All-ages Movement Project

allagesmovementproject.org

PROJECT REPORT
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The All-ages Movement Project (AMP) is aiming to find and better understand youth-run cultural organizations focused on music in the United States. For four months, AMP has been exploring these organizations' social and political significance and the idea of enhancing their impact through a national network.

AMP has designed a database that now houses the names of over **300 organizations** that embody a combination of the following things:

- **youth empowerment component**
- **popular music focus**
- **participatory structure**
- **produce music related cultural products**

The names in AMP's database are turning into profiles and starting to tell a story about how this youthful and eclectic army of organizations is making change in the US in three areas of interest: **meaningful cultural products, political impact, and alternative leadership opportunities**.

AMP looked at metrics in each of these areas to decipher if in fact this group of organizations is playing a role in creating the next generation of leaders through providing the environment and experiences that promote a culture of social change. Here are some highlights:

Cultural Products

The quantity of shows and records produced varies from organization based on infrastructure, level of youth participation, and audience demand in the area. Some venues are focusing all their energies of 4 big concerts a year, while some produce all-ages concerts almost every night. *The most interesting finding was that almost unanimously organizations expressed their zero tolerance policy of content that is sexist, homophobic, or racist in nature.*

Political Impact

Thirty-eight of the 51 organizations surveyed said they considered civic engagement an integral part of their venue or program. Of those thirty-eight:

- 87% consider peer to peer networking to be an integral part of the their programs
- 74% provide space for civic engagement and politically oriented gatherings
- 58% offer popular education opportunities around social and political themes
- 53% promote civic engagement through their internal democratic (non-hierarchical) structure

In terms of their participation and place in the local political environment:

- 66% said they have working relationships with elected officials in their area
- 50% said that elected officials leverage their relationships with them to come across to constituents as supportive of youth issues
- 45% host election related activities that actively try to engage youth in voting

Alternative Leadership Development
Of the 50 respondents in the alternative leadership development section of the survey:

- 35 said youth participants are responsible for planning and implementing programs
- 25 offer formal leadership training
- 21 knew of other cultural organizations and businesses that started as a result of participation in their organization
- 21 are staffed and led mostly by people under 25
- 20 regularly get called upon to refer their participants to outside leadership opportunities
- 20 have youth positions on the Board of Directors

Network Feasibility
Thirty-eight organizations were asked whether they thought the idea of a national network of youth music organizations was a good idea. Of them, 35 said agreed it was a good idea, two said they were "not sure," and one said "no." Those who were interviewed in depth said they envisioned a network being a place where they could share resources, best practices and leverage their collective power to make youth music organizations healthier and more sustainable.

Next Steps
After this preliminary research period, it's clear that AMP has just touched the tip of a promising iceberg. More research in regions like the plains, southeast, and southwest is needed to flush out what is going on in those areas and make connections to the somewhat underground movers and shakers in those communities. Furthermore, AMP needs to explore the different national organizing models to create one that best suits the needs of this community of organizations.

The All-ages Movement Project concludes this—there is an undercurrent of progressive movement building going on throughout the country in music venues and youth programs focused on popular culture. Larger institutions are catching wind of this and are beginning to pool resources to create more formal youth music institutions to work towards different agendas—whether it be youth development among black and latino communities in urban areas, faith-based institutions reaching youth through mainstream secular culture, or politicizing young punks and rappers in Seattle and Oakland. AMP would like to be a positive force in this emerging movement that focuses on keeping the powerful and historical social change and community activist values of these organizations intact while making them stronger through relationship building, resource sharing, and collective asset leveraging.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The All-ages Movement Project (AMP) is focused on the cultural change that is facilitated by youth-run cultural organizations specifically engaged in pop culture music and art. These community-based organizations connect youth through cultural creation and production. They are programs and spaces where young people creatively express themselves, independently produce shows, records, and publications, learn democratic practices, make values based decisions, gain access to resources usually outside their reach, build social networks with political capital, and grow into innovative leaders.

As part of a process to investigate this growing area of activity, a survey was developed to take a snapshot of the national landscape of youth music organizations and examine their cultural influence by looking at three areas of interest: Cultural Products, Political Impact, and Alternative Leadership Development opportunities.

Cultural products are the tangible and measurable creations of participatory culture. They support an organization's programmatic work through earned income and extend the reach of an organization's mission through cultural consumption. Cultural products of interest in this survey are primarily live music concerts and records, though many ancillary products come into play (clothing, posters, publications, etc).

Political Impact measures the significance of the role youth and music organizations play in political processes; specifically looking at these organizations' intersections with community organizing efforts, how they generate political capital, act as political assets and allies, act as an introductory step to civic engagement and political action for young people, and provide the critical space for peer to peer dialogue and influence.

Alternative Leadership Development opportunities are empowering opportunities that appeal to a broader spectrum of youth than opportunities traditionally offered to young people. This study is specifically interested in how youth-directed models encourage leadership through open governance practices and erasing the line between the people serving and being served.

This study aims to answer these research questions:
1) How many organizations exist today that combine youth empowerment, popular music and art, and civic engagement in their work and where are they located?

2) How do they compare to one another in their histories, structures, and demographics?

3) Looking at a variety of metrics in the 3 areas of interest, how are these organizations using youth and community organizing and cultural consumerism to facilitate political and social climate change?

4) What is the potential value of building relationships between these organizations via national network?

DEFINITION OF SCOPE OF PROJECT
Organizations focused on providing youth access to and opportunities in music production are an eclectic bunch. In order to draw some sort of boundary around them, AMP has laid out criteria and sought to capture organizations that embody a combination of the following things:

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
Youth empowerment is based on the theory that young people can enrich their lives by gaining greater control, having more choices, better options and the power to be active and responsible citizens. The age range of people being served through organizations and spaces in AMP is 13-25 years old, with a focus on teens.   It is safe to say that AMP assumes that people in this age group running spaces and programs with no formal "youth empowerment" agenda, are actualizing empowerment and also contributing to the ability of other young people to be empowered.

POPULAR MUSIC AND ART FOCUS
Though it's harder and harder to draw the line, AMP is focused mainly on independent and underground music and art rather than classical or traditional music and art forms (hence the term popular, not referring solely to pop the genre). Urban, hip hop, rap, reggae/reggaeton, punk, hardcore, indie rock, pop, electronic, avant garde, and alt country among the genres currently considered popular with young people.

PARTICIPATORY STRUCTURE
This term is pretty self-explanatory but the depth of participation is where the richness of this method of organizing exists. The types of participatory structures that AMP is seeking out are ones that are erasing the lines between the people serving and the people being served (i.e. performer-audience, producer-consumer, social worker-socially disenfranchised).   The basis for using participatory structures in organizing and organization building is the notion that people and communities have the agency (though not always the appropriate resources) to identify their own needs and come up with realistic and equitable solutions to problems.

PRODUCING CULTURAL PRODUCTS RELATED TO MUSIC
This criteria is related to the popular music and art focus but pushes that criteria further by looking more specifically at organizations engaged in creating meaningful and culturally relevant products that extend the reach of organizations' missions through consumption.

Some organizations focus on a wide variety of things, and not primarily music, but still produce weekly (or daily) all-ages shows. AMP assumes these organizations are contributing significantly to the field of music based cultural products.

Additionally, a handful of organizations engaged in creating other music related products were included in this study. Because hip hop as a genre has four elements - graffiti, breakdancing, emceeing, DJing--and other popular music genres have similar overlapping elements –zines silkscreening, etc, it made sense to include them in the scope of AMP's scan.

METHODOLOGY

This preliminary study was comprised of three phases of analysis: creating an inventory of existing organizations, collecting information from existing organizations via survey, and doing in-depth interviews with the organizations that demonstrate impact in the three areas and are in different regions of the country.

FINDINGS

> **1) How many organizations exist today that combine youth empowerment, popular music and art, and civic engagement in their work and where are they located?**

The most extraordinary finding of AMP thus far is that there are not a handful of programs and spaces existing in the youth, music, civic engagement realm, but **literally hundreds**, and the names are still rolling in.

The Numbers
As of July 29, 2006, 330 organizations have been found that touch on a combination of characteristics within AMP's scope, while **127** meet 3 of the 4 criteria.

Geography
Regionally, these programs are located in and around the country's urban and cultural centers; in particular coastal California and the Great Lakes region.
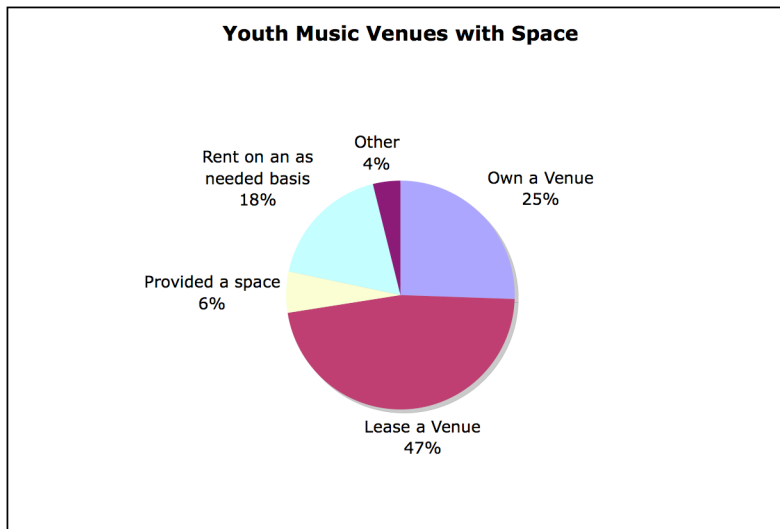
Number of Organizations per Region
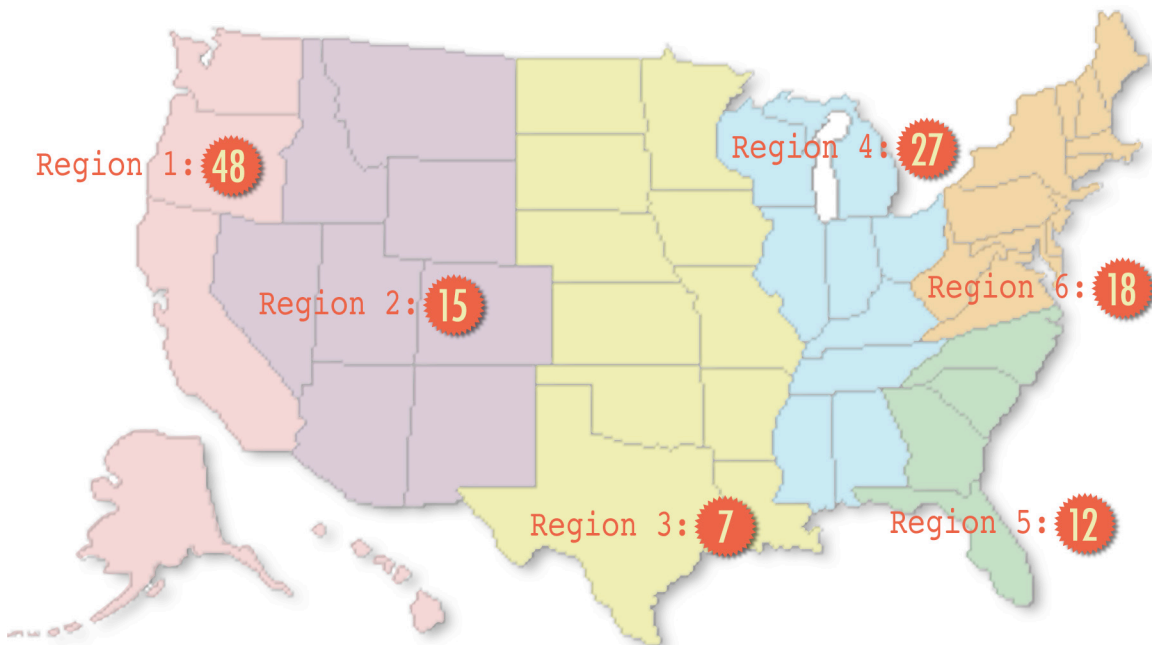
Region 1: 48
Region 2: 15
Region 3: 7
Region 4: 27
Region 5: 12
Region 6: 18

Clubhouses
Almost 75% of these programs have and rely on having a facility to do their work. That said, though a sizeable amount of these organizations own their facility (25%), seventy-five percent lease or get their program spaces though relationships. Lease agreements often include rental rates that are far below market rate and are a formality for cities or other property owners that more or less give space to these programs. The majority of performance spaces in these facilities have the capacity to hold 100-300 people.

Youth Music Venues with Space

Other 4%
Rent on an as needed basis 18%
Own a Venue 25%
Provided a space 6%
Lease a Venue 47%

In the 1990's, churches were often the ones lending out their spaces to these youth organizations to put on shows and have meetings. Recently, however, a shift is happening towards faith-based organizations owning secular mainstream performance arts spaces and providing faith-based programs alongside of programs that appeal more broadly to youth engaged in popular culture.

Young Organizations serving Young People
Aside from institutional legends such as ABC No Rio (New York, NY), AS220 (Providence, RI), 924 Gilman (Berkely, CA), and the Che Café (La Jolla, CA), youth-centered music organizations are young. Judging by the trends demonstrated in the 78 organizations who answered this question, the 1990's and 2000's have seen an enormous growth in organizations being set up to engage young people through music across the country.[1]

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[1] A future study should be done to assess the average lifespan of these organizations as many organizations could have come and gone that are not captured in this survey.

Age of Youth and Music Orgs
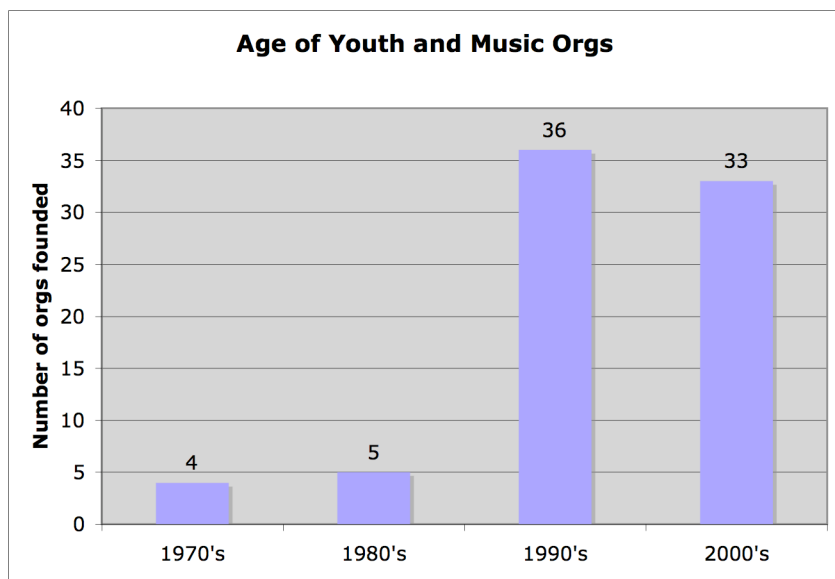
The relative youth of intentionally using popular music and culture to engage youth partially explains why there is little literature that specifically documents and evaluates these organizations role in the nonprofit, youth development, education, public health o civic engagement landscape, or the music industry. Fortunately, this trend is shifting as the nascent field of cultural organizing is being further developed and explored.

As far as how the youthfulness of the organizations affected AMP's information gathering process, it contributed to the challenge of aggregating quantitative metrics through budgets, annual reports, and program evaluations because the terminalogy wasn't understood or the infrastructure to provide them didn't exist.

The underground "Culture of Opposition"
Beyond the lack of shared language in the different incarnations of music and youth organizations, the independent and underground nature of the work itself also made it sometimes difficult to gather information--whether it be that an alternative arts space doesn't want to participate in the bureaucratic lingo of the nonprofit world or that the staff at a more conservative organization wants their progressive work to continue to be unnoticed by parent organizations. For instance, teen centers employing progressive staff may choose to not disclose some of their civic engagement programs because they want it to remain unnoticed by their parent organization. *Because this report wanted to consistently rely on data being provided from the organizations themselves, the findings are somewhat conservative.*

<u>Legal Status</u>
Organizations engaging youth through pop culture ride the lines between art and industry, business and charity, participation and protest. In legal terms, this means they have a variety of statuses as far as the IRS is concerned.

Of the 48 organizations that answered the question of their status, 14 are either fiscally sponsored, part of a larger organization, or a government entity (e.g. a teen center in the city of Bloomington Indiana). Thirty-four are independent, the majority of which are 501(c)(3)'s. Six of the 34 function as collectives or co-ops, three are set up as for profit entities, and five operate off the radar. A music and activism collective on the east coast, for example, has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for political and social causes in the last 20 years without ever filing a paper with the IRS.

<u>Ethnicity and Musical Genre</u>
Of the 50 organizations surveyed, 23 have primarily euro-american/white participants, 20 have primarily non-white participants (7 African-American, 4 Latino, 9 Multiracial), and 7 weren't able to declare their primary audience.

In terms of musical genres represented in the different programs, it's evenly split. One quarter focus on hip hop/rap/urban, one quarter focus on indie rock/punk/hardcore, and the other half mixes genres in their programming.

<u>Budgets</u>
Not surprisingly, almost half of those who answered the survey reported 2005 operating budgets of less than $50,000/yr. Looking at some other vital information such as how many events a year these organizations host indicates that they may not have interpreted the question as it was intended. Most spaces distribute out almost all of the money they take in at the door and often don't report it or consider it income.

The answer to this question demonstrates more about how formal these organizations are, the possible lack of technical skills, and/or the desire to remain financially invisible. Interestingly, age of organization and size of budget seem to have little correlation.

> **3) *Looking at a variety of metrics in the 3 areas of interest (Cultural Products, Political Impact, and Alternative Leadership Development), how are these organizations using youth and community organizing and cultural consumerism to facilitate political and social climate change?***

Cultural Products

Within these programs, organizations are producing anywhere from one concert a month to five a week.   Many are also producing records and release anywhere from 1 to 5 a year. *The most consistent guideline cited among organizations for selecting artists was having zero tolerance of anything racist, sexist, or homophobic in nature* demonstrating an intentional move towards using public platforms to model socially positive and progressive values. Otherwise criteria for selecting artists range from directly recruiting and booking youth who are active in the organization, to working with national booking agents to book touring artists and pair them with local emerging artists.
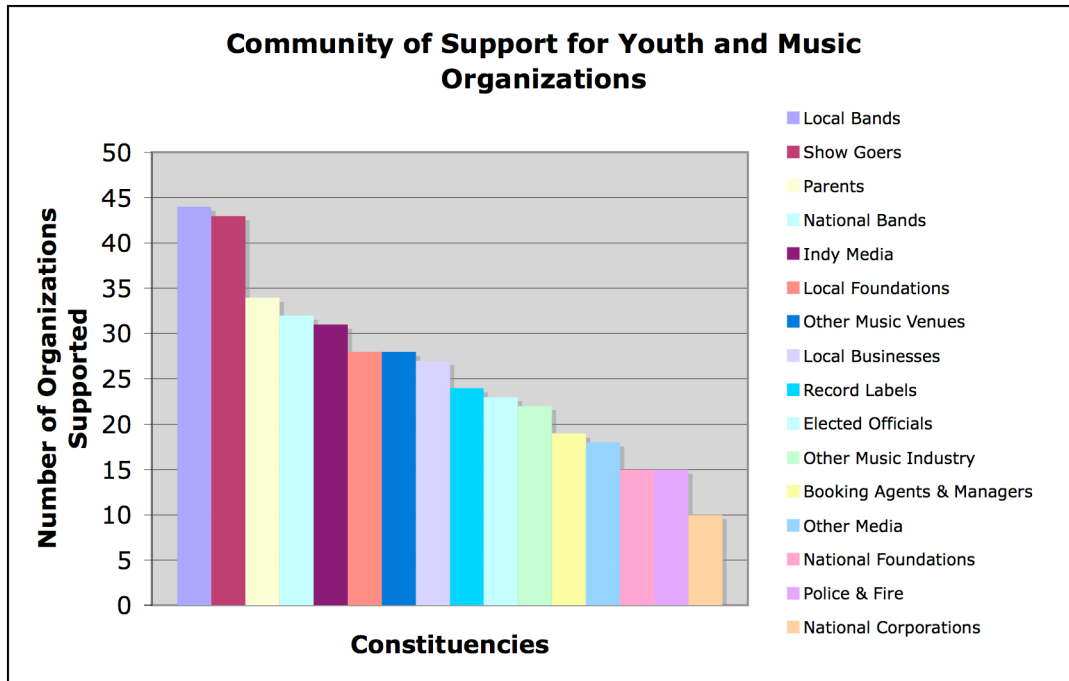
Political Impact

The All-ages Movement Project looked at a variety of civic engagement and community organizing aspects to see how these organizations are participating politically. Of the 51 who answered the question, 13 said they had no civic engagement component (though 1 of those acknowledged they partner with civic engagement organizations) and 38 said there was a civic engagement component to their work.

Of those organizations:
- 87% promote civic engagement philosophically
- 87% consider peer to peer networking to be an integral part of the their programs
- 74% provide space for civic engagement and politically oriented gatherings
- 66% said they have working relationships with elected officials in their area
- 58% offer popular education opportunities around social and political themes
- 53% promote civic engagement through their internal democratic (non-hierarchical) structure
- 50% said that elected officials leverage their relationships with them to come across to constituents as supportive of youth issues
- 45% host election related activities that actively try to engage youth in voting
- 26% regularly lobby and participate in political actions
- 31% raise money for political and social causes
- 30% partner with other organizations to provide voter registration
- 24% offer voter registration all the time
- 5% provide voter registration follow up services

When asked about their support systems, youth and music organizations selected from a list of constituencies they felt were strongly represented among their supporters. The constituencies directly serviced by these organizations (local bands and show attendees) were logically selected as the biggest supporters. Parents, national bands, and independent media represented the second tier. Potential for growth exists in

relationships with police and fire departments, national foundations and national corporations.

Community of Support for Youth and Music Organizations

Legend:
- Local Bands
- Show Goers
- Parents
- National Bands
- Indy Media
- Local Foundations
- Other Music Venues
- Local Businesses
- Record Labels
- Elected Officials
- Other Music Industry
- Booking Agents & Managers
- Other Media
- National Foundations
- Police & Fire
- National Corporations

Y-axis: Number of Organizations Supported
X-axis: Constituencies

Alternative Leadership Development

In the realm of leadership development, it's useful to revisit the organizational differences in this field. Essentially, the organizations can be categorized as either a) organizations with adult professionals (either trained in youth development or organizers turned into nonprofit administrators) who are working towards having more meaningful youth involvement opportunities. Many teen centers and traditional nonprofits fall into this category. The second type is youth-run organizations that are made up of almost exclusively of young people getting the most hands-on opportunities to lead and make decisions. These organizations often have no paid staff and minimal infrastructure such as the Che Café in San Diego, Monkey Mania in Denver and dozens of other alternative art and collective spaces. A handful or organizations are a successful blend of both, such as Elementz in Cincinnati, OH and the Neutral Zone in Ann Arbor, MI. All have enormous value and the potential to support each other's work in significant ways.

Of the 50 respondents who answered questions about leadership development:
- 35 said youth participants are responsible for planning and implementing programs
- 25 offer formal leadership training
- 21 knew of other cultural organizations and businesses that started as a result of participation in their organization
- 21 are staffed and led by people under 25
- 20 regularly get called upon to refer their participants to outside leadership opportunities
- 20 have youth positions on the Board of Directors

When asked how to categorize their work, organizations demonstrated their differing motivation ranging from having a focus on participatory culture, the arts, or youth recreation and crime prevention.

How Youth Music Organizations Characterize Themselves
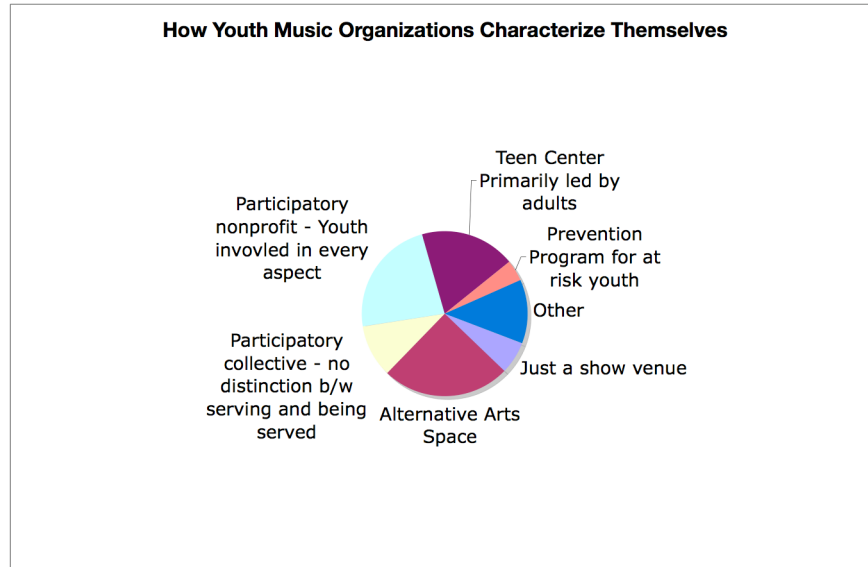
TWO INTERESTING TOP MODELS
Rocketown, Nashville, TN
Rocketown is a relatively young youth center (officially re-opened in 2003) that is enormous in scope. The organization's website boasts that they serve **1350 young folks a week** in their 40,000 sq ft. facility through their music programs, skate park, and coffee shop. Their events calendar lists a smattering of mainstream indie rock groups, local teen punk bands, and faith-based speaking engagements.

In 2002, after leading a prayer session at Columbine High School, Christian Music Star, Michael W. Smith was inspired to set up a model in Nashville that could be replicated anywhere, especially communities like Columbine. **He enlisted George H. W. Bush to head up Rocketown's Capital Campaign and managed to raise $2.3 million in 6 weeks. Rocketown hosts an annual "How to Start a Rocketown In Your Town" seminar, that attracts youth leaders from all across the country.**

YouthVille, Detroit, MI
YouthVille opened its doors in October of 2005 and rivals Rocketown with 70,000 sq ft of programming space ready to serve thousands of young people everyday. YouthVille is a project of the Detroit Youth Foundation and has received funds from several national foundations. It houses long standing family service organizations such as the YMCA, United Way, Sylvan Learning Center, etc. The immaculately designed facility is highly structured, monitored, and impressively outfitted with electronics and equipment. There are up to 25 different classes at YouthVille on any given day but at this point, programs focused on producing shows and records are non-existent YouthVille, similarly has visions of becoming a national model for youth development centers.

> 4. What is the potential value of building relationships between youth music organizations via a national network?

The impetus behind the All-ages Movement Project was to understand whether there was a critical mass of activity in the field of youth music organizing nationally and to see how that activity might or might not benefit from networking, coalition building, and pooling resources.

Thirty-eight organizations were asked whether they thought the idea of a national network of youth music organizations was a good idea. Of them, 35 agreed it was a good idea, two said they were "not sure," and one said "no." Incidentally, the organization who expressed disinterest in the network idea, is one of a handful of organizations that have already reached out to AMP for resources. Phone calls and emails of this sort range in topic from dealing with a particular situation ("the police keep coming to our venue and finding reasons to shut us down") to wanting more information about what it takes to start a program or venue.

According to AMP's research thus far, challenges facing these organizations entail some standard business/nonprofit development questions, but many are unique to youth music venues and programs:

- How do you maintain a participatory culture as the pressure of growth makes streamlining processes more necessary?
- How do you communicate the importance of youth participation in decision-making to funders and people outside who don't understand the culture?
- How do you deal with safety issues without making a venue feel like a correctional facility?
- How can you be competitive as a venue in the music industry without putting board members and small program coffers in financial danger?
- How do you maintain active and accountable core volunteers?
- How can you take advantage of partnerships with national corporations a) in a youth culture largely opposed to being associated with many corporations and b) when marketing liability is often an issue?
- How do you democratize the power dynamics at a traditional teen center and make the decision making processes accessible and inviting to youth?
- How do you set up a sustainable infrastructure and still meet the demand for youth music programming?
- How do you take time to help other communities start their own programs when you have to focus on your own?

The list goes on and on and ranges from issues that could be best looked at by comparing the solutions that similar organizations have come up with to working as a coalition of organizations to better inform and deal with powerful constituents.

Because the sheer number of organizations engaged in this work is much larger than expected, a more thorough needs assessment should be done to understand the potential value and services a national network could offer. Preliminary conversations alone however indicate a vacancy in the intermediary resources available that are

appropriate and relevant to youth organizations engaged in music with leadership and civic participation components. Though only a handful of depth interviews have been done to this end, organizations thus far have said they envision a national network being a place to build relationships, share resources and best practices, and feel part of a larger movement.

NEXT STEPS
Based on the findings thus far in this study, there is much more research and development to be done as a "project" before AMP should embark on being a national organization of it's own.

Research
The following areas have been identified for further inquiry:
- More in depth exploration in regions that AMP has not yet visited and are showing low numbers of youth music organizing
- Exploring different models of national networking and coalition building to identify the best way for AMP to be structured to suit the needs of this community
- More research on the feasibility of future network goals and outcomes— with the possibility of using Participatory Action Research methods to have the organizations in the network to set goals and metrics collectively

Online Directory
A simple tool that can utilize the months of work already done by AMP to serve the community that has contributed to this project is to create an online directory.

The process of building an online directory in conjunction with other youth directory projects is a concrete step that AMP can work towards while gathering relevant information to inform its future development.

Conclusion
There is an undercurrent of progressive movement building going on throughout the country in music venues and youth programs focused on popular culture.   Larger institutions are catching wind of this and are beginning to pool resources to create more formal youth music institutions to work towards different agendas—whether it be youth development among black and latino communities in urban areas, faith-based institutions reaching youth through mainstream secular culture, or politicizing young punks and rappers in Seattle and Oakland.   AMP would like to be a positive force in this emerging movement that focuses on keeping the powerful and historical social change and community activist values of these organizations in tact while making them stronger through relationship building, resource sharing, and collective asset leveraging.