999, p.151); we see "skate plates", specially designed to inhibit, and most likely injure, anyone attempting to skate in areas of Sydney's inner-city (Snow, 1999, p.23); and

here in Perth we have recently witnessed a curfew aimed explicitly at young Indigenous Australians sanctioning the removal of young people from the city's cultural centre and nightlife district after dark (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2003). Again, rather than simply accepting a position of exclusion, I argue that these acts further assert an oppositional role for the young people they affect.

At the same time, and often through the very same newspapers, radio shows or television programs that are voicing criticisms and inciting such moral panics, cultural forms are being sold back to the youth market as politically empty consumer items. Through processes of commercialisation and mass-marketing, youth cultures are often constructed as non-political. Every season a new range of cultural commodities needed to fit the images presented through the pop-culture marketing blitz are all available at any local shopping centre. In her account of the branding of cultural space, especially that of young people, Klein (2001) notes,

Sean "Puffy" Combs has leveraged his celebrity as a rapper and record producer into a magazine, several restaurants, a clothing label and a line of frozen foods. And Raekwon, of rap group Wu-tang Clan, explains that "the music, the clothing, it is all part of the pie we're making. In the year 2005 we might have Wu-tang furniture at Nordstrom" (p.54).

Cultural identifications can now be purchased over the counter – from the food you eat to the music you listen to and the clothes or jewellery to match – 'politics not included'.

The commercial music industry and mass-media market music and its related cultural forms to young people en masse (London, Ramsay, & Hearder, 1997). The result is neatly packaged, easily digestible and non-confrontational cultural forms, mildly offensive at worst, or at best? – Pop. From its inception, the pop music industry has treated the youth market as a single homogenous block, "constantly emphasising generational difference as a safer option than emphasising differences in class, ethnicity or sexual preference" (Cassidy, 1991, p.38). Controversy sells and the sensationalising tendency of mass media has been utilised effectively to publicise countless pop stars to the youth market – from Elvis's shaking hips to Marilyn Manson's

gothic androgyny or Christina Aguilera's explicit pop-sexuality (Cassidy, 1991; Scatena, 1999). Posed against the values of the 'parent-generation' the shock value may have caused many family conflicts or high-school punishments and gained significant media attention, but nothing is said about any political content inherent in many of these forms. Newspaper headlines did not read 'Elvis Shakes Up the Deeply Embedded Racist Values of White Middle-Class Parents: Black influences in his music prove unacceptable' or 'Gender Norms and Conservative Values Thrown into Question as Marilyn Manson Tours Australia'. As Rage Against the Machine and Audioslave guitarist Tom Morello observes:

I think that's not going to be perceived as an accident. It's a crucial part of rolling the wet blanket over us. People should be erecting barricades in the streets for what's going on. Thirty million Americans under the poverty line. Forty million without healthcare. And people are just psyched about Christina Aguilera's short shorts (in Powers, 2003, p.14).

Most commercialised and manufactured musical forms do seem to lack a political edge and encourage a depoliticisation of youth culture.

At the same time, many young people also look beyond the top 40 musical offerings to find music with greater depth, and often more political content, to which they can relate. Even though the cultural matter of young people is being constantly devoured by the multibillion-dollar culture industries and regurgitated in non-oppositional forms, and though it is often represented by commercial media sources as non-political, it does not necessarily follow that there is no political dimension in all of young people's cultural activities across multiple contexts. It surely does not follow that there is no potential for political expression and participation through cultural activities in such contexts. Such political potential is not coming from the culture industry's attempts to neatly package and sell young people's cultural identifications and it will not be found in most media representations of troublesome, disengaged, apathetic, immoral or misguided youth. It can only be found in young people themselves – pop culture is certainly packaged with 'politics not included', but that is not to say that young people cannot bring their own politics into the mix. As Sercombe (1999) explains,

It is clear that we can't deal with youth subcultures simply as the content matter through which powerful mass media interests shape the consciousness of passive audiences. The media are diverse, and they are the product of multiple hands. Young people who are subculturally engaged are intimately involved in the production of representations of themselves and their views on society and the world. ... The reality is that young people are actively and critically engaged in diverse and interactive media. At many points, they, as consumers and producers, have a vital controlling interest (p.9).

At the same time, the influences of mass media interests should not be understated. Its powerful ability to create, change or reinforce public opinions of young people and their cultural activities should not be ignored. As Sercombe (1999) goes on to explain, "to say that youth subcultures are not just the content matter through which powerful mass media interests shape the consciousness of audiences doesn't mean that there isn't a fair bit of that going on" (p.10).

Similarly, even though the influence of class, gender, ethnicity, etcetera has been played down in the theorising of young people's cultural activities; and, as subcultural theories have been heavily criticised for their lack of empirically based research and inability to adequately account for the fluid and fragmented connections between young people's multiple identifications and their cultural activities (A. Bennett, 1999, 2002), it does not necessarily follow that new ways of conceptualising youth cultures and identifications cannot account for the political dimension or influence in these processes.

Conclusion

An approach to politics and culture is needed that does not deny the political potential and reality of many cultural activities or identifications. But nor should it attribute any fixed or single political identities to young people's multiple and fluid experiences of cultural activity and identifications. Concepts such as 'subculture' or 'counter-culture' are certainly out of date and inadequate for the study of cultural formations in contemporary contexts. Emotional and symbolic links operate in young people's cultural relations as

well as a diverse range of political ones. Additionally, the commodification of cultural forms plays a significant part in the processes by which many young people construct their identities, but this is not to say that all that remains to be understood are, as Best (1997) aptly describes them, 'over-the-counter-culture[s]' (p.18). Concurrently, Hutnyk and Sharma (2000) state "it does not follow that (musical) youth cultures possess an indeterminate politics, or a politics of only taste and distinction as implied by some of the post subcultures work" (p.57). If rave cultures are a depoliticised rush to the future or a dissolution in pleasure and hedonism, we ought to ask ourselves why? Indeed, we ought to ask young people themselves. What is it that appeals about the future or the escape from a politics that does not serve us into pleasure? After experiencing disenfranchisement and alienation the fact that we seek different forms of agency should not be taken for evidence that we were never interested in politics in the first place. As I have argued earlier in relation to young people's participation in conventional politics, it seems that, again, individualist attitudes of political and social apathy and consumer-based self-interest have been imposed upon today's young people without any consideration of their own perceptions of the matter.

CHAPTER 4

Cultural Politics & the Potential of Music-Based Youth Cultures for Participation

Along a very similar line as has been argued in relation to the discourses of politics and young people, discourses of culture and young people need to account for young people's everyday experiences. Young people's experiences of structural influences such as class, gender, ethnicity or age need to be considered in ways that take heed of both differences and similarities across diverse and changing contexts, and that acknowledge the influence of powerful institutions such as the media, multinational corporations, governments, and the welfare and education systems. These discourses should also allow space for the influence and agency that young people themselves practice in these processes, including their ability to make changes using the resources available to them in their own cultural contexts. That is, these discourses should recognize young people's political participation. If the political potential of the ways that young people interact and identify with culture in their everyday lives is to be recognized, it must be in relation to this multitude of political forces and discourses. Certainly, it can no longer be accepted that there is simply one dominant cultural formation, the mainstream, as it is sometimes called or one dominant political structure, such as class (for example, see Haenfler, 2004). Therefore, Nash's (2000) suggestion about contemporary politics should be mentioned again, but in relation to the discourses of youth culture:

Wider definitions of power and politics are needed to encompass the formation, contestation, and transformation of identities and institutions across the social field, if fluid, fragmented, and fast changing contemporary social relations are to be understood (p.2).

Postmodern Identity Politics & Music

One perspective that has had a great impact in many areas of social and political thought is the conceptual approach to power developed by Michel Foucault. Foucault (1986) describes power as working *through* all social actors, or subjects as he calls them, rather than *over* them, regardless of their social position or status. Thus, as Gilbert and Pearson (1999) explain, accounts of the political power of music and other cultural activities need to “recognize that there is no single locus of power in society, but rather a multiplicity of points at which power is condensed and dispersed” (p.160). According to this view, the idea of a dominant culture, political structure or discursive formation, exerting power over individuals and smaller or less powerful cultural groups, should be reconsidered. Early accounts of the politics of youth cultures which theorise cultural activities in relation to a hegemonic framework require some rethinking. Instead, power should be seen as operating within and between – not upon – multiple dominant and non-dominant cultural formations, in any number of diverse contexts (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999, p.160).

Based upon feminist critiques and development of Foucault’s view of power, Best (1997) gives a clear account of how resistance can operate through cultural expressions and activities. This account can be used to explain the political potential in young people’s cultural activities and identifications. She explains that the concept of ‘negotiation’ is more useful for characterising the way power operates between dominant and non-dominant groups than a conventional top-down, hierarchical view of power (Best, 1997).

Configurations of power can exist in the form of overt force (i.e. wife battering, child abuse, gay bashing, racial violence, military offensives) or what I will call ‘negotiated’ relations. The feminist in relation to the history of patriarchy, the gay activist in relation to the system of heterosexual norms, or the oppositional musician in relation to consumer culture are examples of negotiated positions. I mean, here, that these subject positions are often enabled by the very structures of domination which they are criticizing and against which they struggle (Best, 1997, p.23).

Young people are inextricably linked to the various structures of domination that influence their experiences in any number of ways, but they are not, as Best (1997) explains, “unconsciously bound to discourses that oppress them, such as patriarchy or consumerism” (p.24). Rather, they “choose negotiated positions, strategically, just as they choose to grant or withhold allegiance to particular discourses” (Best, 1997, p.24). However such choices may be very limited by the discursive options available to young people in various contexts and the constraining influence of social institutions upon their choosing. Nevertheless, these choices can also serve the interests of those making the choice, or represent a challenge to the interests of the beneficiaries of such oppressive discourses. While this might not occur in all cases, the point is that the potential is there. As an example, Best (1997) states:

It is true that, in the context of the production and reception of cultural texts within consumer capitalism, one’s choice is limited, for the most part, in the interests of capital. However, it is both misleading and a simplification to call this limitation strictly a function of domination when the existing options, far from anathema to the interests of some subordinated groups, can, in some instances, serve their interests (Best, 1997, p.24).

Therefore, young people’s interests and identities should be seen as negotiated between dominant and non-dominant groups, at both the individual and collective level, across the social field.

In the same vein, Gilbert and Pearson (1999), informed by the ‘post-Marxist’ theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, describe a process of ‘articulation’ between dominant and non-dominant cultural forms, as opposed to the absorption or determination of one by the other. They explain that the field of social and cultural relations should be seen to be

operating according to the logic of what Laclau and Mouffe call ‘articulation’. As they put it, ‘any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice’. ... The most important effect of such an approach is to enable us to see the extent to which ‘dominant’ and ‘non-dominant’ cultures and formations interact with each other, not simply ‘winning’ or ‘losing’ their mutual

struggles, but negotiating complex and usually ambivalent outcomes (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999, p.160).

As discussed earlier (in chapter 2), political participation should be more broadly defined. Rather than the ability to resist or oppose the static and grand conceptions of a dominant political structure or mainstream culture, participation can be more openly viewed as any active deliberation about a contested decision or course of action where the deliberation concerns the order or form of one's social environment in a given context. Accordingly, young people's articulation or negotiation with oppressive political structures and dominant cultural forms, occurring through cultural activities and identifications such as those associated with their production and reception of music, should thus be viewed as valid political acts – a form of cultural politics. Indeed, as Finlayson (1999) notes:

Popular music, television, fashion, film and so forth are a part of a culture and part of the ongoing political argument of a society as it questions its own identity and goals, just as schools, churches, trade unions and political parties would also do (p.152).

And as Hutnyk and Sharma (2000) state, "the political charge of music can be neither explained away, nor taken for granted" (p.61). Therefore, various instances of cultural identification and activity that, for the reasons outlined above, have previously been constructed or conceived of as apolitical, should be reconsidered in terms of their political potential in this light.

Within the fields of sociology and cultural studies, the importance of the local for understanding cultural phenomena has been repeatedly stressed (A. Bennett, 2000; Gerraldine Bloustien, 2004; Hassan, 1997; Pilkington, 2004). The multitude of music scenes and other key locations of young people's cultural forms, such as music venues, skate parks, shopping centres, or even virtual, web-based, locales should be seen as arenas, or perhaps neo-tribal sites, where negotiation often takes place – where the forces arrayed in support of existing hegemonies are indeed formidable, but also where "serious challenges to hegemonic power" are issued and socio-political statements voiced (A. Bennett, 2000, p.40). Therefore, to develop a

useful understanding of the political charge present, or at least potential, in young people's cultural activities and identifications, precise accounts are needed of the specific points at which they succeed or fail to negotiate new spaces in which the needs and perspectives of young people are accommodated (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999).

In advanced capitalist industrial societies like Australia, the social field can be seen as consisting of any number of competing social or political identities and dominant or oppressive discourses at any one time, as well as the minority or non-dominant discourses to which they are inextricably linked. Ethnicity, sexuality, gender, class, disability and age have been prominent discursive themes shaping the experiences and identifications of young people within the Australian social field. Depending on one's place in this field, the variety of particular discourses that need to be negotiated will vary. The extent to which an individual needs to negotiate particular discourses will also vary according to their vulnerability to disadvantage or exclusion within the existing discourses.

In general, young people in Australia are excluded from political participation more than other age-based groups, and they face an increasing exclusion from the full-time labour market (Arvanitakis, 2003; Bessant et al., 1998). More specifically, vulnerable groups, and especially those young people who are excluded from social and cultural spaces, seem to fare most poorly not only in their position in society, but also in terms of their ability to actively participate in political deliberation. Ethnic minorities, including migrant groups and Indigenous Australians, single parents, lesbian and gay young people, young people with disabilities, and young women have been found to be amongst the most vulnerable to disadvantage and exclusionary discourses in advanced industrial societies, including Australia (Bessant et al., 1998; Coles, 1997; Helve, 1997). Therefore, the negotiation of oppressive or dominant discourses by young people experiencing these conditions should be given most attention. Indeed, it is certainly these groups who would stand to benefit most from an increased influence upon political decision-making processes that is potential through processes of negotiation.

Music can be seen as providing an outlet for marginalised young people to enter into the process of articulation or negotiation with dominant political and cultural discourses. Numerous examples of this process in different musical forms and activities all over the world can be found in the existing academic literature and in other observations of young people's musical activities (A. Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Best, 1997; Otchet, 2000b; Sharma et al., 1996b; Simonett, 2000; Watts, 1997). Hunter (1999) gives an account of the function of music for young people in Australian contexts and describes music as a medium through which young people can actively make sense of their world creating space and identities for themselves. Following from the early non-political depictions of the exploding rave scene, many studies have discussed the use of 'rave' and 'clubbing' experiences by young people for creating spaces where non-dominant sexualities, femininities and masculinities can be tried out and expressed (Brabazon, 2002; Carrington & Wilson, 2004; Gilbert & Pearson, 1999; Pini, 2001; Wilson, 2002). Thus, young people's use of and association with music can be seen as one important aspect of a wide range of possible cultural identifications and activities central to their negotiation of new spaces within a field of dominant and oppressive discourses.

The interaction between local and global settings and structures should also be considered in relation to political cultural processes. Through the globalisation of cultural forms, youth styles, music and collective identifications are translocated to very different political and social contexts to those from where they were conceived. If the experiences of some young people are shaped more by racism and a lack of culturally appropriate recreational space than, for example, gender inequality and domestic violence, or environmental degradation and lack of access to information, then their uses of what might seem very similar cultural resources may differ widely. It has been found that apparently similar cultural forms and activities may hold very different meanings for young people in different contexts. Furthermore, due to the processes of globalisation, new cultural identifications and activities creatively combining elements of "global capitalism, transnationalism, and local culture" are continually emerging

(Bucholtz, 2002, p.545). Technological advances across advanced capitalist industrial societies constantly offer new possibilities for cultural production and communication in multiple locations.

For example, forms of new Asian dance music proving very popular in the United Kingdom have been read as merely examples of “niche marketing” and criticised for their exploitative nature and “fetishization of marginality” (Sharma, 1996; Sharma, Hutnyk, & Sharma, 1996a, p.3). Panjit G of Asian Dub Foundation explains: “By focusing on the exoticism people can say, ‘These Indians don’t mind being poor because they’re spiritual.’” (in Otchet, 2000a, p.48). At the same time, however, numerous studies of the same form of music have noted its empowering qualities for young ethnic minorities and its anti-racist potential in other social and political contexts (Kalra, Hutnyk, & Sharma, 1996; Lockard, 1998; Simonett, 2000). Rap in Tanzania has allowed underemployed youth to participate politically in public discourse (Remes, 1999), while in Zimbabwe, it has enabled privileged urban youth to display personal aspirations through cultural style (Neate, 1994). Therefore, to understand the political potential of any particular cultural activity in its specific context, the particular politics shaping each setting must be identified and understood – instances of cultural or music-based negotiations must be considered in relation to the local and historical contexts of oppression in which they take place (Best, 1997).

Hip-hop cultures have been considered to play a powerful role in the negotiation of dominant discourses for numerous marginalised young people throughout the world. Emerging in underprivileged Black and Hispanic areas of New York in the late 1970s and early 80s, they have since spread rapidly all over the world (Mitchell, 2001). Sharma and Sharma (2000) note: “Hip-hop has been valorized for offering black and other ‘minority’ youth an expressive culture, which allows them to survive and assert a (political) agency in the face of oppressive social conditions” (p.111). Hip-hop cultures have been tied up in discussions of race and ethnicity as well as other interrelated discourses of oppression. One example is the overrepresentation minority groups in the criminal justice system, an issue which continues to have relevance across the western world. As MC Talib Kweli notes: “Yo, activism,

attackin' the system, the blacks and latins in prison Numbers of prison they victim lackin' in the vision... Shit and all they got is rappin to listen to..." (Talib Kweli, *Get By*). Fellow American MC Michael Franti, of Spearhead, argues:

reconciliation between black and white Australia is as much a global issue as a local one ... be it The Bronx or Alice Springs, the colour of a person's skin often leads to prejudice, especially when police are involved. Racial profiling in the United States and mandatory sentencing in the Northern Territory are part of the same global problem of racism (in Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004, p.122).

Within Australia young people's identification with hip-hop is gaining more attention as a significant cultural force (Connor, 2003; Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004; Maxwell & Bambrick, 1994). Connor (2003) explains the political potential of Australian hip-hop acts Good Buddha and Tzu in terms of their negotiation of oppressive discourses in Australian contexts, such as 'mainstream' values and structures, and "the manipulation of the truth by the powers that be" (p.50). In their comprehensive account of Indigenous Australian music throughout Australia Peter Dunbar-Hall and Chris Gibson (2004) state that hip-hop "has become a common feature of everyday Aboriginal life across Australia" (p.122). MC Wire, a well-known Indigenous hip-hop artist from Wilcannia, arguably the most disadvantaged area in New South Wales (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004), explains:

Aboriginal people can relate to hip-hop culture because it's story telling. I could really relate to Ice Cube. Like me, he was an angry young black man, but he was very intellectual about it and he was telling his reality which was removed from my reality, but there were parallels, you know, a black man speaking out about the white oppressor (in Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004, p.128).

With its strong connection to location and community, its roots in the communities of marginalised ethnic minority groups in the United States, and with the recent proliferation of Australian acts, hip-hop is proving to be a very important cultural form for many young Australians, especially those facing exclusion and disadvantage from dominant discourses. Hip-hop provides links to global problems of racism and oppression whilst lending itself to

reinterpretation and reconfiguration to suit local needs and issues around the world.

Dunbar-Hall and Gibson (2000; 2004) stress the importance of contemporary Indigenous Australian musical forms such as hip-hop or country music, and more traditional forms, in asserting and affirming a range of distinct and empowered cultural identities for young Indigenous Australians in various communities and locations across the nation. They describe a contemporary context in which a “well-organised but largely non-Aboriginal tourism industry” dominates the commercial production and distribution of Indigenous Australian music, perpetuating a stereotype of Aboriginal cultures and myths of an ‘ancient’, ‘exotic’ or ‘tribal’ cultural existence that is “out of touch with the exigencies of contemporary Aboriginal life” (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004, pp.185-188).

Original music fills the streetscape of Todd Street Mall, authenticating the objects on sale inside shops, however, local contemporary Aboriginal musicians as yet do not profit from tourism in any comprehensive manner (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004, pp.188-189).

Contemporary Aboriginal musicians such as Yothu-Yindi, Tiddas, The Warumpi Band, Shakaya and many others are forging a place in the Australian and global music markets despite the non-Indigenous domination of the industry. In doing so, they provide relevant alternatives to the dominant and stereotyped conceptions of a diverse Aboriginal population and are positive sources for identifications.

The importance of music’s potential for Indigenous Australians in providing a medium through which political issues can be raised and expressed should also be stressed. As Indigenous folk singer Archie Roach explains,

There were certain things I couldn’t talk about, deal with in my life, so I started to write about it, sing about it, and it was such a release. I’m glad I discovered that – putting your feelings in songs – otherwise I’d probably be committed somewhere by now. Or dead (in Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004, p.92).

In these ways music can be seen as being used to undo some of the inequality and disadvantage imposed upon Indigenous Australians through a history of oppression and exploitation of Aboriginal cultures and identities.

Another interesting example of music's potential for negotiating oppressive discourses is the significant cultural force of Riot Grrrls, a new music-based youth culture that is operating to subvert and resist sexist discourses in the United States. A Washington based youth culture, Riot Grrrl, is a post-punk grassroots feminist movement that has been a strong basis for the development of political identities and participation of young women in recent years (Rosenberg & Garofalo, 1998). In chat rooms and weblogs over the internet, and through the network of local groups, websites, 'zines' and the touring bands that form a significant component of this culture, Riot Grrrls are growing across the United States and beyond. Feminist views and young women's issues are discussed in a large network of highly political 'zines' produced by Riot Grrrl members (Schilt, 2003). Conventions and workshops for organising, zine-making, and discussion around issues including eating disorders, rape, abuse, self-mutilation, racism, and self-defence have taken place (Rosenberg & Garofalo, 1998). Belzer (2004) explains,

Many girls and young women talk about how Riot Grrrl helped them overcome eating disorders, handle emotional problems caused by sexual abuse, and inspire them to have the courage to speak up in the face of oppression in their everyday lives (for example, confronting someone who makes a sexist comment.) Additionally, they succeeded in overturning the male hegemony in punk culture, no small feat considering punk's lengthy history as primarily men's terrain (Belzer, 2004)

With an emphasis on the personal and everyday aspects of life typical of third wave feminist politics, Riot Grrrl represents a social movement less inclined to traditional forms of activism, such as demonstrating and marching, though that is not to say that that this does not still take place (Belzer, 2004). Rather Riot Grrrls are said to forge resistance to sexism and help young women cope with its effects at the same time through the dissemination of alternative cultural representations of women, the provision of support networks and the creation of safe spaces for creative and political expressions and debate.

In some ways, simply existing seems to be a significant political feat in its own right for many music-based cultures (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999). Given their continued presence and importance for many young people, 'underground' music scenes and non-mainstream cultural identifications can be read as successfully resisting the trend of mass-commercialisation and government crackdowns. They represent young people's ability to create cultural spaces for themselves, outside of that dictated to them by governments, mass media or marketing experts. In recent Australian studies the politics of existing in the face of oppressive discourses have been mapped out – Brisbane's youth music scene exists in spite of oppressive and, at times, corrupt government structures and policies (Stafford, 2004), and Indigenous music exists within racist and dominant Australian discourses of ethnicity (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2000, 2004). Stafford (2004) tells the story of how local music scenes survived (and eventually prospered) in Brisbane under the 'iron-fisted' and often 'brutal' rule of National Party Leader Joh Bjelke-Petersen and his corrupt political enforcers – the Queensland Police Force. Despite tight control over and exclusion from local venues, continual harassment and the eviction of local radio station ZZZ (the major supporter of local music in Brisbane) some of the country's most successful bands have emerged out of Brisbane in the last 25 years (Stafford, 2004).

Various other studies account for the ways that diverse cultural formations are used by young people to negotiate the local configurations of dominant and oppressive discourses. Even teenage identifications with Satanism have been noted for a potential to subvert dominant discourses and institutions of social control in certain settings (Lowney, 1995). However, very little literature can be found that investigates the connections to political and civic participation of such examples, or to positive political outcomes as a result of the processes of articulation and negotiation. Studies of music's role in forming, negotiating and creating space for young people's identities in various political contexts are common, but as Cohen (1980) argued from his early investigations into the political nature of youth cultures, it seems that the "form taken by this resistance [is] somehow *symbolic* or *magical*, in the sense of not being an actual successful solution to whatever is the problem"

(Cohen, 1980, p.ix-x). Indeed, Lowney's (1995) study of teenage Satanism found that "like many subcultures" its role was "in social criticism of the dominant culture from which it felt rejected. Lacking the social power to change that culture, Coven members chose to change themselves as a statement to Victory Village" (p.465). In her discussion of the Riot Grrrl culture, Belzer (2004) tells how its achievements are limited to an individual level and that "there were no overt political improvements for women" (p.1). Similarly, through his case study of the global black metal music scene Kahn-Harris (2004) has recently noted "how youth culture can be challenging and transgressive, yet 'fail' to produce wider social change" (p.95).

Most recent studies of the political dimension of young people's use of and association with music tend to identify the temporary or limited nature of any solution offered – that a new space for non-dominant identities can be created and dominant discourses subverted, but only within the boundaries of the settings and duration of cultural identification and activities. In his study of the Canadian rave scene, Wilson (2002) argues that forms of resistance offered to young people are 'empty' in their capacity to effect real changes to the social structures and conditions affecting young people's experiences, and that young people involved in the scene may often fail to find or even desire any oppositional experiences.

[W]hile rave's PLUR [peace, love, unity and respect] revolution might allow some youth to 'feel (temporary) better' about themselves, in the end, what was intended to be a meaningful, united, social movement is little more than false sense of resistance for many ravers (Wilson, 2002, p.397).

Dunbar-Hall and Gibson (2000) explain the potential of music to act as a mediatory text for 'pan-Aboriginal' political issues, such as reconciliation or racism, with real implications for dominant political discourses.

[C]ontemporary popular music by Australian Aboriginal artists has become increasingly evident as a means of mediating Aboriginal viewpoints and agendas into the Australian national consciousness. In this sense, this form of communication with non-indigenous Australians continues to be crucial in promoting acceptance for strategies for nationhood and the recognition of rights in land and law, despite the tendencies of international

music multinationals to favour representations of exoticism. Popular musics are not only reflective of social change, but are implicated in social change as mediatory texts (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2000, p.48).

However, at the same time they note the limitations of this type of mediation in that "reception of these songs is also mediated by the cultural backgrounds, educational levels, and ideological perspectives of both listeners and broadcasters" (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2000, p.59). Hence, they focus more on the importance of music for maintaining and strengthening identity in the face of oppression and suggest that the political charge in music is one dependant on its place alongside "more formal" political participation (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2000, p.48).

Furthermore, some arguments have been posed that the temporary and empty sense of resistance supplied through processes of cultural politics not only fail to effect positive social change, but work against the possibility of such change (Smith, 1994). It is said that a politics of identity aims only to "decenter or subvert", rather than to change, conquer or assert (Burgmann, 2003). Gilbert and Pearson (1999) raise the question of whether non-dominant cultural associations and activities are anything more than just coping mechanisms for oppressed groups in advanced industrial societies, thus acting as 'social safety-valves' to relieve the pressure that otherwise might build up to motivate more effective and successful political action. They explain,

there might be a severe danger of dance culture simply serving as a social safety-valve, a distraction and consolation for a generation for whom prospects for secure jobs, rising standards of living, and opportunities for democratic control over their own lives all look bleak (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999, p.162).

Although Gilbert and Pearson (1999) hold that the political potential of dance culture should not be understated in its ability to "transgress prohibitions laid down by powerful western discourses", they concede that the politics of this culture have been articulated in such a way "as to minimize the impact of such transgression, posing little threat to the ideologies which constitute and legitimate class- and gender-based oppression" (p.179). In addition,

oppressive discourses of age, ethnicity, sexuality, physical and mental disabilities, or any other structural source of oppression, might also be considered as remaining relatively unscathed by the activities of youth cultures.

Negotiation and articulation of oppressive discourses; expression of subversive resistance; the ability to cope under disempowered and oppressive conditions; and creating, maintaining and strengthening identities that are at threat of being lost and which are often misunderstood are all hugely important processes to the lives of many, if not all, young people. This should not be understated or ignored. However, the extent to which truly effective, empowered and self-determined acts of social change or political participation are occurring through young people's use of and association with music is limited. The roots of the rising social pressures many young people face, and the numerous sources of oppression in the lives of various young people, often go further than processes of negotiation, identification or expression can effectively reach. In the contemporary academic literature there is presently a question mark over the potential of young people's cultural identifications and activities to produce social change or positive political outcomes (Kahn-Harris, 2004; Wilson, 2002). A problem exists in that the much talked about political potential of music and youth cultures, in which so many young people invest so much energy and enthusiasm, may not be enough. Thus, more than coping mechanisms are needed to tackle the structural conditions and sources of social inequality, prejudice and marginalisation, and the diverse and multiple formations of such conditions in differing contexts.

Conclusion

The question of 'what is happening once such oppositional political agency is asserted?' stands foremost in any serious consideration of young people's political participation – to what extent might oppositional musical identifications and activities result in positive political change or influence for young people as well as allowing them to cope? The politics involved in young people's cultural formations and processes of negotiation or

articulation should not be confused with political participation in this sense. Nor should a potential to change social structures and political conditions be read into these processes without giving attention to the meanings they hold for the young people involved (Bucholtz, 2002). This is not to say that a potential will not be found in such meanings. If this problem is considered from the perspective of young people's own experiences and understandings, and in relation to the existing discourses of young people's political participation and of politics generally, then it is possible to identify several links from young people's cultural identifications and activities to effective and meaningful modes of political participation. From this perspective, the importance of music and youth cultures for young people's political participation, sits in relation to the conventional discourses of politics, although it is not limited by them.

CHAPTER 5

From Cultural Politics to Political Cultures - Young People Effecting Change Through Music

The musical practices of young people and their associated cultural activities can be seen as providing more than just temporary or empty modes of participation, or simply coping mechanisms. Numerous potentialities as well as many existing areas where young people already use music to effectively participate in politics can be identified. It is through these that a link from the politics of culture, or cultural politics, to political cultures can be conceptualised. Cultural politics can enable political cultures, or culturally empowered and engaged political actors. It might just be that a culturally engaged politics allows for participation of young people in much more effective and enjoyable forms than the established conventional system of political participation as it presently stands in many advanced industrial societies. Political cultural forms, identifications and activities, then, would seem to have a very important potential for communities throughout the world.

Rather than seeing music as an unleashed force for the liberation and empowerment for marginalised young people, I stress that music should be conceived of as a tool for young people, and for governments and others working with young people or researching youth issues. As with any tool, its potential lies in the intent, skill and aptitude with which it is used, and in the appropriateness of its use to any given problem. Like all tools, its use might only benefit certain groups or individuals. A tool might be used for safe, constructive or positive purposes, or for destructive, harmful or negative purposes. One might identify the music industry's use of music as a tool exclusively for the purposes of profit and the resultant private economic growth as benefiting only certain dominant groups of young people in society.

However, unlike many other tools, music can be used by different people at the same time for differing purposes and in many differing ways.

Music & Effective Political Potentialities

Young people's use of and association with music has the potential to support and sustain identifications which might lead to more effective political participation through some other means. Perhaps not an end in itself, but certainly the identity affirming processes involved in music-based cultures should be viewed as one of the necessary means to the end of effective political participation. Indeed, coping under oppressive conditions is surely a prerequisite for any direct effort to make positive changes to social conditions. Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder believes:

If people want to go for the guns and booze aspect of rock and roll, then its there. And it should be. One of the best ways to deal with some problems every once in a while is to dance all over them. At the end of the day, you've done all your thinking-- maybe you voted that day or you held a sign up, and you've talked with your friend and you've kind of got as far as you could get with the issues. You're not going to be able to do anything about it at 1 in the morning. So you're splitting a twelve-pack with a friend, so what do you do now? You rock out. There's a time and a place for everything (in Powers, 2003).

Maintaining and enjoying identities that are subject to the oppressive and absorbing discourses of the mainstream, or dominant cultures, should not be viewed as simply quelling the potential of young people's efforts for social change. Indeed, as young people's politically active identities and the associated cultural identities certainly face these challenges of suppression and absorption, coping-mechanisms should be viewed as essential for any effective political participation to take place. In other words, it is the ability to create or maintain a sense of agency, self-determination, and empowerment through the cultural and music-based identifications of young people that might facilitate the emergence of truly effective, empowered and self-determined acts of social change.

Some attempts to utilise the connection between music and politics for young people are evident in programs that associate music with participation in conventional politics, most notably, in voting. Leading up to the most recent Australian federal election, national youth broadcaster Triple J and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) ran a program entitled *Rock Enrol* encouraging young Australians to enrol correctly and participate in the forthcoming election.

It is a fact that the younger you are, the less likely you are to be correctly enrolled. This means that there are thousands of young Australians who are eligible to vote but can't because they haven't enrolled. Rock Enrol is about encouraging the thousands of young people around Australia who are not enrolled to have their say in the future. Enrolling to vote is a right and is an investment in all our futures (Rock Enrol, 2004).

The program was promoted on-air, and numerous youth music events during the lead up supported the program by featuring links to the *Rock Enrol* website on their promotional material. With a more directly ideological content, a group called Vote for Change ran full-page ads in youth and music based 'street-press' around Australia in the lead-up to the same election. These ads stated the four most prominent arguments for voting against John Howard's government, including examples of how he has lied, practiced divisionary politics, "demeaned Australia in the eyes of the world" and "put profit and big business before ordinary people" (X-press, 2004, p.33). A list of 135 prominent Australian musicians, bands and performers in support of a change in government was included with the statement: "We believe that John Howard has diminished Australia" (X-press, 2004, p.33). Other instances where music has been used to encourage or influence potential participants within the established political structures are numerous (Business Wire, 2004; Evans, 2002; Jones, 2004). Before the most recent presidential election in the United States, American journalist Michael Ross noted that:

In recent months, numerous grass-roots groups – punkvoter.com and musicforamerica.org – have emerged to mobilize younger Americans to vote in this year's election, and

they're using young voters' pop-cultural affinities for musical artists to do it (M. E. Ross, 2004).

However, whilst this type of political use of music is most often made with good intention, its use is limited to participation within conventional modes of participation and politics. In some ways it might be seen as an appropriation of the radical political charge of music acting to diffuse the risk of any serious challenge to the established structures. This kind of appropriation represents more an attempt to incorporate young people into the same political structures that exclude and disadvantage them than any serious potential to change or challenge such structures.

As I have argued, the types of politics that have been found to be more relevant to most young people's experiences are not those typically addressed in conventional state-based parliamentary politics in advanced industrial societies. Such politics rarely address issues from a local or grass roots perspective and they ignore young people's social position, experiences and opinions. In doing so they fail to account for the way that specific local issues and circumstances interplay, and for the specific range of resources (especially cultural resources) locally available, and arguably most suitable, for solving such locally bound problems in young people's lives. Global issues and processes associated with the prominence of neo-conservative politics, globalisation, and the growing power of transnational corporations and their increasing, and disproportionate, effect on young people seem to also stand beyond the realm of conventional state-bound politics. Therefore, it would seem to make little sense to encourage participation in conventional politics as it currently stands.

One of the most striking problems for young people's political participation seems to be the continual failure of conventional political and academic discourses to give attention to young people's experiences and views from their own perspectives. Those in positions of political power are, for example, deaf to the rhymes contained in hip-hop music, deaf to its message, unable to even attempt an understanding of the multiple meanings that hip-hop might hold for young people in differing contexts. More likely, the response is one of confusion or, at worst, revulsion to such oppositional

expressions based upon misinformation, ignorance and fear. As Rosenthal (2001) observes:

When we witness the revulsion expressed by some people toward what they call 'rap,' while they simultaneously complain that they can't understand a word of it, we suspect that it is not merely that they have heard and read bad things about rap, but that they recoil from the sound itself, particularly the voice – generally young, male, black, and confident, the voice of empowerment, of entitlement (p.20).

More concerned with how cultural identities and expressions can be sold back to the youth market, and with how the 'threat' of youth resistance can be diffused or contained, numerous fearful and ignorant government responses based on misinformation not only fail to utilise the positive political potential in hip-hop or other youth cultures, they also perpetuate the marginalised position of young people excluded from dominant cultures and unable to voice their position through conventional means.

It is clear that, to this point, the discourses of politics and of youth, which act to exclude young people from participating in political deliberation, do so through a misunderstanding of young people, their activities and their identifications. Across much of the Australian social research in all fields, a "striking absence of research that takes account of the perspectives of youth themselves" has been noted (Geraldine Bloustien & Peters, 2003, p.38; Schultz, 2001). This is certainly a problem in much of the research undertaken to address the 'crisis' of young people's political participation. Even though their dynamic cultural identifications and activities can be seen to play a significant role in allowing young people to understand and express their own needs, interests and diverse perspectives, unfortunately, this has not translated into a recognized political participation. Young people are not being heard, they are misunderstood, or they are simply ignored. Young people's articulation of their own discourses, discourses of being oppressed, marginalised, disempowered, excluded and so on, are hardly getting through – their discursive negotiations, whilst gaining some concessions, are severely one-sided. It is as if they are speaking in a different language.

A few studies, including some from Australia, are only now beginning to listen to young people's own experiences of politics and participation and look into their everyday activities for answers to the questions about the lack of youth participation and the exclusion of young people from formal politics (Burfoot., 2003; Gauthier, 2003; Olander, 2003; Vromen, 2003a, 2003b). Given the current situation of young people's place within political structures, then, it is no great surprise that these studies which try to listen to young people's perspectives have found that participation occurs outside of conventional state-bound definitions of the 'political' and participation. Young people's volunteering and participation in new social movements are considered an important area of inquiry from which new forms of participation are being suggested.

Yet the predominant perception that musical and other cultural activities or associations of young people have no political significance remains. A significant finding of research into the development of more formal political participation among young people has been the importance of group membership as a young person in forming political attitudes and values, and to participation in politics later in life (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Youniss et al., 1997) In her study, Vromen (2003a) identifies sport as the only form of community or group involvement in which a majority of young Australians have participated. She states: "In terms of looking at 'Generation X's' group-based, collective activities, there was only one category in which a majority had been involved: sporting or recreation groups" (Vromen, 2003a, p.96). However, in her study there was no measure for young people's involvement in their own cultural activities and identifications such as those associated with music – presumably one of the most significant forms of collective or group-based activities for many young people and particularly for those in minority groups and/or from disadvantaged positions in society. This is surprising, given the obvious importance of music to many young people's lives and experiences in societies such as Australia, and the prolific consumption, production and association of music amongst young people (London et al., 1997).

Vromen (2003a) is right to suggest that modes of participation currently ignored by the established field of politics may be identified if more attention is paid to the everyday experiences of young people rather than the conventional 'political' activities which are irrelevant to young people's lives, ignoring their needs and perspectives. However, young people's cultural activities; their participation in music scenes; their multiple and shifting identifications with various 'subcultural' groups; and their own involvement in shaping the cultural forms to which they identify should certainly be considered as part of their everyday experiences. One has only to observe the abundance of diverse music scenes and 'subcultural' groups continually emerging and note the enthusiastic, and often passionate, participation of young people in these groups to become aware of the significance of such activities.

Surely the abundance of politically infused music circulating in these scenes has not also gone unnoticed. From Rage Against the Machine's anti-capitalist radicalism (just have a look at their liner notes), Fugazi's strong anti-corporate stance or John Butler's environmentalism, to the sharp-edged and multifaceted rhymes of MC's Talib Kweli and Mos Def; Pearl Jam front man Eddie Vedder's persistent campaigning for presidential candidate Ralph Nader in the 2000 United States election (Powers, 2003) and Midnight Oil's Peter Garratt standing for and winning a federal seat for the Australian Labor Party in 2004 (Dodshon & Hunter, 2004); countless other local musicians, MC's, artists, dancers, writers, performers and spectators around the world are immersed and entangled in a melting pot of local and global politics – they are living it, expressing it, making it, and they are changing it. To develop a more holistic picture of the 'everyday' of young people's political lives, then, music and youth cultures should not be ignored. It is only here that the languages of young people's cultural political expressions and activities can be learnt.

An interesting research project entitled *Playing for Life* that is currently in progress in Australia seems to have initiated investigations from a similar perspective to that implied here (Geraldine Bloustien & Peters, 2003). A team of international researchers from a variety of academic disciplines is taking a

collaborative cross-generational and cross-cultural approach to explore young people's experiences of the educational dimensions of music and popular culture. In a recent article outlining their project, Bloustien and Peters (2003) explain the three main areas of inquiry as being, firstly, "the causes and effects of alienation, disaffection and social exclusion on youth in technologically advanced societies"; secondly, "the complexity of the ways in which young people engage with popular culture and, in particular, popular music, as a means of agency and as a way of negotiating marginalisation"; and thirdly, "the project further investigates the role of community-based centres (CBOs) as ... alternative learning spaces where young people seem particularly able to develop their own sense of creativity and cultural meaning" (Geraldine Bloustien & Peters, 2003, p.35). Research into young people's political participation should thus look to such innovative studies for approaches that might reveal useful understandings of the cultural processes that can enable young people, especially those experiencing disadvantage or exclusion, to define the issues most important to them, and make positive changes.

To go further than the *Playing for Life* project in an attempt to understand the capacity of young people's cultural identifications and activities to effect positive political change, consideration of the role of music in young people's participation in new social movements is needed. New Social Movements are important collective activities through which politics can be produced and affected, whereas the community-based centres that Bloustien and Peters (2003) describe represent alternative sites for political learning to take place, not action - though this is not to deny their importance. On multiple occasions, new social movements have proven to be effective modes of participation for young people from which numerous positive outcomes have been achieved and changes made (Burbach, 2001; Burgmann, 2003; James & McGillicuddy, 2001; Martinez, 2000). The politics most present in contemporary musical discourses – in the music that young people produce, listen to and dance to – fits into the broad, multifaceted and dynamic character of the politics of new social movements much more easily than into any narrowly defined conception of politics. Furthermore, new social

movements have been identified as one important area where those young people who are participating in political activities do so outside of conventional political structures.

There is a strong connection between music and politics that is apparent in the history of social change and protest movements from the 1960s to the present - from the early protest songs of the folk revival, to the anti-war and civil rights anthems during the 60's and 70's, and to the working-class rants of Billy Bragg or Bruce Springsteen in the Reagan/Thatcher years. A number of texts outline the connection between music and the social change movements of the past (see Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Garofalo, 1992; Pratt, 1990; Rosenthal, 2001). Music is seen 'serving' social movements in a number of ways. In an exploration of the functions of music for social movements, Rosenthal (2001) argues that music can help recruit, educate, inspire, mobilise and sustain people within a movement. He notes that for many, music gave an important sense of validation to newly emerging political identities (Rosenthal, 2001). In his interviews one respondent writes:

Learning folk music (hearing/singing Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Pete Seeger and Joan Baez at the age of about 12) definitely contributed to both my sense of self and my sense of being in the world ... I'm aware that music actually generated that sense of feeling connected in a way that I might not have felt connected if the music wasn't there. And it makes me wonder about the next "story," that of coming out as a lesbian in the 70s ... The women's music movement was absolutely an integral part of my coming out. I have often thought that there are certain songs that I listened to (and I think I was aware of this at the time) that contributed to a better sense of self ... Whether it really informed my coming out, I don't really know. But I'd venture to say it nudged me along the way. I think the most important part of my story, and probably others, is that music helped to form a composite picture of myself, and that it helped me grow into who I became as an adult (in Rosenthal, 2001, p.6).

Rosenthal's findings are supported and further explained by Eyerman and Jamison (1998; 2003), who argue that the construction of meaning through music is a central aspect of collective identity formation. They state that, "songs and music give us access to both feelings and thoughts that are shared by larger collectives and that make better claims, perhaps, for cultural

representativity” and that music can “communicate a feeling of common purpose, even amongst actors who have no previous historical connects with one another” (Eyerman & Jamison, 2003, p.367-368). Therefore, collective cultural identifications and musical expressions are seen as crucial elements of effective social change movements and can represent forms of political participation less susceptible to exclusionary political and social forces, which Eyerman and Jamison (2003) claim to be “significant and largely untapped resources for the academic observer” (p.368).

In theories of contemporary social movements, cultural dimensions, and especially musical dimensions, have been largely overlooked. As McAdam (2000) explains,

the dominance, within the United States, of the ‘resource mobilization’ and ‘political process’ perspectives has privileged the political, organizational and network/structural aspects of social movements while giving the more cultural or ideological dimensions of collective action short shrift (pp.253-254).

Studies that have considered the cultural dimensions of social movements, including recent ones, seem to have stopped their analysis at the 1980s and most tend to focus on the social movements of the 60s and 70s (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Jasper, 1997; Jasper & Goodwin, 2003; Pratt, 1990; Rosenthal, 2001). This places great limits upon their relevance to any new generations of potential political actors, most of whom have probably never heard of Pete Seeger or Joan Baez. Indeed, within the present context where music and young people's use of it are predominantly constructed as non-political and where new forms of social change movement participation are emerging through the processes of globalisation, theories of the role of contemporary music and youth cultures in new social movements are scarce.

The question of why contemporary theorists of social movements have chosen to ignore any post 1980s political music opens up a whole other line of debate, but protest music did not simply disappear in the 90s. New cultural forms and musical styles which young people are constantly forming and engaging with need not be ignored in relation to political movements. In fact, they are most relevant. If contemporary theories of youth cultural

identification (or post-subcultural theory) and an understanding of the complex relationship between music and young people are combined with the most recent and open thinking about young people's participation in politics, then a vast network of efforts for empowerment, justice, equality and freedom, using music as a primary tool, can come into view. Now, more than ever, a diverse range of political musics and political uses of music can be found within various contexts, linked to numerous local and global political issues, where young people are finding much more than the ability to just cope with the issues at hand. Perhaps even more importantly, the great potential for music in encouraging and enabling young people to participate in politics on their own terms becomes equally apparent.

This view positions young people's everyday experiences of politics, and their fluid, multiplicities of cultural and musical identifications, as essential to an understanding of their participation in contemporary social change movements. Indeed, leading social movement theorist James Jasper (1997) argues that "[c]ultural traditions provide the raw materials for creating and revising the means and ends of protest – but also for determining the boundary between means and ends" (p.83). In his account of the role of culture and identity in political analysis, Ross (2000) emphasises the continued importance of culture as a resource for leaders and groups to use as instruments of organisation, mobilisation and solidarity "in situations where 'normal politics' is not possible for one reason or another" (p.48). Studies of social movement culture have found that commitment and participation levels are highly dependant on processes of consciousness-raising, feelings of empowerment, and building a strong sense of insider versus outsider identities (Jasper, 1997). All of these factors seem strikingly similar to the feelings and identifications theorised within the youth subculture works. Furthermore, one of the sources of motivation for participation in social change movements identified by Jasper (1997) is the "diverse pleasures in protest" of which satisfaction in the "expression of group solidarity" and the "thrill and energy derived from rituals and symbols" are noted (p.82). Thus, it is no great leap to imagine how the music of youth cultures corresponds to these sources of motivation for active political participation.

Rosenthal's (2001) initial findings of the potential of music to initiate, inspire and sustain political activity and Eyerman and Jamison's (1998) emphasis on the importance of music and emotions, or feelings, in mobilising traditions of political action stress the continued importance of music for social change movements. However, to be of greater use these theories, and others like them, need to be considered in relation to the music and cultures of today's younger generations, and in light of local and global political issues in the contemporary social field that they face. Indeed, as Rosenthal (2001) states, "there's work to be done" (p.21) in documenting the range of political functions music might serve, especially in the interests of young people. Given that the areas of non-conventional political practice, including new social movements and boycotting, have been identified as important new arenas for young people's political participation, then conventional discourses of politics seeking to address the lack of youth participation, or supposed 'youth apathy', would do well to investigate music and its strong connection to young people's social movements for ways to reconsider and restructure participatory programs and policies to benefit young people's social and political position. A diverse and wide-ranging array of local youth cultures tied up with and helping to shape local and global political issues around the world need to be given attention.

Grassroots and community-based political organisations using music as a tool for participation are consistently appearing around the world. At first glance, flexibility and accessibility seem to be two key features of the cultural forms most amenable to use by young people - cultural forms such as hip-hop, punk, or electronic music seem to be most widely used in this way, and the internet is proving as a very popular and useful vehicle for their dissemination, communication and organisation. A do-it-yourself (DiY) ethos of the youth cultures associated with these forms has been repeatedly noted (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999; Sabin, 1999; St. John, 2001) and is compatible with the needs of grassroots political organising (Iveson & Scalmer, 2001). However, accessibility and flexibility, or the ability to rework and adjust cultural activities to suit diverse local needs, will be highly variable and dependent upon context, not inherent in any musical form. Furthermore,

young people's ability to creatively combine various cultural elements and to create new cultural forms, as can be heard in exciting musical styles such as 'folktronica', 'skip-hop', 'bhangra' or the 'broken-beat' sound of West London, demonstrates the need for a flexible and open approach to any inquiry of young people's political cultures so as not to ignore those less visible or most recent formations. Thus, the following examples of music-based political cultures identified in this initial explorative discussion of young people's use of music to participate in politics should be viewed only as some initial observations of probably the most obvious manifestations of music-based political cultures.

Numerous hip-hop collectives fighting a range of youth issues – from the exploding prison system in the United States (www.mobilized4movement.org) and a lack of youth resources and school funding, to the war in Iraq (www.movementinmotion.org/aboutus.html) and poverty (Evans, 2002) – are starting to achieve positive changes and are continually building a strong following through their websites, weblogs, concerts, events and music. Web pages give information about the political issues they are targeting and the protest events they are organising – they even offer realaudio clips of hip-hop protest chants and slogans to download (www.movementinmotion.org/music.html). In the example of the youth movement in California outlined earlier (in chapter 2), the use of music, especially hip-hop, was considered crucial in promoting public awareness and recruiting young participants for the various protests and actions organised. Preceding the major demonstrations of this movement, several youth-based hip-hop conferences and rallies were held with music, speeches, poetry and workshops building, educating and organising a significant following (Martinez, 2000). Young activist Jay Imani of the Third Eye Movement commented on the crucial role of hip-hop and culture in general for these actions: "On a march, if the chants have a hip-hop flavor, young people will join. It's also been crucial for drawing together youth of all colors – because hip-hop is multi-ethnic from the get" (in Martinez, 2000).

In Italy, another interesting scene has been documented in which an overtly political movement and a local hip-hop culture have developed hand

in hand (Wright, 2000). Anarchist and autonomous “self managed, occupied social centres” emerging out of the local squatting movement, have nurtured new cultural forms and given rise to many Italian hip-hop acts including the very popular Assalti Frontali and 99 Posse (Wright, 2000, p.117). In turn, these acts, and others like them, are fuelling the growth of the movement using music as a tool of proliferation and communication of an antagonistic point of view – to the point where,

its influence is also apparent within the mainstream of Italy's pop industry, with prominent performers such as Jovanotti doffing their caps not only to those first rap posses, but also to the political movement of ‘self managed, occupied social centres’ (CSOAs) which produced them (Wright, 2000, p.117).

The tradition of resistance and political content in hip-hop music is being carried far and wide. With its continued growth and relatively recent rise to popularity in places such as Australia, it is showing no signs of fading away – one can only wait and watch for its political potential to emerge.

Another important example is the connection of dance music cultures to political movements – Gilbert and Pearson (1999) conclude their discussion of dance music cultures in the United Kingdom with a description of the parallels between more formalised social change movement agendas and the ethic of young clubbers, ravers and dancers. They argue it would not take much to utilise the hitherto ineffective political charge of dance culture and that “[t]here is a whole range of concrete political issues with which dance culture and its values could be easily articulated” (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999, p182). Given the emphasis on respect and openness to difference in ethnicities, sexualities, masculinities and femininities that has characterised many dance and rave cultures, it seems that the communities and networks of communication established within these cultural contexts might potentially serve as effective and indiscriminate bases of more politically intentional movements. Gilbert and Pearson (1999) argue that a politics of ‘bodily self-determination’ are one of the concrete political issues more suited to the dance and rave scenes of the United Kingdom in which drug law reforms and lesbian and gay rights are two key issues in the present context. Their discussion highlights the cooperative and community building potential of

youth cultures in general – an aspect of civic life that remains integral to questions of political participation regardless of one's inclusion or exclusion from the conventional forms of participating (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998).

In Australia, a collection of essays about contemporary dance cultures, mostly in New South Wales and Victoria, shows several examples of how the potential that Gilbert and Pearson describe has been realised (St. John, 2001). In numerous movements to reclaim public space, fight environmental degradation, oppose third world debt, protest corporate globalisation and war, and to do all this whilst having a whole heap of fun, rave and dance cultures, as well as many other youth-based cultures, have played significant roles for young people's contribution to debates about important political issues. Iveson and Scalmer (2001) tell of the dancing and mobile sound systems with live DJs and MCs at the well-known 'S11' anti-corporate globalisation protest in Melbourne at the Asia-Pacific Economic Summit of World Economic Forum for three days in September, 2000. They argue that the DiY tactics and techniques developed by political dance and youth cultures were vital to the success and organisation of the 3-day protest/'carnival', gaining enormous publicity and preventing around 200 delegates from attending the forum (Burgmann, 2003).

One such example, in which DiY organising and communication using grassroots methods in both urban spaces and cyberspace has been pioneered, is the Reclaim the Streets movement emerging from the London rave scene. The Australian Reclaim the Streets movement emerging in the late 1990s through to the 2000s is a dance and music-based movement against the privatisation of public space, and the unsustainable consumption and individualisation associated with dominant transportation practices (Luckman, 2001). Reclaim the Streets actions, sometimes known as 'road raves', reclaim public spaces in spontaneous and illegal street parties that celebrate and explore "an alternative social arrangement" ignored by conventional politics (Luckman, 2001, p. 207). As the Sydney-based activist group Massive proclaims: "Labor Party? Liberal Party? National Party? One Nation Party? Bugger the lot, let's STREET PARTY!" (in Luckman, 2001, p.205). Music and dance play a vital role in this innovative form of political

participation. The street parties involved utilise the 'carnavalesque' and inclusive nature of rave culture to bring a new level of enjoyment to direct political actions and diffuse the aggression and violence often associated with, or inflicted on, the more traditional protest actions. Luckman (2001) notes:

In my experiences as both a participant and observer at S11 in Melbourne, RTS [Reclaim the Streets] Brisvegas and other large-scale blockades/protests in Australia, the strategic use of the carnivalesque (music, dance, games, performance, theatricality and the like) at militantly oppositional protests does provide participants with a welcome and necessary positive break from more directly confrontational action (p.217).

In this way, beyond its value as an important coping and empowering mechanism, the political charge of music can also be seen in its potential to improve or complement existing modes of participation.

Improving Political Practice

Similarly, Jestrovic (2000) discusses the use of playfulness and fun in social movements in her study of Yugoslavian protest movements where music and theatre have played an important roles – “The theatricality of political protest has a productive quality, at times transforming the scene of collision and potential violence into a space of play” (Jestrovic, 2000, p.43). It might also be that conventional political discourses have something to learn about the importance of fun and enjoyment for young people’s political participation from such activities. After all, why shouldn’t political participation be enjoyable? In Torgerson’s (1999) study of the environmentalism movement, it is suggested that contemporary political deliberation is restricted by its over emphasis on seriousness and its outcome-based forms of participation. He argues for an opening of new arenas for political action in diverse and unexpected places, and offers theatre as one such arena where irony and indecision may helpfully take place (Torgerson, 1999). Street-level, grassroots strategies for political participation, such as those that have been associated with the Australian dance and rave cultures, represent important political processes for young people which should be seen as important new

arenas for their participation. The musical practices and identifications of young people, then, should be viewed as representing possible modes of participation less susceptible to violence, boredom, monotony, exclusion, and displeasure. They possess a quality that can bring fun and playfulness into political participation without subtracting from the seriousness of the issues involved.

Musical practices and identifications can also form part of a link between non-political cultural activities and politically intentional acts – a link to actions that should be seen as valid forms of participation for young people, although it is a link dependent on any person's choice and need to participate in their own political context. In participating in a cultural activity associated with the hip-hop or rave cultures around the world, for instance, even if political participation is not desired or intended, young people can gain access to alternative ideas about identities and political issues in spaces where a sense of political agency and empowerment is often encouraged and where they can actively create new and revised identities and political alternatives. Young people come into contact with and create new communities of common interests, values, and local needs through their cultural and music-based identifications, albeit fractured and temporary ones, and can develop a sense of belonging – both of which provide an important sense of validation to newly emerging political identities, and might serve as effective bases for collective political influence or individual political motivation. They also gain access to networks of communication and organisation which are conducive to forms of political participation that are known to be favoured by young people in advanced industrial societies, and on numerous occasions have been successful in achieving positive changes.

Very often, the more overtly political musicians in such scenes load their songs, albums, websites and performances with political ideas, sources of information and opinions from which young listeners are free to explore, absorb, relate to, critically engage with, or ignore. The Australian musician John Butler's web page, for example, hosts a discussion board where a range of environmental issues are debated and different perspectives offered (www.johnbutlertrio.org); Rage Against the Machine provide reading lists in

their album covers full of alternative sources of information and political views from writers such as Chomsky, Marx, and Che Guevara (Rage Against the Machine, 1996); and, in an interesting act of subversion and an effort to raise public awareness of the United Kingdom's fierce anti-rave legislation (a law that can prohibit gatherings where music containing repetitive beats is being played), experimental electronica act Autechre released their 'Anti-EP' with no single repetitive beat, which provided information about the legislation and gives a call to "agitate, educate. [and] protest" (Aep) (Autechre, 1994) Other artists, such as Henry Rollins, even tour regularly to give performances of politically infused spoken word with no music at all (www.henryrollins.com). All of these artists mentioned, and many more, write songs about political issues and are themselves involved in political activism. Thus, in a number of ways, a link from unaware and non-participatory identifications to participatory and informed political identities can be found at the point of music.

Music & Cultural Change

In similar ways, it may also be that music plays an important role in the political deliberation of young people in the long-term. That is, perhaps through its use by young people in their construction of political identities, music stands as an important influence upon the ways that they participate in politics and make political decisions throughout their lives. When the young people of one generation are no longer considered young, and, presumably, are somewhat less affected by practices of exclusion from political participation, their experiences of receiving music, producing music and defining themselves in relation to music may have played a crucial role in the formation of their political knowledge, attitudes and values. In some general sense then, one might consider the broad musical trends in popular youth cultures as some indication of broad political trends or directions of the future – as a potential direction in the present context, but becoming more likely as young people grow older, gaining more conventional political access and influence.

Particularly in terms of what Raaijmakers, Verbogt and Vollebergh (1998) have identified as cultural political beliefs, the broad musical trends of the past can be linked to the some of the political trends that have been identified and direction that politics has taken in the past. The values and alternative perspectives of free expression, acceptance, non-conformity, peace and equality, which are present in much of the popular youth music of the 1960s and 70s, may have been a necessary discursive foundation for changes to oppressive discourses such as racism, sexism, homophobia, imperialism and so on, to take place. In the present context, similar processes may be occurring with music playing an important role. For example, where the social movements and music of the past have set the foundations for changes to dominating forms of femininity and masculinity, music-based youth cultures such as the rave and dance music scenes have been applauded for providing cultural spaces where new femininities, masculinities and sexualities can be explored and experienced (Carrington & Wilson, 2004; 2000; Pini, 2001; Wilson, 2002). In another example, Dunbar-Hall and Gibson (2000; 2004) argue that Indigenous Australian music figures heavily in a re-writing of Australian national identity. The way that Aboriginal music acts as a means of mediating Aboriginal viewpoints and agendas into the Australian national consciousness may be an important foundation for positive changes to racist or disempowering discourses surrounding Aboriginal people in the Australian context. In this sense, music plays a role in the cultural political deliberation of society at a collective level, as part of the expression and formation of numerous collective political consciousnesses.

Conclusion

From political youth cultures for whom music is only a peripheral component of their political activities; to those whose activism is music; or to those for whom music has no direct role in their political participation but whose politically active identities have been inspired or empowered through musical identifications or activities; and finally, to the broader connection of music to political participation in terms of its role in influencing public discourses about

political issues on a collective level; the political charge of music is present in many forms. If it can be agreed that an increase in young people's political participation would be advantageous in a democratic society, as is suggested by the mass of concern with their supposed 'disengagement', or 'apathy' (Cowan, 1997; Damon, 1998; Kimberlee, 2002), but as is also hotly contested in debates over voting rights for young people under the age of 18 (AYPAC, 1995; Clark & Underwood, 1996; Ludbrook, 1997; Pullinger, 1995), if this can be agreed, then the tool of music and, more broadly, of cultural forms in general, have a very positive political potential in the numerous ways identified here, and undoubtedly many more. This is certainly the position taken here.

Indeed, this tool might even be put to good use some time in the future – if only someone could find the instruction manual. I have mentioned some of the ways young people use music as a tool for negotiating, subverting and changing oppressive and marginalizing conditions within Australia and other advanced industrial societies from those that have already been investigated and documented. It is, perhaps, these investigations and young people's continually innovative use of music and other cultural identifications and activities that can be read as an 'instruction manual' in the making. If so, further, and most likely continual, investigation and consideration would be needed in order to understand the continually shifting relationship between young people's multiple cultural identifications and activities, and their political participation. It is an important relationship for achieving greater participation among young people and it should be taken seriously. Through paying attention to young people's cultural identifications and activities and seeking to understand their positive potential rather than fearfully perceiving only threat or risk, a comprehensive understanding of the powerful political potential in the use of music that is already occurring, and that which might occur in future, can emerge. More precise accounts of specific instances of cultural or music-based participation in relation to the particular local and historical contexts of oppression in which they take place are required. Such identifications and activities may also provide helpful understandings of the

nature of young people's positions, and their experience of these positions, within the social field in varying contexts and at particular points in time.

CONCLUSION

Young people's use of music, through both production and reception, and with varying degrees of intent and specificity of meaning, should be interpreted as having political relevance and as contributing to the form and content of young people's collective and individual political identifications. Despite the many established views that suggest young people are not interested in politics, or that they are irrelevant to political decision-making, young people should, in fact, be seen as having an important potential for participating in politics. Established and conventional discourses of political participation and traditional views of young people need to be rethought to account for this potential. The conventional political system and the roles prescribed for young people within it, as well as dominant discourses of youth, seem to only seek and perpetuate the replication of existing social relations – the maintenance of the status quo. Music-based and other related modes of participation should represent only one area from which a rethinking of the conventional discourses might take place, though it should be considered an important area. Young people's identifications with and participation in music-based activities and groups are present in countless forms, and local manifestations of music-based cultural identifications are numerous.

Although there is still much to discover about the ways that it can take place, participation in music-based and other cultural activities and groups, whether they are conceived as subcultures or neo-tribes, can offer potential pathways into political participation and resources for participating outside of the exclusionary and oppressive political structures that are present in some advanced industrial societies. Indeed, it might be that only participation outside of such structures is suitable for addressing the needs and perspectives of young people in numerous contexts. Modes of participation rooted in the everyday activities and lifestyles of young people possess a stronger connection to the multiple factors that make up any position within a

social field. They also consist of resources that are familiar and available to these positions. Additionally, it also seems that participation in politics outside of conventional structures and discourses are much more equipped to address the mounting global issues that young people are facing across numerous local contexts and from numerous positions within any social field. Whilst possessing strong connections to local conditions and resources unconventional modes of participation rooted in young people's everyday experiences also remain exempt from the limitations of state-based politics. In doing so, they represent a greater potential for young people to address issues that concern them at both local and global levels than any established means.

In current discourses of politics, participation and youth, the importance and relevance of young people and their use of music are most often not acknowledged as they should be. Much broader conceptions of political participation, and thus broader conceptions of politics, are needed to allow for young people's political expression and action to be heard more formally and carry more potential for effecting positive changes. Indeed, given the various problems associated with the category of 'young person', or 'youth', and a need for all people to participate in political deliberation, contemporary political institutions and discourses need to broaden their scope to include the multiple and diverse modes of political expression and participation found in numerous places. Differences in the type of participation favoured and the issues most relevant, based upon age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, physical ability, culture, style, taste, or any other sources of difference present in society, need to be valued and negotiated fairly in decision-making processes.

Studies from within academic fields concerning young people's participation are beginning to explore such differences in ways that consider the meanings held by young people themselves. As Schultz (2001) has recommended, some researchers now see their research as "opportunities to create spaces for youth to conduct their own inquiry into issues that are important to them so that they can speak their own truths" (p.21). As a response to the numerous calls for explorations of new, innovative and

creative resources for young people's participation in politics (Arvanitakis, 2003; Burfoot., 2003; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Frazer & Elmer, 1997), and a challenge to discourses that inherently exclude young people from ideas and conceptions of political participation, I would suggest that such research turn more of its attention to the spaces involved in young people's music-based cultural formations. As has been outlined, these spaces are important for the construction of empowered and engaged political identities and for the discussion of alternative political ideas. Indeed, young people already create such spaces through their cultural activities and identifications without the help of researchers or government programs. Hip-hop and rave cultures are only two relatively recent formations that have been briefly discussed here. Many others sources of cultural identification come to mind – persisting punk scenes, new surfer or skating cultures, the goth scenes, or the many new possibilities of cultural formations allowed by advancing technologies and the proliferation of cultural forms from all over the world. If governments in advanced industrial societies are to achieve higher levels of participation in their democratic political systems they need to come some way towards accepting forms of participation that occur through music. They also need to encourage the processes that facilitate the construction of politically active identifications associated with young people's use of music.

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WEB SITE DETAILS

Organisation	Web Site Address
Books Not Bombs	www.booksnotbombs.org.au
California Fund for Youth Organizing	www.tidesfoundation.org/cfyo.cfm
Free Child Project	www.freechild.org
Henry Rollins/Rollins Band	www.henryrollins.com
International Youth Parliament	www.iyp.oxfam.org
John Butler Trio	www.johnbutlertrio.org
Just Act	www.justact.org
Listen Inc.	www.lisn.org
Mobilized 4 Movement (M4M)	www.mobilized4movement.org
Movement in Motion / Beats not Bombs	www.movementinmotion.org
No War Alliance	www.nwawa.org
Rage Against The Machine	www.ratm.com
Refugee Rights Action Network	www.rran-wa.org
S11	www.s11.org
Wire Tap Magazine	www.wiretapmag.org
World Peace Forum	www.worldpeaceforum.org.au
Young Liberals NSW	www.younglibs.org.au
Youth Action Network	www.youthactionnet.org