MUSIC IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF YOUNG TEENAGE GIRLS

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on research undertaken in Merseyside during 2003 – 2008 with girls aged between twelve and fourteen, using questionnaires, and ethnographic methods with small friendship groups. The thesis has two main aims. Firstly, it aims to explore the role and significance of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, particularly in relation to identities, relationships, creativities and emotions. Secondly, it aims to consider the relationships between the research findings and methods, the methodological issues that arose, and the role of emotions in the research processes. This thesis argues that music plays a vital role in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, particularly in their social relationships, which are central to understanding what and how music means. Social relationships play an intense and formative role in the lives of children and young people, providing contexts for negotiating identities, exploring creativities, and experiencing emotions, in all of which music plays a central role. Further, in researching this role, this thesis argues that it is crucially important to consider the relationship between research processes and data.

The first chapter describes the research participants, methods and settings, and analyses some of the key methodological issues that arose, particularly those relating to the search for appropriate methods, and questions of access and ethics. The second chapter argues that identities are constructed through a continuous process of identity work. This is a social process in which music plays a crucial role, as both a technology of self and a form of cultural capital. The girls in this research were in a liminal phase of development between childhood and youth, and negotiations of age and gender were particularly important. They used music to negotiate identities through music tastes, and a range of listening, sharing and ownership practices. The third chapter argues that identities are negotiated within social interaction, and focuses on the role of music in the girls' relationships with parents and friends. In relationships with parents, the role of music revolved around access to technologies, negotiating control of domestic soundscapes, such as the home and car, and music taste. Within friendships, issues of sameness and difference were prevalent, as the girls used music to achieve unity and distinction within their friendship groups, both offline and online. The fourth chapter considers the musical creativities significant in the girls' everyday lives. Singing, rapping, musical instrument playing and dancing were important to varying degrees, and the girls' identities as musically creative individuals were negotiated within and shifted according to the social contexts of everyday relationships. Finally, throughout this research, emotions were involved in all experiences and interactions, and the fifth chapter discusses the importance of emotions in relation to both research data and processes. The girls used music to manage emotional states, and emotions also arose from their experiences of music in everyday life, particularly from negotiations of identities that took place in their relationships and creative practices. Similarly, the processes that generated this data produced, and were produced by, emotions, and these are discussed in relation to the research findings.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The intense relationship between my daughter Ruth and her close friend Amy lasted for about two years, from 2002 to 2004, bridging the transition from primary to secondary school. They spent the summer break of 2003 together, and after returning to their respective secondary schools, continued to see each other as often as they could, and when they were apart, communicated online and by phone. Music played an important role in their relationship and the girls shared similar taste, especially in 'nu metal' music[1], by bands such as Linkin Park and Offspring. Both girls adopted the style of dress associated with this genre of music - black hooded tops, over-long wide-legged jeans accessorized with chains, trainers, studded belts and jewelry - and identified themselves as 'goths'[2]. Amy was the first to adopt this style, in a rather sudden and wholesale way, and Ruth gradually and somewhat cautiously followed suit. In early 2004, however, their tastes in music diverged dramatically as Ruth developed a passion for the music of female singer/songwriter Tori Amos, listening and singing along to it every day to the almost complete exclusion of everything else.

The girls communicated daily with each other, and other friends, using instant messaging. Each instant messaging participant had an online name, which was usually a phrase reflecting the person's current mood or latest obsession. The names changed frequently, often on a daily basis. Both Ruth and Amy constructed many personal websites using HTML[3], and a particular trend was to create web pages consisting of the lyrics of a song layered over an image that was associated with the lyrics in some way. One of the pages Ruth created consisted of a picture of galloping white horses onto which she superimposed some of the lyrics of the Tori Amos song 'Winter' (see appendix 1). The song contains the line 'All the white horses are still in bed' (Amos, 1992), and soon after the page became live, Amy's instant messaging name changed to 'Bloody hell, the white horses are still in bed, what are we going to do?' Ruth was upset by this, as she felt that Amy was being scornful about the web page, Tori Amos and, by extension, Ruth herself. In the ensuing online spat, Amy

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[1] A sub-genre of rock that emerged in America in the mid/late1990s, combining 'downtuned guitar, hip hop influences and obligatory "dark" lyrics' (Baker, 2008).

[2] While the term 'goth' is commonly used in relation to the post-punk subculture that began in the UK in the early 1980s (see Hodkinson, 2002), the girls who participated in this research used 'goth' to denote fans of nu-metal music who adopted the style of dress described above, and differentiated themselves from local 'scallies' or 'chavs'. This particular self-identification will be considered in more depth later in the thesis.

[3] Hyper Text Markup Language, used to structure and format text-based webpages.

denied any intentional malice, explaining that she and another friend had been joking together about it at school. The idea of Amy having a joke with another girl at her expense was, of course, even more hurtful, and Ruth decided to 'block' her: that is, to refuse to accept any more online messages from her, effectively terminating their communication.

After an intensely close summer together then, during which the girls seemed perfectly attuned in their attitudes and tastes, their friendship suffered a serious crisis, catalysed, so it seemed, by a joke over a web page. In truth, however, the White Horses argument was the culmination of a series of disagreements that had been brewing beneath the surface of the friendship for some time. Amy did not like Tori Amos, and later confessed to feelings of jealousy towards her, as if she was a source of competition for Ruth's loyalty. As well as this, Amy had become more involved in the goth scene at her school – a scene in which Ruth was not involved. Gradually, the two girls appeared to be moving in different directions, forging new identities, and neither of them seemed to know how to handle it. The confusion and anxiety this caused within the friendship, it seemed, were acted out using Tori Amos and the White Horses web page as 'weapons' in their personal struggle.

This thesis is based on field research undertaken in Merseyside, in three phases between 2003 and 2008, involving a range of methods, participants and settings. The first phase of the research involved ethnographic research with my daughter and her two closest friends, and the White Horses episode occurred a few months into this research phase. In the everyday lives of children and young people, social relationships, particularly those with friends, play an intense and formative role, as Barnes (2003) observes:

> ...within friendship relationships children may experience affection, intimacy, communication, sharing and co-operation. Paradoxically, friendship is also a site for conflict and experiences of what it is to feel jealous, angry and excluded. By comparing themselves with their friends, children may develop an understanding of who they are and what they aspire to become – and what they aspire not to become. They may further extend their range of emotional experience, both positive and negative. They may find new and different opportunities to be creative and come to regard themselves as autonomous individuals in their own right. In sum, children's experiences around friendship are closely tied to the development of their personal identity (Barnes, 2003, 49).

Barnes' analysis emphasises the significance of relationships as contexts for negotiating identities, exploring creativities, and experiencing emotions. This thesis focuses on music as

'social practice and process' (Cohen, 1993, 123), with meaning negotiated in music and the social world through two-way processes of co-production: music's meanings have an effect on the social world; and the social world has an effect on music's meanings (Born, 2005; DeNora, 2000). Music, then, plays a key role in social relationships; and social relationships are at the heart of understanding what and how music means. The White Horses story highlights the complex interconnections between music, identities, relationships, creativities and emotions in girls' everyday lives, as well as pointing to a range of emerging methodological issues relating to researching children and young people. As Ruth's mother, my role in this episode was one of parent and researcher, sharpening my awareness of the importance of taking account of methodological issues such as anonymity, informed consent, subjectivity and emotions in research, and the role of the researcher.

Aims and argument
This thesis has two main aims. Firstly, it aims to explore the role and significance of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, particularly in relation to identities, relationships, creativities and emotions. Secondly, it aims to consider the relationships between the research findings and methods, the methodological issues that arose, and the role of emotions in the research processes.

This thesis argues that music plays a vital role in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, particularly in their social relationships, which are central to understanding what and how music means. Social relationships play an intense and formative role in the lives of children and young people, providing contexts for negotiating identities, exploring creativities, and experiencing emotions, in all of which music plays a central role. Further, in researching this role, this thesis argues that it is crucially important to consider the relationship between research processes and data.

Significance and rationale
In a recent memoir entitled *The Importance of Music To Girls*, the poet Lavinia Greenlaw presents her life experiences 'filtered through the medium of music' (Greenlaw, 2007, dust jacket). Interviewed for *The Observer*, Greenlaw recognises that, although she didn't intend

3

to 'write a polemic', she was 'claiming ground that wasn't usually that of girls in a way that was somehow "transgressive"' (Clark, 2007). She observes:

> Being a woman seemed to mean listening to the music boys liked and neither dancing nor singing along. That would be annoying. And while boys were serious about music, they didn't expect me to be so too. A boy could impress a girl with his musical knowledge and taste, but it was something he was showing her, like a fleet of cars or a gun collection. She was not meant to join in. Girls and music were separate pursuits (Greenlaw, 2007, 126).

The relative lack of research into the significance of popular music in the lives of girls, especially girls in the transitional phase of young teenagerhood, can lead to such assumptions being made about the nature of girls' music consumption, i.e. that it is not 'serious'. From my observations of music in the lives of my daughter and her friends, as the White Horses episode illustrates, it is clear that music is used and experienced by young teenage girls in complex ways, and is taken very seriously indeed. My observations evoked memories of my own youthful experiences of music, many of which were also serious and carried with them strong feelings. Although music genres have evolved, and technological changes have transformed means and modes of acquisition and consumption, there nonetheless seem to be many similarities between the roles of music in the lives of young girls in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and my own experiences and uses of music in the late 1970s, and the most undeniable of these is its importance.

Advances in consumer technologies have resulted in an unprecedented capacity among young people to acquire and share music, and to consume it in a myriad of ways and places. The proliferation of the personal MP3 player or iPod among young people means that much of their time is spent with the music of their choice playing directly into at least one ear. Similarly, the high level of mobile phone ownership within this demographic, which at the time of the research was 82% of children aged 12-15 (Office for National Statistics, 2007, 172), provides another personal mobile source of music for everyday use. The proliferation of illegal filesharing has given rise to numerous pieces of research into the music consumption practices of the young, often premised on concerns about loss of music industry revenue. Extensive online surveys and qualitative research with 14-24 year-olds, undertaken

in 2008 and 2009 by the University of Hertfordshire on behalf of UK Music[4], for example, found that, while music remains the most popular form of entertainment for young people, 'there remains a significant "value gap" between the popularity of music and the amount of money spent on it, especially compared to other entertainment types' (Bahanovich and Collopy, 2009, 6). The report documents the increasing importance of the computer as the 'main entertainment hub', the vastness of digital music collections, the ongoing importance of ownership, the popularity of filesharing, the increasing complexity of digital music consumption (copying CDs, sending music by email, Bluetooth, etc., downloading music from online storage sites), and a willingness to continue illegal sharing, despite 'an inherent sense of what copyright is' (*ibid*). Although illegal sharing of copyrighted music recordings has been an issue for the music industry since home taping became prevalent in the 1970s, the current technological environment, specifically the ease of digital copying and sharing, has given rise to concerns about the effects of young people's music consumption practices on the economic well-being of the music industry.

While the age range of the girls in my study is slightly below the lower end of the age range in the research for UK Music, many of the findings are similar. Within the context of these concerns, then, my research explores in a more detailed way the complexities and subtleties of the meanings of these practices in everyday life, focusing on how music is used to negotiate identities within the social contexts of everyday relationships with parents and friends, how it is produced and used in everyday creative practices, its use as a means of emotion management, and the emotions that arise from experiences of music in everyday life.

Relevant existing research

A diverse range of texts informs the argument of this thesis as it progresses throughout the subsequent chapters. Instead of an extensive literature review chapter, therefore, these texts are discussed and reviewed in each chapter as appropriate. However, this study is located within a network of existing music research, the key areas of which are: music in everyday

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[4] 'UK Music represents the collective interest of the UK's commercial music industry: from artists, musicians, songwriters and composers, to record labels, music managers, music publishers, collecting societies and studio producers' (Bahanovich and Collopy, 2009, 3).

life and ethnographic research; music and youth; and music and gender. To position this study within the context of this research, a brief overview of these three areas follows.

Music in everyday life and ethnographic research

Before discussing music in everyday life, the term 'everyday life' requires some attention, as it is a notoriously problematic concept; as Felski (1999) points out, 'Everyday life is the most self-evident, yet the most puzzling of ideas' (Felski, 1999, 15). Avoiding delving too deeply into the concept, Finnegan (1997) acknowledges that, while the term 'everyday life' is 'not entirely transparent' , it indicates a concern with matters close to home and 'cases more likely to be within direct personal experience', rather than a focus on 'the cultural industries, production processes or large-scale formal institutions' (Finnegan, 1997, 114). Hesmondhalgh (2002) suggests that the elusiveness of the term is compounded by its long and complex history of use in cultural and social theory. In cultural studies, the concept of everyday life is used as a way of 'invoking ordinary engagement with symbolic artefacts', while also reflecting a shift away from 'a concern with meaning and interpretation ('reception') and towards a greater interest in how media fit into, and help to constitute, the rhythms and routines of people's lives' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, 121). For Bennett (2005), it is its very ambiguity that lends it value as an 'object of social research', as it is theorised as the ground on which the interplay between '"culture" and "structure" in the creation of the social' takes place (Bennett, 2005, 1). The concept of everyday life is 'a culturally constructed and highly contested terrain', fragmented and particularised through the 'convergence of the local with the global':

> In the context of late modernity then, both culture and the everyday are highly complex and fragmented concepts. Rather than espousing singular and essentialist meanings, they express a range of highly differentiated and contested meanings which are underpinned by the competing knowledges and sensibilities of an increasingly heterogeneous society (Bennett, 2005, 4).

Del Negro and Berger (2004) similarly argue against essentialist interpretations of the term, as everyday life is not inherently 'oppressive or resistant, mechanically routine or artful and creative' (Del Negro and Berger, 2004, 10). Rather, they suggest usefully, what constitutes everyday life depends on how it is perceived and interpreted, within particular conditions created by a convergence of contextual, ideological and economic factors:

6

everyday life is an interpretative framework, and the reading of any social practice as everyday or special depends on a complex interplay of factors and the interpreter's own meaning-making process (*ibid*, 14).

In the context of this thesis, then, the term 'everyday life' is understood to involve personal experience, direct social relationships, and the ordinary experiences and routines of life. It is, however, a subjectively constructed concept, dependent on interpretation within certain constraints. My representation of music in the everyday lives of the girls in this research mainly comprises accounts of their musical practices and activities in their homes, cars and schools in Merseyside – in other words, the places where they spent most of their time. My focus is on their musical habits and routines – what they usually did. Consequently, the representation of everyday life in this thesis is a construct, created by both myself and the girls at the interface between my observations, enquiries and interpretations, and their activities, responses and explanations.

Integral to the 'everyday life' approach to studying both the consumption and production of popular music is the use of ethnographic methods, which are recognised as central in creating a more complete picture of experience and practice (Cohen, 1993; De Nora, 2000; Bennett, 2002; Grazian, 2004). The importance of ethnographic methods in researching the relationships between cultural products and consumers is integral to the notion of the 'active audience' developed in the 1980s by researchers such as Morley (1986) and Fiske (1989a and 1989b). As Bennett (2005) explains, following Ang (1996), the idea that intellectuals can study the 'audience' as an object from a distance has become untenable:

> On the contrary, media meanings, as these manifest themselves in everyday life, can only be properly understood through the use of empirical research as a means of engaging with the views and perceptions of audiences themselves (Bennett, 2005, 59).

The relationship between ethnographic research methods and the concepts of 'active audiences' and 'everyday life' is encapsulated by Morley (1996), who argues that the understanding of how media consumption practices are 'embedded in the context of everyday' is a primary effect of ethnographic audience research (Morley, 1996, 321-2 cited in Bennett, 2005, 59).

Cohen (1993) notes the tendency of popular music studies to focus on music as commodity, media, capital and technology, relying too heavily on 'theoretical models abstracted from

empirical data, and upon statistical, textual and journalistic sources' (Cohen, 1993, 123). She calls for this tendency to be 'balanced by a more ethnographic approach', focusing on 'social relationships, emphasising music as social practice and process':

> The focus upon people and their musical practices and processes, rather than upon structures, texts or products, illuminates the ways in which music is used and the important role it plays in everyday life and society generally. It contrasts with orthodox sociological accounts of media effects, 'passive' leisure, class characteristics, and so on (*ibid*).

My Music (Crafts, *et al*, 1993) answers this call to an extent. In the foreword, Lipsitz (1993) argues that this collection of interviews about the roles of music in daily life with 'forty-one individuals of diverse tastes and backgrounds' reveals 'the pervasiveness and power of music as a social force' (Lipsitz, 1993, xii). While the book certainly illuminates the complexity and variety of the uses and experiences of music in people's lives, Lipsitz' foreword is the only analytical element of the collection – the interviews are simply presented without comment or critique.

In the search for an understanding of the roles of music in everyday life, DeNora (2000) recognises the importance of 'a focus on the interaction between people and things', and argues:

> There is no shortcut to this issue; only ethnographic research will do, and only ethnographic research has the power to elaborate our conceptualization of what such processes entail (DeNora, 2000, 38).

She analyses in depth four social contexts in which music is used and experienced in action, aerobics classes, karaoke evenings, music therapy sessions, and high street shops, and argues that music is 'a dynamic material, a medium for making, sustaining and changing social worlds and social activities' (DeNora, 2000, x). The study is based on interviews with fifty-two women, aged between eighteen and seventy-seven who 'lived in one of two small towns in the United States or the United Kingdom, or in London or in New York City' (ibid, 48). DeNora's study offers many ideas and insights that inform this thesis to a great extent; the title of her book, *Music in Everyday Life*, however, seems too general for the specificity of the lives studied. This thesis is more focused and specific in its close examination of the roles of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, exploring musical experiences and practices within the particular contexts of their social relationships.

While this thesis is focused on the experiences of young people, it is not concerned with the music-related spectacular rebellions of young men, but rather the experiences of young teenage girls. Further, it focuses in detail on the everyday music consumption practices of the girls, paying attention to their evaluations and specific uses of songs and genres within their relationships. Hesmondhalgh (2002), critiquing the 'excessive focus on youth culture in popular music studies', particularly the 'spectacular and supposedly rebellious uses' of music, calls for a more focused consideration of the 'ordinary, banal musical experience' of a wider range of age groups (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, 117). He argues that more research is needed on 'what people value in particular texts and genres and why' (*ibid*, 128). Writing in the same year, Frith (2002) identifies as important those ethnographies that:

> would try to map in detail people's *timetable of engagement*, the reasons why particular music gets particular attention at particular moments, and how these moments are, in turn, imbricated in people's social networks' (Frith, 2002, 46).

Further, he argues that 'we need to balance accounts of how people use music to manage their emotions with accounts of how music still has the power to disrupt us emotionally' (*ibid*). This thesis discusses both how music can be used to manage emotion, as well as the emotions that arise from everyday experiences of music.

Music and youth

The age range of the girls in this study situates them in a transitional, or liminal, phase of development between childhood and youth, and the conceptual categories of childhood and youth are explored in some detail in the chapter 'Identities'. Accounts of the roles of music in the lives of children and in the lives of young people occupy separate scholarly spaces. Much of the research into music in the lives of children focuses on educational and/or therapeutic contexts and uses (e.g. Campbell, 1998; Jones, 2008; Nordoff, 1979; Oldfield and Flower, 2008). Music and youth, on the other hand, has enjoyed a great deal of scholarly attention since the 1950s, which is outlined succinctly by Bennett (2009). The post-Second World War boom in mass production and consumer affluence gave rise to a highly lucrative new teenage market, in which rock 'n' roll music became increasingly popular due to its 'rawness and vitality' (Bennett, 2009, 263). Each of the music genres that evolved throughout the subsequent decades - psychedelic rock, glam rock, punk, reggae, rap, electronic dance music, grunge, Britpop - developed in a range of technological, social,

cultural and economic contexts, and generated 'increasingly spectacular forms of youth cultural practice' (*ibid*, 264).

Theorisations of music and youth began with the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s, which drew on the ideas of the Italian political theorist Gramsci to argue that post-war youth cultures, particularly white, male, working-class youth cultures such as teddy boys, skinheads and mods, were counter-hegemonic expressions of resistance (*ibid*, 265). Post-CCCS work on youth focused more closely on music, for example Willis (1978), who argued for 'a strong homological resonance between the respective class backgrounds and musical preferences' of bikers and hippies. In the 1990s,'post-subcultural' approaches to youth and music, led by Redhead's (1990) observations of electronic dance music cultures, argued that stylistic allegiances were becoming more individualistic. According to Muggleton (2000), rather than being 'mapped in relation to markers such as class, gender and ethnicity', the musical and stylistic affiliations of post-subculturalist youth 'reflect a more individualist sensibility in which image and taste form part of a reflexively derived lifestyle project' (*ibid*, 266). More recent debates challenge the dominance of youth in studies of music and culture (Hesmondhalgh, 2005), and a range of studies, including one by Bennett (forthcoming), explore the consumption of music and involvement in music scenes of ageing audiences and participants (*ibid*, 267).

As mentioned above, this thesis differs from these dominant accounts of music and 'spectacular youth' and broadens the perspective of studies of music consumption, by focusing on music in the everyday lives of girls in the liminal phase of development between childhood and youth. Further, it contributes to recent interesting and valuable debates about ageing music consumers by considering the roles of music in the relationships between the girls and their parents.

Despite the predominance of 'spectacular youth' studies, music in the 'unspectacular' everyday lives of young people has been explored by, for example, McRobbie and Garber (1991), Williams (2001), Baker (2001a, 2001b, 2004) and Lincoln (2004, 2005). Apart from Williams (2001), these studies focus exclusively on girls, and so are discussed in the following section *Music and gender*. Williams' (2001) research is an ethnographic study of music in the lives of teenagers of both sexes and was carried out in schools. Her research

generated some interesting data which supports her thesis that for many 'ordinary kids', i.e. those not self-identifying as fans or members of a subculture, music is more important to them 'in terms of routine use rather than emotional investment or identity construction' (Williams, 2001, 240). The research carried out in schools for this thesis found that music was important in terms of routine, *and* in processes of identity construction and emotional investment. However, although based in a different cultural setting, an ethnographic study of popular music and high school pupils in Japan found that 'school is a place where adolescents are cautious about revealing their personal music' (Koizumi, 2002, 111). Williams acknowledges that her methodology does not meet the ethnographic criteria stipulated by Cohen, as the discussions take place in school and their 'discourse is consequently disconnected from their day-to-day activities, relationships and experiences' (Cohen, 1993, 127 cited in Williams, 2001, 224). This highlights the methodological issues of access and finding appropriate methods to research the daily lives of young people, discussed in the 'Methodology' chapter. This thesis takes a reflexive approach to these issues, recognising that research contexts and methods affect the findings.

Music and gender

As Hollows (2000) points out, 'many studies of youth and pop have been blind both to questions about gender and to feminist concerns' (Hollows, 2000, 161). In studies of both the spectacular and the everyday, it seems music consumption research tends to focus on males. The first academic investigation into the gender imbalance in studies of music in people's lives was published in 1977 by McRobbie and Garber (1991), working at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Questioning the invisibility of girls' cultures in existing accounts of youth subcultures, they conclude, 'Girls negotiate a different leisure space and different personal spaces from those inhabited by boys', this being primarily 'teenybopper culture' based in the bedroom, and around 'extremely tight-knit friendship groups' sharing a romantic interest in young male popstars (McRobbie and Garber, 1991, 111-112). Two essays first published in 1984 sought to challenge existing gender stereotypes by providing personal accounts of female experiences of music fandom. Wise (1990) redefines the meaning of Elvis from her subjective point of view, characterizing him as a 'teddy bear' rather than the 'butch god' depicted in male-constructed histories, while Garratt (1990) challenges the stereotypical view of young female fans as 'silly screaming girls' by documenting the camaraderie and sexual complexity integral to her own experiences of female fandom. Almost thirty years after McRobbie and Garber's critique of male-

dominated subcultural research, DeNora (2000) explains her decision to focus on women in her ethnographic research on music in everyday life as an attempt to '[redress] the gender imbalance characteristic of cultural studies of music and everyday life' (DeNora, 2000, 48).

More recently, Baker's (2001a, 2001b, 2004) research into the importance of music in the lives of seven pre-teen girls in Adelaide, Australia, focuses on the creative and playful practices of the girls in their own bedrooms, using cassette recorders provided by Baker to produce radio show style 'mega-mix tapes', and cameras to document their activities and personal spaces. Contradicting notions of stability and security of self in childhood, Baker argues that the identities of young girls are 'constantly being negotiated' (Baker, 2004, 359), and they use music in ways she describes as 'serious play' to locate and express a 'real' self. The concept of girls' 'bedroom culture' formulated by McRobbie and Garber in the 1970s is developed in Lincoln's study of teenage girls' 'social-life worlds' in the 1990s (Lincoln, 2004, 94-5). McRobbie and Garber's notion of bedroom culture is based on a set of 'codes' derived from magazines, i.e. romance, fashion and beauty, personal life, and pop music, which operate within an exclusively female domain. Lincoln develops this model to incorporate the concept of 'zones', a conceptual tool arising from post-subcultural debates which emphasise the fluidity and autonomy of cultural choices. The 'zone' unlike the 'code', is 'material rather than abstract', consisting of all the objects that are contained within the bedroom space and how they are configured to facilitate the various social activities that occur within the space (Lincoln, 2004, 97).

The focus in both these studies, however, is on girls either younger (Baker, 2001a, 2001b, 2004) or older (Lincoln, 2004, 2005) than the girls in this thesis who, aged between twelve and fourteen, were in a transitional phase between childhood and youth, which has a particular significance in their uses and experiences of music in everyday life. This thesis recognises the value of these previous studies of music in the lives of girls, and contributes to the body of existing work by considering girls in the specific developmental phase between childhood and youth. Further, it builds on them with a stronger focus on how music is used, experienced and understood in the social contexts of micro-level relationships in the everyday lives of young teenage girls. As with these existing studies, gender is a key underlying concept in the analysis of the research themes in this thesis. As Nayak and Kehily (2008) rightly argue, however, studies of gender need to take account of both femininities and masculinities, as gender is a relational concept. The focus on girls in this thesis, then, is in

part also pragmatic, the result of methodological circumstances and constraints that are discussed in the 'Methodology' chapter.

Research methods

The research for this thesis took place in Merseyside over a period of five years, between 2003 and 2008. The research was not continuous throughout this period, however, but took place in three phases. The first phase of the research focused on my daughter and her two closest friends, and was undertaken mainly in my home, using observation, discussions and interviews. In the second phase, I used a questionnaire to gather data about uses of music in everyday life from a year seven (age twelve to thirteen) secondary school cohort. In the third phase, I visited three secondary schools to carry out small group discussions with three small friendship groups of girls. All the girls involved were aged between twelve and fourteen and all of them were living in Merseyside at the time of the research. The 'Methodology' chapter contains further detailed descriptions of the field research methods, participants and environments, as well as an in-depth consideration of a range of issues arising from the research.

Structure of thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters that are structured around the research aims. The first chapter, 'Methodology', addresses the second research aim, examining the relationships between the research findings and methods, and the methodological issues that arose. The subsequent three chapters explore the first research aim, investigating the role and significance of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, particularly in relation to identities, relationships, creativities and emotions. Each of these chapters focuses on a specific aspect of this aim, in the following order: 'Identities', 'Relationships' and 'Creativities'. The final chapter, 'Emotions', explores both research aims, considering emotions in relation to music in the everyday lives of the girls, as well as exploring the role of emotions in the research processes. A more detailed summary of each chapter follows.

The first chapter, 'Methodology', describes in detail the research methods, participants and environments, and analyses methodological issues arising from the research processes. Reflecting the importance in this thesis of relationships between research processes and data,

this chapter examines the advantages and challenges of using ethnographic research methods in a range of environments and considers the particular ethical issues of carrying out ethnographic research with young people.

The second chapter, 'Identities', investigates the ways in which young teenage girls use music to forge identities, particularly in relation to age and gender. This chapter argues that identities are fluid and constructed in a continuous process of identity work, which involves telling the narrative of the self both to the self and to others. These are social processes in which music can play a significant role, as both a technology of self and a form of cultural capital. The girls in this study used music to express, construct, maintain and negotiate their identities, through their music tastes and preferences, and their listening, sharing and ownership practices, for which they used a range of technologies. This chapter establishes the argument that identities are socially constructed, and explores some of the ways music is involved with this, before the thesis continues to examine more closely the roles of music in specific social relationships in the next chapter.

The third chapter, 'Relationships', argues that identities are negotiated within social interaction, and focuses on the role of music in the girls' everyday close relationships with parents and friends. This chapter is split into two sections, the first of which discusses music in relationships with parents, and the second music in relationships with friends, arguing that the roles of music differed in each of these two types of relationship. In the girls' relationships with parents, the roles of music revolved around access to technologies, negotiating control of the domestic soundscapes of the home and the car, and music taste. Within their friendships, issues of sameness and difference were prevalent, as the girls used music to achieve both unity and distinction within their friendship groups, both offline and online.

The fourth chapter 'Creativities' considers the everyday musical creativities of the girls, and explores how their sense of their own and each other's identities as creative individuals were negotiated within their relationships. This chapter argues that, for all the girls, performance practices such as singing and rapping, musical instrument playing and dancing were important to varying degrees, and their identities as musically creative individuals were negotiated within and shifted according to the social contexts of their everyday relationships.

Finally, throughout this research, emotions were involved in all experiences and interactions, and the fifth chapter 'Emotions' discusses the importance of emotions in relation to both the research data and the research processes. This chapter analyses the relationships between emotions and music in the everyday lives of the girls, and the role of emotions in the research processes that elicited the data upon which the thesis is based. This chapter argues that emotions are socially constituted and provide a bridge between the individual and the world. Music, acting as a medium for achieving emotional work, can be used as part of the bridging process. The girls in this research actively used music to manage emotional states, to express, confirm, enhance and create emotions, and emotions also arose from their experiences of music in everyday life, particularly from negotiations of identities that took place in their relationships and creative practices. Similarly, the research processes that generated this data produced, and were produced by, emotions, and these are discussed in relation to the domestic and schools based research.

CHAPTER 1 - METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research that forms the basis of this thesis was carried out over a period of five years. Rather than a study of a single social group or environment however, the research involved a range of different participants and environments, using various methods at each stage. The research began in 2003 in my own domestic context, observing and discussing music in the everyday lives of my daughter and her two closest friends, all of whom were twelve years old at the beginning of the study. The next phase of the research began in 2006, when I arranged for a questionnaire to be distributed to year seven pupils (aged 11-12) at a local secondary school. My intention at this point was not to undertake quantitative research for its own sake, but rather to identify which of the respondents would be interested in participating in face-to-face discussions with me about music in their everyday lives. The constraints of the school timetable, however, eventually precluded any opportunities for discussions to take place. Instead, I arranged several meetings with small groups of girls at three other secondary schools, and this phase of the research took place during 2007-2008.

Since the beginning of this project, maybe because of the close personal relationships in the initial, domestic research context, methodological issues have been a major preoccupation. Consequently, central to this study is a reflexive approach to research methodology, as advocated by Harden, *et al* (2000), following Bourdieu (1977):

> Rather than judging methods as tools through which we can uncover the truth, we should instead examine the relationship between the methods used, the assumptions behind these and the data collected (Harden, *et al*, 2000).

In relation to ethnographic studies of popular music in the lives of young people particularly, Bennett (2002) criticises the 'lack of focus on methodological problems and issues arising from the research process', and demands a movement towards the creation of 'a body of work that critically reflects on the research process itself' (Bennett, 2002, 464). He identifies three specific issues as requiring attention: finding appropriate methods, negotiating access to the field, and ethical issues. These three areas capture well many of the methodological issues that arose during my research, both in the domestic and schools contexts, although the categories often overlap and, within each category, different issues surface according to the research context.

The first section of this chapter portrays the environments of my research, represents the participants as I experienced and understood them within these environments and the research context, and outlines the methods used in each context. Following the chronological order of the research, I describe first the domestic context, introducing Ruth and her two friends Fran and Amy, and the research methods used. Next, I outline the research carried out in schools, starting with the questionnaire research, and then the discussion groups, carried out in three schools and involving nine girls. I have given pseudonyms to all participants, and refer to the first school as the 'Mixed Comp', the second as the 'Girls' High', and the third as the 'Catholic High'. The one exception to this is Ruth, as the fact that she is my daughter is an explicit feature of this research, making her anonymity impossible. This ethical issue is discussed in the second section of the chapter that examines the various methodological issues arising from the research. In this section, the role of the researcher, which has been a primary concern throughout the research process, is discussed first. Then, following Bennett (2002), issues concerning finding appropriate methods, access and ethics are discussed in relation to both the domestic and schools-based research.

Description of research methods, participants and environments: Domestic research

The initial phase of my research, from 2003 and 2006, focused on music in the everyday lives of my daughter and her two closest friends, when they were aged between twelve and fourteen. Each of the girls was the only child living at home, Ruth with me, and Fran and Amy each with both of their parents. The girls became friends at school. Fran and Amy had been friends on and off since the beginning of school at the age of four. When Ruth joined the school in Easter 1997, she befriended Fran almost immediately, and her friendship with Amy began towards the end of their time at junior school, in June 2002. Throughout the summer break of 2002, they became particularly close, while also both remaining close friends with Fran. In September 2002, the three girls went to different secondary schools. None of the girls made a new best friend at school straightaway, and in the academic year 2002-2003, Ruth continued to see Amy once or twice a week, either after school, or at the weekend. She saw Fran about once a week, and Amy and Fran saw each other about once every week or two weeks. The girls were always dropped off and picked up by parents when they visited each other, as none of them lived within easy walking distance of either of the

others. When in their respective homes they communicated every day, by either phone or the online instant messaging service MSN Messenger.

During the summer break of 2003, the friendship between Ruth and Amy became more intense and exclusive. They went on two holidays together with their respective families and their closeness continued in the first half of their second year at secondary school. Around Easter 2004, however, as discussed earlier, a series of disagreements ended their friendship completely. In the summer of 2004, Fran accompanied Ruth on our family holiday in Wales, my abiding memory of which is the sound of the two girls repeatedly playing every ringtone on their mobile phones. Ruth and Fran continued to be friends, but by 2006, their separate school lives had taken them different directions, and their meetings and communications gradually became less frequent.

Participant observation, the main method of ethnography, requires immersion over a length of time in the culture of a group in order to learn how they live their lives and their beliefs about themselves. As the mother of a girl in a closely-knit small friendship group, I was immersed, to a certain extent, in their culture. My and Ruth's home was the place where the girls spent most of their time together, most likely because Ruth had a reasonably large bedroom with a computer in it, there was no dominating male presence in the house, and I had a relaxed and friendly attitude to the girls, and was willing to facilitate their activities. In their everyday lives, young teenage girls are not only involved with each other, and I was privileged to share many of their spaces and experiences. Inevitably, however, the cultural differences between adults and children meant there were boundaries I could not cross, as much of the interaction that bonds friends together takes place in a private space that, rightly, cannot be penetrated. The participation of children as co-researchers can overcome some of the issues arising from this, bringing such benefits as an equalising of the power balance between researcher and participants and greater insider knowledge for both obtaining and interpreting data (Greig, *et al*, 2007, 97). For me, this worked in an informal way, with Ruth proving to be an invaluable source of information, reporting from the 'frontline' on the intricacies of the roles and experiences of music in her friendships.

A great deal of the research, then, took place in my home and my car, as well as the homes of Fran and Amy, and various public settings and venues, such as restaurants, shops and cinemas. As O'Reilly (2005) observes, participant observation is 'never simply a matter of

participating and observing', and involves a range of different activities such as asking questions, doing interviews, making notes and collecting data (O'Reilly, 2005, 101). My domestic research involved all of these. Throughout the research, I was able to observe the girls' many music-oriented conversations and activities, which took place during the course of our daily lives. As well as these, we had many casual conversations and spontaneous discussions about music, which I directed to varying degrees. Additionally, I carried out several semi-structured interviews with them individually, often sitting at their computers in their respective homes, in order for them to show and explain to me the details of their computer-based activities, and the roles of music in these. On two occasions, I asked the girls to interview each other, in order to remove myself from the equation, providing them with a list of suggested topics for them to base the interviews on, and a voice recorder. The recordings of all the interviews were transcribed, and the information obtained from ongoing observation and discussion was preserved through note taking. Over time, as the nature of the friendships between the girls changed substantially, Ruth began to spend more time alone in her bedroom. In 2007-08, in order for me to gain a deeper understanding of music in her everyday life, Ruth produced several autobiographical accounts of her experiences and uses of music during this period, based on online journal archives, memories and conversations.

Description of research methods, participants and environments: Schools research

Questionnaire
After finishing the domestic phase of my research, I decided to approach a school in order to access other young people with whom I could discuss the roles of music in everyday life. I felt a change of environment and a shift in the kinds of relationships within the research context would provide a useful opportunity for comparison, in terms of method, data and the relationships between them. Additionally, as I wanted to investigate gender differences in the ways music is used and experienced, I aimed to extend the research to include boys. The reasons for re-focusing the research onto girls are discussed later in the chapter.

I designed a questionnaire of seventeen questions about music in everyday life. The questions were intended to be simple and direct, and were concerned with when and where music is listened to, what equipment is used to listen to music, what bands, artists, and music genres are most liked, how music is obtained, the music taste of friends and family, and

music making (see appendix 2). The questionnaire began with a brief explanation of my research and why I was asking them to complete the questionnaire, and ended with a request for the children to indicate if they would be interested in participating in one-to-one or small group discussions with me the following school year. In order to be able to identify those who wished to participate further, and to have a clear idea of the number of boys and girls likely to be involved, I also asked for their name and for them to indicate if they were male or female.

I emailed several local mixed secondary schools with an explanation of my research and one school responded positively, a specialist science college with around 1,500 pupils, including a sixth form of just over 250. An inspection report produced by Ofsted[5] in November 2007 describes it as follows:

> It is a larger than average comprehensive situated in the southern part of Liverpool. The school is popular and attracts students from a very large number of primary schools from across and outside the city. The intake includes students from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Overall the attainment on entry to the school is average. Due to the number of girls' schools in the vicinity, there are more boys than girls in most year groups. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The number of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and a number of these speak English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the number of pupils with statements of educational needs. The school has achieved the Investors in People Award and the Liverpool Healthy Schools Award. Work by the students' school council has led to the school achieving the Fair Trade Award (Ofsted, 2007, 3).

I liaised with the deputy head teacher to organise the delivery of the questionnaires to the school, which he agreed to distribute to around 200 year seven pupils, who were aged between eleven and twelve. I anticipated following on with further research in year eight, when the children would be a year older. Ruth and her friends were twelve when I started research with them, and although I wanted to carry out research in a different environment using different methods with different children, parity in terms of age seemed to be appropriate. The school supervised the completion of the questionnaires, and I collected them from the school office several weeks later. I did not meet the teacher involved, or speak to him in person. When I contacted him later, in order to arrange discussion groups with

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[5] Office for Standards in Education – a non-ministerial government department, which became Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills in April 2007.

those children who had expressed an interest, he told me the school was too busy to accommodate this.

In total, 139 questionnaires were completed, 91 by boys and 48 by girls – a ratio which reflects the fact that there are more boys than girls in the school. Clearly, the answers provided by the children provide a sketch rather than a detailed picture of their practices. In addition, as I was not present when the questionnaires were filled in, it is difficult for me to know how much time was spent on them and how seriously they were taken. However, most of the answers seem considered and thoughtful and, with regard to the main purpose of the questionnaire, which was to identify those pupils who would be interested in participating in face-to-face discussions with me during the following academic year, approximately a third of the girls and a third of the boys agreed to this.

Despite the fact that my intentions for the questionnaires were unfulfilled, the data they yielded provides an interesting and useful overview of the roles of music in the everyday lives of the young respondents. For example, the answers to the question 'What equipment do you use to listen to music?' revealed that for most of the respondents, the music of their choice was available to them everywhere through a variety of equipment. Over 80% of all the children used an MP3 player or iPod, and a similar number used a PC for listening to music. The car stereo was next, listed by 70% of boys and 77% of girls. Television and radio were both used by 68% of the boys, but girls used them more – radio 75% and TV 90%. More girls than boys reported using their phone for music listening – 15% and 8% respectively, and only boys reported using a games console for this purpose – 9%. From these results, it would appear that the use of new technology is more or less equally prevalent among girls and boys. However, what this type of analysis cannot show is how the answers to the questions interrelate to form a picture of the experiences and uses of music in the everyday life of each individual respondent: how, for example, different media overlap and coincide in use. The questionnaires provide a series of tantalising glimpses, but it is impossible to gain any real insight into the roles and experiences of music in the everyday lives of young people, without meeting and talking with them face-to-face.

Discussion groups
To help me to find other schools where I could carry out field research, the Widening Participation Officer at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA), where I worked as

a visiting lecturer, put me in touch with the Aimhigher Coordinator for Liverpool, who contacted numerous Liverpool secondary schools on my behalf. Launched in September 2001, Aimhigher, a government-run national outreach programme, aimed to widen participation in higher education among young people from under-represented groups, particularly those from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, some minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities (Directgov, 2010). Thanks to the efforts of the Aimhigher Coordinator, in February 2007 I received several offers to carry out my research in schools, two of which I accepted.

The meetings took place regularly at both the schools for two months until the summer break in July 2007. In September 2007, changes to University of Liverpool regulations required me to apply to the University Committee on Research Ethics for approval of my research. Before resuming my visits to the schools, I waited to receive the results of my application. Following the recommendations of the ethics committee, I amended the letters to parents and the information sheet for the children describing the research, and created a separate consent form for the children to sign. My application to the University Committee on Research Ethics is discussed in more detail in the section concerned with methodological issues. My research was approved in December 2007, but I was unable to arrange to return to either school to continue my research, as they were too busy. Consequently, I approached a neighbour who I knew was a secondary school teacher, and she arranged for me to meet with a small group of girls in year seven of the school at which she taught. These meetings took place throughout the summer term of 2008.

My use of group discussions with small groups of friends in their school environments adheres closely to the 'planned discussion group' method. According to O'Reilly (2005), this method typically involves a small, naturally occurring group of people who already know each other, and is conducted in a setting with which the participants are familiar, with the researcher more likely to learn from spontaneous interaction, rather than controlling or directing the discussion (O'Reilly, 2005, 135). Interactions between researchers and participants, O'Reilly argues, are modelled on familiar 'real world' relationships. Because the participant draws on life experiences to inform their behaviour, an individual interview can take the form of a job or journalistic interview, a 'therapeutic' or 'confessional' session, or a 'confidential discussion with a close friend'. In contrast, the group discussion is closer to the kinds of conversations that take place in everyday life settings, and as such can be seen as

a more 'normal discussion or conversation in a group with all the rules and norms that attach to those' (*ibid*, 130). People's representations of themselves and their ideas and beliefs differ and change depending on who else is there, so the generation of data through interaction can be seen as more naturalistic, 'reflecting the idea that people make sense of their world in interaction, not as individuals'. Further, discussion groups often take on a life of their own 'even to the extent that participants can forget the researcher is there' (*ibid*, 133).

At each of the schools, the group sat around a table and, apart from the introductory meetings with each group, I recorded all the discussions using a digital voice recorder that was placed on the table in the middle of the group. I transcribed the recorded discussions as accurately as possible and, although occasionally certain utterances were obscured by several voices talking at once, the transcriptions capture the words spoken in the discussions almost entirely. The process of transcribing, involving many repeated listening of the recordings, worked to embed the nuances of the actual speech in the mind – for me, the experience of reading the transcriptions was to hear the conversations. If the exact meaning of any of the written words was unclear, the recordings could be listened to again. Alongside the transcriptions of each meeting, I extracted all of the statements and exchanges of each girl to create a separate 'participant profile' for each of them. Used in conjunction, these two types of document allowed me to gain a clearer impression of the specific characteristics and circumstances of each participant, as well as the ways they interacted with each other. The next three sections describe the research in the three schools. In each case, I briefly describe the school, outline the processes by which, and people with whom, I negotiated access to the participants, and depict the environments in which the discussions took place, the general atmosphere of the discussions and the friendship group that took part in each.

Mixed Comp
The first school with which I made contact was a mixed comprehensive, multi-faith, community school, with just under 900 pupils on roll. According to the Ofsted inspection report of 2003, it is situated in 'an extremely deprived area of Liverpool', in what was designated an Education Action Zone (EAZ)[6] in 1999. At this school, most students had very low attainment on entry, and just over a quarter of the students in the school joined other than

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[6] An EAZ is a group of schools that is awarded special assistance from the Department of Education & Employment, to run projects in schools and the community to improve the academic achievement, attendance, punctuality and behaviour of pupils.

at the normal time of admission into Year 7. There were more boys than girls, and most students were white British, with about one fifth black British and a tenth from East Africa and Asia. Forty-five students were at an early stage of English language acquisition and about one-third of the students had special educational needs (Ofsted, 2003, i).

I liaised with Carol, a Learning Mentor at the school, who agreed to arrange meetings for me with year seven pupils during the school day. Before I could start the research, I was required by the school to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, which the school arranged and funded. The CRB, an Executive Agency of the Home Office, was launched in March 2002 and provides access to criminal record information through its disclosure service, enabling organisations to identify candidates who may be unsuitable for work involving children or vulnerable adults (Home Office, 2010). While this was being processed, I drafted a letter to parents, explaining the research and seeking permission for pupils to participate (see appendix 3). Carol agreed to distribute this to year seven pupils. The CRB check took much longer than I expected, and several months passed before I was able to go into the school to start the research.

The first meeting with the children took place during a school morning early in June 2007, in a small windowless room off a busy corridor, containing a table and several chairs. I did not record this first meeting, as I wanted to introduce myself and the research and explain their right to withdraw before recording any discussions. The meeting was with two boys Jack and Jamie, and three girls, Lianna, Tallulah and Alisha, who were all in year seven, and all aged twelve. I distributed the sheets I had designed, that outlined the research in simple terms, explained that they could leave the discussion group whenever they wanted, and listed possible topics for discussion (see appendix 4). I read through this with them, although it was clear that I did not have the full attention of all of them, as the two boys spun round continuously on their chairs. The children often spoke simultaneously so it was difficult to distinguish what they were saying; I decided smaller groups would be more manageable. At the end of the meeting, Lianna and Tallulah took their sheets with them and said they would answer the questions for next week. I said they did not have to do this, as it was just to give them an idea of the kinds of things I was interested in talking about with them. The other three left without the sheets, having not really looked at them at all. Subsequent discussions usually involved only the three girls. The girls expressed a wish to meet separately from the boys, as the boys 'messed around' too much. All the meetings at this school took place

24

during the school morning and in the same small room off the corridor. I signed in at the reception desk, and waited for Carol to take me to the room. I re-arranged the furniture so that the chairs were around the table, while I waited for the children to arrive. I understood from the children that Carol called them from their lessons to come to the room to meet with me.

It soon became apparent that the girls were willing to come along, not only because they enjoyed the discussions, but also because they were missing P.E. (Physical Education), which they all disliked. The boys, on the other hand, were reluctant to participate for the opposite reason: several times, they arrived at the room only to ask my permission to go to their P.E. lesson. Although Jack and Jamie turned up occasionally after the initial meeting, they never stayed long and discussions with them did not progress. A boy who was not at the first meeting, James, came along once and talked with me for about twenty minutes on his own. Although the boys' contributions were interesting, I only met the three girls on a regular basis and for any length of time, so the research at this school became focused on them.

The girls appeared to know each other reasonably well. They told me about a party held at Alisha's house for her birthday, which both Tallulah and Lianna had attended. They were clearly good friends with each other in school, each of them equally keen to get away from the challenges and irritations of the school curriculum and participate in the discussions with me. None of them seemed to enjoy school particularly and only Tallulah expressed any positive feelings about any of the lessons or school life in general. In one long discussion, they all complained bitterly about the school's ban on mobile phones, and each of them justified breaking this rule on the instructions of their parents. The school, they argued, was unsupportive and pointlessly bureaucratic in cases of sickness, and it was preferable by far to be able to contact parents directly to be collected and taken home.

Lianna was an enthusiastic and lively participant in the discussions. When I asked a question, she tended to be the first to answer and gave a lot of information quickly. She told me she did not find talking about music strange, as she discussed music with her friends anyway, but she preferred it when the boys were not in the meeting, because she found them too talkative and their singing annoyed her. Alisha was the least communicative of the three, and seemed uncomfortable and withdrawn in the discussions. She continued to attend the meetings, however, perhaps because the alternative was even less appealing. She revealed

very little about herself and only really fully participated in the discussion about phones mentioned above. Although she was quietly spoken, Tallulah seemed confident and her comments were thoughtful and informative. She asked me several questions about myself and, like Lianna, remarked that the discussion was 'better without the boys'. She seemed to look forward to the discussions, and once said that she had forgotten we were in school.

Girls' High

At the same time as the meetings at the Mixed Comp, I carried out research at the Girls' High school. This was a single sex Church of England Voluntary Aided High School and specialist Technology College with Beacon school status. The Ofsted inspection report (2004) provides the following description:

> There are just under 900 girls on roll, including a sixth form of about 140 students. Just over 13 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is in line with the national figure. Most pupils enter the school having achieved broadly average results in their primary schools. The number of pupils who have special educational needs is below average. Around 10 per cent of the pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds; no pupils are at an early stage of learning English (Ofsted, 2004, 1).

Abby, the enthusiastic and friendly Aimhigher Coordinator for the school, set up the discussion group. The school agreed that the CRB check already in process, if clear, would be acceptable. Abby sent a letter home to parents, seeking permission for girls in year seven to participate in the research. Unlike the letter to parents of the children at the Mixed Comp, which I wrote, Abby wrote the letter to parents herself, basing it on information I had given her about my research (see appendix 5). As with the Mixed Comp, the meetings at the Girls' High began as soon as the CRB check was cleared, in June 2007.

During the months that had passed while I waited to start, Abby had reported a good level of interest in the project among the year seven girls. Eventually however, I met with only two year eight girls, Emma and Charlotte, who were twelve and thirteen years old respectively. The meetings took place immediately after the end of the school day. When I arrived, I signed in and was issued with an identification badge. Abby took me to the large sixth form common room, where she supervised an afterschool homework club each day. Other girls were sometimes working quietly in other parts of the room, and Abby worked in an adjoining room close by with the door open. The environment was light and spacious, with a peaceful

and pleasant atmosphere. The only occasional interruption was from a parent, calling Emma or Charlotte on their mobile phone to ask when they needed to be collected. The three of us sat at a table, the girls side by side, with me opposite them, and the voice recorder on the table between us. Our discussions usually lasted about half an hour. Both girls were articulate and polite, and the discussions progressed in an orderly and calm way. As Emma and Charlotte were best friends, and spent most of their time together both in and outside of school, their stories were closely intertwined. For example, they were both members of a Christian youth club, and they went to the gym and swimming together twice a week, as well as to a netball club at their church. Dancing was an important activity for both girls, and they attended a street dance class together. They both had an account on the social networking site Piczo, but neither of them used it much, as they were too busy with their many activities. Although many of their responses were similar, there were some points on which their opinions diverged, and their different personalities and the subtleties of their relationship were revealed during the discussions. Emma often looked for assurance or confirmation from Charlotte when she answered questions, but was also willing to give her own opinion on many topics and was generally more forthcoming than Charlotte in the discussions. Charlotte was less talkative, but seemed confident nonetheless.

Catholic High
After the delay resulting from my application the Ethics Committee, and the loss of contact with the Mixed Comp and Girls' High, I felt I needed to gain access to a third school in order to develop my field research further. O'Reilly (2005) invokes the image of the essential person emerging 'like a fairy godmother to help the forlorn ethnographer' (Rock, 2001, 34 cited in O'Reilly, 2005, 90). My neighbour Bernie Watson was my fairy godmother. I knew she was a secondary school teacher, and we were on friendly terms, so I decided to ask her if she would be able to organise some discussions with a small group of year seven or eight girls for me. She was extremely helpful and enthusiastic. I gave her my CRB certificate, and the consent forms and information sheet I had produced. As the school was in the process of an Ofsted inspection in the spring term of 2008, and consequently she was very busy, my regular meetings with four girls in year eight took place throughout the summer term.
The school was a mixed catholic high school in the metropolitan borough of Knowsley, about six miles north-east of central Liverpool. There were almost 1400 pupils at the school,

including a sixth form of just over 120. The report produced by Ofsted from the 2008 inspection describes the school as follows:

> ... a larger than average secondary school serving predominantly the Roman Catholic communities of Kirkby and the surrounding districts. There is considerable social and economic deprivation in the local area. Over a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, but the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average ... The school is a specialist college for business and enterprise, and holds the Investors in People award (Ofsted, 2008).

The sessions were scheduled to take place during lunch time. The gate to the school grounds was guarded by a tough-seeming yet friendly woman, and I was obliged to introduce myself and state the nature of my visit, before being allowed to proceed into the car park. On my first visit, as I waited in the foyer of the school to meet Bernie, I witnessed a female teacher attempting to disperse a gathering of boys, some of whom were reluctant to cooperate. The situation became increasingly tense and aggressive as the teacher continued to assert and the boys to resist her authority, and I felt slightly on edge. Finally, Bernie arrived with an older teenage boy, Cameron, who was shadowing her for work experience, and the four girls who were to participate in the discussions. Bernie had brought a sandwich, a cake and a carton of juice for me. We settled in a long narrow room off the foyer, which was the office of the deputy head teacher. The room was bright and pleasant, and we sat around a long table at the opposite end of the room from a large window, which looked out onto a main pedestrian thoroughfare. We agreed to Bernie's request for Cameron to stay for the session, then Bernie suggested that two of the girls, Bethany and Lucy, should sing a song, as they were both members of a choir and known for their vocal talent. Without too much persuasion, they gave a sweet and strong rendition of 'Amazing Grace'. The other two girls, Rachel and Olivia, were also invited to sing, but they claimed to be too shy due to the presence of Cameron. Cameron offered to leave and, as an air of embarrassment and confusion had started to develop, I suggested that they take some time to consider and prepare, and possibly perform the following week. Bernie then left and the discussion began. After I had explained to them about my research and the kinds of topics I was interested in discussing with them, the girls signed the consent form I had designed, and talked a bit about themselves and the music in their lives. This session was not recorded, as I wanted us to get to know each other a little before introducing the potentially inhibiting element of the voice recorder.

For the subsequent sessions, I arrived at the school at the same time, and waited in the foyer for the girls to arrive. I witnessed several more tense moments in the foyer, and was impressed by the calm and good-natured way the teachers dealt with the pupils. The girls brought their own lunch as well as some for me, and we ate during the session. Bernie usually came along at some point, to check things were going well, and often to offer me something else to eat. I felt very welcome, and these discussions were the most enjoyable of all those I carried out in schools. This is not to say, however, that the sessions always ran smoothly: when all four girls were present together, a confrontational and competitive atmosphere tended to prevail, and the less voluble participants, such as Rachel, consequently withdrew into relative silence.

Rachel seemed to me to be a mature, intelligent and straightforward girl, with a propensity for honesty and factual accuracy, and she often made the group laugh with stories of her chaotic-sounding home life. However, while she did not seem to be comfortable joining in with the excited and argumentative banter of the larger group meetings, her insistence on several points of fact caused several disagreements. She was the only one of the four girls who attended all the meetings. Lucy was confident and assertive in the discussions, and voiced strong opinions. Bethany was often quiet in the discussion group. She was clearly closest to Lucy, and it seemed that Lucy was the dominant one of the pair. Olivia was a witty girl with a sarcastic sense of humour, although many of the things she said were a bit unclear and indirect, and I was often unsure of what she meant exactly. Often she seemed to speak in the cracks between the others talking, slipping her comments in slyly. Sometimes when I asked her something, it was as if I had jolted her out of a daydream.

These brief portraits of the girls are based on what they told me and my own observations during our meetings, and as such are necessarily bound by the context of the research. Further, they are based on my own subjective impressions, and the act of representing these girls in words has highlighted for me the judgements necessarily involved in describing people.

Methodological issues
Soon after starting the field research, it quickly became obvious that an examination of the research process is inextricable from, and as important as, the analysis of the data collected.

Early in 2004, the White Horses incident described at the beginning of the thesis brought this realisation into sharp focus. In April 2004, I presented a seminar paper[7] focusing on this incident, in which I considered numerous methodological questions. I was concerned about the extent to which my understanding of the argument between Ruth and Amy and the role played by music was shaped by my own involvement and emotions, and if the difficulty of achieving objectivity researching in an 'incestuous field' negated the research. The question of whether research with children and young people needs to be approached differently from research with adults was also significant. The fact that, in comparison with adults, children can be seen as socially subordinate, less competent, and more naïve and vulnerable, seemed important to bear in mind in relation to methodology. Further, my power and control as an adult may have had an influence, enabling me to engineer situations which would contribute to my research; to what extent, for example, did my interest in and analysis of the argument between the girls affect the outcome? In relation to the roles of parent and researcher, it often seemed difficult to know where one ended and the other began. As the research was largely situated in my own home, I could not detach or distance myself from it, nor leave it behind when I 'went home'; the question arose, therefore, of how much I wanted to reveal about my own life. More crucially, the intrinsic power imbalance in the parent/child relationship raised the issues of exploitation and choice. Even if a child does not mind being researched, can she really understand the implications of it? Can children really give 'informed consent'? Research is intrusive, and the issue of privacy is important. I began to wonder if it was right or normal for a parent to be closely involved and aware of a young teenager's inner life and social relationships, and furthermore if it was right to write about it? If I tried not to intrude, but still tried to observe, was I in effect eavesdropping on private situations? Finally, as the research was founded on the method of a parent studying their own child, then it was difficult to see how the anonymity of the subject(s) could be preserved.

These questions were formulated before I undertook any substantial research into methodological issues, yet they capture many of the key considerations of a reflexive approach to research methods, including those identified by Bennett (2002): the challenges of finding appropriate methods, gaining access, and ethical issues. These considerations are also relevant, sometimes in different ways, to my research in schools, and this section will

[7] 'Beating the eavesdropper's blues: meeting the methodological and ethical challenges of researching popular music in the daily lives of young teenagers'. Liverpool University School of Music postgraduate colloquium.

discuss the issues in relation to both fields, drawing comparisons between them. In the following four sections, then, I will consider first issues of subjectivity and reflexivity in relation the role of the researcher; second, I will discuss the challenge of finding appropriate methods to research the lives of young teenagers; third, I will address issues associated with negotiating access to the field; finally, I will examine ethical issues.

The role of the researcher

Existing ethnographic studies of music in the everyday lives of young people have been criticised for their lack of methodological reflexivity (Bennett, 2002). Central but not exclusive to feminist approaches to research, reflexivity emerged in the 1980s as part of the postmodern development in ethnographic research (O'Reilly, 2005, 210-211). The 'reflexive turn' resulted in a critical examination of the power relations embedded in the production of ethnographic texts. The emphasis on ethnography as constructed and artificial resulted in a tendency to regard all ethnographies as equally biased and untrustworthy. Evolving out of this 'crisis in representation', the current paradigm reclaims 'some authority for the academic ethnographer' and retains 'what was beneficial, intelligent and insightful from the reflexive turn', which is:

> an awareness that ethnographies are constructed by human beings who make choices about what to research, interpret what they see and hear, decide what to write and how, and they do this within the context of their own personal biographies and often ensconced in scientific and disciplinary environments (*ibid*).

From a feminist research perspective, Järviluoma, *et al* (2003) advocate the 'necessity of positioning', whereby the researcher acknowledges 'that there is no 'innocent' research' (Järviluoma, *et al*, 2003, 22). The background, beliefs and choices of the researcher always shape the research, and therefore must be examined, justified, explicitly stated and taken into account throughout the research process (*ibid*, 23). Similarly, Westmarland (2001) cites 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1991) and 'intellectual biography' (Stanley and Wise, 1990), which involve the inclusion of an acknowledgement of 'both the situation the knowledge was produced in, and the located knowledge of the researcher' (Westmarland, 2001). Within the 'complex and impenetrable kaleidoscope of heavily constructed social meanings' that is qualitative research (Oakley, 2000, 25 cited in Järviluoma, *et al*, 2003, 24), this is how 'objectivity' can be attained:

31

The 'objectivity' of a study evolves from the explicit positioning of the background factors influencing the methodological choices, the perspectives taken, as well as the selection of the material (Järviluoma, *et al*, 2003, 23).

Throughout this thesis, and particularly in the rest of this chapter and in the final chapter 'Emotions', I take account of my own role and influence as a researcher, above all with regard to my identity as an adult female academic, and as a parent-researcher.

Finding appropriate methods

Researching the daily lives of children and young teenagers raises its own particular concerns. The efficacy of ethnographic research methods, specifically participant observation, is questionable when there is a generation gap between researcher and research participants. Although, clearly, gaps exist between researchers and participants across a range of variables, for example class, gender and ethnicity, the gap between the adult researcher and the child participant brings its own specific challenges. As Harden, *et al* (2000) observe:

> Clearly, participant observation is problematic in a culture where children are used to seeing adults as different and are therefore unlikely to be prepared to accept them as one of themselves or to ignore their presence (Harden, *et al*, 2000).

The various attempts to find alternative methods have involved the researcher ostensibly removing themselves from the field, to a greater or lesser degree. Equipping children with the skills to undertake their own research is one solution (see for example Alderson, 2000; Kellett, 2005), and in January 2004, the Children's Research Centre (CRC), based at the Open University, opened with this specific aim. The CRC enables children and young people to carry out research projects in areas that are important to them, through taught programmes and supervisory support, in all stages of the research from design to dissemination, as explained on the website:

> The CRC is all about children by children. Our primary objective is to empower children and young people as active researchers. The CRC recognises that children are experts on their own lives. We value the child's perspective and believe in promoting child voice by supporting children to carry out research on topics that are important to them. The CRC is based at the Open University in Milton Keynes. We offer diverse groups of children and young people a taught programme on all aspects of the research process followed by one-to-one support to design and carry out a

research project. We also help them to disseminate their research findings, support a variety of outreach programmes. It links to numerous schools and community organisations and exists to contribute to the body of knowledge on childhood and children's views (Open University, 2004).

The research interests of children and adults are not always the same, however, and children themselves will not necessarily identify as important or interesting the gaps in knowledge about children's lives. Empowering and equipping children with the skills to research their own concerns is, without doubt, a valuable and worthwhile undertaking; however, the methodological challenges experienced by adults researching children's lives remain.

In ethnographic studies of music in the lives of young people, carried out by Williams (2001), Baker (2001a, 2001b, 2004), and Lincoln (2004, 2005), methodological challenges were met in various ways. To avoid intruding into the private spaces that constitute girls' 'bedroom culture', Baker (2001a, 2001b, 2004) adopted a similar approach to that of the CRC. Using a method she describes as 'auto-audio ethnography', she provided the girls with tape recorders and cameras to enable them to record and document their own musical practices and environments. Another method, used by both Lincoln (2004, 2005) and Williams (2001), was to instigate informal group discussions about music, which were observed and recorded, but with minimal participation and intervention by the researcher. The difference between these two studies is that Lincoln's research took place in the bedrooms of the participants, while Williams carried out her research in a school.

Williams, as we have seen, acknowledges that her schools-based discussions were 'disconnected from their day-to-day activities, relationships and experiences' (Cohen, 1993, 127 cited in Williams, 2001, 224). She argues nonetheless that asking young people about their engagement with popular music is better than simply theorizing from a detached subjective position. Williams was as 'hands-off' as possible in the group discussions, merely initiating discussions with open questions such as 'Is music important in your life?' then allowing the conversation to unfold with minimal intervention. She carried out individual feedback sessions after the discussions, checking that the research experience was comfortable, and discussing any points further (*ibid*, 225). Williams' research results in an interesting and unorthodox thesis that many 'ordinary kids' use music for utilitarian rather than emotional purposes. Apart from her introductory engagement with the methodological issues arising from her research, however, she does not take a reflexive approach either to the

research context or to the influence of her own presence as a researcher in the school, nor does she address these issues in relation to her actual findings. A more critical consideration of the apparent dispassion towards music displayed by the young people within the context of school would have provided a more revealing and rewarding line of enquiry.

Unlike the research projects supported by the CRC, which are chosen by the children themselves, Baker's (2001a, 2001b, 2004) research subject area was her own choice. Although the girls who took part in the research were clearly willing, and the data she collected was based on their everyday musical practices, the study was conceived, designed and shaped by Baker, not the girls themselves. Further, Baker recognises that the tapes and photographs presented to her by the girls constitute consciously constructed representations of themselves for her. However, she emphasises her interest in 'the *gaps* in this representation – the aspects of their play that I observed, but that were not included in their own overt reflections' (Baker, 2004, 79). Further, Baker is careful to counter the notion that her methodology in any way creates the practices she is researching:

> I should point out here that a number of the girls had access to cassette decks in their homes, so their use of technology was in no way dependent on their being part of my research (Baker, 2001b, 359-360).

While Baker goes some way to address the issues of reflexivity and subjectivity in her analysis of her research methodology, it is seemingly not a central concern. Considering the level of intrusion and intervention her methodology entails, albeit by proxy, this aspect of the research process would benefit from further consideration.

Lincoln's (2004, 2005) research took place in the participant's bedrooms – '*within* the culture itself' – where she conducted interviews and collected visual and written diaries to 'produce a more complete picture of what the girls' lives are really like' (Lincoln, 2004, 95). Most importantly, interviewing the young people in their own spaces allowed them control over the situation, ensuring 'they felt relaxed and consequently spoke confidently and fluently'; further, the use of friendship group interviews allowed her to record the talk and banter between the young people, which 'produced some excellent data' (Lincoln, 2005, 405). Although Lincoln's approach to methodology is thoughtful, any in depth consideration of her own role as a researcher, and the effects and influences of her presence in the bedroom spaces, is not evident in the two articles referred to here.

My solution to the methodological issues both of finding appropriate research methods and of negotiating access to the field was to research my own daughter and her friends in environments in which I usually spent time with the girls, primarily my own home. Researching literally 'at home', however, is not straightforward, and has been problematised by Negus (1994). In response to articles written by Tagg (1994) and McRobbie (1993), both of whom use their own daughters as a source of information about the rave scene, Negus criticises what he perceives to be a 'new methodology ...[in]...popular music scholarship': that of 'apocalyptic generalisation based on distant observations of and conversations with dancing offspring' (Negus, 1994). Observing and interviewing one's own family members 'slumped in front of the TV or HiFi after a hard day's work' would, he argues, produce some 'fascinating' yet unsound theories. Clearly, ethnographic research at home raises issues of credibility and validity, which need to be addressed. Exploring her own experience of carrying out management research in an 'incestuous field' (i.e. with colleagues in the company she worked for), Perriton (2000) identifies several important and relevant issues, one of which is the tendency to respond more emotionally to data generated from friends or family. Considering the transcript of an email interview with a former partner, she reflects:

> On the page the data looks thin in terms of description but it had a resonance for me that was rich and influential. It was difficult to consider some parts of the interview transcripts as being bounded by the words on the page. Often, when I reread the transcripts, I was aware that it acted as a prompt for my own memories – surfacing material in my own experience I had not previously considered influencing my analysis (Perriton, 2000, 3).

A reflexive approach to research at home requires an acknowledgment of the role of emotion in research, an awareness of life/research interference, and the creation of distance in order to make the familiar strange. These issues are discussed in the second part of the 'Emotions' chapter, dealing with emotions on the research processes.

In my domestic research, the ethnographic methods I used - observation, discussion, interview, and autobiography - were intrusive to varying degrees, but effectively generated data that was subtle and detailed. I observed, listened and sometimes participated in naturally occurring situations, for example, conversations at the dinner table or in the car. When I needed a more detailed understanding of practices that were unfamiliar to me, particularly their online activities, I arranged to sit with the girls at their computers, for them to show and

explain to me what they did. The interviews the girls conducted with each other, at my request, were partly successful. An interview between Ruth and Amy yielded some interesting thoughts and ideas of Amy's, but Ruth followed very closely the suggested topics I provided, and questioned Amy with no reciprocal questioning taking place. In short, a spontaneous discussion about music did not develop, and the unnaturalness of the situation was clear. A similar interview took place between Ruth and Fran but accidently the recorder was left switched off during the discussion. I sensed the girls found the situation false and therefore embarrassing, so I did not ask them to do it again. The sudden estrangement of Ruth and Amy partway through the research period, and the gradual drifting apart of Ruth and Fran towards the end, presented a serious methodological challenge. Although I was able to continue to observe Ruth's use of music and discuss music with her, this was a difficult period in her life that affected us both, and by extension the research process. Ruth's willingness to write autobiographically was a welcome solution to the scarcity of data resulting from a turbulent life and research situation although, clearly, these accounts present events from her particular point of view.

My use of questionnaires to elicit data from secondary school children was intended primarily to identify those children interested in participating in face-to-face discussions with me about music. As I was unable to develop the research in a qualitative way, the questionnaire data only hints at the complexity of the roles of music in the lives of the children, and yet is valuable as a quantitative supplement to the more substantial and detailed data gathered in the small group discussions that took place in the Mixed Comp, Girls' High and Catholic High schools. Not only did these discussions reveal the everyday experiences of music in the lives of the children in much more depth, but also the roles of music in the relationships between them. As in Williams' (2001) project, the school environment was, arguably, a specific research site in which the children were studied 'outside their usual social, spatial and temporal context' (Cohen, 1993, 127). The problem of 'disconnectedness' identified by Cohen (*ibid*) results from a mismatch between the aims of the research, which are to reveal everyday life in all its breadth and depth, and the research methods and environment, which are limiting and constrained. One way to overcome this disconnectedness caused by attempting to conduct ethnographic research into young people's everyday use of music in the school environment, however, is to focus on the ways music is experienced and used specifically in this environment. Clearly, any consideration of the

everyday lives of young people must include their experiences in school, as it is in this environment that they spend the majority of their daily lives.

. Undoubtedly, group discussions are not problem-free, as they are often hard to control, and group dynamics can work to obscure or even silence the contributions of some participants. Arguments and disagreements may break out, which sometimes happened when the four Catholic High girls were together, or the discussion may wander onto unrelated topics, which was sometimes the case at the Mixed Comp; although all data, however seemingly irrelevant, can be revealing and interesting. However, as well as the advantage of yielding data generated through interaction, group discussions can provide 'the opportunity to talk to people who are normally overpowered' (O'Reilly, 2005, 136). Recognised as a 'useful tool in feminist ethnography', the group discussion can encourage and enable those to participate, who may feel vulnerable or inhibited under the intense spotlight of the individual interview (*ibid*). This can be seen as particularly useful, then, to redress any power imbalance between adult researchers and child participants, potentially enabling the young people to feel less under pressure in the situation, and to achieve a feeling of 'safety in numbers'.

Negotiating access to the field
This section considers the practicalities of gaining access to a field for research. It is clear, however, that negotiating access to children and young people for research purposes also raises significant questions concerning ethics, and these are considered at the beginning of the next section 'Ethical issues'. My experience of negotiating access differed greatly between the two research contexts. Working within my own domestic environment was an obvious way to carry out ethnographic research into the daily lives of young teenagers in their own homes, which, as Harden, *et al* (2000) observe, is invariably problematic:

> Even observation is constrained by practical issues of access. For example, it would be very difficult if not impossible to undertake sustained observation in a household context in Britain, given the privacy associated with family life (Harden, *et al*, 2000).

The domestic research posed few access problems, as I was already sharing my life and home with one of the participants and I had regular and close contact with the others. I visited the homes of Fran and Amy often, usually to collect Ruth or drop her off, and I got to know their parents reasonably well. By virtue of my role as a parent, I was frequently involved in the girls' activities and conversations, and simple proximity afforded many opportunities to

observe and overhear. I was in a good position to unobtrusively observe the nuances and details of the ways in which my daughter and her friends used and experienced music on a daily basis, and I felt confident that this research would reveal a depth of experience lacking in other studies of young people's uses of music. Unlike Williams (2001), Baker (2001a, 2001b, 2004), and Lincoln (2004, 2005), all of whom constructed the fields in which they were researching to some degree, I believed, perhaps naively, that in certain situations I could observe 'real life' as it was experienced. In the car, for example, the conversations taking place on the back seat often seemed to occur without any reference to or acknowledgement of my presence. I was aware that my ability to access their lives completely was limited by the fact that I am an adult and they were children. Ease of access, however, meant that I could share, both directly and vicariously, their experiences to a great extent, and provided a unique window, albeit shaped by my role and status as a parent, onto the intricacies of the roles and significance of music in their everyday lives. Shifts in the key relationships during the research, however, revealed the flipside of the initial ease of access in the domestic setting, highlighting the difficulty of maintaining the roles of parent and researcher concurrently. As the closeness between Ruth and her two friends disintegrated, my ability to access Amy and Fran as a researcher decreased along with my fading involvement with them as the parent of a friend.

In contrast, obtaining access to schools in the first place was far more challenging. As Heath, *et al* (2007) point out, children spend 'increasing amounts of their time in age-structured institutions which separate them out from 'adult' society and construct them as marginal to 'adult' concerns', and where direct access is mediated by 'adult' gatekeepers (Heath, *et al,* 2007, 405). Consequently, researching children in institutional settings, such as schools, youth organisations and welfare agencies, is dependent 'on the goodwill of institutional gatekeepers' (*ibid,* citing Morrow and Richards, 1996). The school that distributed questionnaires for me decided not to accommodate the discussions I had planned because they were too busy, and my own direct attempts to arrange discussions at other schools were unsuccessful, my emails and phone calls typically receiving no response. However, when the Aimhigher Coordinator for Liverpool took on my case, several schools contacted me expressing their willingness to help.

Schools are extremely busy places, where teachers and pupils are under increasing pressure to meet targets. In these conditions, to justify a researcher taking up time and resources, a clear

reciprocal advantage for the school is needed. The reason for the effectiveness of approaching schools through Aimhigher was revealed by the letter to parents composed by Abby, the Aimhigher Coordinator at the Girls' High, in which she wrote:

> I have been approached by Helen Davies, a visiting lecturer from Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA). Helen is currently undertaking her PhD in Music at the University of Liverpool.
> [...]
> Your child's participation in this research gives her an insight into the kind of work that is required at university level.... It also means that school will have a contact at LIPA which we see as a valuable resource (appendix 5).

In this case, my role as a visiting lecturer at LIPA seemed to be my strongest currency. As Abby explained to me in our first meeting, in Liverpool, LIPA had both a powerful allure and the reputation of being virtually impenetrable to local residents; so the possibility of forging a link between the school and a LIPA 'insider' was a compelling incentive. In the case of the Catholic High, a friendly relationship with a teacher at the school facilitated my access, and the process was far smoother and less stressful. My neighbour Bernie Watson readily agreed to my request, and organised the meetings I asked for as soon as she could. These experiences strongly suggest that the help of external agencies is essential in order for researchers to negotiate access to schools; however, a personal relationship with an 'insider' is the most valuable asset of all.

Ethics

All research, especially that involving living beings, necessitates a consideration of ethics, and researching the lives of children and young people gives rise to specific ethical issues. Alderson and Morrow (2005) state: 'Ethics raises questions rather than providing answers, though it offers methods of addressing the questions' (Alderson and Morrow, 2005, 4). They propose ten topics to consider when carrying out ethical research with children: the purpose of the research; costs and hoped-for benefits; privacy and confidentiality; selection, inclusion and exclusion; funding; review and revision of research aims and methods; information; consent; dissemination; impact on children. In this section, I discuss all of these topics in relation to my research in both domestic and schools contexts. First, however, I consider the ethical issues arising from negotiating access to the field.

Access

Ethical issues relating to access in the domestic research context arose early in the process.

My role as a parent rendered me effectively unavoidable for a significant proportion of the girls' everyday lives, as Ruth, and to some extent Fran and Amy, depended on me for food, transport, shelter, and many other kinds of resources, not least the technologies they used for entertainment and communication. The fact that they spent much of their free time in my home, however, and seemed to enjoy my company, suggests that I was not too great an encumbrance to them, and my research was not unpleasantly intrusive. Towards the end of the research period, however, the necessity for me as a parent to respect and maintain Ruth's self and social esteem prevented my continuation of a research relationship with two girls with whom she was no longer friends. In effect, my access to Fran and Amy ceased along with the friendships.

In the case of the schools research, negotiating access to young people outside of one's own social network is particularly challenging, as it involves both penetrating a protective barrier of gatekeepers and official bodies, and working within the constraints of the school timetable. Beliefs about the unequal or different competencies of children are central to issues of access, as gatekeepers are responsible for protecting children from exploitation and harm. The problems I encountered when trying to gain access to research schoolchildren, however, seemed to arise more from practical and time constraints than ethical misgivings. Aside from the need to fulfil the legal obligation of the CRB check, the gatekeepers involved seemed less concerned than I was about ethical issues. In some cases, I gained the distinct impression that my concern to ensure the children had readily consented to participate in the research was considered to be somewhat over-scrupulous and pedantic. It seems the reality of researching in schools is not always in accordance with the ideals of ethical research, in that it can be difficult for the researcher to follow plans and procedures in an environment where she is not in control. It is inevitable that the gatekeepers will do things their way, and to a certain extent, the researcher has to relinquish control in order to gain access. The three school discussion groups, for example, consisted of girls chosen by the gatekeepers, for reasons which they determined. It seems the girls chosen were considered most suitable because of their interest in music, their relative maturity, and their availability at the times at which the discussions took place, which were also established by the gatekeepers. This availability resulted from various factors, such as an antipathy to a certain lesson, which was considered unimportant enough to miss, a willingness and ability to stay behind after the end of the school day, and a desire to avoid the schoolyard at lunchtime. The gatekeepers assured me of the willingness of the girls to participate, and I had no reason to doubt them. At every

meeting I emphasised to the children that they were free to leave at any time, and sometimes one of them would not attend for some reason. It could be argued that of the three parties involved in this stage of the process, the gatekeepers, the participants, and the researcher, it is the latter who has least control.

Purpose of the research

This issue is concerned with the aims and value of the research, and the suitability of the research methods to answer the research questions. The domestic environment is an unusual research context, and yet has great potential in revealing the fine detail of the role of music in young teenagers' everyday lives; the schools settings extend the scope of the research, creating opportunities for girls from different backgrounds to talk about their lives and the role music plays in them. The use of two distinct research environments also allows for comparisons of data and methodology, and the relationship between them.

Costs and hoped-for benefits

Alderson and Morrow (2005) include time, inconvenience, embarrassment, and intrusion of privacy as possible risks or costs incurred by research, and satisfaction, increased confidence or knowledge, and time to talk to an attentive listener as potential benefits. The girls who took part in the schools research appeared to give up their time willingly. At the Mixed Comp, Lianna and Tallulah both agreed that they enjoyed the discussions when there were no boys present to disrupt things, and all three girls welcomed the weekly opportunity to miss P.E. For the boys, however, the discussions were scheduled at the wrong time, and they chose to withdraw.

The discussions at the Girls' High took place after school had finished, and therefore Emma and Charlotte sacrificed their free time to participate. They told me they were keen dancers, attending weekly street dance classes as well as spending much of their free time together practising their own dance routines. It is possible that the letter Abby, the school's Aimhigher Coordinator, wrote to parents, which mentioned the beneficial link with LIPA that I represented, led them to think they may somehow gain access to LIPA through their connection with me. It is certainly the case that the University Committee on Research Ethics considered the following paragraph of the letter to parents to be 'coercive', and stipulated that it should be removed:

Your child's participation in this research gives her an insight into the kind of work that is required at university level. It will also improve key employability skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, team work and reliability and punctuality. All that we ask of your daughter is that she shows a full commitment to the research project by turning up regularly. It also means that school will have a contact at LIPA which we see as a valuable resource (see appendix 5).

However, as Haudrup (2004) acknowledges, in reference to her research into children's health awareness, 'research questions are rarely posed at the request of the participants in our research. The questions were posed by me and were central to my interests and concern, not theirs' (Haudrup, 2004, 5). Similarly, reflecting on her experience of carrying out research with mothers of school children, Reay (1995) questions the reality of the 'mutuality and exchange' in the interviews she carried out:

> The research process positions participants not simply as partners in a research exchange, but also as means to research ends ... I have learnt from my own research that it is the researcher, rather than the researched, who is at the heart of the research process. At the end of the interview, I was the person who walked away with what I wanted - at least an hour, and sometimes much more, of interview data (Reay, 1995, 213).

While it is probably the case that the girls who participated in the discussions gained some advantages, and certainly did not appear to suffer any risks or costs, it is an unavoidable truth that the person who benefited most from the research was me.

In relation to the research carried out in the domestic field, there were few time and inconvenience costs to the girls, as the research took place mainly in the course of our shared daily lives. Occasionally I would intrude on their lives to conduct a fact-finding interview, but most of the data was gathered through fairly unobtrusive observation and naturally occurring conversations. Ruth's autobiography is perhaps the most cost and risk incurring contribution, but she expressed a willingness to undertake this, and considered it to be an almost therapeutic opportunity to revisit and re-assess a difficult time in her life. I sensed a potential risk early on, when I questioned the impact of my 'researcher' role on the relationships between my daughter and her friends. As a parent, I am very involved with and interested in my daughter, and by extension, her friends. However, although in-depth discussions about all aspects of our lives are fairly normal, I am careful to respect her privacy. While even a discreet research presence clearly has some effect on situations, it is impossible to know to what extent my analytical spotlight heightened the drama of, for

example, the 'White Horses' argument between Ruth and Amy, if at all.

Privacy and confidentiality

The issue of privacy and confidentiality has different implications in each of the research .
contexts. In the schools context, the issue was addressed in a fairly straightforward way by
the adoption of pseudonyms. However, the University Committee on Research Ethics
highlighted a specific issue that required confidentiality, regarding one of the discussion
topics I included on the information sheet for participants (see appendix 4). The question
about downloading music, it was pointed out, raised the ethical issue of my responsibility if
any of the participants divulged that they downloaded music illegally. My response to this
was that I would not report any illegal activity disclosed to me by participants, and would
maintain confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms for participating pupils and schools
in any writing or presentations (see appendix 6), and I amended the information sheet (see
appendix 7) and the letters to parents (see appendices 8 and 9) to reflect this. Despite the fact
that the privacy and confidentiality issues raised in relation to the schools research are no less
relevant in the domestic setting, their implications are more complex and more difficult to
resolve. Alternative names are used for Ruth's friends and acquaintances discussed in this
thesis, but as the foundation of the domestic research is that it involves my own daughter,
unless I remain anonymous myself, changing her name will not conceal her identity in a
meaningful way. Ruth's own contribution to the thesis, in the form of her autobiographical
account, demonstrates her level of involvement with the project and her ease with being
identified.

Whether or not participants are anonymised, it is still important to be tactful with regard to
sensitive data, including information about private practices. Although research into music is
relatively non-intrusive in terms of privacy, nonetheless it can generate data of a deeply
personal nature. Music consumption, as the subsequent chapters explore, is bound up with
personal practices and social relationships in ways that, for some, may be embarrassing,
painful or otherwise risky to reveal. Despite the fact that the names of the girls in the schools
and Ruth's friends have been changed, they are likely to be able recognise themselves in the
writing. The 'White Horses' incident demonstrates the need to balance an analysis of the
captivating subtleties of the role of music in a friendship, with the deployment of discretion
when recounting the details. As the research is concerned with relationships between friends,
data inevitably exists about each participant which they would prefer the others not to know.

Consequently, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of each participant within the group at data level is of equal importance as using pseudonyms in the written thesis.

Selection, inclusion and exclusion

This issue concerns the selection of participants for the research. In the domestic context, the research involved my daughter and her friends, who were selected because of their relationship with me. Indeed, to a certain extent it was their presence in my life that instigated the research in the first place. In a sense, it was because of them that this particular research project was selected. In the schools research, the children were selected from years seven and eight for parity, so they would be the same age as Ruth and her friends were during the domestic phase of the research. I relied on the schools to select the children for me and have identified several ethical issues arising from this. At the Mixed Comp, I was not completely sure that the permission form had been sent home to parents, and although I emphasised that I wanted children who were willing to participate, the boys gave the impression of having been coerced into participating. It was difficult to find an opportunity to discuss my concerns with Carol (the learning mentor), as she was under pressure, busy and often unavailable. I dealt with the reluctance of the boys to join the discussion by allowing them to leave whenever they wanted to, and emphasised to them that they were under no obligation to participate. This had an impact on the research aims, which are discussed below. As aforementioned, in the case of the Girls' High, the original permission letter sent to parents seemed to suggest that participating in my research might be advantageous to pupils wishing to become involved with LIPA. As Emma and Charlotte were both keen dancers with a clear interest in performance, this could have influenced their decision to participate. When I mentioned to Bernie Watson my wish to carry out research with a small group of year seven girls, she knew immediately a 'good little group' of girls who could participate. As such, the four girls I met with at the Catholic High were selected by Bernie, to the exclusion of any others who may have been interested in the project. It could be argued that I should have asked Bernie to distribute information about my research to all year seven girls, to allow them to self select. The reality is, however, that to insist on such stipulations when Bernie was effectively doing me a huge favour, would have been unthinkable.

Funding

The only funding issue that arose from the research related to the Criminal Records Bureau check that I was required to undergo before I could start the research in schools. The Mixed Comp paid for this on my behalf, probably as part of their Aimhigher remit. However, the length of time it took to be processed reduced the amount of time available to undertake the research to a considerable degree. The need to obtain clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) was imperative at all three schools. I was fortunate that the Mixed Comp arranged and paid for this, and the Girls' High and Catholic High agreed to accept the same check, despite the fact that it is usual for different institutions to demand separate checks. However, I was unfortunate in that the application took five months to be processed, from February to June 2007, and because the school had arranged the check, I had no opportunity to communicate directly with the CRB to find out what was causing the delay and sort it out. Consequently, with schools breaking up for summer in July, the time available to carry out my research at the schools shrank from months to weeks.

Review and revision of research aims and methods

Review and revision of the aims and methods of the research have taken place throughout the project. In terms of research aims, I have made two significant revisions. Originally intended to be a 'straightforward' ethnographic study of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, the methodological issues that arose from the particular circumstances of the domestic context launched an in-depth consideration of the relationship between research methods and data. The second major revision of research aims was a result of external circumstances. My original intention after completing the domestic phase of the research was to extend the study to include boys. This became part of the research plan in the early stages of the process because, as gender is a relational concept, studying both girls and boys would be more meaningful. Alongside the opportunity to compare the relationship between types of research fields, research methods and data, this was one of the reasons for extending my research into schools sites. As it turned out, of the first two schools who agreed to accommodate my research, one was a single-sex girls school, and in the other, the boys who were initially identified as being interested in participating, soon decided that they would rather not. When arranging to visit the third school, for the sake of consistency, I specifically requested to meet only with girls, as by this stage the research was concerned exclusively with girls. While recognising the value of including boys in a study such as this, then, external circumstances have resulted in their exclusion.

A notable methodological revision was needed towards the end of the domestic phase of the field research due to the estrangement between the girls, which resulted in significantly fewer opportunities to observe and discuss music in their everyday lives as a friendship group. Consequently, Ruth's autobiographical accounts of her experiences of music in everyday life at that time supplemented my own observations.

Information

In the domestic research, the sharing of information about the research took place as part of the ongoing communication between me, my daughter and her friends. A more formal approach to information-giving was necessary at the schools, where the channels of communication were less open. I carefully designed a project information sheet, based on guidelines given by Alderson and Morrow (2004), which I gave to each of the children involved in the research to keep (see appendix 4). I intended to answer directly any questions or concerns they or their parents may have, so the first draft of my letter to parents at the Mixed Comp included my email address and work telephone number, and the invitation to contact me directly if they had any questions. I was asked by the school to remove my contact details from the letter, however, and inform parents that they should contact the school if they had any concerns. Although the reason for this was not explained to me, taking into account the level of security at the school, I surmised this may have been for my own protection. Abby's letter to parents at the Girls' High school was based on a draft I sent her but significantly extended with several paragraphs of her own, one of which, as mentioned above, was deemed 'coercive' by the University Committee on Research Ethics. By the time I approached the Catholic High, the letters and information were amended according to the recommendations of the Ethics Committee, and these were given to the girls by Bernie Watson. In all cases, the need to negotiate access through gatekeepers at the schools had an effect on the information given to the participants, and reveals the extent to which ethical considerations can be influenced by external forces. In a sense, the price of access is acquiescence to the preferences and priorities of the gatekeepers.

Consent

The issue of gaining informed consent from children in institutional settings is a key concern in social and educational research and has been explored by numerous researchers, including Lindsay (2000), David, *et al* (2001), and Heath, *et al* (2004). As Burgess (1984) observes, relatively powerless subjects such as children often have consent given (or withheld) for them

by 'gatekeepers' such as parents and teachers (Burgess, 1984, 200). As mentioned above, some of the boys who came along to the first meeting at the Mixed Comp, and infrequently after that, told me that although they had been asked to join the research group, they hadn't been given a letter to take home or anything to sign. The University Committee on Research Ethics also pointed out that, although there was a permission letter for parents to sign, there was no formal provision for the children to give their consent. Although in the cases of the Mixed Comp and the Girls' High I sought the consent of the children verbally, and relied upon the gatekeepers to select only those children who were willing to participate, I recognised that a consent form specifically for the children should be given. Accordingly, one was designed and given to each of the girls at Catholic High (see appendix 10).

The domestic phase of the research was over before the ethical approval of the university became a requirement, although it would have been interesting to see how it would have been reviewed. The fact that I was in close or familiar relationships with the girls in the domestic research seemed to make unnecessary ethical formalities, such as the signing of consent forms. Nevertheless, I was concerned to avoid exploiting them or intruding upon their privacy, so before starting the research, and continually throughout, I checked that they were happy and comfortable with the project. I also sought the agreement of the parents of Ruth's friends, to ensure they had no objection to the research. Even so, the issue of informed consent arose early in the research process, due to the power relationships inherent in the domestic setting. Although, as Reid (1998) argues, the reasons researchers want to gain access to children's thoughts and actions are usually altruistic, researching within relationships of dependency makes the issue of informed consent particularly significant:

> There is…a thin line between the exploitation of relationships of love and trust, between children and researcher teachers and parents, and the privileged access that such close relationships afford us as researchers (Reid, 1998, 56).

At first, Ruth and her friends appeared to quite enjoy the attention I was giving them in the course of the research, but I still wondered if they (or I for that matter) fully understood what we were doing. Could they really give informed consent if, as Burgess (1984) observes, at the beginning of a project the full implications of research are as yet unknown (Burgess, 1984, 200)? In the close family and friendship-based relationships we have/had with each other, it could be argued that withdrawal from the research was not a real possibility for any of them, especially Ruth, who was acutely aware of the importance to me of the research, and the centrality of her role in it.

Further, the fact that we were together most of the time in normal, everyday situations, means that much of my research, while not exactly secret, could be described as 'covert'. Although the girls agreed to the research taking place, much of the time they must have been unaware of the fact that I was observing them. Burgess gives an example from his research in a school, where teachers where surprised when his observations encompassed not only classroom activities, but also 'informal' situations such as social events (*ibid*, 199). Similarly, reflecting on her ethnographic research into local music making, in which she was already a participant, Finnegan (1989) recognises the fuzziness of the issue of consent:

> I did not conceal the fact that I was doing research on local music...and in a vague way it was fairly generally known; but at the same time I did not keep reminding people about it during the ordinary course of my life or in many off-hand conversations which turned out to be illuminating. The observation was not therefore covert, but neither was it constantly obvious throughout (as it must be when a stranger comes to study a foreign community), as I was *already* an established person (Finnegan, 1989, 343).

However, participant observation necessarily involves a degree of unawareness on the part of those being observed, and is an unavoidable element of ethnographic research.

Dissemination

Burgess identifies four ethical issues arising from the dissemination of research data: confidentiality, privacy, deception and harm. Problems of confidentiality and privacy can be overcome by the adoption of pseudonyms, and modified locations and events, but problems can arise as names and places are often essential to an understanding of the data. His research into a school, for example, necessitated finding suitable pseudonyms for the school 'houses', the names of which were deeply symbolic within the school culture. His attempts to find alternative equally meaningful names presented a great challenge. Too much alteration for the sake of anonymity, he argues, distorts data and deceives readers (Burgess, 1984, 203-207). Mindful of this, I tried to choose alternative names for the girls that were, in my opinion, connotatively as close as possible to their real names, without being too derivative and obvious.

One answer to these problems, as Burgess suggests, is to invite participants to read and comment on the written study (*ibid*). Clearly, allowing research participants access to the finished research in an appropriate form is an important ethical issue, and one that can be addressed through providing simplified written versions of the research, or giving verbal

presentations. In the case of my schools research, this would entail re-negotiating access to the participants through the schools' gatekeepers, which no doubt would present new challenges. In relation to the domestic research, outputs generated during the research, including two seminar presentations and several undergraduate lectures, were given to the girls to read and check.

Impact on children

This issue is concerned with the effects of the research, not only on the children involved, but on children in general. The representations of the children involved must be fair, respectful, and positive; and the researcher's own prejudices and bias should be discussed critically. In relation to my domestic research, the unavoidable bias in favour of Ruth in my analyses and interpretations of situations and events is a prime example of this. The different feelings I had at each school, aroused by the contrasting environments, attitudes and behaviour I encountered, undoubtedly result in representations of the children and their lives that are distorted, however subtly, by favouritism and prejudice. A reflexive approach helps to ensure that this is acknowledged and made as transparent as possible. As a product of its own process, research constructs a limited and nuanced representation of a culture.

Furthermore, on a wider scale, it is a matter of duty that the effects of the representation on the culture itself are taken into account, as Shank (1994) claims:

> Any ethnographer must recognize that the object of knowledge – whether conceived of as a culture or a practice under study – does indeed exist beyond what he or she could possibly say about it, and at the same time that the culture or practice is constituted only through similar and innumerable, decentered yet interested cultural acts. Ethnographic descriptions have effects on the culture or practice being described – creating new angles from which to view the object – and ethnographers are responsible for these discursive effects (Shank, 1994, xi).

Music consumption is, arguably, assumed to be a pleasure, and girls' everyday experiences of music, particularly the roles it plays in relationships with peers, are typically represented in positive ways (e.g. Garratt, 1990; McRobbie and Garber, 1991). As Iley (1997) argues, in academic accounts 'girls' same-sex relationships have been variously overlooked, over-romanticized, overpoliticized and oversimplified' (Iley, 1997, 6). While it is perhaps politically valuable to construct positive representations of girls' cultures, the omission of other experiences results in an incomplete picture of girls' lives and potentially the alienation of those unrepresented. While still recognising itself as a construct, and therefore inevitably

partial and nuanced, this study explores experiences beyond those usually related, and offers an alternative account of music in the everyday lives of girls.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the research participants, environments and methods, and explored and analysed the methodological issues that arose throughout the research process. The chapter began with a short introductory discussion of the importance of an engagement with methodological issues in ethnographic studies of popular music in the lives of young people, as advocated by Bennett (2002). Then, the first section of the chapter focused on my own ethnographic research into music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, describing the environments, participants, and methods used in the domestic and schools research fields. The numerous issues and dilemmas that occurred during my research demanded a critical engagement with methodology, which consequently became a key aspect of the argument. These issues were discussed in the second section of this chapter, specifically those areas in which methodological issues were particularly challenging: the role of the researcher, finding appropriate research methods, accessing the field, and ethics.

While this chapter is the most in depth methodological discussion in this thesis, it is not the only one. Methodological concerns are intrinsic to and inextricable from my account of music in the everyday lives of girls; therefore, a critical engagement with methodology informs this thesis throughout. In the final chapter, 'Emotions', methodological concerns are returned to in more depth, in the section discussing emotions in the research process.

CHAPTER 2 – IDENTITIES

Introduction

Fran, aged fourteen, showing me her MySpace account profile page, explained: 'This is my profile. You have a section to show about you. That song lyric at the top – that's just me.' She told me that creators of online profiles commonly adopted popular songs to represent and communicate a current identity state, quoting lyrics or providing links to music elsewhere on the internet. Several of the girls in this study made a direct link between music and identities. In answer to the question 'Why do you like the music you like?' three of the questionnaire respondents gave reasons relating explicitly to identity: 'suits my personality', 'it represents me', and 'shows who you are'. Talking about her favourite music, Amy felt an affiliation with artists and music that she felt were 'like' her in various ways:

> I identify with people like Avril Lavigne because obviously she's a gothy person, and Busted cos because they're happy and lively and I like Pink because she's a bit depressed and so am I.

Questions of identity are at the heart of investigations into the uses and experiences of music in everyday life. Turino (2008) describes the performing arts as 'fulcrums of identity',

> allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style and through the very act of participating together in performance (Turino, 2008, 2).

He cites the anthropological view that expressive cultural practices such as music are essential to human survival, as they enable people to 'articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups, which are, in turn, basic to survival' (*ibid*). Identities, whether individual or collective, are produced through social processes, and they are not only expressed and confirmed through music, but also negotiated. This chapter, then, investigates the ways in which young teenage girls use music to forge identities, particularly in relation to age and gender, and is in four sections.

In the first section, the key underpinning concepts of identity, age and gender are examined in turn. First, a range of notions of identity are outlined briefly in order to establish a working definition that places the social at the centre of identity. Clearly, a wide range of social relations are involved in identity, such as age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious

faith and dis/ability. Although all of these variables, and more, undoubtedly contributed to the identities of all the girls in this study, this thesis focuses mainly on two of them, age and gender, as these were most apparent during the research. Consequently, the second part of this section discusses age, examining social constructions of childhood and youth, and the useful notion of liminality; and thirdly, the concept of gender is explored, particularly young femininities. The second section of the chapter extends the discussion of these three underpinning concepts, using examples from the research data to examine the roles of music in the ways identities, age and gender are negotiated. Following the same structure as the previous section, the relationships between music and identities are explored first, specifically the connections and tensions between self and social musical identities. In the second part, some of the issues surrounding the relationships between music and age identities are explored, and in the third part, music and gender identities are considered. In the third section of the chapter, the relationship between identities and music taste is discussed, focusing particularly on the role of genre in negotiations of musical identities. Alongside and integrated with music taste, music ownership played a crucial role in the identity work of the girls in this study, and the fourth section explores some of the complexities of this.

Identity

In late modern, post traditional societies, personal identity is an 'inescapable issue':

> What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity – and ones which, on some level or other, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour (Giddens, 1991, 70 cited in Gauntlett, 2002, 96).

Identity is not 'given', nor is it an innate quality or essence; rather, identity is 'constantly being reconstructed and renegotiated according to the experiences, situations and other people with whom we interact in everyday life' (Hargreaves, *et al*, 2002, 2). The ongoing process of identity construction involves both 'projection' of self to others, and 'introjection' of self to self:

> individuals engage in a range of mostly tacit identity work to construct, reinforce and repair the thread of self identity. This work is what makes that thread appear

continuous throughout the varied moments of day-to-day living whenever one formulates accounts of self to self and others (DeNora, 2000, 62).

The narrative account a person maintains of self to self and self to others is central to identity:

> Self identity...is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. It is a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography. Self identity has continuity – that is, it cannot easily be changed at will – but that continuity is only a product of the person's reflexive beliefs about their own biography (Giddens, 1991, 53 cited in Gauntlett, 2002, 99).

Consistency, 'the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*', is the main constituent of identity, Giddens argues, and credibility is also vital, as a personal narrative must be recognisably 'true' in relation to the outside world, otherwise it will be rejected by others as false (Giddens, 1991, 54 cited in Gauntlett, 2002, 99). The 'project of the self', therefore, is not completely free of limitations. Social forces, the taken for granted social expectations that are instilled in us in early life, constrain most people from acting or behaving in any way they choose. Consequently, a consensus develops about how people should behave (Gauntlett, 2002, 95). Institutions, moral codes and established ways of doing things are reproduced and maintained through individual actions, but 'these can be changed when people start to ignore them, relapse them, or reproduce them differently' (*ibid*, 93).

The idea that the self is 'fundamentally a social phenomenon' has existed since the work of Mead (among others) in the early twentieth century conceptualised the 'idea of the social self' (Branaman, 2001b, 169). Mead (1934) argued that we come to view ourselves as a 'self' only when we are able to view ourselves from the perspectives of others:

> The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social groups as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only insofar as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experiences; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which he and they are involved (Mead, 1934, 138 in Branaman, 2001b, 170).

Branaman explains Mead's argument with the following example, the particular relevance of which will become clear in the 'Creativities' chapter:

> We decide who we are on the basis of how other people respond to us. Whether or not I define myself as a musician, for example, depends largely on how other people respond to my attempts at making music (Branaman, 2001b, 170).

As Branaman explains, Goffman, in works such as *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), goes beyond Mead's claim that the self *arises* in social contexts, by arguing that the self is *a product of performance* in social interaction:

> Goffman argues that self-presentation is a crucial determinant of one's very sense of self. In contrast with the common sense view that self-presentation either expresses the self or a false image of the self, Goffman emphasizes that the self is shaped in the process of self-presentation......self-presentation is an essential aspect of social interaction and ... the self is a dramatic effect rather than the cause of these performances (Branaman, 2001b, 170).

The notion that the self is realised only through social interaction is challenging, as people maintain an identity outside of social interaction, as well as within it. The biographical narrative of identity that is maintained and constructed through the ongoing processes of identity work is not only projected (told to others) but also introjected (told to self). Telling one's identity story to the self, experiencing and constructing the self, involves, as Mead (1934) puts it, becoming an object to the self. Arguably, even when alone, each person is engaged in imagined social interaction, introjecting to a self that is conceptualised as 'other'. Self identity, in other words, can be seen as an imagined or ideal social identity, which sometimes coheres with actual social identity, and sometimes does not, and the processes of negotiating and managing the tensions between them are central to identity work. As well as in micro-level social interactions with friends, family and peers, identity work takes place within the context of broader structural social relations. For the girls in this study, age and gender seemed to be the most significant, and these are discussed next.

Age

Alongside the well-established discipline of youth studies, the growing body of research and literature within childhood studies indicates both the importance of 'childhood' as a conceptual category and the increasing social status of children (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 7).

There are different approaches to what constitutes childhood however. Developmental psychology documents the stages and transitional phases of childhood, regarding it as an 'apprenticeship for adulthood that can be charted through stages relating to age, physical development and cognitive ability', with the progression from childhood to adulthood constituting a journey towards 'rational subjectivity' (*ibid*, 8). Sociological approaches on the other hand, based on the notion that identity is a social construction, are concerned with 'issues of socialization: ways of exploring how children learn to become members of the society in which they live' (*ibid*). Physical growth and cognitive development are clearly inherent features of childhood, but neither childhood nor youth can be considered to be 'universal states'. On the contrary, they are 'culturally produced and as such will vary across time and place' (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 7). As James and Prout (1997) put it:

> the immaturity of children is a biological fact of life but the ways this is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture (James and Prout, 1997, 7 cited in Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 8).

While it can be argued, then, that childhood and youth are states of being that are both biological and socioculturally constructed, the point at which one ends and the other begins remains unclear. Nayak and Kehily (2008) rightly emphasise the importance of examining the boundaries between childhood and youth:

> Is a young person still a child or does youth signal a move out of childhood and the onset of adulthood? These are key questions to ask, as they reveal how children, youth and adults are terms that gloss over a great deal of complexity and carry with them a substantial amount of discursive power (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 8).

One of the discursive issues Nayak and Kehily identify is the construction of childhood as 'innocent', compared to youth, which is often seen as 'difficult, 'out of control' and 'potentially dangerous' (*ibid*). Contrasting attitudes to 'play' are central to these conceptualisations, with children's play being considered 'creative and constructive', while young people's leisure activities are commonly seen as 'potentially threatening and disturbing' (*ibid*, 11). Illustrating the significance and complexity of discourses surrounding constructions of childhood and youth, in early 2010 the UK Office for National Statistics defined children as 'those aged 16 and under' (Office for National Statistics, 2010), while in March of the same year, a request from England's Children's Commissioner Maggie Atkinson

to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 was rejected by the UK government (BBC News, 2010).

Dichotomous accounts of childhood and youth, and the blurring of the boundaries between them, are further reinforced by the academic separation of childhood studies and youth studies. Nayak and Kehily (2008) argue for the establishment of a dialogue between the two disciplines, which they suggest could be led by a reconsideration of the role of play in both childhood and youth: 'young people's play can be seen as imaginative expression of late childhood/early adulthood that have many points of continuity with children's play' (*ibid*, 12). Kehily (2009) proposes focusing on *practices* in order to reveal points of connection, and argues that spiritual status, learning and self expression, psychological development, and boundaries between self and others, are all significant in different ways in the role of play in both childhood and youth.

While some of the differences between childhood and youth may be exaggerated in the current paradigm, the fact that a transition of some kind occurs from one to the other is indisputable. Rites of passage, as Turner (1977) explains, are 'rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age', and have three stages: separation, margin, and re-aggregation:

> The first and last speak for themselves; they detach ritual subjects from their old places in society and return them, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to new places. A more interesting problem is provided by the middle, (marginal) or liminal phase (Turner, 1977, 36).

The word 'limen' literally means 'threshold', and liminality is both a state and a process (*ibid*, 37). The importance of play is also recognised in Turner's concept of liminality, as a form of experimental behaviour:

> Liminality is particularly conducive to play. Play is not to be restricted to games and jokes; it extends to the introduction of new forms of symbolic action, such as word-games or masks...In liminality, new ways of acting, new combinations of symbols, are tried out, to be discarded or accepted' (*ibid*, 40).

The disparities between conceptualisations of childhood and youth, and the obscurity of a clear point of transition, exacerbated by the gap between them in academia, can be accounted

for, to a certain extent, by the concept of liminality. Liminaries are 'betwixt and between', evading both 'established states of politico-jural structure' and 'ordinary cognitive classification'. Paradoxically, while they are 'neither-this-nor-that, here-nor-there, one-thing-not-the-other', they are also 'both this and that' (ibid). The liminal state of childhood/youth, Gracyk (2004) observes, is a life period in which the fluidity of self identity is particularly strong. From a psychological perspective, the development of 'abstract cognition' results in a heightened awareness of 'the diversity of their own choices and the diversity of the points of view that will evaluate and respond to those choices', resulting in the unique 'realization that there is nothing concrete...to anchor the integration of self identity'. At this stage of life, 'even the physical body is in flux' (Gracyk, 2004, 13).

Gender

Gender, like identity and age states, is now widely understood as being socially constructed. Leonard (2007) outlines the development of the concept succinctly:

> Feminist theory has distinguished between the biological categories of sex (male and female) and the socially constructed categories of gender (e.g. masculinity and femininity). This separation of biological sex from modes of gender socialisation has allowed critics to question apparently 'natural' modes of social behaviour and challenge gender distinctions that support systems of inequality between men and women. Contemporary debate has broadened the scope of gender studies from a focus on women to analysis of institutions and related discourses of masculinity and femininity, and has problematised even the apparent epistemological surety of the categorisation of sex (Butler, 1990: 6f). Gender identities and discourses are not to be understood as static but as dynamic, changing over time and relating to the particular contexts of their production (Leonard, 2007, 1).

The understanding of gender as both socially constructed and performative is, Dibben (2002) argues, 'congruent with social-constructionist views of identity in which identity is something we do rather than something we are' (Dibben, 2002, 120). In this view 'language and all symbolic systems provide the concepts through which we think, and our understanding of the world is socially constructed through our interactions' (ibid, 121).

As Nayak and Kehily (2008) point out, one of the problems with collapsing sex and gender together, defining gender as a 'product or outcome of the sexed body', is that it can result in identities which are believed to be failing or aberrant versions of 'proper' masculinity or

femininity, such as 'sissy' and 'tom boy' (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 4). Instead, Nayak and Kehily suggest focusing on 'gender practices', in which gender is understood to be 'a lived process rather than a proper object that we are each magically endowed with as an unwritten consequence of our sex' (*ibid*, 5). The body remains important because, while gender structures are not determining, and produced in and through social action, 'gender practices are embodied activities that carry with them a scattering of feelings, affects and emotion' (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 6). Gender is affected by bodily 'mechanics', such as health, dis/ability, body mass, and skin pigmentation; it is sculpted through everyday hormonal bodily processes, such as menstruation, weight loss/gain, and hair loss/gain; and it is culturally signed via the body, through the use of cosmetics, tanning, piercing, hair removal, etc. (*ibid*). Gender can be seen as 'a set of relations configured through technologies, bodies, spatial, discursive and material processes', which is '"summoned into life' under the weight of particular historical conditions, and....discursively struggled over, repudiated or enacted' (*ibid*, 5).

Considering young femininities specifically, contemporary accounts offer depictions of girls and young women as empowered and independent, in contrast to 'crisis ridden' young men:

> The fuschia-pink hue of late-modernity can be seen as part of the prevailing zeitgeist, giving young women license to become agentic, assertive and 'out there' (*ibid*, 52).

However, girls are increasingly hyper-sexualised in consumer culture: 'soft porn images, playboy logos and lewd slogans exist alongside 'girlpower' messages and feminist themes' (*ibid*, 68), and Nayak and Kehily cite McRobbie's (2004) 'cautionary discussion' of the relationship between feminism and consumer culture. McRobbie (2004) argues that the apparent freedoms of consumer culture aimed at girls are as restricting as the marginalising gender structures of the past:

> The 'I'm a princess' spending power of girls energetically embraces desires for self-improvement, pampering and indulgence in ways that reinscribe young women within the disciplinary power of gender subordination (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 68).

Feminists, McRobbie (2004) suggests, may have 'over-celebrated the pleasures of consumption and underestimated the market's appetite for innovation':

In an attempt to celebrate young women's engagement with consumer culture as agentic and pleasure-seeking, feminist scholars may have overlooked the tensions and pain of 'doing girl' (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 68).

Current femininities bear more similarities to those of the past than may be immediately obvious:

> Looking at feminist scholarship across several decades suggests that young women in the contemporary period live the contradictions of femininity as in the past. The proliferation of femininities and the extension of girlhood can be read as further manifestations of a contradictory feminine condition that engages young women in ever more artful ways of managing the inconsistencies inherent in identifying as young and female (*ibid*, 73).

What role, then, does music play in negotiations of identities, particularly the inconsistencies of young and female?

Music and identities

Foucault's concept of 'technologies of the self' takes account of 'the ways in which available discourses may enable or discourage various practices of the self' (Foucault, 1992 cited in Gauntlett, 2002, 125). Foucault uses the term 'ethics' to refer not only to a moral code, but also to 'the self's relationship to itself'; that is 'a person's concern for and care about themselves; the standards they have for how they would like to be treated, and how they will treat themselves' (*ibid*, 124), and so:

> If ethics refers to a person's concern for the self - a set of internal ideas or loose rules – then the 'technologies of the self' are what is actually done about it: the ways that an individual's ethics are manifested in their mindset and actions' (*ibid*, 125).

Music, argues DeNora (2000), plays a key role in this endeavour, as it is the 'cultural material *par excellence* of emotion and the personal' and can be observed as central to 'the construction of the self as an aesthetic agent' (DeNora, 2000, 46).

DeNora (2000) observes how the 'sense of 'self' is locatable in music' (DeNora, 2000, 68). The structures of music, or 'musical materials', provide 'terms and templates for elaborating self identity' and are 'active ingredients in identity work'. Listeners, she argues 'find

themselves' in musical structures, making meaning in often highly individual ways that reflect their own identities. This can be seen as a 'virtuous circle', by which 'music is appropriated as [an] ally, as an enabler for the articulation of self identity' (*ibid*, 69). For Ruth, socially isolated in school and estranged from Amy, one particular song became her 'ally', as she recalls in the following autobiographical passage:

> At school I alienated myself completely. I listened to my CD player and wrote diary entries and silly stories all through break and lunch. I remember listening to Placebo a lot – 'Haemoglobin' on *Black Market Music*. That's the song of year 8. I used it to block out the conversations and the annoying music of the other girls in my class, and when I had headphones on they were less likely to talk to me.

The song 'Haemoglobin', included on rock band Placebo's album *Black Market Music* (2000), which Ruth owned on CD, combined a tense, powerful, strident rock sound with a lyrical message of victimisation, defiance and transcendence:

> I was hanging from a tree/Unaccustomed to such violence/Jesus looking down on me/I'm prepared for one big silence/How'd I ever end up here/Must be through some lack of kindness/And it seemed to dawn on me/Haemoglobin is the key/To a healthy heart beat/At the time they cut me free/I was brimming with defiance/Doctors looking down on me/Breaking every law of science/How'd I ever end up here?/A latent strain of color blindness/Then it seemed to dawn on me/Haemoglobin is the key/To a healthy heart beat/Now my feet don't touch the ground/As they drag me to my feet/I was filled with incoherence/Theories of conspiracy/The whole world wants my disappearance/I'll go fighting nail and teeth/You've never seen such perseverance/Gonna make you scared of me/Cause haemoglobin is the key/To a healthy heart beat/Now my feet don't touch the ground (Hewitt, *et al*, 2000).

Ruth used this particular song as a 'technology of the self', a means of caring for herself in a social environment she felt to be hostile. Listening on headphones among classmates in school, Ruth used the physical sound of the song to 'block out' her classmates' irritating conversations and music, and its musical structures to reflect and confirm her identity. As Bull (2005) puts it:

> Users [of iPods] tend to negate public spaces through their prioritisation of their own technologically mediated private realm. The uses of these technologies enable users to transform the site of their experience into a form of sanctuary (Bull, 2005, 354).

The song shielded her from an uncomfortable environment, and also confirmed her resilience and defiance, enabling her to construct an identity that was different from her classmates and resistant to their normative music tastes. However, it not only reinforced her *feelings* of alienation, but also her *actual* alienation, contributing to her separation and difference from her classmates. In other words, Ruth chose to listen to this song in class because her feelings resonated with the song, the lyrics, music, genre, and led her to interpret the song in a way that was meaningful and useful to her in that particular situation – the social situation affected the music; equally, her choice of song and mode of listening (privately using headphones in a space where others were listening to music played aloud), reinforcing her feelings and communicating them to her classmates, undoubtedly compounded her isolation – the music affected the social situation. This two-way relationship between music and the social world is captured by mediation theory.

Mediation theory (Born, 2005; DeNora, 2000) posits a 'co-productive' interrelationship between music and social life, exploring:

> both how music and its meanings are constructed by wider discursive and social formations, and how in turn music – its emotive, symbolic, corporeal and material properties – become a resource, as Tia DeNora puts it, 'for semiotic activity – for doing, being, naming...social reality' (Born, 2005, 13 citing DeNora, 2000, 40).

Music's meanings are neither intrinsic nor autonomous, nor constructed and constrained entirely by contextual forces – instead, in DeNora's words:

> just as music's meanings may be constructed in relation to things outside it, so, too, things outside music may be constructed in relation to music (DeNora, 2000, 44).

Similarly, Frith (1996) maintains that experiences of identity and music are mutually constructed: 'our experience of music – of music making and music listening – is best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process*', and identity is 'most vividly grasped *as music*' (Frith, 1996, 109-110).

Born (2000) makes a similar argument in her analysis of two existing models of music and sociocultural identity, homology and process. Homology, the idea that music 'reflects or enunciates underlying social relations and structures' and tries to 'trace the links between a

musical form or practice and its production or consumption by particular social groups', has been discredited because of its overly mechanical and deterministic 'mapping of the relation between the social base and the cultural superstructure', and its tendency to reify 'what are more accurately conceived as fluid and processual dynamics in the formation and change of social and cultural identities' (Born, 2000, 31). An alternative to homology is the process model, in which music, instead of reflecting sociocultural identities, plays a formative role in their 'construction, negotiation, and transformation':

> [Music] engenders communities or "scenes"; it allows a play with, a performance of, and an imaginary exploration of identities. Its aesthetic pleasure has much to do with this vicarious exploration of identities (*ibid*).

So, depending on circumstances, music's primary function can be either to 'articulate the boundaries defining the collective identities or mutual antagonisms of pre-existing sociocultural groups, groups defined by shared cultural systems quite distinct from music' or to act as a 'means for the imagining of emergent and labile identities' (*ibid*). These two functions are not contradictory because, unlike the visual and literary arts, music is connotative rather than denotative:

> It is precisely music's extraordinary powers of imaginary evocation of identity and of cross-cultural and intersubjective empathy that renders it a primary means of both marking and transforming individual and collective identities (*ibid*).

Born concludes that, while homology is considered to be essentialist, and process is too reductionist, 'each brings insight in relation to different sociomusical phenomena'. As with Frith (1996) and DeNora (2000), the crux of Born's argument is the idea that 'music can variably *both* construct new identities *and* reflect existing ones' (Born, 2000, 31-32):

> Sociocultural identities are not simply constructed in music; there are "prior" identities that come to be embodied dynamically in musical cultures, which then also *form* the reproduction of those identities – no passive process of reflection (*ibid*, 32).

Musical identities, then, are not individual but 'mutual constructions', as they depend on the shared agreement of understanding of meanings (Hargreaves, *et al*, 2002, 11). Music often works to bring together self and social identities: 'musical participation and experience are valuable for the processes of personal and social integration that make us whole' (Turino,

2008, 1). For Frith (1996) too, the experience of music necessitates a merging of self and social identities:

> the issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience – a musical experience, an aesthetic experience – that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity (Frith, 1996, 109).

Music is a key to the experiential process of identity because 'it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective' (*ibid*). Music is a source of both confirmation of the self, and transformation of the self into the collective:

> It is deciding – playing and hearing what sounds *right* (I would extend this account of music from performing to listening, to listening as a way of performing) – that we both express ourselves, our own sense of rightness, and suborn ourselves, lose ourselves, in an act of participation (*ibid*).

Musical experiences, however, through being both deeply personal and 'clearly apart', produce a paradox of identity; simultaneously ideal and real. Identities experienced through music are 'always already an ideal, what we would like to be, not what we are'; and yet:

> if musical identity is...always fantastic, idealizing not just oneself but also the social world one inhabits, it is, secondly, always also real, enacted in musical activities [...] music gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be (*ibid*, 123).

Individual and social musical identities, the ideal and the real, do not always match up. Born (2000) addresses this gap, arguing for an awareness of the 'multiple musical identifications or subject positions to which individuals are susceptible as producers and consumers' and to distinguish between individual and collective musical identities, because otherwise:

> ... we cannot address the potential disjunctures and conflicts between individual and collective musical identities, the way that cultural expectations and norms, or dominant musical discourses, may be in tension with individual identities and may exert powerful pressures of musical subjectification (Born, 2000, 32).

To summarise so far, this thesis is premised on the notion that identities are not given or fixed, but rather continuously undergoing construction and negotiation, within socio-cultural constraints, through ongoing processes of identity work. This work involves the construction

and maintenance of biographical narratives that are both projected to others and introjected to the self. The self, however, is perceived as an object, and so introjection, like projection, can be understood as social interaction – interaction with an 'ideal' or 'imagined social'. As a technology of self, music can be used to care for the self and maintain identity, as listeners can 'find themselves' in the structures of music. However, musical meanings and social life are co-produced: meanings (musical and social) are produced in a two-way process, and music can both reflect and construct identity. Self and social identities merge in the experience of music, however disjunctures and conflicts can occur between them. The detail and importance of these processes in the everyday lives of the girls in this study are discussed in depth later in this chapter, and in the rest of the thesis.

Music and age identities

Although negotiations over meanings of identities and music continue throughout life, they seem to be particularly important during childhood and youth. Willis (1990), exploring 'symbolic creativity' in the lives of young people, argues that the focus is not on young people because they are different, or 'locked into some biological stage that enforces its own condition', but because it is in youth that 'people are formed most self-consciously through their own symbolic and other activities' and 'begin to construct themselves through nuance and complexity, through difference as well as similarity' (Willis, 1990, 7). Gracyk (2004) correlates the processes involved in making sense of music with the adolescent project of constructing self-identity:

> Music's power, particularly in adolescence, may stem from the manner in which it serves as an external model for the very process of identity formation. The process by which individuals stabilize a self-identity is remarkably like that for recognizing musical identity (that is, the identity of the self-same piece of music in temporally separated and sonically distinct performances) [...] So listening involves an easily repeatable but generally successful exercise of the mental processes that are needed to construct a sense of self. Even the repetitive behavior of listening to the same song again and again may have far more to do with securing a needed sense of stability (through satisfied anticipation) than with the specific emotional content of the piece of music (Gracyk, 2004, 13-15).

It is clear from my data that music played a significant role in the girls' negotiations of age identities. On one of Amy's many visits to our house when the girls were aged twelve, she agreed to my request to answer some questions about music. On this occasion, I left the two

girls together with the voice recorder, and Ruth asked Amy a series of questions that I had provided. In relation to music and identity, Amy had this to say:

> Ruth: Do you think that the kind of music that you like helps you to be the kind of person that you want to be?
> Amy: Yeah, cos like being a goth...I listen to rock music and that but it's kind of gothy. But if you listen to Gareth Gates then you're all sappified and [high girly voice] "Oooh he's so sweet". So I think if you like listening to heavy rocky music you're all gothy and "waaaah!", and if you listen to pop you're all "Hi, I dress to impress." Kind of floaty...
> Ruth: Yeah. Erm...if you liked different music would you be a different person?
> Amy: Going back to the last question, I used to be a different person, but then I liked rock and I became a different person. But I think I like rock because I thought, "OK, move along."

For most of the girls in this study, the transition from primary to secondary school seemed to coincide with a feeling that it was also time to 'move along' musically. While not all of them underwent a complete musical identity makeover, most of the girls could recall music from their pasts that they 'used to' like. Lianna and Tallulah were once Spice Girls fans:

> Tallulah: I used to be pure into them.
> Lianna: I used to love the Spice Girls.
> Tallulah: I used to have covers of them and everything on my wallpaper and I used to stick it up on my wall and it looked a show, my mates used to come in and say you like the Spice Girls and I'd go yeah.

Emma, differing from her best friend Charlotte, was also an avid fan:

> Emma: When I was little I used to be a big fan of S Club and the Spice Girls.
> Charlotte: I think they're dead cheesy.
> Helen: You think they're cheesy?
> Emma: I used to like Baby Spice the best.
> Charlotte: Is that Emma?
> Emma: Yeah.
> Helen: [to Charlotte] So you didn't like the Spice Girls?
> Charlotte: They're really cheesy.

Rachel used to have posters of popstars on her bedroom, most of which she got from pop magazines, such as *Top of the Pops*:

> Helen: So you used to have posters up but you took them down did you?
> Rachel: Yeah.
> Helen: Why?

Rachel: I grown out of them.
Helen: Did you start to feel a bit embarrassed about them?
Rachel: Mmmm. 'Why've you got him on your wall?' 'Cos I like him.' 'Get it down!'
'Oh ok.'

Not only had she taken down her posters, but she no longer bought pop magazines – her younger sister was now the *Top of the Pops* subscriber, while Rachel preferred the more adult content of celebrity gossip magazines such as *Closer*. These girls, although only around twelve years old, were already aware of the existence of past selves, represented and expressed through old tastes, which had to be discarded. Each of them 'moved along' because of a feeling of the inappropriateness of their musical identity: Amy felt liking pop meant you were 'sappified'; Tallulah remembers her Spice Girls decorated bedroom as looking 'a show'; Rachel succumbed to others' scorn and took down her popstar posters; and although Emma did not completely disassociate herself from her erstwhile pop fandom, and appeared unperturbed by Charlotte's critique of the Spice Girls, she was ambivalent about the possibility of seeing them perform live again:

Helen: Would you go and see them again do you think, if they got back together?
Emma: I'm not sure cos I'm not as into them as I used to be, but it might be fun to see what the difference is now, but I think it's better the first time you saw them.

As they recounted their childhood musical passions, however, their eyes shone and their voices became excited. Although they spoke about their enthusiasm for these popstars as something in the past, all of them seemed to enjoy remembering what it was like to be a Spice Girls or S Club 7 fan. Remembering, as DeNora (2000) points out, is an important part of identity work, both for the self and for others, and music can play a central role in this:

Music can be used as a device for the reflexive process of remembering/constructing who one is, a technology for spinning the apparently continuous tale of who one is (DeNora, 2000, 63).

For these girls, the music of their childhoods was used as a memory device, enabling the construction of a past identity to compare with the identity of the present, and at the same time constructing a present identity that had 'moved along' from the past.

However, past music was not only used for conjuring past selves. Demonstrating a liminal state, '*both* this *and* that' (Turner, 1977, 40), some of the girls moved readily between their

childhood and current tastes simply for entertainment. Along with their mobile phones, MP3 players and collections of latest songs, Disney products seemed to play a significant role in the cultural lives of several of the girls. Lianna, Alisha and Bethany all mentioned the Disney shop as one of their favourite city centre shops. Emma and Charlotte described an evening spent together at Charlotte's house, when they entertained themselves by making up dances. Alongside Irish folk and contemporary pop songs such as 'Lose Control' by Missy Elliott and Ciara, the girls danced to a song from the Disney film *Aladdin*:

> Charlotte: We were dancing in the bedroom weren't we?
> Emma: Yeah I go to Charlotte's house on a Monday and we just make up dances for fun, and we get the music off the computer, off YouTube.
> Helen: So is this part of your street dance kind of thing that you do?
> Emma: No it's just for fun.
> Charlotte: We were just like bored.
> Emma: So we just made up a dance.
> Charlotte: We made up one to 'Arabian Nights'.
> Emma: We were doing just all Disney songs.
> Charlotte: [to Emma] You did it mostly didn't you?

Charlotte's final statement here shows her distancing herself from the activity, suggesting that, as with the Spice Girls, she was less willing to openly embrace the past culture.

Sometimes, it seemed, present identities became too difficult to negotiate, and past identities were revisited spontaneously through music, as a means of reconciliation. Following a heated dispute about their incompatible music tastes, discussed in detail in the next section, Rachel fell silent for much of the subsequent discussion, until Lucy persuaded her to sing a song they both knew from primary school:

> Lucy: Who wants to sing something? [sings] 'Rambo had an auntie' - Rach sing with me.
> Rachel: No.
> Lucy: You'd sing any other day.
> Rachel: I'll sing it then.
> Lucy: How does it go?
> Rachel: [sings] 'Rambo had an uncle an uncle very poor, one day he said to Rambo I'll make you scrub the floor'.
> Rachel/Lucy: [singing] 'Rambo had an uncle an uncle very poor, one day he said to Rambo I'll make you scrub the floor. Rambo feeling tired went upstairs to bed, he tried to climb the banister and fell down on his head. Crash bang another little job for the undertaker, another little job for the tombstone maker, in our local cemetery on a tombstone you will see, Rambo RIP, rest in peace'.

They sang several verses together. Rachel knew all the words, but sometimes Lucy got them a bit wrong, and a slight disagreement erupted:

> Lucy: It's 'crash bang wallop'!
> Rachel: It's not, it's 'crash bang another little job for the undertaker'.
> Lucy: [sings] 'Crash bang wallop another little job for the undertaker' – it goes dead quick.
> Rachel: It's 'crash bang another little job for the undertaker another little job for the tombstone maker'.
> Lucy: Why are you looking at Olivia?
> Rachel: I'm not.

Although not wholly successful, Lucy's attempt at re-establishing the collective identity used music from a shared past to repair a musical rift in the present. Childhood and youth, as Nayak and Kehily (2008) point out, are discursively constructed in opposition, the first as 'innocent' and the second as 'potentially dangerous', with their associated modes of 'play' similarly constructed respectively as 'creative and constructive' and 'potentially threatening and disturbing' (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 8). It is possible that the girls were aware, on some level, of these discourses, and actively negotiated their positions within the categories of childhood and youth in a fluid and flexible way, as they sought to solve the everyday identity crises associated with liminality. Despite obvious variations in their attitudes towards and uses of music and culture associated with their childhood, it can be argued that all of these girls were in a liminal phase of development. Some of them were still comfortable with using the music and culture of their childhood for entertainment and pleasure, and some of them had consciously distanced themselves from musical identities associated with their younger selves, yet revisited them periodically and self-consciously. For some of the girls, the 'moving along' they felt was necessary involved a rejection of 'girliness', and a distancing of the self from a mainstream perceived, albeit unconsciously, as feminine (Huyssen, 1986). As Railton (2001) has noted: 'The pleasures of 'pop' are something we must learn to grow out of' (Railton, 2001, 330), and some of this 'growing out of' has to do with gender.

Music and gender identities

The negotiation of gender norms was played out through musical practices and preferences by all the girls in my study, in various ways and to differing degrees. Perceptions of the increasing sexualisation of girls and women in society and the media have given rise to government sponsored research in several countries, including the UK (Papadopoulos, 2010),

the USA (APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls, 2007) and Australia (APS Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts, 2008), as well as numerous popular academic books on the subject (e.g. Levy, 2005; Orbach, 2009; Walter, 2010). Issues relating to sexualisation, however, were not raised or discussed by the girls in this study. Possible reasons for this are that they were unaware of the issues, or they believed that the issues were not important or relevant to them, or they were inhibited by the research relationships and environments. Nonetheless, some of the girls seemed to have an uneasy relationship with what they perceived to be normative femininity. In terms of their style and appearance, several of them preferred to wear clothing that was not marked as feminine. Around the beginning of my research for example, Amy changed her style suddenly and somewhat dramatically from pretty skirts and tops, sequinned slippers and tiny handbags, to black wide-legged trousers, black t-shirts and hoodies, chunky trainers or boots, and spiked jewellery; a change, in Amy's own words, which signified a move from a 'sappified' to a 'waaaah!' identity. Rachel, Bethany and Lucy described a similar aversion to feminine clothing, each vying to surpass the others in her rejection of the skirt and dress:

> Rachel: All I wear is jeans, I don't wear skirts.
> Bethany: Me neither.
> Rachel: I don't wear dresses or...
> Bethany: No.
> Rachel: I'd wear shorts now and again but it's either shorts or jeans. The only time I'd wear a skirt is for school.
> Bethany: I don't even wear shorts.
> Lucy: That's the only time I wear skirts. Or like I've got a dress but...
> Rachel: On holiday...
> Lucy: I don't even wear it on holiday. I wear three-quarter jeans or like short like knee-length jeans.

Although Emma and Charlotte disliked entirely black clothing, and sometimes wore 'girly' clothes, their main preference seemed to be for jeans:

> Emma: We have like...
> Charlotte: Hoodies
> Emma: Yeah and we have like different styles as well don't we? We go like, not like punky, but we have the converse and the skinny jeans and stuff, but we sometimes go like girly, full on girly and stuff. It just depends on the mood.
> Helen: So what about the kids that you sometimes see in town who are like all dressed in black and everything. You know like the kids who hang out outside Quiggins?

Charlotte: Yeah I seen a man who had mascara, I don't know if it was a woman or a man [both girls giggle]. He had like long hair, he had like eyeliner all across there and lipstick on.
Emma: We don't do that.
Helen: That's unusual isn't it?
Charlotte: I was like really confused.
Emma: We're not like into the pure black. Black black black black you know all over and all the baggy jeans and stuff. Just like say we'd wear a black hoodie or a black pair of jeans, or we'd wear like...
Charlotte: I like the baggy jeans though.
Emma: Yeah.
Helen: You like baggy jeans?
Charlotte: Yeah.
Helen: Better than the skinny jeans?
Charlotte: Yeah.
Emma: I usually wear the skinny jeans don't I?
Charlotte: Yeah and I wear the ones like with the buttons up.
Emma: Yeah. She's baggy and I'm skinny.
Helen: So why is that?
Emma: You probably just find them comfier don't you? And I find the skinny...
Charlotte: I like loose clothes not tight ones. Like I can't wear a tracksuit that's tight round my ankles cos I feel uncomfortable.

While they were confused, amused and perhaps dismayed by the androgynous character Charlotte encountered outside a city centre alternative clothing emporium, they were scathingly dismissive of the hyper-femininity of their friend Chloe:

Helen: So do you find that the other people that you know are quite similar to you? Do they like the same sort of stuff as you?
Emma: No cos...
Charlotte: Chloe's like dead girly.
Emma: Our other friend she's like really really girly.
Charlotte: She's just totally girly.
Helen: Does she go to this school as well?
Emma: Yeah. She's like all like "oh what does my hair look like?" and all make-up and...
Helen: You don't do that?
Emma: No it's like for school as well, for school ... I just tie my hair up for school I'm not really bothered, and like on a Friday we just go like casual but she goes really like...
Helen: Is this to the club?
Charlotte: Or she'll be like dead dressed up.
Emma: Like high heels and stuff and I don't really think it's suitable for that kind of environment.
Charlotte: But we just go in hoodies and jeans and trainers.
Emma: And we feel more comfortable and stuff.
Helen: So what kind of music does your friend Chloe like then? Is she into all the same stuff as you or...?

70

Emma: She doesn't really listen to a lot of music does she?
Charlotte: She dances but she doesn't really listen to music.

Emma and Charlotte seemed to be inclined towards a casual style, and disliked extremes of fashion. Their scornful account of Chloe's 'girly' style, bordering at moments on outrage, is interesting in conjunction with their perception that Chloe did not 'really listen to music', especially when considered in the light of the following exchange a bit later in the discussion:

Helen: I'm just trying to get an idea of how important music is to the girls that you know in school or even out of school. Is it something that is sort of talked about very much do you think normally?
Emma/Charlotte: Not really.
Emma: Unless they're sending something or playing it in break then...
Helen: So do a lot of the girls have like an MP3 with them or something that they listen to at break time?
Emma: Yeah, but they don't usually actually like talk about the songs that they listen to.
Helen: Right so they just sort of have it in their ear sort of thing going on, do they ever like sort of try to get anyone else to listen to it or any of that sort of thing?
Emma: Sometimes but they usually just listen to them themselves.
Helen: That's interesting. Cos I think sometimes that people think that all young people are really into music that it's the most important thing but in some ways it isn't really is it?
Emma: It's more boys.

It is evident that Emma and Charlotte, while sometimes going 'full on girly' in their style, tended to prefer more casual, comfortable and less markedly feminine clothing. They disliked and disapproved of their friend's overly girly style, finding it inappropriate. Furthermore, they did not consider her to be particularly interested in music. They considered themselves to be very interested in music, but at the same time felt this was usually associated more with boys. In short, then, through their style and interest in music, they identified themselves to a certain extent as masculine, and through this identification, distinguished themselves in a positive way from other girls. This demonstrates, arguably, their utilisation of a strategy for 'managing the inconsistencies inherent in identifying as young and female' (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 73), and is one example from my research of the way music is used in negotiations of gender identities. The importance of music in negotiations of gender identity is central to much of the discussion in subsequent sections and chapters.

Identities and music taste

When talking about the kind of music they liked, many of the girls identified particular musical features. A lively beat, for example, was particularly important to Emma and Rachel:

> Emma: I'm not really into the slowish songs, like I really like quite a fast beat.
>
> Rachel: It's just like, it's like a dancey rhythm but it's got, it's I don't know it's just got a nice beat to it.

Olivia's favourite music was 'clubland', which she associated with a powerful beat:

> Helen: So would you say that rap is your favourite kind of music?
> Olivia: No clubland.
> Helen: So dance music you like then?
> Olivia: Yeah, headbanging stuff.

Amy similarly enjoyed rock because of its powerful musical characteristics:

> Ruth: What kind of music do you like?
> Amy: Rock, goth, punky scary stuff.
> [...]
> Ruth: Why do you like it?
> Amy: Cos it's loud and they thrash and they jump up and down and most of the singers are fit.

As we have seen, Amy encapsulated both the music and the feeling it evoked in the exclamation: "waaaah!" Some of the girls, however, were equally certain that this was a musical feature/feeling they did *not* like:

> Rachel: ...I don't like ones like Lydia said, Slipknot, cos that's all like bashing of the drums and everything, it's just 'aaargh' and screaming and stuff like that.
> Helen: So you don't like it cos you don't actually like the music, the sound of it?
> Rachel: I hate music that's got people screaming in. I like music that's slow and it's got a nice rhythm to it, not ones that have got all proper banging and guitars and all that.
> Helen: Too noisy?
> Rachel: I hate listening to it.

> Emma: Some of the, like the heavy metal stuff that my brother's into. D'you know like they sound like they're screaming?
> Charlotte: Oh yeah.
> Emma: Like Marilyn, Marilyn what? What's his name?
> Charlotte: Manson. It gets on my nerves.

On one level, then, the girls liked or disliked music because of particular musical features. However, this was often linked to strong feelings about genre, and it is clear that genre categories represent more than texts. While, for some of the girls in this study, self and social musical identities cohered often in their everyday lives, when conflict about music arose, it seemed that much of it revolved around music taste. As we have seen, the liminality experienced by the girls in this study seemed to coincide with changes in music taste, and for some this involved 'leaving behind' certain genres. Amy was a devoted fan of pop band Hear'Say when she and Ruth first became friends towards the end of primary school, and Amy's 'moving along' from pop to rock suggests not only a change of musical preference, but also a desire to grow up and away from childhood to an older 'youth' identity, and an associated progression from a genre perceived as "sappified" (childish, feminine) to one embodying "waaaah!" (adult, masculine).

Negus (1999) explores genre through the concept of 'genre culture', which is a sociological rather than formal concept. Genre cultures involve more than 'aesthetic debates within the 'genre world' of musicians, fans and critics' (*ibid*, 29), as they:

> arise from the complex intersection and interplay between commercial organizational structures and promotional labels; the activities of fans, listeners and audiences; networks of musicians; and historical legacies that come to us with broader social formations (*ibid*, 29-30).

He cites Neale (1980), who defines genres as 'systems of orientations, expectations and conventions' that link text, industry and audience' (Neale, 1980, 19). As Holt (2007) puts it:

> At a basic level, genre is a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation and signification. That is to say, genre is not only "in the music", but also in the minds and bodies of particular groups of people who share certain conventions. These conventions are created in relation to particular musical texts and artists and the contexts in which they are performed and experienced (Holt, 2007, 2).

Music taste, then, can be about far more than simply liking or disliking the sounds and structures of songs. When there is an awareness and acknowledgement of a genre category, identity becomes more deeply involved, as the musical features are understood to be entwined with and representative of a 'cultural web of ... signification' (*ibid*).

Holt proposes a basic framework for conceptualising genre, which takes account of networks, and conventions, including codes, practices and values (*ibid*, 20-24). Networks are both social and discursive, encompassing 'the communicative relations between the many different agents that create and sustain a genre's identity' (*ibid*, 20). Musical and social specialisation crystallise into a collectivity, for example a band and its fans, a scene, a community. Mass mediation and corporate companies also play a role. Alongside genre networks, while acknowledging the impossibility of a definitive catalogue of generic features, as it would be 'banal and reductive' (*ibid*, 22), Holt identifies three central concepts for understanding the conventions of a genre: codes, values and practices. Musical codes operate semiotically to signify genre. Although music is difficult to describe using language, semiotics can be useful in 'exploring conventions on the level of discrete musical elements', for example 'certain vocal techniques with soul, certain distorted guitar sounds with rock' (*ibid*, 22-23). Although many musical elements appear in more than one genre, some nonetheless have 'assumed the status of genre signifiers' (*ibid*, 23). In relation to values, genres have often 'evolved around the formation or transformation of a social group and the articulation of its values', for example the association of rock with youth rebellion. Conventions can also include 'ideological values invested in or articulated by core subjects'. In some genres, for example, 'the primary roles of women have been singing and dancing, and instrumental virtuosity has been a distinctly male domain' (*ibid*, 23-24). Practice is important because 'genre cannot be perceived only in terms of "content", of what is played, but also of how music is created, performed and perceived'. Genres differ in their balance between, for example, composition and improvisation, and the degree to which they tend towards performances of self-composed or repertoire songs. Groups of musicians are organised differently, and audiences participate and appreciate in genre specific ways (*ibid*, 24).

The girls' understanding of music genres was undoubtedly shaped by a range of factors, including family and peer influence, music industry marketing and mass media. However, it is important to acknowledge the 'ultimately subjective nature' of genre (Shuker, 2002, 168), as there was clearly a certain degree of subjectivity in their perceptions and uses of genre categories. For example, although Emma and Charlotte did not identify themselves as rock fans, they did like some of the music of particular rock bands, such as Queen and Aerosmith. Along with bands such as the Monkees, the Bee Gees, the Beatles, the Supremes and Sister Sledge, they grouped these into the heterogeneous genre of 'older music', which they

constructed subjectively to encompass the music they liked in their parents' collections. Some of the girls took a somewhat idiosyncratic approach to genre categorisation, which involved some debate and a little confusion:

> Lianna: A:kon's boss.
> Tallulah: Oh my god I love it, his music is boss.
> Lianna: His song is boss I forgot what it's called though. It's like a slowish one but it's still hip hop.
> Helen: What kind of music's that then?
> Lianna: It's like a bit of rap, a bit of hip hop, a bit of everything.
> Tallulah: Not rap.
> Lianna: Not exactly rap.
> Tallulah: RnB I'll say.
> Helen: What's the difference between rap and hip hop?
> Lianna: Rap is just like luhluhluhluhluh really fast.
> Tallulah: Yeah.
> Lianna: And hip hop's like fast as...in the middle.
> [...]
> Helen: So someone like 50 Cent would you say that was rap?
> Lianna: 50 Cent's rap.
> Tallulah: I'd say that's RnB as well.
> Lianna: No RnB. Eminem is rap, and Tupac's rap
>
> [...]
> Tallulah: Eight mile, that was RnB weren't it? Not RnB, pop, something like that.
> Lianna: Pop yeah something like that.

My aim, however, is not to assess the girls' understanding of genre in relation to wider cultural norms, but rather to consider the girls' own perceptions and uses of genre, and to understand how they used genre in their identity work. It seemed usual for the girls to discuss, evaluate or use genre categories in opposition to other genres rather than individually or in isolation. The importance of 'categorical difference' is noted by Holt (2007), emphasising the tendency of people to identify themselves, and music, in relation to an 'other':

> Genre is also fundamental in the sense that the concept of music is bound up with categorical difference. There is no such thing as "general music", only particular musics. Music comes into being when individuals make it happen, and their concepts of music are deeply social. Humans are enculturated into particular musics and ways of thinking about musical difference (Holt, 2007, 2).

Consequently, rather than attempting to describe each genre from the girls' perspectives, and analysing their reasons for liking or disliking each one, I use Holt's framework for conceptualising genre, taking account of genre networks and conventions, to analyse the girls' perceptions of rock or 'goth'. For the girls in this research, and more widely among young people in Liverpool at the time, the genre of rock was represented and epitomised by bands they described as 'nu-metal' or 'goth', such as Good Charlotte, Sum 41, Offspring and Slipknot. In the following analysis, I will discuss their identification of goth as 'other', in opposition to mainstream chart pop and RnB, and their uses of this particular genre relationship in identity work.

'That's the goth corner' - goth networks

In Liverpool at the time of my field research (2003-2008), groups of young teenagers, wearing the distinctive style of clothing adopted by Amy and Ruth in the last year of their friendship, wide-legged black jeans, hooded sweatshirts (hoodies), t-shirts bearing band names such as Nirvana, studded belts and chunky skater-style trainers, such as Vans, were visible in certain areas of Liverpool city centre. They gathered both inside and outside the alternative shopping emporium Quiggins, in a square outside the law courts in the south of the city centre, and at the riverside Pier Head area. With Amy and some other friends, Ruth went to the law courts once or twice on a Saturday afternoon, and reported that the young people were hanging around drinking alcohol, skateboarding, arguing, flirting and 'snogging'. She did not feel comfortable and found it boring. Later, when she and Amy had gone to separate schools, Ruth was isolated among her classmates, who listened to other music: 'Most people at school like R&B, rap, stuff in the charts that I couldn't stand at all, and I was into nu-metal stuff instead.' The growing distance between herself and Amy was reinforced by her perception that Amy was part of a goth network while she was not, as she recalled:

> She had new friends at her secondary school (whereas I didn't really) and they had introduced her to new types of music like My Chemical Romance, Yellowcard and Bright Eyes – emo stuff. I never really got into those bands back then; I thought the songs all sounded the same. She was hanging around in her school-group a lot, so we drifted apart. She dyed her hair in a kind of scene-kid style, and I felt a bit intimidated by her.

76

Ruth's estrangement from Amy, and her self identity as an outsider from the goth network or 'scene', may have led eventually to her abandonment of goth music and style, and the adoption of a less markedly 'other' image.

At the Catholic High, a goth network occupied a particular area of the schoolyard:

> Lucy: Cos like when they walk in over there and they sit on the benches, to people they are the goths.
> Rachel: That's the goth corner.

Although Lucy clearly felt an attraction to the goths in the corner, peer pressure prevented her from joining them physically. The impossibility of participating in the goth network in school, however, was ameliorated by her ability to communicate with them online: 'Yeah cos I talked to most of them on MSN and that and they're just dead nice people and I like...I just like talking to them and that.' Online communication, therefore, enabled Lucy to manage a disjuncture between self and social musical identities, allowing her to continue harmonious relationships with her close friends at the same time as satisfying her need for a feeling of association with a goth network. The problem within her friendship group of Lucy's affinity for goth will be explored further in the section, and more fully in the next chapter.

Set against the goth network were the 'normal' people:

> Helen: So the people who aren't goths, what do they call themselves? Are they described...?
> Rachel: Normal, just normal.

Rachel used the word 'normal' on several occasions throughout the research, both to describe people like herself, who did not associate themselves with goths, and to describe the music she liked, namely chart pop, RnB and dance. For Rachel, goth was indisputably 'other'. However, Lucy took a different view:

> Lucy: But to them, they are normal cos they're all the same.
> Helen: So what do they call, do you know what they call...?
> Bethany: They're just normal.
> Helen: What do they call everyone else though, do you know?
> Rachel: Weird.
> Lucy: No they don't normally call us anything, just cos they dress different.

Clearly, the 'otherness' of goth, and what it meant, shifted according to individual point of view. For Ruth and Amy, 'otherness' was actively sought after and embraced – they did not want to be like the other girls who listened to 'stuff in the charts'. For Rachel, the idea of 'otherness' was deeply unattractive and even threatening, and she persistently clung to the notion of 'normality'.

'Black black black black': goth codes, values, practices

The sounds of goth, as discussed earlier, provoked strong reactions in many of the girls. The loud, thrashy, screamy qualities of the music elicited a range of emotional responses. For the girls who liked rock, the energy of the music generated great excitement: Amy liked rock 'Cos it's loud and they thrash and they jump up and down and most of the singers are fit.' However, for those who did not like it, feelings ranged from irritation to abhorrence:

> Charlotte: [Marilyn] Manson. It gets on my nerves.
>
> Rachel: ...horrible. It's like 'ah turn it off turn it off now'. So when Lucy plays something I'm like aawh [groans].

In a discussion about the band Slipknot, even Lucy was critical of them:

> Helen: Do you like to listen to Slipknot Rachel?
> Rachel: No they're rubbish.
> [...]
> Lucy: They're like this [grimaces] with all blood drooling down.
> Helen: Do you think they're a serious band?
> Lucy: No I don't, they're crap. All they do is scream.

As well as the musical sounds and performance conventions of the bands, the appearance and clothing of goths were significant. As we have seen, Emma and Charlotte, completely outside a goth network, reported feelings of incomprehension when confronted with the crowd outside Quiggins, wearing eyeliner and all black. Although they were scornful of extreme girliness in the wrong environment, they did sometimes go 'full on girly'. However, their preferred style was more casual and, although similar to the clothing worn by goths, not so extreme, as Emma explained:

> We're not like into the pure black. Black black black black you know all over and all the baggy jeans and stuff. Just like say we'd wear a black hoodie or a black pair of jeans...

Most of the girls preferred casual clothing, such as jeans and trainers; however, the bagginess, blackness and somewhat aggressive style of the goths connoted an 'otherness' that was appealing only to Ruth, Amy and Lucy.

The perceived values and ideologies of goth related mainly to ideas of difference and self-destructiveness. Rachel repeatedly suggested the reason for liking goth music or dressing in a goth style was to be different:

> Helen: [to Lucy] But what made you start that though? What made you get into that way of dressing?
> Rachel: Probably something different.
>
> Helen: [to Olivia] So how come you've got chains then, if you're not like a punk or a goth? What are the chains...about?
> Rachel: She just wants to be individual don't you?
> Olivia: Yeah.
> Rachel: Just to be different, not anyone else or copy any celebrities or anything.

Unlike pop and RnB, with its lively rhythms and romantic/hedonistic lyrical content, goth rock was associated with darker subject matter and, as well as the importance of difference, self-destructiveness was perceived to be a central goth value. The excessive drinking Ruth observed among the goths at the law courts exemplifies this, although such behaviour is also common among teenagers more generally. More specifically, the criticism Lucy suffered for her goth identity highlighted its association with self-harm, as she explained:

> And they like, people will say like, people will draw lines on their wrists and say that it's me and stuff like that just cos of the music I listen to they say I want to slit my wrists and kill myself and stuff like that just cos of the music.

Goth music was distinguished from mainstream 'normal' music by the fact that it was seen to be created and performed by 'bands'. As discussed further in the chapter 'Creativities', the association of bands with certain instruments, such as guitars and drums, had an limiting effect on the musical practices of the girls, especially Lucy.

Apart from Ruth, Amy, Lucy and Olivia, the girls in my research disliked rock more than any other genre. Although their dislike was sometimes based on textual features, the ways the genre signified culturally seemed to be the most important factors in their evaluation, as the following two statements suggest:

Rachel: Well just some like some artists like Rihanna they dress as like punks and all that and they sing punk songs, right, they sing a couple but I like listening to them but cos they do goth songs like Rihanna and Leona Lewis they do like goth songs.

Lianna: ... if I've got a CD, like an RnB CD, and if there's a bit of different music on it like a little bit of rock or something then I'd listen to it to see what it was then I'd get into it and like it, and dance to it.

Acknowledging the fact that the 'project of the self' takes place within the social context of 'the standardising effects of commodity capitalism' (Giddens, 1991, 196 in Gauntlett, 2002, 102), Frith (1996) draws a distinction between the individualising experiences of music, through which people can reflect, construct and extend the self, and the collective, pre-formed nature of the popular music products used in the process:

> The experience of pop music is an experience of identity: in responding to a song we are drawn, haphazardly, into emotional alliances with the performers and with the performers' other fans. Because of its qualities of abstractness, music is, by nature, an individualizing form. We absorb songs into our own lives and rhythm into our own bodies; they have a looseness of reference that makes them immediately accessible. At the same time, and equally significantly, music is obviously collective. We hear things as music because their sounds obey a more or less familiar cultural logic, and for most music listeners (who are not themselves music makers) this logic is out of their control. There is a mystery to our own musical tastes....Somebody else has set up the conventions; they are clearly social and clearly apart from us (Frith, 1996, 121).

For these girls, goth music was acceptable if it was disassociated from its genre, its cultural context, 'the performers' other fans', through being performed by a pop/RnB artist, or included on a compilation CD. In these ways, its 'otherness' was excised and it became safe to consume. Although none of the girls explicitly linked goth with masculinity (in fact, rap was the genre they identified as 'for boys'), it is unlikely that were unaware of the fact that 'the discourse of masculinity operates within [rock]' (Leonard, 2007, 2). While not wishing to impose an interpretation on their understanding of the codes of goth, as its otherness may well have been associated with social class as much as with gender, the discussions revealed a degree of ambivalence towards normative femininity for some of the girls, suggesting an ongoing negotiation of gender identity, enacted through their acceptance or rejection of goth.

Identities and music ownership

Music, as Shuker (2002) points out, 'expresses self identity through the use of music consumption to indicate cultural capital' (Shuker, 2002, 169). Cultural capital, conceived by Bourdieu (1984), is displayed through the knowledge, experience and ownership of cultural products, and used to construct identity and establish social distinction. Exploding the myth of 'natural good taste', Bourdieu links cultural capital with education and social class:

> Whereas the ideology of charisma regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading, etc.), and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to educational level (measured by qualifications or length of schooling) and secondarily to social origin (Bourdieu, 1984, 1).

Bourdieu argues that there are hierarchies of the arts, and within each art there are hierarchies of genres, schools, periods, etc. There is a corresponding hierarchy of consumers for all of these (*ibid.*) and, exercising and displaying their taste through cultural capital, individuals construct a self identity which positions them in the social order at a certain level:

> Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classification is expressed or betrayed (*ibid*, 6).

Thornton (1995) adapts this idea, coining the term 'subcultural capital' to explore the 'values and hierarchies of club culture' among the participants in the British rave scene of the late 1980s/early 1990s. Thornton's use of the term 'subculture' does not align her work with that of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) theorists, whose definitions she finds too theory-driven and 'empirically unworkable' (*ibid*, 8). Instead, she uses the term to 'identify taste cultures which are labelled by the media as subcultures and the word 'subcultural' as a synonym for those practices that clubbers call 'underground'' (*ibid*, 8), and to differentiate her work from that of Bourdieu, whose focus was on the 'institutionalised cultural capital' of privileged bourgeois society (Thornton, 1995, 10-11). So, both 'cultural capital' and 'subcultural capital' are terms which refer to an individual's cultural knowledge and experience, through which they acquire status within their particular social environment:

Subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder. In many ways it affects the standing of the young person like its adult equivalent. Subcultural capital can be *objectified* or *embodied*. Just as books and paintings display cultural capital in the family home, so subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record collections...Just as cultural capital is personified in 'good' manners and urbane conversation, so subcultural capital is embodies in the form of being 'in the know', using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform certain dance styles. Both cultural and subcultural capital put a premium on the 'second nature' of their knowledges. Nothing depletes capital more than the sight of someone trying too hard (*ibid.*, 11).

In Bourdieu's study, this is closely tied to social class. In Thornton's work, as in this study, while class is not irrelevant, age and gender seem more significant (*ibid,* 13). As the concepts to which the terms 'cultural capital' and 'subcultural capital' refer are essentially the same, operating within different social contexts, I use the term 'cultural capital' to refer to the ways the girls in this study acquire and use cultural commodities, particularly music, to construct and maintain their identities, and to achieve 'distinction' within their social groups. Music ownership highlights the relationships between self and social identities, as through the display of cultural capital, consistencies and conflicts between them are brought into focus.

As we have seen, research carried out on behalf of UK Music found that music remains the most valued form of entertainment, and ownership of music is hugely important, both online and offline (UK Music, 2009). In keeping with her explanation for the choice of song lyric on her MySpace profile page, 'that's just me', Fran linked the feeling that the music she liked *was* her identity with a sense of ownership:

> Helen: ... you feel if people get into a band that you you're into then it annoys you?
> Fran: Yeah because it's like your identity isn't it? If you like a band then it's like your band but when other people go 'oh I like them' then it's like 'well how do you like them I liked them first'. That's what I think anyway.

Clearly, music can be consumed, and musical experience and knowledge can be accrued, without commodity ownership. However, 'having' music, in some form, was important to the girls in this study. 'Serious' music collecting, as Dibben (2002) has observed, has been seen to be a masculine activity, as boys tend to spend more money on equipment and recordings, and place a higher value on the quality of the music they have (Dibben, 2002,

126). Whether or not this is true, many of the girls in my study did prefer to spend their money on clothing, and acquiring music on CD usually depended on the kindness of relatives:

> Lianna: Every time I go to town with my auntie I make her get me, I don't actually make her, she asks me that she'll get me one CD, one DVD and if I want to get another DVD but I have to buy it and a CD, so it means I'm getting two CDs and two DVDs.

> Rachel: Sometimes my brother buys me them [...] And sometimes his girlfriend buys me some cos she likes the same music as I do, but and my dad normally buys me the most, cos I go out with him every week and I say I like that CD and he says ok go on get it and I say ok.

> Bethany: I haven't bought CDs for ages, but the last CD I got was at Christmas off my brother's girlfriend, the Leona one.

Music ownership, however, is not a straightforward concept and, as almost all of the girls in my study had access to a computer and internet connection, their musical cultural capital was not limited to bought, original CDs. They acquired and consumed music in MP3 form in a variety of ways, demonstrating other types of ownership, not all of which involved money changing hands. Lianna, for example, created CDs from downloaded tracks to listen to in the car:

> Lianna: We've got CDs in my nan's car that we made from the internet.
> Helen: So you download tracks from the internet and put them on a CD and then you put them in the CD player in the car?
> Lianna: Yeah.

Bethany had both downloaded music and music from her CDs on her laptop:

> Helen: So you listen to music on the laptop do you?
> Bethany: Yeah you put your CDs in it.
> Helen: I see, and what about getting music off the internet, do you do that?
> Bethany: Yeah, LimeWire[8].

Emma had music from CDs and downloaded from the internet on her MP3 player:

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[8] A free to use peer-to-peer file sharing program.

Emma: I either get it from CDs or my brother's got this software on his computer where you search for a song and it comes up and then you just load it on to your iPod with a lead that connects it to the computer.
Helen: Is that like iTunes type thing?
Emma: Sort of but you have to like pay for the iTunes and this is free.

Emma, however, acknowledged the primacy of the bought, original CD in terms of ownership: 'Yeah the Pussycat Dolls ... I'm quite into them cos I've got the CD and stuff.' Ruth too, while listening to a vast and eclectic range of downloaded music, bought on CD each new release by Tori Amos. These examples illustrate how actually buying (or being bought) the CD can indicate a strong commitment to the music, artist or band. The UK Music research supports this:

> Even if they were subscribing to an unlimited download service, 77% of respondents said they would continue to buy original albums. There are a variety of reasons for this, but clearly, and as previously stated, the desire of respondents to actually "own" a physical product remains strong - whether for tangible reasons such as artwork or sleeve notes, because they feel they are supporting the artist, or simply because the sound quality is better (Bahanovich and Collopy, 2009, 20).

Music ownership, however, exists on several levels and, during the school day, the construction, maintenance and expression of self-identity through the acquisition and display of cultural capital required a more accessible, portable, and ephemeral music collection. Music played an important role in the girls' relationships with friends and peers, and the sharing of music was a significant feature of their everyday lives. During my schools-based research in 2007, the most prevalent practice among the girls was the sharing of music via Bluetooth on their mobile phones. In line with the practicalities of their daily routines, personal music was used to accompany journeys to and from school, to create spatial boundaries in school breaks, and to relieve boredom in lessons. The multifunctionality of the mobile phone clearly enhanced its convenience and importance for the girls during the school day. Lianna, Tallulah and Alisha all agreed that the phone was better than an MP3 player, because, as Alisha explained, 'you can ring people on your phone and listen to your music and take pictures.' Emma and Charlotte frequently bluetoothed songs, both to each other and to other friends, and Rachel, Bethany, Lucy and Olivia kept each other's music collections up to date by bluetoothing songs on a daily basis, including several times during the discussion sessions they had with me:

Rachel: Well every time a new song comes out, if like Bethany's got it on her phone and I like it I go 'Bethany send us that' and then Lucy'll want and then Olivia'll want it. And then Olivia'll get a new song and it gets passed round, and so everyone will end up with it by the end of the day.

[Bethany plays a song on her phone]
Rachel: Is that 'Love in this club' by Usher? Jordin Sparks's new song's nice 'Tattoo' – have you heard that? With Ne-Yo?
Bethany: Is that the one that goes...
Rachel: 'On my heart is like a tattoo'.
Bethany: Yeah have you got that?
Rachel: Yeah.
Bethany: Send me it.

Both knowledge and ownership of the latest, or 'in' song, was crucial:

Rachel: I've got loads of new songs, like Jordin Sparks and Ne-Yo.
Helen: What sort of thing is that?
Rachel: Erm...
Lucy: Like this is the in song, can I play it?
Helen: Yes.
Lucy: This is the in song at the moment.
[Plays song on phone]
Helen: What is it?
Lucy: 'Take a bow'.
Rachel: That's not any more, Ne-Yo is, it's number one.
Helen: So who is this by?
Lucy: Rihanna.
Rachel: But that's not number one at the moment in the charts, it's Ne-Yo.

As well as the newness of the songs owned, the number of songs was also important. For Emma and Charlotte, their friend Chloe's relative lack of interest in music was thus proven:

Emma: She does have CDs but I've never heard her really been listening to them and she doesn't have music on her phone or anything and she did have an MP3 but she never uses it, so she's not as into it as we are.

Olivia had only two songs on her phone, and was keen to explain the reason:

Helen: So how come you haven't got very many, have you not had your phone very long?
Olivia: No it's the memory card. I'm getting one tomorrow.

A little later in the discussion, Bethany and Rachel mocked her lack of songs:

Helen: So you listen to music on the phone in the house?
Olivia: Until someone phones me or texts me.
Bethany: The two songs that you've got.
Rachel: Yeah, they repeat themselves about twenty times.

Clearly, both the currency and the number of the songs carried on the phone were important in terms of cultural capital. However, what was *not* on the phone was equally significant:

Helen: So you told me you had about 200 songs on your phone?
Bethany: Yeah.
Helen: So is that..?
Rachel: It's just normal.
Helen: To have that many?
Rachel: Yeah.
Bethany: 190 I've got
Helen: And do you ever go through and get rid of songs that you don't like anymore?
Rachel: Yeah.
Helen: Cos how many can you have on?
Bethany: I can have 4,000.
Helen: I suppose it depends on your phone?
Rachel: I've got one gigabyte.
Bethany: So have I.
Helen: So even though you might have loads of space on the phone and you can still get more songs on, you might get rid of them?
Rachel: Yeah, cos the songs that were out a couple of weeks ago ... there's one called 'American Boy', and you listen to them and you like them first time, but after everyone plays them in school over and over and over again, it just gets on your nerves. So you go through and go 'oh I'm deleting that' cos it gets so annoying. It's just really annoying, it's horrible.

Although it was important to Rachel to appear 'normal', and she had a clear tendency to cleave to the mainstream in terms of her music taste, she also liked to differentiate herself from others by having the most up to date music. Knowledge and ownership of the 'in song' was a form of cultural capital crucial to her self-identity and, while she initially liked the song 'American Boy', its ubiquity and overuse by her peers in school resulted in her sickening of it and eventually deleting it in disgust.

In a more complex example, Lucy played music by bands such as Sum 41 and Good Charlotte on her phone during the discussions one week, as she talked about her erstwhile goth identity. During the next week's discussion, however, the following exchange occurred:

Helen: So Rachel do you think [the music you like is] important for your kind of sense of who you are?

> Rachel: Yeah cos if Lucy, cos Lucy likes rock if I turned round...
> Lucy: *I don't.* Why put the, why say me?
> Rachel: Cos they like the same music as me.
> Bethany: She likes the same music as all of us.
> Rachel: But you like bands.
> Lucy: No I don't.
> Rachel: She likes bands.
> Lucy: No I don't.
> Bethany: She likes the same as us.
> Rachel: She's got it on her phone...you played it to us last week.
> Bethany: If she liked rock music I wouldn't do singing with her would I?
> Lucy: Exactly.
> Bethany: Cos I don't like rock.
> Rachel: But you've got it on your phone!
> Lucy: I haven't!

The vehemence with which Lucy denied having rock music on her phone demonstrates clearly the high importance of music *not* owned. Dibben (2002) supports this:

> Interestingly, it is not only the music one likes that turns out to be significant in the construction of identity, but the music one has stopped listening to, and that one must eradicate from the record collection: most people try to deny or laugh at past tastes, although they might hold on to music with personal resonance (Dibben, 2002, 126).

The reason for Lucy's disavowal of rock music and her denial that she had it on her phone that particular day, when she had been willing to discuss it openly the previous week, was unclear. What is clear, however, is that Lucy sometimes felt unable to admit to owning rock music due to the criticism – the 'skitting' – she had suffered for her goth identity in the past. Despite being able to access a vast amount and range of music at any time for free via the internet, ownership of music was crucially important to these girls. As well as the physical object of the CD, the music they carried on their mobile phones was evidence, especially in the school environment, of the music they knew and liked. It was not enough to simply hear something from someone else, or even listen to it on another's phone – the girls wanted to have the music themselves, to construct, maintain and express their self identity through the acquisition and display of cultural capital. Although quantity was important, quality was equally so, and what was *not* on the phone was highly significant. Demonstrating a need to avoid 'potential disjunctures and conflicts between individual and collective musical identities' (Born, 2000, 32), ownership was denied and songs were deleted ruthlessly from phones carrying a fraction of capacity, because they had become embarrassing, irrelevant or dangerous to own.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the ways in which young teenage girls use music to forge identities, particularly in relation to age and gender. More specifically, this chapter has: established identity as a socially negotiated construct and explored some of the roles of music in its negotiation; examined the role of music in negotiations of age and gender; and explored music taste and music ownership as means of negotiating identities. Identities, it has been argued, are processual, fluid and social, and are constructed, maintained and negotiated by continuous identity work that involves biographical narratives, projected to others and introjected to self. As the self is perceived as an object, introjection, like projection, can be understood as social, involving interaction with an 'imagined social'. Self identity can be seen as an imagined ideal social identity, which is sometimes and sometimes not aligned with social identity, and the processes of negotiating and managing the tensions between them are central to identity work. Music as a technology of self can be used to care for the self and maintain identity, as listeners can 'find themselves' in the structures of music, as in Ruth's case with the song 'Haemoglobin'. However, music both reflects and constructs identity, as musical and social meanings are co-produced in a two-way process. Although self and social identities often merge in the experience of music, individual and social identities do not always correspond, and disjunctures can occur between them, bringing about musical conflicts.

For the girls in this study, age and gender played a significant role in their negotiations of self and social identities. The concepts of childhood and youth reflect biological states and processes, yet they are socially constructed categories in terms of the significance and characteristics assigned to them, and the boundary between them is shifting and contested. The girls in this study were on both the conceptual and biological threshold between childhood and youth, in a liminal phase in which they were both and neither this and/or that. The role of music in the girls' negotiations of age identity, and their liminal state, was revealed in several ways in the domestic and schools discussions data. The need to 'move along' from music associated with childhood to embrace genres and styles perceived as more grown up was common. For some of the girls, this progression was represented by a move from pop to rock; for others the shift was not genre-based, but nevertheless, they identified music that they felt belonged to a past self. Sometimes, however, the girls readily returned to and embraced the culture and music of their earlier childhoods, such as Disney songs and songs from their primary schools, demonstrating an abiding need and use for childhood

identities. This fluidity was also apparent in their negotiations of gender identity, as they struggled with their own and others' normative and subversive gender identities and practices. The girls' negotiations of gender identities were most often discussed in relation to their clothing and style choices. Fashions considered overly 'girly' were often marginalised or rejected, and a girly style was sometimes equated with a lack of serious interest in music. On the other hand, the adoption or rejection of the subversive goth style seemed, to some extent, to represent a struggle over gender identity, as it was associated with masculinity and otherness.

Music taste played a crucial role in the girls' negotiations of identities, particularly in relation to genre, which classifies music socially as well as stylistically and aesthetically. Goth was the most contentious genre among the girls in this study, and, using Holt's (2007) basic framework of genre, taking account of networks, codes, values and practices, the complexities of the relationships between the girls' self and social identities and the style and genre of goth were explored. Finally, the importance of music ownership and its role in identity work were examined using the concept of cultural capital. The significance of music owned on mobile phones was particularly striking among the girls in the schools discussions. Merging of self and social identities was demonstrated by the girls' frequent sharing of music using Bluetooth, and yet conflict often arose as they argued, sometimes bitterly, about the music each of them had, or did not have, on her phone. Social interactions between the girls and their friends and peers had a profound effect on the meanings of the music in their everyday lives, how they used it as cultural capital to construct and express their identities, and the music they wanted, and did not want, to own. The next chapter builds on these discussions and arguments, exploring in more detail and depth the girls' relationships with their parents and friends, to consider the importance of music in shared experiences and negotiations of conflict between self and social identities at the micro-level of everyday social interaction.

CHAPTER 3 – RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

The previous chapter argued that identities are socially constructed and negotiated, and explored some of the roles of music in identity work undertaken by the girls in this study. This chapter develops this argument to focus on how music is used in the girls' everyday close relationships, particularly with parents and friends. Social relationships are fundamental to the ways music is used and understood, and the personal and familiar relationships the girls had with the people in their everyday lives played a central role in their experiences of music. In a liminal phase between childhood and youth, the most significant of the girls' everyday relationships were with parents and with friends. Many of the girls maintained close relationships with parents, while others experienced fluctuating levels of closeness. Friendships were crucially important to all the girls and, while some of them had close and stable friendships, others experienced conflicts and shifts in their friendship groups. This chapter, then, examines in more detail the specific micro-level social relationships integral to the processes of identity work, and explores the roles of music in the girls' negotiations of these relationships. The chapter is split into two main sections: the first section discusses music in relationships with parents, and the second section examines the roles of music in friendships.

The section on music and parents begins with a brief overview of existing representations of music in relationships between parents and children, considering the role of music in the 'generation gap'. Then, experiences of music listening are discussed, in relation to the girls' negotiations with parents over access to technologies, as well as control over music listening within the domestic spaces of the car and home. Finally, the girls' attitudes towards their parents' music tastes are analysed, providing an insight into their opinions about 'older music', as well as indicating attitudes towards their parents more generally. The section on music and friends begins with a brief review of existing studies of girls' cultures and friendships, followed by a summary of the findings of the questionnaire research relating to music and friendships. Then, issues of sameness and difference in the friendships between the four girls from the Catholic High school are examined, focusing on a specific incident of conflict relating to music and identity. Finally, friendship and music on the social networking website MySpace are explored, as experienced by Ruth and Fran.

Music and parents

The role of music in the relationship between parents and children is often discussed in terms of a generation gap:

> I do worry about the potentially distancing generation gap which might occur over the ... terrain of popular music between my daughter and me. How do we navigate this difficult passage when my proclivities and interpretations differ from hers? How do we share a home without constant struggle? (Valdivia with Bettivia, 1999, 429).

Straw (2001) argues that the 'very idea of generations as having distinctive cultures is a rather recent one, a product of two long-term developments'. The first of these was the profound social change resulting from 'the decline of agricultural life and the mass migration of people to cities' in the nineteenth century. For the first time, schools were organised into classes consisting of people of the same age, prompting the development of 'an ever-increasing sense of generational identification, the belief that one's cultural experiences are shared most intensely with others of one's age'. As Straw points out, this 'intra-generational solidarity' was strengthened further, by 'new, mostly electronic, media like radio and the cinema':

> With their turnover of titles and styles, these have helped to mark time as an ongoing succession of novelties and sensations. As we grow up, we emerge into a world of cultural experiences unfolding in sequence. We do so, of course, at the same time as thousands of others of similar age, and our collective movement through the lifecycle is interwoven with the turnover of songs, movies, books and historical events (Straw, 2001, 66).

The concept of youth culture, developed in the 1950s, extended this belief to incorporate the assumption that teenagers, fuelled by increased post-war economic autonomy to express 'their own distinct values and separate ideals', were 'involved in some form of revolt against their elders' (Shuker, 2002, 195), with controversial music styles providing a focus for this. However, as Goodwin observed in the late 1980s, the development of digital technologies has forced a change in 'our ideas about generation'. From back catalogue reissues on CD, to the use of sampling to 'deconstruct old texts', the linearity of the unfolding sequence of cultural experiences, ensuring our life soundtrack is similar only to that of our contemporaries, has been disrupted: 'It isn't just that pop's audience has grown older...The essential change is that "older" music has become contemporary for audiences of *all* ages' (Goodwin, 1990, 259).

The generation gap, then, has been conceptualised in terms of broad social and technological shifts, but how it affects the roles of music in the everyday lives of individual families, Valdivia (1999) rightly argues, is relatively under-researched:

> Little is written about the domestic struggle and negotiation over popular music between members of the family. While nearly all of us can remember conflict with our parents over our choice of music, the literature is nearly mum on this subject (Valdivia with Bettivia, 1999, 430).

The generation gap's current state of health, however, is a popular topic in media discourses. Radice (2004), for example, argues that parents' reluctance to 'embrace middle age' brings them closer to their teenage children, with whom they share cultural interests and references such as TV programmes, books and CDs, and get on 'better than ever before'. Lindon (2006), however, testing the capacity of music to bridge the generation gap by persuading four inter-generational pairs to 'swap their favourite records', found only one of the pairs discovers a mutual liking for their music choices. Sawyer (2007) contends: 'Suddenly the generation gap is back', as '[n]ew technology has created a separate teenage universe that is incomprehensible to adults' (Sawyer, 2007). This selection of recent journalistic assessments of the parent-child musical zeitgeist suggests that, compared with the children of parents whose music tastes were shaped by pre-rock sounds, the music taste of children today is much closer to that of their parents. While inter-generational music preferences undoubtedly still differ, the biggest gap is in relation not to music taste, but rather to the ways in which music is acquired, shared, consumed and displayed using new technologies; 'intra-generational solidarity' (Straw, 2001, 66) is compounded by a technological rather than a musical revolution.

Within their families, although relationships with siblings were significant for some of the girls in this study, the relationships they had with their parents[9] seemed to be the most important with regard to the role of music. Alongside methodological reasons, particularly my role as a parent-researcher that led to my specific interest in the role of music in relationships between children and parents, it seems likely that the age range of the girls is a

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[9] Although this section is nominally, and mainly, focused on the role of music in relationships between the girls and their parents, relationships with other adult carers are included in the discussion where relevant.

factor in this. In the liminal or transitional phase of young teenagerhood, the influence of friends and peers is becomingly increasingly important, and separation and independence from parents is beginning; yet material reliance upon them is inevitable and, for many, emotional attachment also remains strong. Parents facilitate their children's music experiences in numerous ways. They provide technologies with which children can access and listen to music, and spaces in which to do this; they may take their children to concerts, and pay for music lessons and musical instruments. As well as this, their music preferences are probably the first to which the child is exposed. Negotiations of material and emotional dependency on parents, therefore, are significant for children in early teenagerhood, and strategies involving music-related behaviours and tastes were used by many of the girls in this study to assert their increasing sense of an individual identity distinct from that of their parents and the collective family. In the following sections, the roles of music listening and music taste in the girls' relationships with their parents are explored.

Parents and music listening

Three of the questions included in the school questionnaire related to everyday music listening practices: 'What kind of equipment do you use to listen to music?' 'Where do you listen to music?' and 'When do you listen to music?' Forty-nine girls responded to these questions, revealing three key features of their everyday experiences and uses of music. First, the girls had access to and habitually used a wide range of home-based and personal music listening equipment:
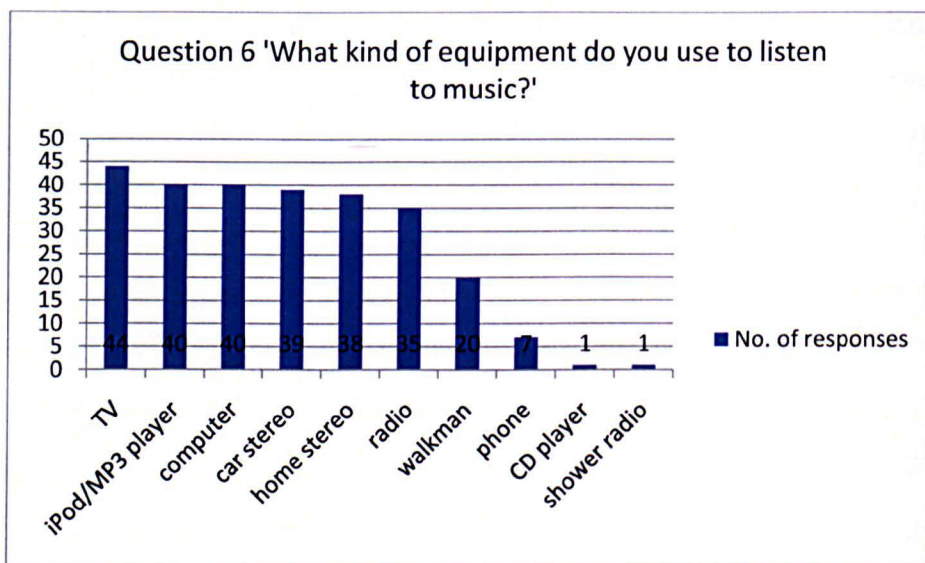
Figure 1 Graph of responses to question 6 'What kind of equipment do you use to listen to music?'

None of the girls was restricted to the use of only one type of equipment in her music listening. Indeed, most of them indicated that they used between four and seven different types of equipment. The rapidity of shifts in music consumption practices within this age group is highlighted by the relative unimportance of the phone as a music listening device among these girls in 2006: only seven girls mentioned it as a device used for music listening. By the following year, however, the mobile phone was central to the everyday music listening of the girls in the discussion groups. Second, although they listened to music in public places such as buses and shops, domestic spaces were the most common sites of their music listening:
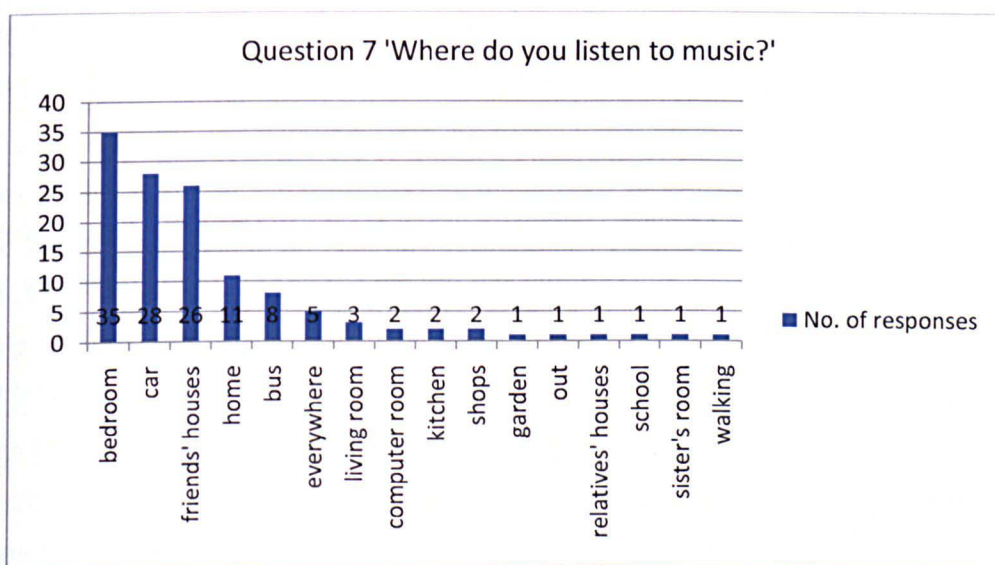
Figure 2 Graph of questionnaire responses to question 7 'Where do you listen to music?'

Third, for the overwhelming majority of them, time spent at home, more than any other time, was when they listened to music:

Question 2 'When do you listen to music?'
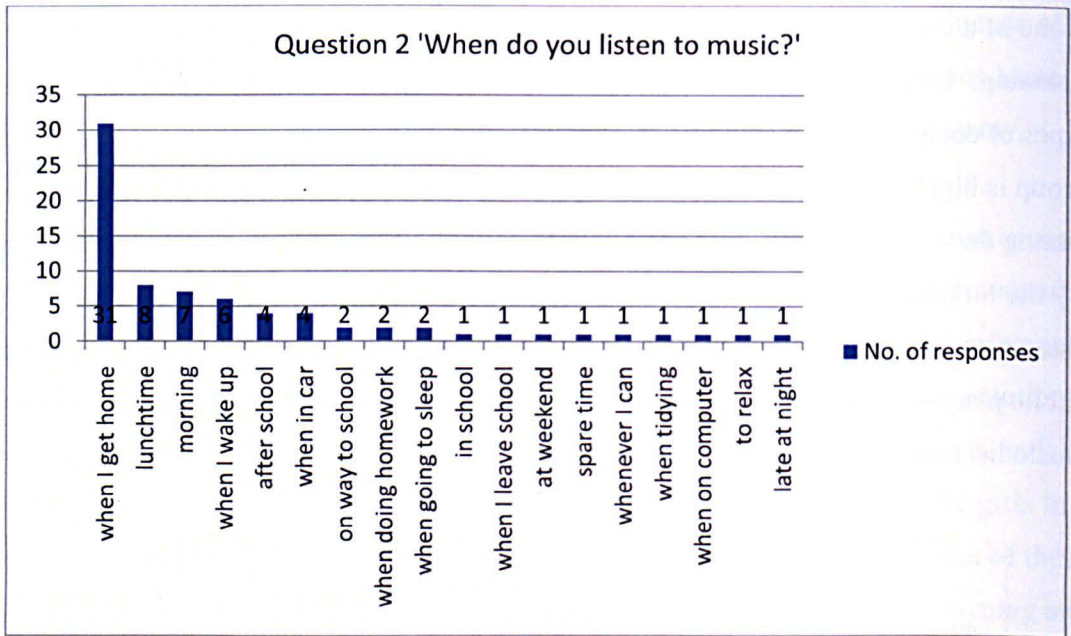
Figure 3 Graph of questionnaire responses to question 2 'When do you listen to music?'

Although other family members may often contribute, for girls of this age, parents are usually the key providers of resources for acquiring and listening to music. Furthermore, as co-occupiers of domestic environments, parents potentially exercise the most control over young teenage girls' music listening in everyday life. For these girls then, it can be inferred that their everyday music listening practices were bound up in various ways with the relationships they had with their parents. To flesh out the sketch suggested by the questionnaire responses, the focus now shifts to data generated in the domestic research and schools discussions, to explore music listening and the relationships between parents and girls in more detail and depth. First, a brief overview of the girls' access to and use of technologies is given, and then music listening in domestic spaces is explored, specifically the soundscapes of the car and the home.

Technologies

Following on from the questionnaire responses, a similar range of technologies enabled music listening in everyday life for the participants in the domestic research and schools discussions. Ruth's personal computer, situated in her bedroom, connected to an amplifier and loudspeakers, was the main site of her music listening and acquisition, as most of her music collection was downloaded from the internet. Fran and Amy both used a computer connected to the internet for music listening, but these were situated in their respective family living rooms. In their bedrooms, all three girls had their own radio/CD players, and Fran also

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had a television, video player and Sony Playstation. All three girls had a mobile phone, and a personal radio/cassette or CD player. In all of the girls' homes, there was a 'main' stereo, and an accompanying music collection consisting of a combination of vinyl, audio cassette and compact disc, belonging to their parent(s), situated in one of the family living rooms. In each family living room, the television enabled access to either Sky or cable TV music channels. All of this was provided by the girls' parents.

Similarly, the girls who participated in the discussion groups both owned and had access to a wealth of technologies. Lianna had a stereo and television in her bedroom, as well as a computer, a mobile phone and an iPod. Tallulah used the DVD player to play music through the family television, watched music TV channels, and used the shared family computer and two laptops to listen to and download music. Alisha had her own computer, and also used the family stereo to listen to music. Emma had an iPod which she asked her mum and dad to get her for Christmas, and she used software on her brother's computer to download music onto it. She used her own laptop for entertainment and leisure, and the family computer for schoolwork. In order to access the internet connection, she often listened to music on her laptop in the family living room. Charlotte's use of a computer was limited as the computer she used was in her brother's bedroom. However, she was hoping to get her own laptop for Christmas, and a replacement for her MP3 player, which was broken. Bethany had a flat screen TV with freeview and a DVD player in her bedroom, which she usually used to listen to music. She had her own laptop, which she used to listen to music she downloaded from the internet. Rachel had her own CD player in her bedroom, and also listened to music in the family living room, either using the stereo or watching music channels on TV. Her laptop was broken, because her younger sister had dropped it in the bath, and so she did not have an iPod, because her mum thought there was no point as she had no computer. As well as receiving MP3 files from friends on her mobile phone, her brother, brother's girlfriend and dad sometimes bought CDs for her. Overcoming the limitations of her domestic audio resources, Rachel used the school's Play Station 3 to upload music from CD onto her mobile phone's memory card.

The provision of technologies is a significant way in which parents, and other family members, can both facilitate and control young teenagers' music listening. The extent of their listening autonomy depends greatly on the stipulations of their parents – where, for example, the computer and internet connection are situated - and the size, income and

spending priorities of their families. The girls' access to resources for music listening, however, was not wholly limited to those their parents provided. During the time span of the field research for this study, from 2003 to 2008, it is arguable that the girls' dependency upon parents for access to music was declining as, through their use of new technologies, they were increasingly able to acquire music in ways that bypassed the need for economic capital. As long as they were provided with the minimum requirement, a mobile phone, which all of them were, and access to the internet, which most of them had, acquisition through peer-to-peer filesharing and bluetoothing enabled them to listen to music and build music collections independently of parental resources. The prevalence of their use of portable personal media players suggests the need for spaces in which to listen to music aloud was similarly diminishing.

Domestic spaces

Nonetheless, domestic sites were central to the girls' negotiations of their relationships with their parents using music, and, of these, the most significant were the car and the home. The categorisation of the car as a domestic space, Bull (2003) explains, 'has a long anecdotal history in cultural theory', based on an understanding of 'the automobile as metaphor for the dominant Western values of individualism and private property' (Bull, 2003, 358). As Sibley (1995) points out, both the family home and car are domestic spaces in which 'the use of space and time' are under the control of parents, and children attempt to 'carve out' their own spaces and times, potentially leading to considerable conflict (Sibley, 1995, 129). In order to understand children's experiences of 'home', Sibley identifies the need to focus on 'power relations, the way power is expressed in family interactions and played out in the spaces of home' (*ibid*, 130). The struggle for control within domestic spaces is territorial, and music can play a significant role in this: 'control over music in social settings is a source of social power...there are occasions when music is perceived as something to be resisted' (DeNora, 2000, 20). Valdivia (1999) anticipated a 'constant struggle' over popular music within the domestic terrain, as her daughter's autonomy increased with her growing maturity and their music tastes and practices diverged (Valdivia with Bettivia, 1999, 429). As Frith (2004) observes:

> If music empowers people, if it is a means of articulating physical and cultural and ideological identity by occupying sonic territory, then it can only do so at the expense of other people's use of that territory, other people's sense of identity. Musical

empowerment for one group of people—teenagers, say—may mean musical disempowerment for another group, grown-ups (Frith, 2004).

The ways in which music is used to construct boundaries and claim spaces is closely involved with negotiations of self and social identities.

Domestic spaces: Car
Since the development of the '5T71' car radio by Motorola in 1930 (Motorola, 1994-2009), music has played an integral role in the driving experience. Specific styles of song are identified, compiled and marketed as 'driving songs'[10] and 'drivetime' shows[11] proliferate on both national and local radio. The massive market in car audio conflicts with various studies warning drivers of the dangers of listening to distractingly loud and/or fast music (e.g. Brodsky, 2001; Dalton, *et al*, 2007). The experience of moving forward at speed, viewing the outside world receding on all sides from the insularity of the enclosed private space, takes on an intense aesthetic quality when accompanied by music. Unlike the home however, where it is often easier for music listeners to find separate spaces to indulge their individual tastes, the car is a single space in which family members are enclosed together. Control of the interior environment of the car lies in the hands of the drivers, as 'car drivers control the social mix in their car just like homeowners control those visiting their home' (Urry, 1999, 16-17 cited in Bull 2003, 359). Unless occupants create individuated listening experiences by using personal music players, the music played on the car stereo is the music everyone hears, whether they like it or not. Despite the twofold power of the adult as both driver and parent, however, the importance of music listening to the girls in this study engendered a number of strategies through which they negotiated control of the car soundscape. From incorporation of the adult driver's music taste, to complete disregard for it, there was a range of subtle concessions and direct challenges that constituted a power struggle over the sounds that filled the shared family car, reflecting the extent to which self and social identities merged or conflicted.

Except when I hired or borrowed a newer car with a CD player for our annual summer holiday, Ruth and I usually did not listen to music while travelling together in my car, as it

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[10] For example *101 Driving Songs* (2008), Virgin TV; *Top Gear: Seriously Cool Driving Music* (2007), EMI; *Greatest Ever Driving Songs* (2007), Union Square.
[11] Usually aired between 5pm and 7pm, these shows are specifically targeted at people driving home from work, and are intended to ease the transition between these two sites of everyday life.

was equipped only with a cassette player, which, until Ruth acquired an MP3/cassette adaptor in 2008, prevented the playing of any of her music collection in the car. In any case, like the many drivers in Bull's study, I prefer to listen to music in the car when travelling alone (Bull, 2003, 364). Consequently, most of our shared daily journeys were undertaken without music, representing in effect a mutual abdication of our musical selves within this small enclosed environment. Alternatively, for some of the girls who participated in the discussions in schools, the family car was a place where music was played, and controlled completely by parents. When Bethany travelled in the family car with her dad, for example, they listened only to bands he liked, or to his choice of radio station:

> Bethany: My dad plays Beautiful South, Simply Red, The Housemartins...
> [...]
> Helen: So when you're in the car with your dad do you always listen to the music he likes?
> Bethany: Yeah, or we have Smooth FM on the radio or whatever.
> [..]
> Helen: So do you ever put on any of your stuff in the car then?
> Bethany: No.

Although Bethany was not allowed to play her own music in the car, she did not object to the music chosen by her dad. Similarly, the music in Charlotte's family car was chosen by her parents. Her mum controlled the radio station, and the family's favourite type of music, Irish folk, was played on CD:

> Charlotte: We're only allowed erm... my mum only lets us put Smooth Radio on in the car. We're not allowed to put Juice on or anything.
> Helen: What kind of thing do they play on Juice? Is that ...
> Charlotte/Emma: It's all sort of club music.
> Helen: Right so your mum doesn't like that then?
> Charlotte: No, we're only allowed one channel.
> Helen: So Smooth's all sort of R & B and soul?
> Emma: Yeah they play the same song a lot don't they?
> Charlotte: Yeah and if there isn't that then there's Irish CDs as well in the car....
> Helen: In the car?
> Charlotte: It can be a bit annoying when you hear it all the time.

Clearly, for Emma and Charlotte, their favourite type of music, the club music played on Juice FM, would have been their preferred listening in Charlotte's family car. The music played in the car was 'annoying' both because it was played so frequently, and because it was

enforced listening. Emma and Charlotte often chose to listen to Irish music when they were together at Charlotte's house; however, it was annoying in the car precisely because it was not their choice. For Rachel too the choice of music played in the car she travelled in, her uncle's, was a source of irritation:

> Rachel: My mum doesn't drive but my uncle does and I normally get lifts off my uncle and he plays all the like, I've forgot what it's called, the violin players and the orchestra.
> Helen: Like classical stuff?
> Rachel: Yeah that's the word I was looking for, classical.
> Helen: Right, what do you think of that then?
> Rachel: It's nice and, it cools, calms you down and makes like you feel dead light, but it's just...horrible.

Her ambivalence towards the classical music her uncle played in the car suggests confusion. She seemed to enjoy the sensations it evoked, and described them in a precise and insightful way; however, she concluded with a rejection of the music. In our discussions, Rachel placed a lot of value on her knowledge of music, contributing music information to the discussions to a striking extent. Her discomfort with classical music, despite its pleasurable affects, perhaps resulted from her unfamiliarity with and lack of understanding of the style of music, as well as her lack of control over the car soundscape.

In contrast to these adult-controlled listening experiences, some of the girls offered other accounts of negotiating music listening in the car. Ruth enjoyed drives with Amy as Amy's mum had a car with a CD player, and allowed the girls to play the music of their choice at high volume. Ruth's memories of these experiences remain among the most powerful of her friendship with Amy. Lianna, who spent a lot of time being cared for by her nan, described how she controlled the music listened to in her nan's car:

> Helen: So when you listen to it in the car, do you listen to the music you want to play or ...
> Lianna: Yeah.
> Helen: So your nan doesn't mind you putting your music on?
> Lianna: I just put it on anyway.
> Helen: Does she like it?
> Lianna: We've got CDs in my nan's car that we made from the internet.
> Helen: So you download tracks from the internet and put them on a CD and then you put them in the CD player in the car do you?
> Lianna: Yeah.

> Helen: And does everyone like the same kind of thing then in the car? No one moans...?
> Lianna: My nan doesn't, I just put it on anyway.

Lianna's insistence that she played her own music 'anyway', whether her nan liked it or not, suggests that her nan conceded control of the music played in the car to Lianna, or at least that Lianna interpreted it that way. It seemed important to Lianna, not only that she played her own music, but also that her nan's opinion of it was irrelevant. If Lianna perceived the car as a place where control of the music is something to be fought over, she represented herself as having won this battle before it had even begun.

Although the car is a domestic space, it is, unlike the home, a semi-private space. As Bull (2003) points out, 'The space of a car is both one to look out from and to be looked into. It is simultaneously private and public' (Bull, 2003, 367). Playing one's music of choice when travelling in the car is empowering not only as a means of confirming and expressing self identity by 'occupying sonic territory' (Frith, 2004) within the space of the car, but also as a way of displaying self identity to the passing world by occupying the sonic space surrounding the car. The potency of this experience is the key to Ruth's vivid positive memories of travelling with Amy and Lianna's insistence on commanding the sonic environment of her nan's car. Charlotte's disgruntlement with the repetitive playing of Irish music in the family car, despite sometimes choosing to play it at home, perhaps resulted from a desire to experience this music in private rather than in public. As Born (2000) observes:

> ...rather than musical subjectivity being fixed and unitary, several musical "identities" may inhabit the same individual. These are expressed in different musical tastes and practices, some of them in tension with each other or in contradiction with other parts of the self (Born, 2000, 33).

Charlotte's preferred public musical identity was that expressed by club music rather than Irish folk, and the experience of travelling with music brought the disjuncture between her family/collective musical identity and her self (ideal social) identity into focus.
Listening to music in the car is not only important when travelling, as Tallulah and Alisha explained:

> Tallulah: Yeah, when I'm bored me and my mate just go and sit in the car and play music.

Helen: Do you? Why do you do that? Why don't you just listen to it in the house?
Tallulah: Cos it's quiet.
Alisha: Cos it's not as much fun in the house as it is when you're in the car.
Helen: Why is that?
Tallulah: Cos it's quiet when you're with your mates on your own listening to music.
Alisha: And you can lock the doors in the car but if you lock the doors in the house then your mum or your dad can't get in.
Tallulah: And if they're hoovering downstairs then we don't have to hear it like when we're listening to music upstairs.

For these girls, the car was a semi-private space, away from parents and siblings, yet safely annexed to the home, where they could play their own music in a quiet enclosed environment. Alisha's description of it as being more 'fun' than the house captures the thrill of exclusively occupying a space that is usually under adult control. Tallulah mentioned twice that she listened to music in the car with her friends, and it is perhaps unlikely that she would have done this on her own. As well as offering an escape from the distractions or boredom of the home, the car was a place to be seen and heard listening to music, and there was undoubtedly an element of display in this practice.

Domestic spaces: Home

It seems to be important for young teenage girls to have a place in which to spend time alone or with friends listening to music, and for the vast majority (71%) of the girls who responded to my school questionnaire, the bedroom was the place where they listened to music most. The bedroom occupies a position of mythical importance in accounts of female youth cultures (McRobbie and Garber, 1991; Baker, 2001, 2004; Bloustein, 2003; Lincoln, 2004, 2005), with music playing a central role in the activities that take place there. As Lincoln (2005) argues:

> Teenagers play music in their bedrooms. For them the bedroom, which throughout their teenage years is a site of multiple cultural and social articulations and expressions, is often the first space in which they are able to exert some control, be creative and make that space their own....Music is used in the teenager's bedroom in a diverse number of ways: volume, choice of music or associated resources all play a role in the creative control of the bedroom space (Lincoln, 2005, 400).

For Tallulah and Alisha, however, the enclosed security of the car, parked outside the house, was perhaps the most private available space to which they could withdraw from the noise and activity of the family home. Although neither of them explicitly revealed it, taking

account of the number of siblings these girls had (five and four respectively), and the socio-economic deprivation of the area in which they lived, it is unlikely that either of them enjoyed the luxury of a bedroom of her own. As Sibley points out:

> Having one's own space is important in developing autonomy and this distinguishes the middle-class child who is part of a small family from one with many siblings or living in poverty (Sibley, 1995, 133).

Rachel similarly shared a bedroom with her younger sister, a situation that sometimes caused conflict when Rachel wanted the space to herself: 'Normally I just kick her out and she'll start crying outside the door and I'll go no.' The rest of the girls in this study, however, as they were an only child or only daughter, did have a bedroom of their own; but this did not mean that they used this space exclusively, or even mostly, for listening to music, either alone or with friends. The size of the room seemed to be a factor, but more importantly, the technology in the room was greatly influential on the amount of time spent and type of activities undertaken in the bedroom.

As previously discussed, the girls were largely dependent upon their parents, not only for the technologies they used for music listening, but also for the spaces in which to listen. Parents were also able to exert control over which technologies were situated in which domestic spaces. As we have seen, for the forty-nine girls who responded to the questionnaire, the television was the type of equipment most used for listening to music (90%), followed by iPod/MP3 player (82%) and computer (82%). As most of these girls favoured their bedroom for music listening, it is probable that many of them had a television and computer in their bedroom as, in 2006, seven in ten British children had a television in their bedroom, six in ten had a games console, more than half had a DVD player, around 50% had a hi-fi system, and one in three had a digital personal music player or computer (BBC News, 2006). Despite the normalising effects of its prevalence, the debate surrounding the provision of televisions in children's bedrooms continues (e.g. Ross, 2009). This particular anxiety has been superseded, however, by graver concerns about the situating of computers in children's bedrooms, from their role in the further fragmentation of family life, to the dangers of unsupervised online activities. More than any other technology, it has been argued, the 'provision of computing facilities in children's bedrooms has the potential to change family life and thus contemporary meanings of home' (Holloway and Valentine, 2001, 570), and

parents' decisions as to where to place computers in the home are based on a range of circumstances and beliefs:

> In some homes the availability of material resources, alongside parental beliefs that children are capable of managing their own ICT usage, means children are able to use ICT in their bedrooms. This practice is positively endorsed by some parents who feel that computer usage in the child's bedroom protects them from the dangers of, or dangerous use of, adult public spaces....Equally, however, other families domesticate technology in other ways defining the computer as a social machine and keeping it in a family room. Rather than seeing the child's bedroom with an on-line PC as a safe space, they see it as inherently risky, giving children access to unsuitable materials on-line and, more importantly, strangers on-line access to their children. Moreover many families who keep a computer in a family room do so not only to protect children and the privacy of individual family members' bedrooms, but also to ensure a social atmosphere surrounding computer use (*ibid*, 579).

Computers were central to the music acquisition and consumption practices of many of the girls in this study, and their position in the home was significant. Ruth's computer was in her bedroom and, throughout the period of the domestic research, when Ruth was at home she spent as much time as she possibly could in her bedroom using her computer. All the music she listened to was stored on her computer hard drive, including music files downloaded from the Internet, and albums uploaded from CD. Much of her free time was spent constructing websites devoted to her passionate interest in anime (Japanese animation), communicating with friends online, and writing stories and poems which she sent to various online writers' clubs in the hope that they will be posted on the website. Most of these activities were carried out synchronically, and all were accompanied by a continuous soundtrack of music. Although she had a portable CD player in her bedroom, the sound quality was better on her PC, so she uploaded her favourite albums onto her hard drive. From the music files stored in carefully ordered and labelled folders in her 'Media Library', she constructed play lists, which she set to play in a random order to avoid hearing the songs at the top of the lists too often. Ruth's relationship with her computer seemed almost symbiotic, and the music that emanated from it often seemed to me to be an accurate reflection of her mood. As Ruth's involvement with music increased, her bedroom became the primary source of music in our home, and I enjoyed hearing Ruth's music emanating from her bedroom, and only occasionally asked her to turn it down. Sometimes, in shared situations such as preparing a meal together in the kitchen, we listened to music we both liked, and most often this was the shared music that originated from Ruth.

For both Fran and Amy, the computer was similarly central to their everyday experiences and uses of music but, unlike Ruth, they used a computer that was situated in the family living room. Fran used her CD player to listen to music in her bedroom, and listened to downloaded music or online radio on the computer using headphones. Amy's bedroom audio equipment was limited to a radio/CD player, and like Fran, she consequently chose to spend most of her leisure time at home in the family living room, where she could listen to music and communicate online using the computer. Both Fran and Amy also had satellite television, and watched music channels on TV in their living rooms. For these two girls, then, unlike for Ruth, the bedroom was not the main site of their music listening activities. The convergence of communication, creativity and music consumption in a single machine determined the space in which they spent their time: either alone or with friends, they chose to be with the technology. If this necessitated sharing the space with parents, they modified their listening practices by using headphones, as Emma explained:

> Helen: ... so when you're listening to your own music on the computer then does anybody mind you doing that or do you have to wear headphones or..?
> Emma: If there's no-one in the house then I'm ok to just listen to it out loud but sometimes if my mum's watching something or if my mum's doing work on the other computer then I'll have to wear earphones then.
> Helen: Right I see so it's in the kind of living room is it?
> Emma: Yeah.

The desire to play their music loud and out loud is mentioned by several girls, who had to wait until they have the house to themselves before they can indulge in this particular pleasure:

> Helen: So would you rather have the music playing so it kind of fills the room then?
> Tallulah: Yeah.
> Lianna: Normally I just have mine on loud so you can actually hear it.
> Tallulah: Yeah I have it on full blast when I'm tidying up when my mum's out, cos I don't like tidying up when there's anyone else in the house, cos I like my own space and time.

Lianna used the opportunity of time in the house alone to dance to her music: 'Normally I dance in my nan's living room when my nan's at work and I'm the only one in the house.' The importance of having the whole house to experience music is acknowledged by Valdivia's daughter and co-author:

Now when nobody else is at home, I take all my CD's downstairs to the living room and I play them at high volume, really high volume. So I can feel the bass when I am lying on the couch. I usually listen to Aerosmith, Guns 'n' Roses, Smashing Pumpkins, Live, Marilyn Manson, and anything else that can be played obnoxiously loud. I also play my opera CD's really loud because that's the way opera is supposed to be. And so nobody can hear me sing (Valdivia and Bettivia, 1999, 435).

This practice demonstrates the complex interrelationships between music listening and taste, as the music chosen to be played loud in the privacy of an empty house can be music that is preferred for singing to, or dancing, in Lianna's case, and can also be music that the other family members particularly dislike. Issues of power and control within relationships between young teenage girls and their parents are often negotiated through access to and uses of technologies and domestic spaces; the next section considers the role of music taste in the relationships between girls and their parents.

Parents and music taste

As Bourdieu (1984) argues, identities are produced through the practice of 'distinction', a process of differentiation from others in terms of cultural taste. The school questionnaire included two questions relating to parents and music taste: 'What do your parents think about the music you listen to?' and 'What do you think about the music your parents listen to?' Forty-four girls responded to these two questions with a range of comments, which seemed to fall into four categories, negative, neutral, ambivalent and positive:
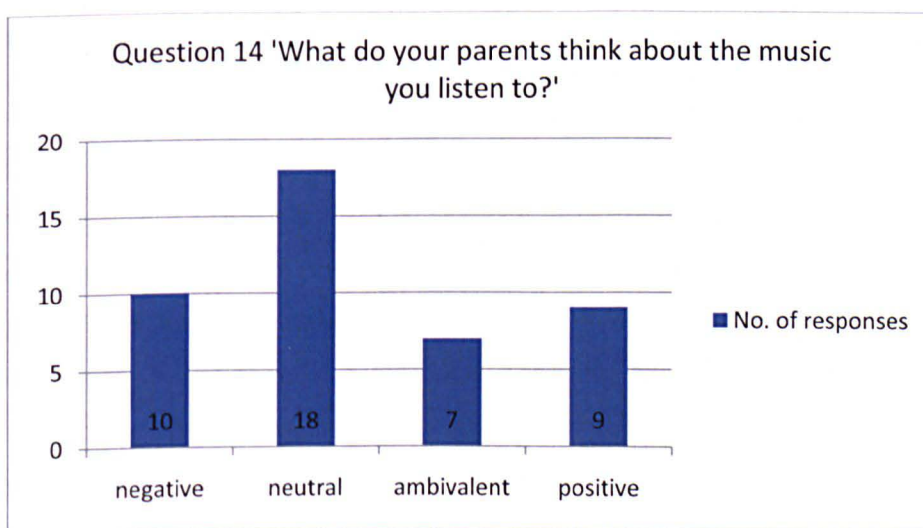
Figure 4 Graph of questionnaire responses to question 14 'What do your parents think about the music you listen to?'
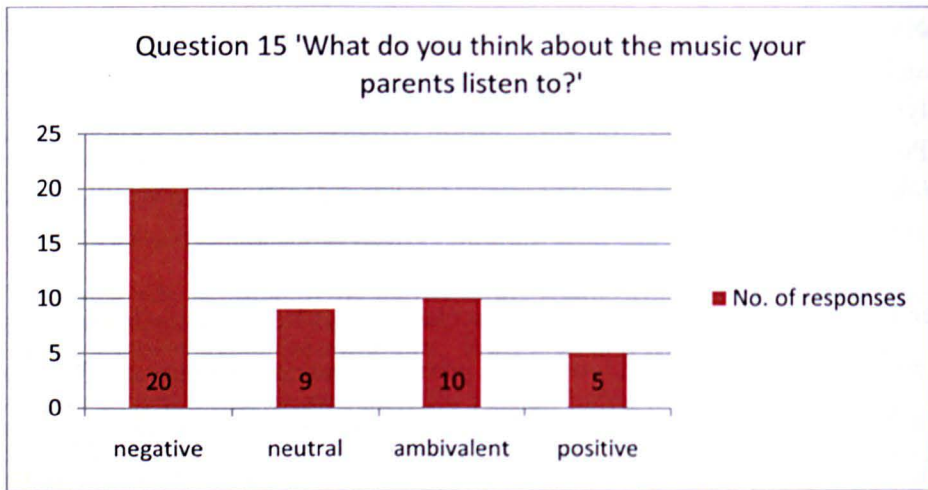
Figure 5 Graph of questionnaire responses to question 15 'What do you think about the music your parents listen to?'

For many of the girls who responded to the questionnaire, it seemed to be important to distinguish themselves from their parents in terms of music taste, as very few of them expressed a positive attitude towards their parent's music, or vice versa. The most striking differences are between the negative and neutral types of response to each question. Twenty of the girls, the overwhelming majority, had a negative attitude towards their parents' music taste. However, an almost equally large majority (18) believed that their parents' attitude towards their own music taste was neutral. These forty-four girls, then, represented themselves as more critical of their parents' music than their parents were of theirs. In fact, as shown below, fifteen girls represented their parents' attitudes to their music as more positive than their own attitudes towards their parents' music, while only five represented the relationship in reverse. However, a slight majority of the girls (24) represented the respective attitudes to music taste of themselves and their parents as mutual:
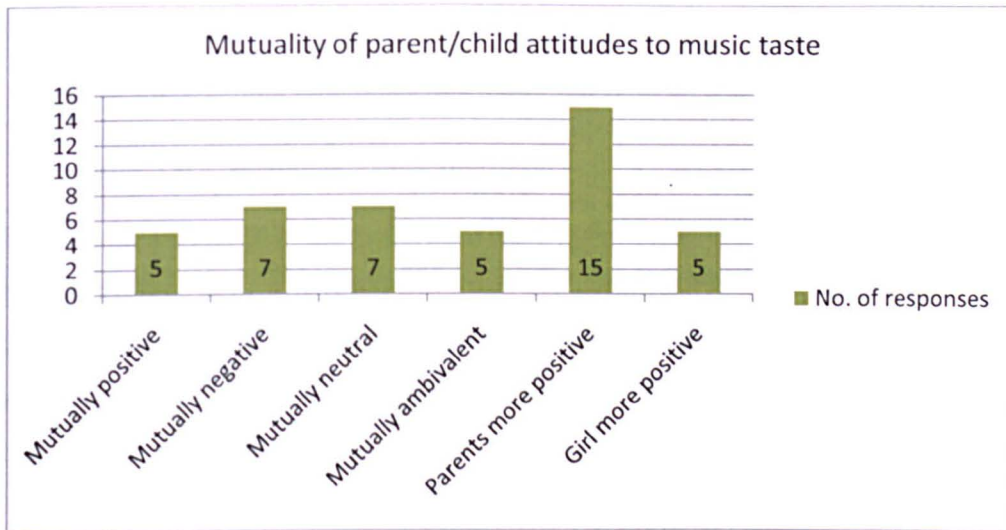
Figure 6 Graph showing mutuality of parent/child attitudes to music taste

The lack of contextual information this research method entails makes it impossible to understand this, as the underlying complexities of the relationships these girls had with their parents are completely unknown. However, the domestic and schools discussion group research revealed in some detail the role of music taste in the relationships between the girls and their parents, both reflecting and reinforcing the degree of emotional closeness between the girls and their parents, and the extent to which self and social identities were aligned.

Music played an important role in the relationship between me and Ruth. She liked some of the music I listened to, and copied some of my CDs onto her computer, incorporating particular songs into her playlists. Hearing a song of 'mine' coming from her room gave me a strange yet pleasurable jolt, like meeting a friend unexpectedly and momentarily not recognising them, as I tried to identify the familiar sounds among the unfamiliar. Of course, many of the unfamiliar sounds emanating from Ruth's room soon became familiar with repeated hearing and, if I particularly liked what I heard, I bought it on CD, and recorded it onto cassette tapes to listen to in my car. This practice emphasised the gap between our technological worlds, but despite the differences in the ways we used to technology to acquire and listen to music, there were similarities between the music listening experiences we created for ourselves. Engrossed in online communication or creative activities in the private and personalised space of her bedroom, Ruth enveloped herself in her playlist cocoon; while I, focused on driving, alone in my car, immersed myself in a soundscape of the same music. Our music tastes were closely aligned, and we talked about this shared music,

discussing lyrics, identifying songs and parts of songs we particularly liked, exchanging information about the bands, and we went to several concerts together.

Amy's parents, similar in age to me, both had well-defined musical preferences. Her mum liked 1980s new romantic music and her dad liked rock, particularly 1990s grunge. Both her parents played their music in the house, and Amy was familiar with it. Before leaving junior school, Amy enjoyed chart music by pop groups such as S Club 7 and Steps, and female pop/rock artists Pink and Avril Lavigne, and her mum happily listened to this music with her. At the start of the research, however, as she became more interested in rock, Amy's music taste became more aligned with that of her dad, emphasising her move away from a normative feminine self identity.

Both Emma and Charlotte talked in a mostly positive way about their families and their music taste. Emma lived with her mum, dad and older brother. She seemed to have a well-ordered home life, and was supported by her parents in a range of activities, such as attending a Christian youth club, going swimming and going to the gym. Although she did not mention her dad's music taste, the music her mum played had a strong influence on her, leading her to like a lot of older music:

> Emma: I like the Bee Gees and Queen and the Beatles and stuff.
> [...]
> Helen: Where do you hear all this sort of music then?
> Emma: Well my mum's got loads and loads of records upstairs and like they've never been touched or anything and she's got like the Monkees and the Beatles and stuff so I've heard a lot from her, and she has like the CDs and stuff like that ... So I've just got to hear it and like it.

She appreciated the broader perspective and wider musical knowledge this gave her:

> Helen: So are you quite glad then that you've been able to listen to that older music as well?
> Emma: Yeah cos like you've got more knowledge of music cos you don't just know about modern day music you can connect to stuff from other years.

Further, she and Charlotte agreed that older music is often better than contemporary music, and they both had strong opinions about what makes older music better:

> Emma: I think I prefer the music from before, like back in the years because they played with just instruments and, I'm not being mean, but they actually could sing because some people now, they're singers and they've got loads of technology to make them sound really good haven't they?
> Charlotte: Like Madonna.
> Emma: Yeah. But if they sing live they're not that good. But people like Queen and the Monkees and that, they really did have talent. But some people don't now, they just use all these weird voices and it makes them sound really good but when they play live they're rubbish.
> Charlotte: Or sometimes they mime when they're live don't they?
> Emma: And back ages ago they didn't mime, they actually sang.
> Charlotte: And they played all their instruments and stuff, now it's just done by computer, computerised music.

The belief expressed in this exchange that, unlike modern day music, older music involves authentic performances given by genuinely talented artists, could easily have been borrowed directly from the girls' parents, along with the old records. However, Emma did not enjoy all the older music her mum played: it still had to fit with her desire for upbeat lively music, and she drew the line at Cliff Richard: 'mum sometimes plays stuff like Cliff Richard and stuff, and I'm not really into the slowish songs, like I really like quite a fast beat.'

Charlotte's identification with the Irish music that was played by her family at home was clear, despite her misgivings about the repeated playing of it in the family car. She had been with her dad to see The Dubliners perform at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, and often chose to play Irish music when Emma came to her house:

> Helen: So do you put that music on when Emma comes round or is it just playing in the house anyway when you're around?
> Charlotte: Sometimes it is but sometimes I put it on myself.

Of the four girls who participated in the discussions at the Catholic High, Bethany was the most unreservedly positive about both her family life and her parents' music taste. Her home life seemed comfortable and close and she spent most of the weekend with her family, not seeing her school friends at all: 'Of a Saturday I mostly stay in then I go to my nan's and on a Sunday I go to my nan's, and sometimes we go to town or townie.'[12] As discussed earlier, she enjoyed the music played in the family car, which was usually her dad's choice. Indeed, she grew to like it to the extent that, as Rachel pointed out, she was comfortable to engage actively with the music by singing along to it, even when Rachel was present:

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[12] A colloquial name for the local town centre.

> Bethany: Yeah, or we have Smooth FM on the radio or whatever.
> Rachel: Or Juice FM.
> Helen: Smooth FM, what sort of thing is on that?
> Bethany: Like old songs but cos I'm used to listening to that now cos we always have it on and the same songs are on so they're good.
> Rachel: She sings to them.
> Helen: You quite like them?
> Bethany: Yeah.
> Rachel: Do you sing along to them in the car?
> Bethany: Yeah.

This suggests that the frequent exposure to the songs played in the car influenced her to such an extent that she had incorporated her parents' music taste into her own. Her acceptance of older music is demonstrated both by her active engagement through the practice of singing along, and, in the same way as Emma and Charlotte, by her expressed opinion that it is sometimes better than contemporary pop:

> Yeah cos my mum was born in the 70s and was like a teenager in the 80s and like she likes songs and she's got the CDs at home when she cleans up and I'm getting used to them and they get catchy and you start like singing along to them. Sometimes the music in the 80s is better than like what it is now.

The correlation between the positive relationships enjoyed by Ruth, Amy, Emma, Charlotte and Bethany with their parents, and their liking for and incorporation of their parents' music taste into their own, reveals in a reasonably straightforward way the low level of disjuncture between the girls' self identities and the social identities they shared with their parents. Rachel's representation of her relationship with her mum, and her attitude towards her mum's music taste, however, was more complex. The first time I met the girls, Rachel told me that her mum was a 'terrible singer', and liked 'terrible music' such as the Jam, Elvis and REM. The next time we met, however, her description of her mum's taste in music was more positive:

> Rachel: My mum has got a very mixed thing cos she likes Eminem and then she likes Elvis, but then she likes REM and OMD and Spandau Ballet and like Squeeze and just all the bands from the 80s, and the 60s, but she likes more from the 80s, she likes all them.
> Helen: And what do you think of all that, do you like any of it?
> Rachel: I like Squeeze.
> Helen: Do you?
> Rachel: I like the song 'Cool for cats', it's boss.
> [...]

111

> Rachel: I like that one. My mum always puts it on while she's cleaning up so I always sing along to it upstairs cos she has it on like a hundred.

As with Bethany, her singing along to the music her mum played demonstrated her acceptance and incorporation of it into her own music taste. However, her continuing description of the domestic soundscape took on a tone of frustration and irritation as, in a reversal of the stereotypical generational roles, she complained about her mum's tendency to play her music loud:

> You're trying to sleep or something in the night and she puts it on to annoy you, or if you go to bed about six o'clock, cos normally I'm tired, and then she puts it on to wake you up and goes 'Why you're going to sleep? You'll get up about 12 o'clock and then you won't do nothing', like 'God alright'.

Rachel seemed to be close to her mum, and mentioned explicitly her mum's preferences and opinions more often that any of the other girls. The fluctuations in her representations of and attitudes towards her mum's music taste suggest a turbulent relationship, perhaps resulting from the sometimes fraught domestic atmosphere she described, but also undoubtedly resulting from differences in the research context, as discussed in the final chapter 'Emotions'.

Fran seemed to have little in common with her parents in terms of music. Her mum enjoyed Merseybeat, the soundtrack of her own youth in 1960s Liverpool, and listened mostly to the music played on the local BBC radio station Radio Merseyside. Fran described this as 'old music' and, in contrast to some of the other girls in this study, disliked it completely. Sometimes Fran's mum objected strongly to the music she listened to, for example the opening track on Eminem's *Marshall Mathers LP* (2000), 'Public Service Announcement 2000'. While Fran was not actually prohibited from listening to the album, the numerous sexual obscenities in the lyrics of this track in particular caused her mum some consternation, and created a degree of tension between them for a while. Ruth also was a fan of Eminem, and my own somewhat *laissez faire* attitude to the obscene lyrics highlighted the differences between my and Ruth's musical relationship and that of Fran and her mum.

In the Catholic High discussion groups, Olivia depicted her relationship with her parents as mostly unsympathetic, with music being a key source of conflict:

Helen: So listening to music on the phone then, is this something you do in places other than in school?
Olivia: Yeah, when I'm in the house my mum's like 'Get it off now.'
Olivia: That 50 Cent song that was on the radio, it was boss and she turned it off.

Olivia: I whistle a tune sometimes but my mum tells me to shut up cos it's annoying.

Helen: So would you ever [rap] in the house or is it always outside?
Olivia: I can't do it in the house otherwise my dad'll start skitting me. He always does it.
Helen: What do your mum and dad think of that then, do they not understand it?
Olivia: They think I'm alright at it, but they always like tease me and that.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, she expressed a mutual dislike of her mum's music taste: 'When she's doing downstairs my mum, she puts all our Irish crap on and then, it's terrible.' Olivia represented herself as being at odds with her parents in terms of her music listening, her music taste, and her music practices, and gave only hints of common ground between them. She admitted her parents thought she was 'alright' at rapping and, despite her avowed dislike of the music, her use of the possessive 'our' in relation to the 'Irish crap' her mum played, while clearly not as enthusiastic about it as Charlotte, suggested a shared sense of Irish identity represented by music.

Through back catalogue reissues and sampling, '"older" music has become contemporary for audiences of all ages' (Goodwin, 1990, 259) and, as Lucy astutely observed, on the *X Factor* 'everyone sings an old song'. For most of the girls in this study, then, popular music released up to fifty years before their birth was a familiar constituent of their everyday soundscapes. While the extent of inter-generational differences in technology use for acquiring and listening to music was no doubt significant, similarities between the music tastes of the girls and their parents were equally striking. The perception of some of them that older music was better in terms of musical skill and authenticity revealed a critical awareness of current pop practices, as well as a desire to align themselves with the music tastes, and sometimes nostalgic viewpoints, of their parents, and perhaps also with me. The extent to which the girls disavowed their parents' music taste, and their opinions about music, could be seen to indicate the degree to which they endeavoured to distinguish themselves from their parents, and establish a separate identity. To an extent, variations in the ways the relationships were represented by the girls demonstrated how attitudes towards the music taste of parents can act as a barometer of these relationships more generally: the more harmonious the collective identity they shared with their parents, the more likely they were to share music taste.

Importantly, however, apart from my own first hand experiences, the data relating to music and parents was collected in situations where friends were present, and so the influence of friends on the descriptions given by the girls of their relationships with their parents, and the roles of music in these, must be taken into account. The second section of the 'Emotions' chapter includes a discussion of this issue. In the relationships between the girls and their parents, however, the correlation of music taste seemed not to be the most important issue; negotiations relating to access to and control of resources, i.e. technologies and spaces, were more significant. The girls' negotiations of self and social identities with their friends and peers were more intense than those with their parents. Within friendships, the role of music is crucial and complex, as the next section explores.

Music and friends

Barnes (2003) identifies two important characteristics of children's friendships with their peers. Firstly, they 'provide an arena for many aspects of their cultural worlds' through shared activities such as play, shopping, and watching television (Barnes, 2003, 49). Secondly, within friendships, children can 'explore dimensions of experience which can have both formative and lasting effects', exploring their identities through experiences with and of others, extending their emotional understanding and developing their creativity. Music is not mentioned by Barnes as a shared activity within the 'cultural worlds' of children; however, of the 1808 14-24-year-old respondents to Bahanovich and Collopy's (2009) survey for UK Music, 90% identified music as their most valued form of entertainment:

> Similar to 2008's findings, music remains the most important entertainment type for this age group. When respondents were asked which type of entertainment they would miss most if stuck on a desert island, music outscored both "the internet" [61%] and "mobile phone" [31%] (Bahanovich and Collopy, 2009, 13).

Alongside play, shopping and watching television, music was a highly significant aspect of the cultural worlds of the girls in my research. Activities involving music were common in all their everyday lives within the arenas of their friendships; as well as listening and dancing to music, shared activities included music evaluation, exchange, creation and performance. Music was also prominent in the second, and closely related, experiential dimension of friendship identified by Barnes (2003, 49), playing a powerful role in the negotiation of their relationships with each other. Music was used not only to forge new friendships and cement

existing ones, but also to distance, exclude, and construct hierarchies within friendship groups.

Several studies have identified gender differences in the ways children's friendship are formed and negotiated. James (1993), for example, observed girls' friendships to be particularly tightly bound and emotionally intense, in comparison with boys' friendships, which tend to be looser and less personal (James, 1993 cited in Barnes, 2003, 73). Nayak and Kehily (2008), in a discussion of childhood as a gendered experience, cite Thorne's (1993) concept of 'borderwork', 'a term used to characterize the ways in which children tend to form single-sex friendship groups that serve to create and strengthen gender boundaries':

> Thorne suggests that children's friendship patterns create a spatial separation between boys and girls that they work to maintain through play and social interactions more generally. Drawing up boundaries, however, also creates opportunities for transgression, crossing the line to disrupt gender-appropriate behaviour or 'border-crossing' as Thorne terms it. While most children adhered to gender-defined boundaries, Thorne did notice that border crossing appeared to be acceptable among girls and boys who had achieved a position of high status within their peer group (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 10).

Although, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, girls' cultures and friendships have received relatively little academic attention, there have been some notable exceptions during the last thirty years, and the following brief overview outlines those most relevant to this study.

McRobbie and Garber's (1991) essay 'Girls and Subcultures' (first published in 1977) criticised the absence of girls' leisure activities in previous studies of youth sub/culture and suggested that within bedroom-based 'teenybopper culture', the exclusive 'extremely tight-knit friendship groups formed by girls' provided a means of 'resistance', which could be compared with the oppositional stances adopted by male subcultures (McRobbie and Garber, 1991, 14). Lees (1993) however, contests the reading of bedroom culture as resistant, suggesting that girls' tendencies to 'stay home listening to records with a close group of friends' is instead 'mere conformity to the expected feminine role which, by and large, is anticipated to centre on the home' (Lees, 1993, 69). In any case, Lees' own study of 15-17-year-old, inner city 'ordinary girls', found that girls' leisure time is not spent predominantly in the home, and so to 'depict girls spending most of their time at home, talking and listening

to records, is incorrect' (*ibid*, 95). By attempting to fit girls' cultures into male dominated theories, Hey (1997) argues, in early academic accounts 'girls' same-sex relationships have been variously overlooked, over-romanticized, overpoliticized and oversimplified' and, as a result, 'empirical girls almost disappear' (Hey, 1997, 6). The centrality of the bedroom to explorations of girls' cultural lives, however, has been developed in studies by Baker (2001a; 2001b; 2004), Bloustein (2003) and Lincoln (2004; 2005); and, as Nayak and Kehily (2008) suggest:

> For young women in the contemporary period the bedroom remains a personalized space that, with access to multimedia, also serves as a global and techno-cultural space (Nayak and Kehily, 2008, 56).

As discussed in the previous section, due to domestic space considerations and parental control over technologies, this is true for several, although not all, of the girls in this study.

Garratt (1990) acknowledges the importance of music in girls' friendships, pointing out that, for her and her friends, the excitement was more about themselves than the objects of their fandom. For Garratt, the experience of young female music-focused camaraderie was completely positive; in her account, the conflict is not within the friendship/fan group, but between the group and wider society, with its patriarchal norms of derision and disrespect for the young female. However, Hey's (1997) ethnographic study of British schoolgirls reveals that, as well as involving mutual understanding, sharing and support, girls' friendships can also provide an arena for strong negative emotions, such as jealousy and hatred. Similarly, Griffiths' (1995) exploration of girls' friendships describes relationships that were 'close and supportive, characterised by trust and loyalty' (Griffiths, 1995, 170), while identifying jealousy and bossiness as two key causes of friendship break up (*ibid*, 82).

Both Griffiths (1995) and Hey (1997) point out the importance of 'sameness' for close female friends. Griffiths cites Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg's (1982) study of gender and schooling in Norway and Denmark, which found that 'what is most important in identifying and reinforcing friendships between adolescent girls is that they look and dress the same', and 'have exactly the same views on everything' (Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg, 1992, 10 cited in Griffiths, 1995, 33). She notes: 'The need to identify themselves as the same as their friends stood out in my own research' (*ibid*). Hey (1997) observes that the importance of

sameness among girls arises because they 'are frequently (and sometimes permanently) placed on the margins of their respective groups through the axis of difference' (Hey, 1997, 4) and therefore have 'a vested interest in reproducing themselves as mirroring their friends' (*ibid*, 5). Bloustein (2003), in her cross-cultural ethnographic study of teenage girls' everyday lives, explores the contradiction of sameness as a feature of friendship. Selfhood is constructed as distinctive through difference from others, yet friendship offers 'selfhood through *sameness*':

> This immediately presents an interesting paradox because both distinctiveness and sameness in friendships are maintained in this vitally important tension in order to be effective: one has to strive for a sense of individuation while simultaneously belonging to a specific group. *To become friends*, means to construct a bond that is separate and discrete *from* oneself and yet includes oneself. Simultaneously, it is to construct a "symbolic boundary" (Cohen, 1986) from others who are not in the exclusive relationship, as a form of cultural "distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984) (Bloustein, 2003, 180).

Although the questionnaire data in my own study revealed few of the subtleties of the friendships between the girls who responded, some details of the patterns of music use in their friendships emerged. Of the forty-nine respondents, twenty-six (53%) said they listened to music at friends' homes, and eleven (22%) cited friends as a source of new music. Sixteen girls said that they swapped music, and ten of these (62%) swapped with friends. Of the eighteen girls who had been to a gig, thirteen (78%) of them had been with friends' and/or friends' parents. To the question, 'What kind of music do your friends like?' fourteen of the forty-nine respondents (29%) answered 'Same as me'. Most interesting were the indications on the physical questionnaires of proximity copying. As I sorted through the returned questionnaires for the first time, it became clear that questionnaires immediately next to each other in the pile had been completed using the same pen (a pink felt tip) and contained very similar answers. I surmised from this that friends sitting next to each other when the questionnaires were filled in shared not only a pen, but exactly the same preferences for artists and genres.

Children's friendships are determined to a large extent by geographical context. Barnes (2003) discusses the importance of school, the street and the wider neighbourhood as locations for the formation of friendships among children, highlighting the significance of propinquity in these relationships (Barnes, 2003, 62). For all the girls in this study, school

was the place where their friendships with each other were formed, although for many of them their friendships extended into their lives outside of school. Some of the girls also had significant friendships with girls in their street or from their neighbourhood. Rachel for example, mentioned going out with friends other than those in the friendship group in school, and Olivia talked about friends from her neighbourhood. Online friendships were also important to several of the girls in my study. Online networking services were used by the girls to communicate with each other from their respective homes, and some of the girls had friendships that were conducted solely online, either with people geographically distant whom they had never met, or people within their immediate location with whom they did not associate physically.

The following two sections explore the roles of music in friendship within a particular friendship or friendship group. The first section draws on data from discussions at the Catholic High school with Rachel, Bethany, Lucy and Olivia. In these discussions, as well as talking about the roles of music in their friendships, the girls' interactions within the discussion group itself revealed various ways in which they used music to negotiate self and social identities in their friendships. In the second section, I consider the complex interweaving of friendship and music on the social networking site MySpace, as it was represented to me by Ruth and Fran in separate discussions which took place in my home and Fran's home in 2006.

'She likes the same music as all of us'- music and friends in school
Soon after the first meeting with all four girls at the Catholic High school, it became clear that the friendship group was in a state of flux. Olivia came to tell me that she was unable to attend one of our group discussion meetings because she had another commitment. Shortly after, the other three girls told me Olivia had decided she no longer wanted to participate in the discussions as she had broken friends with the rest of the group. The split was partly due to a difference of opinion over where to spend break times, as Bethany, Lucy and Rachel explained that they found the school yard unpleasant and dangerous; in Lucy's words: 'It's just not a nice place to be'. Olivia did attend subsequent discussion meetings however, at which she seemed to be part of the friendship group again; and while there was a high level of tension between the girls when all four of them were present, not all of the disagreements involved Olivia directly. It seemed, nonetheless, that Rachel, Bethany and Lucy were closer friends with each other than with Olivia, perhaps because they had attended the same primary

school. Bethany and Lucy's shared passion for singing was also a strong bond between them, and Rachel considered Bethany and Lucy to be her good friends, as she was able to overcome her inhibitions and sing in front of them: 'I just won't sing when I'm in front of people, except people I know really well like my mum or Bethany or Lucy'.

Outside school, the girls socialised with each other to varying degrees. Apart from attending choir rehearsals with Lucy, Bethany spent most of her free time with her family, although she communicated with Lucy using MSN. Among the other girls, meeting outside school occurred seemingly irregularly:

> Helen: So do you three spend much time round each other's houses or not?
> Bethany: Not really.
> Lucy: [to Rachel] I go to like yours but not that often.
> Rachel: We don't really see Bethany of a weekend or when we're off school.

Lucy sometimes went to Olivia's house, but Olivia never went to Lucy's house, as she explained in a meeting at which Lucy was not present:

> Helen: So do you stay over at each other's houses sometimes and watch films and all that?
> Olivia: I've never stayed in hers, she's never stayed in mine. None of my mates that I've got now have stayed in mine.
> Rachel: I've stayed in Lucy's and Lucy's stayed in mine.
> Olivia: Lucy's never stayed in mine. It's dead weird, Lucy comes to my house but I never go to hers.

Lucy and Rachel had both stayed overnight at each other's homes, and they sometimes went to town together; and Rachel also went out with other friends from her neighbourhood:

> I go out but I normally go to town with Lucy or I sometimes go with other mates that live by mine. I usually go out with them to townie sometimes but they don't really stay long cos there's never nothing there, they just go up you know for a bus ride, look around and then come back and it's like ok quite boring.

Olivia too had friends in her neighbourhood, and this had caused some friction between her and Lucy, who felt Olivia was disloyal:

Olivia: I always fall out with everyone, at first I never used to fall out with Lucy and then I started hanging round with these people outside of school and then we started falling out.
[...]
Olivia: ... Lucy had purple hair and they were all laughing at her and then she found out that I was hanging round with them and then got angry with me and then we just started falling out after that.
Helen: So why did she get angry cos you were with them?
Olivia: Cos she said they were skitting her and she thought you don't hang round with people who skit your best mate.

Clearly, the structures of their friendships were complex, as their allegiances and power relationships were constantly undergoing both dramatic and subtle shifts.

Sharing music, in terms of exchanging it, was common as we have seen. However, listening together was also a significant feature of their everyday lives in school. Sometimes music was shared by two girls each using one side of a set of headphones, and sometimes the music was played aloud. Lucy and Rachel explained how it was decided whose music was played aloud:

Lucy: The more popular you are like that's who plays the music...Like say you're in a group and Rachel was the main one then she'd play her music.
Rachel: I'd play the music cos I'll have all the latest songs.
Lucy: Cos everyone looks up to Rachel cos in a little group there's always one person everyone looks up to and like if that was Rachel then she'd play the music but if she was off then it would be me and then Bethany or something like that...But that's just like for instance.
Helen: So in a little gang of friends, the one who seems to be the most popular, does that change a lot or is it always the same?
Lucy: I'd say that cos people just mingle in with other people and get new mates and that's how it can always change, but like for the likes of us one day Rachel might play her music or I might or Bethany might or we just might just listen to it on our earphones and that's just like our music.

In their small group, then, which on this particular day did not include Olivia, the criteria determining which girl won the privilege to play her music aloud included: popularity, respect and the currency of her songs. Interestingly, Rachel's main claim to the right to play her music was the fact that she had the latest songs, rather than her greater popularity.

As Lucy explained, as well as the songs that everyone liked and listened to, the girls sometimes liked to listen to music that was different from the norm, and in this case they used

earphones. Sometimes this music was 'old' music and although, as Lucy, Rachel and Bethany agreed, this was sometimes better than current music, their peers criticised them for listening to it:

Rachel: Cos I like, cos when songs come out, you like them and you want to just leave them cos you like it so much like, you'd have them on your phone but you'd only play music that people like, other people like outsi... out loud, otherwise people go 'Why are you listening to that, that's old?' So that's why you listen to it on your earphones.
[...]
Helen: So when you say old music, how old does it have to be to be?
Rachel: I listen to 80s music.
Bethany: Yeah cos my mum was born in the 70s and was like a teenager in the 80s and like she likes songs and she's got the CDs at home when she cleans up and I'm getting used to them and they get catchy and you start like singing along to them. Sometimes the music in the 80s is better than like what it is now.
Helen: Do you think?
Bethany: Yeah.
Lucy: Yeah I think so personally like.
Helen: So what sort of music from the 80s do you like better?
Bethany: I like Abba.
Lucy: Yeah, Abba.
Rachel: I don't really like them.
Lucy: And Queen, and like Blondie and stuff like that and Dolly Parton.
Bethany: Yeah I love Dolly Parton.
Lucy: I like Dolly Parton. It's just like, they're just better you know what I mean cos they're like jazzy.
Bethany: Yeah.
Lucy: It's not always like, cos the music you hear now it's just basically all for, it's all the same but with different words cos sometimes you get, like you can get a band and they're not that good but people now are bringing the same songs out as the olden days.
Rachel: I like a song from the 80s and like Leona Lewis sings a song of it now, Roberta Flack. You know like Leona Lewis's 'The first time ever I saw your face'? Well Roberta Flack used to sing that originally and it was boss.
Bethany: And 'Somewhere over the rainbow'.
Helen: Does Leona Lewis sing that song as well?
Bethany: Yeah.
Lucy: Like, take the X Factor for instance, like you go on the X Factor and everyone sings an old song.
Bethany: They don't sing any like new songs from now, just old songs like...
Lucy/Bethany: Whitney Houston.
Lucy: I love her.
Bethany: Yeah.
Lucy: She's amazing.
Helen: So that's the kind of stuff that you wouldn't want anyone to know, you wouldn't play it at break or anything?

Lucy: Not so much Whitney Houston like but as Bethany said Abba or like Rachel said...
Rachel: Yeah cos they all go 'Why eurgh that's horrible, why don't you listen to normal songs?' and I'm like 'cos I don't want to really' like but they just make fun of you cos you're listening to something different.
Helen: So who is that? Who is it that makes fun of you mainly?
Rachel: Just all other people.
Bethany: Loads of people.

Here, potential conflicts between self and social identities are resolved by the use of earphones for private listening of music considered to be unacceptably 'different' by the majority. While the three girls were united in their experience of 'other people' deriding their taste for older music, for Lucy, the need to sometimes use earphones was the result of her liking for the controversial genre of goth. As discussed earlier, Lucy initially talked openly about her taste for goth music, however it soon gave rise to some disagreements. The first of these involved Bethany, who contested the duration, and implicitly the seriousness, of Lucy's goth phase:

Lucy: I did go through a phase of that like but you know...
Helen: Did you? When was that?
Bethany: About a couple of weeks ago.
Lucy: It wasn't a couple of weeks ago, I was like that for about six months and everyone used to skit me and I used to wear like Vans and all that.
Bethany: It weren't six months it was about two months, three months.
Lucy: It was longer than that.
Bethany: It weren't that long.

The second disagreement, discussed in the previous chapter, was more bitter and prolonged, and occurred almost at the very start of the following week's meeting, at which all four girls were present. I include the exchange here again, for clarity:

Helen: So Rachel you do think [the music you like is] important for your kind of sense of who you are?
Rachel: Yeah cos if Lucy, cos Lucy likes rock if I turned round...
Lucy: *I don't.* Why put the, why say me?
Rachel: Cos they like the same music as me.
Bethany: She likes the same music as all of us.
Rachel: But you like bands.
Lucy: No I don't.
Rachel: She likes bands.
Lucy: No I don't.
Olivia: I like bands, don't skit.
Bethany: She likes the same as us.

Rachel: She's got it on her phone...you played it to us last week.
Helen: So I guess as a group of friends you all like music that's the same, but I guess some of you will like music that's different from perhaps what the others like?
Bethany: If she liked rock music I wouldn't do singing with her would I?
Lucy: Exactly.
Bethany: Cos I don't like rock.
Rachel: But you've got it on your phone.
Lucy: I haven't.
Olivia: So now you're skitting me?
Helen: So if one of you likes music that the others don't like for example rock...
Lucy: You're trying to say I like something that I don't to start an argument.
Helen: ...that seems to be a problem. Is that a problem really? Say one of you did like rock and the rest of you don't...
Lucy: It's not a problem but you don't have to go round telling everyone, cos that could be something private to me.
Rachel: You were playing that yesterday, you were playing that last week though.
Helen: So is that something you feel would be a problem if people knew about it?
Lucy: Yeah.
Helen: And why is that?
Lucy: Cos I'll only start getting skitted again.
Helen: Ok so in this school is that?
Lucy: Yeah.

Events occurring in the week between the two meetings, about which I had no knowledge, may have created the tension here; however, Olivia's presence may also have been a factor as, at the time of our meetings, Olivia's status as a friendship group insider was uncertain. Olivia made two attempts to involve herself in the disagreement, but the contention clearly did not concern her. Both Rachel and Bethany seemed to be interested only in addressing the issue of Lucy's taste for rock, and each had a different reason for doing so. For Rachel, factual accuracy was essential, and her persistent challenges demonstrated her willingness to risk conflict in order to establish the truth. Bethany, on the other hand, was more concerned with carrying out the necessary 'borderwork' (Thorne, 1993) to restore harmony in her friendship with Lucy and re-establish the uniformity of their musical identities. Developing her stance of the previous week, in which she had played down the duration of Lucy's goth phase, she insisted on the sameness of Lucy's music taste, and presented their shared activity of (feminine) singing as proof of the impossibility of Lucy liking (masculine) rock. Lucy finally admitted what everyone already knew, and explained the need to keep it private to avoid ridicule. Despite their shared liking for rock, at no point in any of our discussions did Olivia and Lucy align. Bethany, Rachel and Lucy seemed to be simply critical of Olivia's music, and Olivia apparently took this lightly. Thorne (1993) suggests that 'border crossing' is acceptable for children who have achieved a high status within the group. However,

123

Olivia's apparent transcendence of the friendship borders seemed to be for the opposite reason: the friendship bonds between Olivia and the other three girls were simply not strong enough to warrant any impassioned argument about music. The degree of anger evoked by conflicting musical identities clearly depends on the intensity of and investment in the friendship, and the delicate paradoxical tension between 'distinctiveness and sameness' within friendships (Bloustein, 2003, 180).

'You can't just add them - you don't know them'- music and friends on MySpace

When I spoke with Fran about MySpace in 2006, she told me, 'they all talk about MySpace in school; the whole bus is just talking about MySpace'. MySpace, it seemed, was by far the most successful and popular online forum for young teenage girls at that time; in April 2006, the site had 65 million registered users, 2.3 million concurrent users, and 260,000 users added per day on average (Johnson, 2006). It has been compared to a 'scrapbook' (Lilley, 2006), and described as 'a conspicuous display of personal preferences for today's teenagers' (Johnson, 2006), similar to the use of personalised ringtones among teenagers in 2006.

The MySpace profile was constructed to display self (ideal social) identity. It typically consisted of a photograph, a friends list, a comments list and an 'About Me' section. This was made up of various lists including general interests and cultural capital, such as favourite music, films, TV programmes and books. A 'profile song' was uploaded to play when the page was opened. The MySpace self-portrait was usually taken by the user with a digital camera and uploaded onto the site. The teenage girl MySpace pose was somewhat standardised and often provocative, typically showing her peering seductively from behind a fringe, or leaning forward to reveal a cleavage. I was shown profiles of several of Ruth's schoolmates containing pictures of them lying or on all fours, clad only in underwear, on their beds. As well as self-portraits, photos of friends also featured heavily on MySpace. In Ruth's 'About Me' section, instead of personal information she pasted the lyrics of her current favourite song, which was also her 'profile song'. A line from the lyrics also appeared below her photograph and username, as an extra descriptive 'title'. Fran too had a profile song and, as we have seen, a lyric extract that encapsulated her current self identity: 'that song lyric at the top – that's just me.' Written exchanges between friends, or 'Comments', were displayed on the profile page. They were highly sought after, as they represented an acknowledgement and recognition of the person. Comments about photographs were particularly valuable. Ruth claimed that most comments were just requests

124

for a comment, and she reported receiving many comments, mostly from girls she knew offline, merely asking for a reciprocal comment about a photo.

Central to the MySpace profile was the 'Friends list', where social capital was displayed. Fran had over two hundred friends, although she did not talk to all of them: 'I talk to some of them but some of them really you just don't talk to them if you don't really know them you just don't.' Friends were added to the list by invitation, usually through other friends, or friends of friends, or, as Fran said: 'sometimes they'll just add you, like random people just find your profile off other people's profiles and add you.' Around the time of my discussions with Fran and Ruth about MySpace, the 'Top 8' friends list had been introduced, allowing friends to be rearranged in rank order of preference at any time. Music and friends were categorized similarly on MySpace, demonstrating a blurring of the boundaries between social and cultural capital. Bands and musicians sought fans by adding users to their friends list, and vice versa, as Fran explained:

> Helen: So you can add friends and some of the friends are the bands that you like?
> Fran: So if you had no friends in real life you could go round adding loads of bands instead which would be quite sad.
> Helen: I see so when you add a band...
> Fran: They just add you back and they can comment you and you can comment them...so you can like interact with a band and talk to them...you can go online and talk to a band and if they reply...
> Helen: And do you do that with some of these?
> Fran: Not really the bigger bands but if local bands add me I'd probably comment them saying 'hi' and thanks for the add, cos that's what you do if someone adds you, you thank them.
> Helen: So has that happened with any of these bands then?
> Fran: I'm trying to think... I did comment some band the other day they were like from Manchester or somewhere...but there are so many bands that add you, that are trying to get popularity.
> Helen: So how do... I know bands like Garbage are well-known but the ones that aren't – how do you find out...?
> Fran: How do you know who they are?
> Helen: How do you end up adding them?
> Fran: Sometimes they add you – they'll just go round adding everyone so that people listen to their music...on their profile they'll have songs uploaded that you can listen to.

Fran's explanation of adding bands revealed that, although being added by a band was flattering, and interaction with a band even more so, bands were no replacement for real friends.

Both Ruth and Fran's MySpace profiles included a link to the website Last.fm.[13] While they used MySpace to display photos, and list their favourite music, films, and so on, the music they listened to was monitored by Last.fm through a plug-in to their PCs' music players, and displayed as weekly charts on their Last.fm home pages. Both girls considered Last.fm, rather than MySpace, the predominant site for finding new music. This was achieved through the 'neighbours' list, whereby the website searched among its users to find those whose musical tastes matched yours, and listed them in order of highest percentage match first. New music could thus be discovered, recommended in effect by a musical soul mate. Each user had a photo and a profile, so it was possible to see where users were from, their age and sex. Fran discovered Last.fm through a review in *The Guardian* newspaper, and told Ruth and several other friends about it. Last.fm was an all-hearing ear that monitored and listed everything played. Fran observed that some people left Last.fm on even when they are out, or sometimes even all night, so the charts showed that they listened to more music than they actually did. The reverse of the earphone, the rationale behind Last.fm is to make private listening public. Sometimes, this caused embarrassment, as Ruth recounted:

> The only time I remember there being some kind of drama was when Samira took the piss out of me for listening to some songs by some female-fronted lame-rock kind of band that I sort of got into for a bit and then later on we saw on her last.fm that she'd been listening to the songs loads of times herself. When we asked her about it she just completely denied it and got really pissed off at us. It was quite funny really.

Wise girls who wanted to listen to music that was not necessarily for public consumption, Fran explained to me, listened using a music player without a Last.fm plug-in. The boundaries between private and public online practices are often confusing, and have to be negotiated with caution. Social identities require careful construction and, in the privacy of the bedroom, inadvertent displays of less than ideal self identities are an acknowledged hazard of online social activity.

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[13] Last.fm is a UK-based Internet radio and music community website, founded in 2002. It claims over 30 million active users based in more than 200 countries. In 2007, CBS Interactive acquired Last.fm for £140m.

Bennett (2004) and Valentine and Holloway (2002), however, have observed the continuities between 'online and offline worlds'. Valentine and Holloway demonstrated through empirical research with 11-16 year olds from three English schools that: 'Children's on-line and off-line worlds are not oppositional or unconnected but rather are mutually constructed' (Valentine and Holloway, 2002, 316). This is evident in the friendships conducted by Ruth and Fran on MySpace as, despite the global reach of the network, the most important of which were with local friends and schoolmates. As Fran explained, MySpace was used to foster and consolidate real life relationships:

> You can contact people...start talking to new people, or if you see people around like in town you can add them and then you can get to know them online first and then when you see them in town it's less awkward to make new friends really.

Conversely Ruth, often unable to communicate with girls in school because of timetable constraints or the obstacles presented by cliques, conducted conversations with schoolmates on MySpace that were rarely replicated in real life. Although both girls had online friends who lived distantly and who they had never met, it seemed the local friendships were the most significant, and MySpace was used to develop and negotiate relationships that also existed offline.

Both Ruth and Fran decided to 'hide' their friends and comments. This was not a particularly easy thing to do, as it involved getting HTML code from a MySpace layout tutorial website and pasting it into the About Me section. Once the friends list was hidden, it was visible only to its owner. It was apparently not difficult, however, to view a hidden friends list by using a person's 'friend ID number', although the Top 8 could not be seen this way. Ruth had customized the layout of her About Me page and liked to keep tight control over its appearance. She felt hiding her friends list made her About Me page 'look neater' and more about her, rather than about other people. More significantly perhaps, Ruth found the Top 8 friends list troubling, as ranking someone in your Top 8 who did not return the compliment could be blow to the self-esteem. Fran, however, had a different reason for hiding her friends - to prevent other people from stealing them:

> Helen: So tell me about stealing friends then.
> Fran: My profile, it used to be like you could see my friends and my comments until one day I decided I'd had enough and I decided to hide them. I got like a code so on

my profile you can't see my friends.

Helen: Ok, so why do people steal friends?

Fran: To look more popular. It's like a popularity contest and people sometimes think if I had more friends more people'll think I'm nice.

Helen: Because it says here how many friends you've got.

Fran: I've got quite a lot but I've had it for over a year.

Helen: And the friends you've got, do you talk to all of them?

Fran: I talk to some of them but some of them really you just don't talk to them if you don't really know them you just don't.

Helen: So how do you end up adding friends? I suppose some of them will be people you know from school?

Fran: Yeah, or see around town, or sometimes they'll just add you, like random people just find your profile off other people's profiles and add them.

Helen: Why does the idea of people stealing friends bother you?

Fran: I don't know. I'm like weird like that, about music as well. If someone starts to get into a band I like it's like 'grrr I don't like you anymore'. But like with the whole thing it's like they're my friend – you can't just add them. You don't know them.

Helen: So is it quite a common thing to do, to hide friends?

Fran: I think a few people have started because I think it's a good idea. Like a few people started it and then I thought why don't I do that, then a few people have copied me ...

Helen: So do you think there are any disadvantages to hiding your friends?

Fran: The only disadvantage I can think of is people thinking you haven't got any friends and you're just hiding them because you're ashamed of having a lack of friends – but I don't think that's really the case.

Friends were the most valuable commodity on MySpace and, although the practice of adding unknown people as friends was widespread, it was intensely annoying for the 'original owner' of that friend. It seemed to be something many people did, but no-one liked to have done to them. As Hey (2002) observes, 'girls' tangible desires for power through friendship have to be reconciled with its ethical rules' (Hey, 2002, 86). The popularity contest among girls on MySpace, entered into with a strong competitive spirit by some, was governed by ethical rules which prohibited such immoral acts as stealing. To take the decision to hide the friends list, given its vital role as the means to display the trophies of popularity, is testimony to the gravity with which the stealing of friends was viewed. The fact that the number of friends was still displayed, however, ensured that the quantity, if not the quality, of the friends remained public. The comparison Fran made between stealing friends and music reveals how, on MySpace, both forms of social and cultural capital, are sought after and protected for similar reasons – the importance of authenticity of commitment to a band or a

friend was paramount, and any perceived fake interest was deemed intolerable, pathetic, and yet also threatening.

Fran's irritation with those who got into a band she liked arose from the perceived threat it posed to her self identity. Laying claim to the first or original commitment to a band demonstrates the protectionist attitude to music held by many music fans, demonstrating the use of music as a form of cultural capital to signify distinction. The concept of the 'fake fan' was often wielded by Ruth, Fran and their friends to dismiss even close friends who claimed a late affiliation to a band. Frith (1996) defines music as simultaneously individualizing and collective. It is an individualizing experience as we 'absorb songs into our own lives and rhythm into our own bodies', while at the same time, music 'stands for, symbolizes *and* offers the immediate experience of collective identity' (*ibid*, 110). Clearly, songs were used to represent the current self on MySpace, as shown by Ruth's use of lyrics in her About Me section, and the inclusion of a profile song and lyric extract on profile pages. Both girls revealed a reluctance to be associated with their immediate peers, to enter into the 'experience of collective identity', showing the subtle interplay between the strength of feeling for the music, the current status of the friendship, and the appropriating friend's attitude to the music. The worst thing, it seemed, was for someone to get into a band that you had discovered, and give you no acknowledgement of the fact. If jealousy or a power imbalance already existed in the relationship, it would be exacerbated by the stealing of music. Clearly, friendships are based on mutual interests, and Ruth and Fran had similar musical taste to a great degree. They frequently introduced each other to new music, and attended several gigs together, and the stealing of music did not seem to be a particular issue between them, however Ruth reflected later:

> On last.fm I did get kind of annoyed when Fran had ALL the same top artists as me and stuff, I felt like she needed to get her own music sometimes I think, but it never came up between us.

Valentine and Holloway (2002) argue that the ways 'children and technology come together in practice' reveal that the Internet does not have any 'inherent properties or universal impacts', but rather is a tool used differently by different children (Valentine and Holloway, 2002, 316). However, the negotiation of friendships and acquisition and consumption of music using MySpace and Last.fm seem to lack the subtleties of offline behaviour; despite

attempts at subterfuge, through the blunt, mechanical processes of adding, hiding, searching and displaying, subtlety is stripped away and practices are laid bare. Using a machine to manage the complexities of negotiating social/cultural capital rules out much of the fudging that oils the wheels of offline relationships. My discussions with Ruth and Fran about MySpace show the crucial importance of friends and music, and the different ways the girls negotiated and managed the acquisition and maintenance of these forms of capital, the significance of which seems particularly vivid during young teenagerhood. The girls dealt with the tension between self and social identities in ways that reflect the continuities between their offline and online worlds and their respective personal and social situations. While some users may be 'bored of the homogeny of profiles – of a million fringes and foibles' (Wiseman, 2005), scratch the surface of MySpace and the struggles of teenage girlhood are exposed, as Hey puts it, in all their 'violence and passion' (Hey, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how music is used in the girls' everyday close relationships with parents and friends. It has explored further the link between music and identities, focusing more closely on the role of music in negotiations of conflict between self and social identities in the girls' most significant micro-level relationships in everyday life: those with parents and with friends. In a liminal phase, the girls in this study were largely dependent upon their parents for the technologies and resources they needed to consume music. Their relationships seemed to be characterised by frequent negotiations of their increasing independence, enacted through their self and social musical identities. Relationships with friends, and their use of new technologies, afforded them a significant degree of autonomy in their ability to acquire, share and listen to music. Within the shared environments of the family car and home, the girls negotiated occupation of the sonic territory (Frith, 2004) in a variety of ways, which reflected and reinforced the degree of harmony or conflict between their self identities and the social identities of their families. In terms of music taste, while the majority of their music listening focused on contemporary pop styles, some of them also enjoyed the older music listened to by their parents, and maintained that this music was better than contemporary pop. Within their relationships with parents, though, sameness and difference in music taste was not a source of intense feeling, and their most important negotiations with parents tended to be related to control of domestic soundscapes.

Within their friendships, however, issues of identity were more passionately felt, and sameness and difference were crucial. For some of the friends in this study, it seemed important to like the same music, and to distinguish the friendship group from others by liking different music to them. For others, difference was something they strived for within their friendship groups. Sometimes they were conscious of the need to conceal music listening of certain styles from their peers, both online and offline, when this would cause an unwelcome disjuncture between their self and social identities. For some of them, this was the older music they shared with their parents; for others, for example, Lucy, this was rock, a genre unpopular within her social circle. Online practices on social networking sites such as MySpace, while clearly concerned with establishing relationships and seeking out music, involved a tendency to conflate friends and music, protecting both as form of cultural capital as a means of distinction. Through their uses of music in their relationships, each girl endeavoured to manage the balance between individual self identities and shared social identities, whether in the family car, at home, in school, or online.

Alongside the everyday practices of acquiring, sharing, evaluating, displaying and listening to music, the girls practised a range of musical creativities that were also highly significant in their negotiations of self and social identities in their relationships with friends and parents. These creativities are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 – CREATIVITIES

Introduction

On the front page of my local free newspaper, an advertisement for Stagecoach Liverpool, a national and international 'theatre arts school' franchise, offered parents: 'Three ways to bring out the creativity in your child - an hour to act, an hour to dance, an hour to sing'. These activities were recommended as 'fun, challenging' ways in which young people, aged 4-16, could be helped to 'grow as people' (Stagecoach, 2010). The aims of Stagecoach clearly arose from a belief that developing skills in the performing arts is a way of fostering and releasing an inner creativity that everyone possesses. The concept of creativity, however, is complex, controversial and political. A recent scholarly report produced for Creative Partnerships[14] outlined nine different ways in which the notion of creativity is constructed discursively, each based on particular theoretical or ideological beliefs (Banaji and Burn, 2006; Banaji, 2009). Other scholarly research offers ideas about which musical activities involve creativity, ranging from composition (e.g. Green, 1997, 5) to consumption (e.g. Willis, 1990, 60). A range of musical creativities emerged from my research data as significant in the everyday lives of the girls in this study, and this chapter explores the everyday musical creativities of the girls, to understand how their sense of their own and each other's identities as creative individuals were negotiated within their relationships.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the debates relating to the concept of creativity, both in general and in relation to music. This overview informs my own understanding of the term that, following Negus and Pickering (2004), encompasses everyday expressive, communicative and recognised musical creativities. I use this definition to discuss the musical creativities in the everyday lives of the girls that, as with the activities offered by Stagecoach, were performance focused: singing and other vocal practices, musical instrument playing, and dancing. Each of these types of musical creative performance occupies a position on the spectrum of gender normativity, and the girls' negotiations of femininities through their creative practices were significant in their identities and relationships.

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[14] Creative Partnerships aims to influence policy and practice in both the education and cultural sectors. It was established by Arts Council England, with funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in response to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) report by Ken Robinson: *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*. It spearheads a raft of initiatives designed to develop creativity and encompasses social, personal and economic domains.

Creativities

Creativity, as Robinson and Willett (2009) point out, is a problematic concept:

> By examining philosophical and historical traditions, it is possible to see how 'creativity' is used in oppositional and political ways. For example, some traditions define creativity as unique, something special that only certain people possess; other traditions discuss creativity as something that can be fostered and developed; whilst still others use a definition of creativity which is far more inclusive and democratic, referring to a quality that exists in all people and can be seen in everyday interactions (Robinson and Willett, 2009, 221).

The belief that creativity is a unique and exclusive quality fits with the notion of 'creative genius', identified by Banaji and Burn (2006) as a:

> post-romantic rhetoric that dismisses modernity and popular culture as vulgar, and argues for creativity as a special quality of a few individuals, either highly educated and disciplined, or inspired in some way, or both (Banaji and Burn, 2006, 55).

Traditions which view creativity as a quality that can be fostered and developed focus on its potential as a tool for 'personal empowerment and ultimately for social regeneration' – in other words, for 'social good' (*ibid*, 56). Similarly, in the development of a competitive national workforce, creativity is seen as an 'economic imperative', not only in the fostering of 'problem solving skills of workers and their managers', but also in 'the contribution of the 'creative industries'' (*ibid*). Creativity as 'a quality that exists in all people and can be seen in everyday interactions' (Robinson and Willett, 2009, 221) is categorised into two types by Banaji and Burn (2006). 'Democratic and political creativity' is focused on 'everyday cultural and symbolic practices', specifically the creative processes involved in making meaning 'from and with popular cultural products' (*ibid*, 55). 'Ubiquitous creativity' is less concerned with the consumption and production of cultural products, but rather 'involves a skill in having the flexibility to respond to problems and changes in the modern world and one's personal life' (*ibid*, 56).

Willis' (1990) work on 'symbolic creativity' in the everyday lives of young people is a persuasive exposition of the notion of creativity as a democratic and political resource. Focusing on 'ordinary culture' rather than the specialised, institutionalised and exclusive practices and objects that constitute 'art', Willis explores:

...the extraordinary symbolic creativity of the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanize, decorate, and invest with meanings their common and immediate life spaces and social practices – personal styles and choices of clothes; selective and active use of music, TV, magazines; decoration of bedrooms; the rituals of romance and subcultural styles; the style, banter and drama of friendship groups; music-making and dance (*ibid*, 2).

His exploration is both 'explicitly anti-elitist' (Banaji and Burn, 2006, 55) and celebratory:

Nor are these pursuits and activities trivial or inconsequential [...] they can be crucial to the creation and sustenance of individual and group identities, even to cultural survival of identity itself. There is work, even desperate work, in their play (Willis, 1990, 2).

Symbolic creativity is a necessary part of everyday human activity and, alongside productive work, is 'an integral part of *necessary work*':

Necessary symbolic work is necessary simply because humans are communicating as well as producing beings. [..] Whilst all may not be productive, all are communicative. *All*. This is our species distinction (*ibid*, 10).

Necessary symbolic work consists of four basic elements: language, which 'allows us to see ourselves as others'; the active body, which is a 'signing, symbolizing, feeling' resource'; drama, as 'communication is achieved through roles, rituals and performances that we produce with others'. Language, the active body and drama are the raw materials and tools of the fourth and most important element: symbolic creativity (*ibid*, 11).

Symbolic creativity may be individual and/or collective, and is 'roughly equivalent to what an all-embracing and inclusive notion of the living arts might include' (*ibid*). It involves 'the production of *new* (however small the shift) meanings intrinsically attached to feeling, to energy, to excitement and psychic movement' and is integral to 'human be-ing-ness', which 'means to be creative in the sense of remaking the world for ourselves as we make and find our own place and identity' (*ibid*). The products of symbolic work and symbolic creativity are threefold. Firstly, and most importantly, they 'produce and reproduce individual identities – who and what 'I am' and could become (*ibid*, 11). They are also 'intersubjective', because: 'It is through knowing 'the other', including recognizing the self as an other for some others, that the self or selves can be known at all' (*ibid*, 12). Second, they engender an understanding of the self as part of a greater whole, 'related in time, place, things', and lead to an understanding of structures of collectivities and differences, as well as

the 'materiality of context' (*ibid*). Third, they develop and affirm our 'active senses of our own vital capacities, the powers of self and how they might be applied to the cultural world [...] It is the expectation of being able to apply power to the world to change it – however minutely' (*ibid*).

For Willis, symbolic creativity is evident in all kinds of music practices and experiences, including music consumption: 'Most musical activity [...] begins as and from consumption, from the process of listening to music. But consumption itself is creative' *(ibid, 60)*. Symbolic creativity is present in the 'complex and careful exercises of choice from the point of initial listening to seeking out, handling and scrutinizing records' (*ibid*, 61), and the undertaking of 'archaeologies of popular music history, carefully excavating the originals and tracing the genealogies of particular styles' (*ibid*). Among his research participants, home taping was 'an important material dimension of symbolic work and creativity', enabling them 'to make their own personal soundtracks', and compilations to share with others (*ibid*, 62-63). Resonant of current attitudes to music downloading, for these young people, 'the economic and cultural logic of taping was plain and simple, and its illegality largely irrelevant' (*ibid*, 63).

Interpreting song lyrics is another way in which music consumers are symbolically creative:

> Some young people acquire an intimate and considerable knowledge of the semantic
> complexities and nuances of song lyrics, a knowledge gleaned from close listening,
> perhaps in the privacy of a bedroom, and from the scrutiny of lyrics printed on album
> covers (*ibid*, 69).

Song narratives are used by young people 'to make sense of their everyday conditions of existence, and particularly the experience of growing up' (*ibid*). Considering the relationships between children's consumption and creative practices, Kehily (2003) similarly argues that:

> children exercise agency in their interactions with cultural resources and this gives
> rise to forms of creativity that shape and structure children's lives and experiences
> (Kehily, 2003, 272).

Although previously defined as having 'negative associations with destruction and waste', consumption is now used in relation to cultural, as well as material, goods: we consume messages as well as physical objects, and so 'as consumers of messages, we also create and

produce *meanings* by interpreting them in ways that make sense to us as individuals' (*ibid*). Kehily, then, sees consumption as 'part of a process involving agency and activity' (*ibid*), and is strongly linked with identity:

> The consumption of cultural products is an active process through which children make sense of the world and define themselves and their place within it (*ibid*, 275).

In relation to music, children and young people 'may be involved in many different aspects of musical activity, as producers of music and as consumers, regulators and meaning makers' (*ibid*, 291). Although, Kehily argues, 'Being a fan is usually regarded as less important, less significant and secondary to participating in the cultural form at first hand', fandom 'gives individuals a cultural reference point and a feeling of affiliation with others that produces a collective identity' (*ibid*, 292). Frith (1996) too considers consumption of music to be a creative act, seeing 'listening as a way of performing' (Frith, 1996, 110). Green (1997), in contrast, offers a somewhat narrow definition of musical creativity, distinguishing between 'performing (whether playing or singing, even at a basic level), creating (whether composing or improvising) and listening (to ourselves and/or to others)' (Green, 1997, 5).

Clearly, the use of music as a 'technology of self' is a creative practice. Ruth's White Horses webpage, Fran's 'that's just me' song lyric on MySpace, Amy's adoption of a goth style: in the everyday lives of the girls in this study, the ways in which they chose, acquired, listened to, understood, shared, owned and expressed their tastes in music were creative in the sense that their uses of music involved choices, practices and actions that contributed to the ongoing construction, maintenance and negotiation of their self and social identities. This kind of symbolic creativity is not the primary focus of this chapter, however, and yet Green's (1997) definition of musical creativity as 'composing or improvising', is too limiting for my purposes. From my observations of and discussions with the girls in my research, musical composition and improvisation, although not entirely absent, occurred infrequently in their everyday lives, and yet musical creativities were important to all of them.

Negus and Pickering's (2004) understanding of creativity, as 'a process which brings experience into meaning and significance, and helps it attain communicative value' (Negus and Pickering, 2004, vii) addresses this problematic dichotomy. While they consider art to be 'continuous with everyday living' rather than 'separate from it as a special and defined object', they do not argue that creativity is ubiquitous. There are 'intrinsic connections

between creative practice and everyday life', but they should not be simply 'collapsed' together (*ibid*, 44-45). Creativity is both 'ordinary and exceptional' (*ibid*, vii), in that it makes the experiences of everyday life meaningful. Expression and communication are central to this:

> our experience of the world is shaped and given significance by the act of creation, and [...] our understanding of the world is realised through the process of communication. People do not – as artists, writers, musicians – have some pre-formed condition which they then seek to express in art form and communicate to others. The contours and characteristics of experiences are given form, meaning and value through the processes of expression and communication (*ibid*, 22).

Experience is 'realised' through expression. Artworks and cultural products do not straightforwardly represent and communicate pre-existing 'feelings, ideas, or values'; rather, they 'only exist as realised in their expressive medium' (*ibid*, 24-25). Creative expression not only forms experience, but transforms it, 'making it into something whose meaning changes our understanding of it' (*ibid*, 25):

> Without its representation in words or sounds an experience often does not signify for us at all, for a feeling or an idea associated with it is made manifest through the combination of materials that characterise any particular cultural representation (*ibid*).

As well as being formed through the means of creative expression, in order to complete the creative process, experience must also be communicated to others in meaningful and resonant ways that are *recognised*.

Creativity, then, is a social process that, to be fully realised, must be 'achieved within some social encounter':

> ... we cannot confine creativity to the artist or cultural producer alone. Creativity entails a communicative experience which is cross-relational. It is an intersubjective and interactive dialogue bringing its participants together in the activity of interpretation, exchange and understanding (*ibid*, 23).

The creative expression and communication of experience is integral to identity formation, as the 'continually developing sense of self is always informed by the ways in which we have, over time, given expressive form to experience' (*ibid*, 27), and shaped by the contextual constraints of time and place (*ibid*, 28). At the same time, a creative identity, like any other, requires the recognition of others for its validation, as we have seen:

We decide who we are on the basis of how other people respond to us. Whether or not I define myself as a musician, for example, depends largely on how other people respond to my attempts at making music (Branaman, 2001b, 170).

This chapter, then, explores the everyday expressive and communicative performed musical creativities of the girls, and the ways they negotiated recognition of these, demonstrating the interrelatedness of creativities, identities and relationships. First, I discuss their singing and other vocal practices, followed by their experiences of musical instrument playing, and finally dancing.

Singing

Singing, as Craig (1990) observes, is something everyone does as part of daily life:

> ...everybody sings – those who can and do it, and those who cannot and do it anyway. Some people sing for money and some sing for themselves in closets, bathrooms, and in their cars as they drive. The thing is: Everybody sings (Craig, 1990, viii-ix).

In our everyday lives at home, I was aware of Ruth's singing along to the songs on her online playlists, and the sound of her singing unaccompanied as she went about her daily routines. Sometimes this singing seemed to signal that she was happy, or at least relaxed, and other times distracted. Hassan (2010) argues that singing 'to your self' in domestic environments can be a resource for easing the boredom of domestic routines and for 'coping with everyday life' (Hassan, 2010, 9); in company, singing can be used to articulate self-identity and mood to others, and to influence social situations (*ibid*, 6). For some of the girls in my research, singing was something they did all the time, sometimes without realising it:

> Lucy: Everywhere I am I just sing.
> Bethany: I walk to the shops singing
> Lucy: I sing in the shower and everything, I sing on the bus. I sing in class, I just sing don't I? I sang in class once and everyone looked and I just went oh no, I was on the bus as well and this song come on 'The greatest love' come on and I just can't help but sing it, and I was just singing and everyone turned round and looked at me, everyone started laughing and I went 'Oh no'.

Lucy and Bethany were serious about singing, and as well as their everyday informal singing, engaged with it in a formal and organised way. Rachel, on the other hand, did not consider herself a serious singer, and yet she also emphasised the importance of singing in her

everyday life. When I asked her what she usually did during her time spent at home, she answered immediately: 'Singing'.

Of all forms of musical engagement, singing is the most strongly associated with femininity and the most widely practised by females. This is because, Green (1997) argues, it affirms patriarchal definitions of femininity in four ways. Firstly, singing involves display of the body:

> The voice is the one musical instrument whose sound-production mechanisms have no intrinsic links with anything outside the body [...] The body is the instrument. The singing woman is, literally and metaphorically, in tune with her body (Green, 1997, 28).

However, rather than complete display of the body for its own sake, singing is *almost* complete absorption in display. Femininity is thus affirmed, as female singers are placed in a 'typically contrary position, safely embodied yet dangerously alluring' (*ibid*). Secondly, the absence of technology in singing further affirms patriarchal definitions of femininity, which construct 'woman as part of nature that man controls' through the harnessing of technology:

> The sight and sound of the woman singing therefore affirms the correctness of the fact of what is absent: the unsuitability of any serious and lasting connection between woman and instrument, woman and technology (*ibid*, 29).

Thirdly, the putting on public display of the female body and voice 'has inevitably been associated in practically all known societies with that of the sexual temptress or prostitute'. Although the female singer is 'not engaged fully in an intentional act of display', she is close enough to doing so to be perceived as a threat, and so 'is open to abuse' (*ibid*). The fourth aspect is the equally prevalent cultural image of 'the mother privately singing to her baby', which alongside the image of the sexually available public singer, reproduces the 'age-old dichotomy of woman as whore/madonna' (*ibid*). These four aspects, Green argues, despite involving contradictions, 'go together, to articulate a space in which femininity is constructed as contrary, desirable but dangerous, sexually available but maternally preoccupied' (*ibid*, 30). Green explores these associations between femininity and singing in education, and her research confirms girls' tendencies towards singing, as well as assumptions among their peers and teachers that singing is a feminine practice.

Similarly, the importance of singing to girls is observable in school playgrounds. As Barnes and Kehily (2003) observe, young girls' playground songs and games are passed down through generations without adult intervention, undergoing slight changes over time (Barnes and Kehily, 2003, 25). Grugeon (1988) argues that playground songs and singing games 'both transmit the social order and cultural information and provide the means to challenge it', providing young girls with the means for 'subversive acts of resistance' while often 'still predicting a future of marriage, domesticity and childrearing' (Grugeon, 1988, cited in Barnes and Kehily, 2003, 25-26). Grugeon's more recent research (2001), observes 'a new stereotype of femaleness', inspired, she suggests, by the influence of 'girl power' bands such as the Spice Girls. Instead of taking place on the peripheries of playgrounds as in the 1980s, the singing games of the girls in her more recent research occupied a more central space, exhibiting a more 'confident and noisy exuberance' (Grugeon, 2001, 113 cited in Barnes and Kehily, 2003, 26).

The girls in my research had clearly grown out of the stage of playground singing games, although Amy and Ruth remembered 'making bands' during break times at primary school:

> Amy: I used to have like ten bands all at once with different people...
> Ruth: Oh yeah, we used to make bands in school. It was so annoying.

Like the girls in Grugeon's later research, Ruth and Amy still participated in playground culture in the late 1990s, and were inspired by girl bands such as the Spice Girls to exhibit 'noisy exuberance' (*ibid*) in the form of singing and dancing like their favourite popstars. By the time they arrived at secondary school, however, most of the girls in my research seemed to prefer to avoid the school playground completely. For some of them, indeed, this was a key reason for participating in my research. Nonetheless, the most prevalent of the actively expressive and productive musical activities they engaged in was singing, and for many of them this was, if only implicitly, connected with their femininity. For some of them, vocal creativity was not limited to just singing: rapping, beatboxing[15] and shouting were also ways in which they expressed themselves, performed and participated vocally, and negotiations of gender were more explicit in these practices. Clearly, as Green (1997) argues, the physical inhering of the voice to the body lends itself to discursive constructions of singing as a

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[15] The art of producing drum beats, rhythm, and musical sounds using one's mouth, lips, tongue, voice, nasal passage and throat (Humanbeatbox.com, 2001-2009).

feminine practice. However, the fact of the voice as a physical attribute means it is available to all as a resource for creative musical self-expression, regardless of economic capital, education or opportunity. In other words, it is perhaps not only the association of singing with femininity that made it the most popular musical creative activity for the girls in my research, but also the fact that it can be practised without the need for resources or specialised learned skills.

The influence of current popular music performers was also significant in the girls' attraction to singing. The questionnaire and schools discussion data revealed that, among these girls, the most popular performer by some margin was the singer Rihanna, a Barbadian-born, US-based RnB/pop solo artist whose 2007 single 'Umbrella' spent 10 consecutive weeks at number one in the UK music chart. Eleven of the questionnaire respondents listed her as one of their favourite artists, and she was mentioned in all the schools discussions groups. Tallulah and Lianna were unreservedly enthusiastic:

> Helen: So have you heard any new music over the last few weeks that you like?
> Lianna: Yeah yeah yeah, 'Umbrella'
> Tallulah: Rihanna.
> Lianna: Rihanna.
> [one of them sings a brief snatch of the song]

Bethany and Rachel liked Rihanna as well as other female solo and group vocalists:

> Helen: So can you give me any names of the people you like?
> Bethany: Rihanna.
> Rachel: The Sugababes, Leona Lewis, Girls Aloud.

Indeed, as we have seen, Rachel liked songs from genres other than pop only when they were performed by mainstream artists such as Rihanna:

> Rachel: Well just some like some artists like Rihanna they dress as like punks and all that and they sing punk songs, right, they sing a couple but I like listening to them but cos they do goth songs like Rihanna and Leona Lewis they do like goth songs. They're good but I don't like ones like Lydia said, Slipknot, cos that's all like bashing of the drums and everything, it's just 'aaargh' and screaming and stuff like that.

Emma, and Charlotte, while citing her as an example of an artist liked by girls not as musically aware as themselves, liked her also:

> Emma: Yeah I think it is cos most of the girls in our school prefer like the ones that are just coming out now, like Rihanna and...
> Charlotte: Beyonce.
> Emma: Yeah and Justin Timberlake. But we like them as well but we like ones from ... like ... back.

Similarly, although Lucy, as discussed earlier, liked 'other stuff' such as rock, she also liked Rihanna:

> Helen: So what kind of music does everyone like then?
> Lucy: Like Rihanna and like dancey music and stuff.
> Helen: So the sort of stuff that you told me you liked when we first met yeah, kind of poppy dancey stuff?
> Lucy: Yeah and I do like that but I like other stuff as well, not just that.

So, while some of the girls sought out musical identities to distance themselves from normative femininity, it seems female vocalists were important to all of them. As Ruth said: 'I don't mind boy bands but I like girl bands better cos you can sing along. You can't sing along to a boy band.'

I observed and/or discussed the informal singing practices that took place in the everyday lives of most of the girls in this research: that is, the kind of singing the girls practised outside of organised groups, choirs and lessons. It incorporated singing alone, singing with and for others, singing along, and combinations of these, in a range of informal contexts and environments, including bedrooms, family homes, cars, gardens, schools, public transport and streets. Formal singing also featured in the daily lives of all of the girls in school assemblies, and some of the girls had singing lessons in school, participated in choirs both in and outside of school, and competed in singing competitions.

Aspects of the girls' relationships with singing, which were varied and, for some of them, shifting, are discussed in the following sections. The first considers singer and non-singer identities, the second 'different' singing voices, and the third 'other' vocal creativities. Finally, different performance styles are explored.

'We love singing, that's like our life, we just love singing' – singer and non-singer identities

The first time I met the four girls from the Catholic High, their teacher Bernie Watson

encouraged Lucy and Bethany to sing. Confidently, and with no discernable trace of self-consciousness, they sang the first verse of 'Amazing Grace' to me, Ms. Watson, Olivia and Rachel, and Cameron, a teenage boy who was shadowing Ms. Watson for work experience. During the following weeks when I met the girls again, all four of them performed vocally at various times during the discussions. Lucy and Bethany, and Rachel and Lucy, sang together; Rachel sang alone; Olivia rapped; and Lucy beatboxed. Lucy and Bethany, however, identified themselves most strongly as singers:

> Lucy: Yeah, cos me and her [indicates Bethany], not so much you is it [to Rachel], but me and her are always in shows. We love singing, that's like our life, we just love singing.
> Bethany: And we're going to be in a show.

This identity was underpinned by their participation in formal singing activities: they had a weekly joint singing lesson in school, and were members of a local youth choir. At the time of our discussions, the choir was rehearsing for a summer concert that was to be broadcast on the local independent radio station, and both girls talked about this at length and with great excitement. Their identities as singers, as the following exchange shows, were further reinforced by their friend Rachel's self-identification as a non-singer:

> Helen: So what about you Rachel do you do any singing?
> Rachel: No.
> Helen: Not your sort of thing?
> Rachel: No I used to have singing lessons last year but they just stopped them and I didn't go anymore.
> Helen: Didn't you like it?
> Rachel: No.
> Helen: It's not for everyone is it?
> Rachel: No I didn't really like it. I don't really like singing in front of people. When I'm at home like by myself when I'm cleaning up or something, then I'd sing, but then I just won't sing when I'm in front of people, except people I know really well like my mum or Bethany or Lucy cos they've heard me sing Rihanna haven't they?
> Bethany: Yeah.

Although Rachel lacked the confidence to sing in front of people she did not know well, she enjoyed singing in informal, everyday situations, and tentatively claimed a singer identity in association with Bethany and Lucy: 'I'm their backing singer, but I'm not going to be in the show.' Ultimately, though, she conceded serious singer identity status to her two friends, and instead took on another identity – that of the sporty girl: 'But they're like more dedicated to music and singing and that but I'm more into sports.'

The interconnections between identities, relationships and creativities are demonstrated in the complexities of the friendships between these three girls. The ways in which they identified themselves as creative individuals were dependent on the relationship context. Creative identities require investment and work in order to be sustained, as well as recognition and support from others. The special status of Lucy and Bethany's identities as singers derived both from their participation in formal training and performance, as well as from the discourses produced by themselves and others. Following the definition of creativity proposed by Negus and Pickering (2004), the difference between the singing practised by Rachel, and that practised by Lucy and Bethany, is that Lucy and Bethany's singing was performed for others, and therefore they were *recognised* and identified as singers.

Like Lucy and Bethany, Tallulah was involved in various formal singing activities. She had been a member of a youth choir outside of school and had taken part in a singing competition:

> Tallulah: I entered this competition and it was singing...
> [...]
> Helen: So where do you go for that competition?
> Tallulah: Here, the school.
> Helen: I see. So have you actually entered that? Have you done your audition?
> Tallulah: Yeah and they've told us we've got through to the next round, and it's the next one and then the final.
> Helen: And when's the next round?
> Tallulah: Dunno.
> Helen: A while? So what did you sing?
> Tallulah: I forgot. I dunno. I forgot.
> Helen: So did you have to sing totally unaccompanied then or do you have a backing track or anything?
> Tallulah: No. You do in the second round and in the third round.
> Helen: But first off you just have to sing on your own?
> Tallulah: You have to sing a whole song as well.
> Helen: Really?
> Tallulah: We got taken in this room and there were three teachers and they were all sitting behind a table and we had to stand at like the other side of the room to see if we were loud enough, and they said I was very good and I was probably the best singer they'd had that day.

Her talent was recognised and encouraged both by her teachers and her mum, yet this account of the experience communicated a clear lack of enthusiasm for and engagement with the process. Unlike Bethany and Lucy, Tallulah did not identify herself as a singer, and expressed no ambition to pursue singing, either as a pastime or a career:

Helen: So would you like to be a singer do you think?
Tallulah: Dunno.
Helen: So you don't know if you'd like to be a singer or not? Don't you ever dream about being on...
Tallulah: No.
Helen: You know, having your own record or something like that?
Tallulah: When singing things come up my mum thinks I'm stupid if I don't enter it cos she says I can sing good and I'm stupid if I don't enter it. There's been loads of singing things and she said I should've done...

Tallulah had slightly older twin sisters who were also talented singers. One of her sisters attended LIPA 4:19, a part-time performing arts academy for four to nineteen year olds, because she was a 'boss singer and dancer'. With fees of around £250 a term, it is probable that attendance at LIPA 4:19 was a privilege affordable for only one of the girls of the family. Further, both sisters had entered the same singing competition as her:

Helen: So do you sing altogether or separately?
Tallulah: Separately, so we're against each other.

Competitive performance singing entails exclusivity; not everyone can be a winner, and so not everyone can be identified as a singer. Unable and unwilling to compete seriously with close family members who received more recognition as singers than she did, it is possible that, like Rachel with her close friends Lucy and Bethany, Tallulah was conceding the singer identity to her twin sisters.

'I don't really sing like that'- different voices
Some of the girls found it difficult to sing in the presence of other people. As Craig (1990) observes:

It is of no small interest to observe that [singing] in public is not accomplished without enduring some degree of pain. Most people find it disorienting at best and, in extreme cases, self-annihilative (Craig, 1990, viii-ix).

Tallulah, despite her talent, was debilitated by fear at having to sing in front of teachers for a competition:

Helen: How did you feel when you had to go and sing in front of them?
Tallulah: Scared.
Helen: Were you?

145

Tallulah: I stopped singing and I started again and they said it's alright have another chance, cos I'd stopped singing cos I was scared and I was just shaking cos I hadn't sang in front of people, just me mum and family.

Similarly, Rachel, as mentioned above, could only sing in front of people she knew well. It seemed Rachel aspired to a singer identity, and yet was thwarted by a lack of confidence, and was also perhaps overshadowed by the more assertive and recognised singer identities of Lucy and Bethany. While she was unable to perform at our first meeting, when her friends sang 'Amazing Grace', she shyly sang a few seconds of the Squeeze song 'Take me I'm yours' in one of our discussions, when only Bethany and I were present, and she sang at length with Lucy a song she knew from junior school. This jolly, comic song was delivered in a chant-like vocal style, and seemed somehow childlike and quite unlike the sexually inflected styles of much popular music. Perhaps Rachel was able to sing in this way because, singing a song from her childhood, she was using a voice from a younger identity, and not the voice of her current self.

Similarly, Fran explained her embarrassment at singing in front of others, and demonstrated her use of a 'not real' voice:

> Helen: So when you're in school, do you sing your own songs to yourself, or do you and your mates sing songs?
> Fran: No, I get embarrassed if I try and sing.
> Helen: Do you?
> Fran: I sound all squeaky.
> Helen: So do you ever sing, you know sometimes when I'm walking around I might have a song in my head, do you ever have that in school?
> Fran: Sometimes…I get something that's on telly, and I don't really like it that much, or Girls Aloud and 'I don't need your good advice'.
> Helen: I don't know that one.
> Fran: [sings] 'I don't need your good advice'. That's just my impression, I don't really sing like that.
> Helen: So you get a song like that stuck in your head do you?
> [Fran sings the next few lines of the song, in a mocking and self-mocking way].

Amy too sometimes found it difficult to sing in front of others using her 'real' voice and yet punctuated her zany conversations with snatches of 'in character' singing, such as her rock-style 'waaah!', gloomy funeral marches and opera style singing. Among her friends, Ruth was known for singing songs from the anime TV programmes she liked, in both English and Japanese:

Helen: Why do you like the music that you like?
Ruth: Cos all of the anime stuff, like it's original and I can sing it and people can go "What the hell are you singing?" I like that.

Singing in Japanese, a language neither she nor the people around her understood, was a multifaceted strategy. As she recognised and acknowledged, she used it to both distinguish herself and attract attention from others and, socially unfulfilled among classmates in school, 'in character' singing was a way to amuse and sustain herself without revealing too much of her self-identity: 'I used to sing a lot and write and draw instead of talking to them because I thought they were quite boring.' Her friends and peers, however, had their own counter-strategy, and by singing different songs concurrently, the girls effectively practised mutual non-recognition:

Helen: So what do you think when Ruth goes on and on about music and she starts singing in Japanese?
Fran: I don't mind.
Ruth: She doesn't mind! She puts up with me.
Fran: I think there's some people who just go "Oh Ruth shut up", and she goes [sings] "Happy smile hello", and I'm just like, I'll sing one of my songs...
Ruth: Yeah she's sitting there singing a completely different tune.
Helen: So you both sit there together and sing completely different songs?
Ruth: Yeah. Me and Zoe [a girl in school] were doing it the other day.

Olivia, like Rachel, found singing in front of others difficult in certain situations. Obligatory singing in school assemblies, for example, was a source of discomfort for her: 'I don't want to stand next to someone and have them hear me sing [...] I just used to move my mouth then no-one could hear me.' Within the friendship group, she was unwilling to identify herself as a singer, despite the affirmation of Lucy and Bethany:

Helen: Do you sing as well Olivia?
Olivia: No.
Lucy/Bethany: *Yeah.*
Bethany: You do, she's quite good as well.
Olivia: I'm not.
Helen: So do you sing just...?
Lucy: Gospel songs.
Olivia: *No.*
Helen: Do you sing in a group or just by yourself?
Bethany: What were you singing that song behind the clock?
Olivia: [sings] 'You raise me up...'
[laughter]
Bethany: No, the Titanic one you sing.

147

> Lucy: But she's really good at it and she doesn't know she is, she hasn't got enough confidence to sing in front of anybody.

Singing, inherent to the body, is an intimate performance of the self, and singing in one's 'real' voice can be seen as a way of expressing the ideal social self - a self that is constructed and perceived by the self as 'true'. Singing in front of others requires a degree of confidence and trust: the girls were able to sing in the presence of close friends and family members more easily than when they were with strangers or when they perceived a situation as hostile.

Although she was reluctant to sing in front of others, Olivia was a skilful rapper, who participated in this form of vocal creativity with friends in her neighbourhood. Her school friends, however, despite recognising and encouraging her singing talents, were less supportive of her passion for rapping. In a discussion when she was not present, they told me:

> Lucy: Lydia found a band hasn't she?
> Bethany: She does band and singing.
> Rachel: That's who she was with before doing like a band, they have like a band, but they're not really...
> Bethany: It's not good.
> Rachel: Yeah, cos instead of singing they talk, they don't sing with a tune or a different type of note, do they? They talk.
> Bethany: They don't sing.

Olivia's use of her voice in a way perceived as 'not singing' was problematic for the other girls, and their denial of the validity of this particular use of the voice was evident in their scornful tones when discussing and dismissing her rapping. However, Olivia's rapping was not an example of a 'different' voice, used to conceal or protect an ideal social self; on the contrary, rapping was, for Olivia, an expression of this self. Along with shouting and beatboxing, rapping can be seen as a form of vocal creativity that challenges rather than affirms patriarchal feminine norms (Green, 1997). The recognition as creative of such subversive, 'other' vocalisations was subject to intense negotiation among the girls, which is explored in the next section.

'It's not wrong for girls to do it but it's just better when boys do it' - 'other' voices

The girls' negativity towards Olivia's rapping was expressed not only in her absence: during the discussions, they communicated their dislike directly to her, and any admiration for her

148

skill was given only grudgingly. During one of the discussions, Lucy and Bethany offered to perform a 'rap':

Lucy: When me and Bethany go to our Monday night thing we've got to like...rap. It's kind of a rap and rhythm in one. Do you want us to show you what we have to do?
[Lucy and Bethany sing a piece of instrumental music, Lucy singing the rhythm and Bethany the melody. Rachel and Olivia laugh quietly during the performance]
Rachel: [during the performance] It's just muttering a load of beats.
[Lucy and Bethany finish singing]
Lucy: That's what rap's like.
Bethany: And then we start with the song.
Olivia: But about twenty times but faster.
Helen: So the song has got some words as well has it?
Bethany: Yeah.
Helen: So you kind of provide the music with your voices then?
Lucy: But that's what I mean but they can't understand that, they laugh at us when we do that. They laugh at us when we sing like that.
Rachel: No I was only laughing then when you said it was like a rap but it's not rapping.
Lucy: It is cos you got, oh alright.
Rachel: [indicating Olivia] She's like 50 Cent compared to that, be honest.
Lucy: I know.

To prove the point, Rachel suggested Olivia should perform one of her raps and, after some persuasion, Olivia eventually agreed, with the proviso that the voice recorder was turned off. Olivia then performed a short, very fast rap she had made up with her cousin. Lucy, however, did not like it, and she and Bethany mocked Olivia's rap:

Helen: That was amazing. So fast!
Olivia: Innit?
Helen: Yeah, very good, very good.
Lucy: No I don't even like that.
Helen: You don't like that?
Lucy: No.
Helen: Why not?
Lucy: You can't understand it.
Helen: You can't understand it?
Lucy: She goes [mimics Olivia] 'I'm gonna get you at your door.'
[laughter]
Lucy: That's all I could understand [she mimics Olivia again, slurring the words fast; Bethany joins in]
Helen: That's part of that style of music isn't it, to do it fast?
Olivia: Yeah.

Rap, as previously mentioned, was the least popular music genre among the girls apart from goth/rock and, as the Mixed Comp girls explained, rapping was perceived to be a 'boy's thing':

> Tallulah: What she said, because boys like rapping, and it's not wrong for girls to do it but it's just better when boys do it and they like it and they want to be them.
> Lianna: Like a lad in year 8 he done a rap he made a rap with some lads and some people have got it on their phone, like they made their own rap.

Rap, like rock, is a genre constructed through discourse and practice as masculine. Performative theories of gender, observes Dibben (2002), allow us to see how 'engagement in musical practices may construct and sustain individual or collective identity' (Dibben, 2002, 121). Despite the apparent equality of available opportunities, she found 'large discrepancies still exist in the extent to which different kinds of musical activities are engaged in' (*ibid*). Just as Green's (1997) research showed children engaging in 'a restriction of musical activities to gender-stereotyped behaviour', similarly, O'Neill and Boulton (1995) found that 'gender boundary violation' in relation to musical instrument choice resulted in children being 'far less popular with their peers' (Dibben, 2002, 123). The conflict caused among the girls by Olivia's rapping shows that using the voice in ways gendered 'other' can have the same result.

Early in the research period at the Catholic High, Olivia formed a rap band with other girls in school and, for a few weeks, band practice was a reason for her non-participation in the discussions. Although she soon re-joined the discussion group, there was a distance between her and the three other girls, which seemed to be exacerbated by her rapping with girls from outside of school:

> Helen: And is that actually something you've done as part of a performance or do you just do that for fun with other people?
> Olivia: I do it for fun, like my mates come round, knock for me and we just stand there and do it on the doorstep.

Despite being perceived as a masculine form of creativity, Olivia's rapping was always carried out with other girls:

> Helen: Is it always all girls who do that with you?

Olivia: Yeah. We make stuff up about each other, like what we wear, what we are, and everything, what your nicknames are and everything.
Helen: I see so what you're talking about is yourselves and each other?
Olivia: Yeah it's a rhythm that gets going round. I start it off then one of my mates answers and then we make something up about people.

Musical composition was apparently rarely undertaken by the girls in this study, although some of them, Fran for example, mentioned composing simple instrumental pieces in school music lessons. Olivia's raps, however, were the exception to this, further compounding the deviant nature of her musical creative practice. Of all musical practices undertaken by females, composition is identified by Green (1997) as the most threatening to patriarchal feminine norms. As Dibben (2002) reports, Green's (1997) research into music education in schools showed that girls were 'seen by both pupils and teachers to lack the necessary abilities for composition – a lack which constitutes their femininity' (Dibben, 2002, 122).

As well as challenging gender boundaries through its generic category and compositional element, the informal and spontaneous performance style of Olivia's rapping contrasted with the more formal singing performances of Lucy and Bethany. As Negus and Pickering (2004) argue, creativity and performance are inseparable, as creativity is realised only in performance. Next, I discuss the various types of performances that took place in the everyday lives of the girls involving the range of their vocal creativities, ranging from performance to participation, encompassing singing along, singing alone, and singing with others in formal and informal contexts.

'I sing in front of the mirror'- presentation and participation
Turino (2008) makes a distinction between participatory and presentational music making:

> Briefly defined, *participatory performance* is a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role. *Presentational performance*, in contrast, refers to situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing (*ibid*, 26).

In the case of Olivia's rapping with her neighbourhood friends, all of the girls in the group were involved in the music-making: 'it's a rhythm that gets going round. I start it off then one of my mates answers'. This practice, then, fits with Turino's definition of participatory

music making, although participation does not exclude presentation: the practice of group rapping clearly involves presentation to the others in the group. Similarly, although some of the music making that occurred within the setting of my research appeared to be participatory, e.g. when Lucy invited Rachel to sing with her, the song was in fact performed by them for the rest of us. Although Olivia's rapping with her friends comes closest to it, I found no evidence of purely participatory music making taking place in the girls' everyday lives at all, and I would argue that the boundary between participatory and presentational music making is more blurred than Turino's model suggests. Every activity they talked about or did during the research was presentational to some extent – i.e. it was prepared and provided by certain people for other people to watch/listen to. Their understanding of music making seemed to be entirely shaped by the concept of it being some kind of presentation, even when they were performing for their own parents, for each other, and even, as I discuss below, when alone. The notion of music making as presentation was not only ever-present, but also somehow integral.

Formal presentational singing was an important part of the creative lives of Lucy and Bethany, who participated in a local youth choir, and also for Tallulah, who entered singing competitions. Informal singing presentations for friends and family were also common, as we have seen. Although the results of my questionnaire did not show whether or not the girls engaged in any formal vocal performance activities, five of the respondents said they liked the music they liked because it was good to sing, rap, or shout along to. Singing, rapping or shouting along are vocal practices that can be defined as taking place in accompaniment to recorded or live music, in relation to which the person singing along is positioned primarily as a listener. Clearly, there are substantial differences between these two types of experience, the main one being that in the case of recorded music, the performer of the music is removed in both space and time from the listener, whereas in a live music context, the performer and audience are in the same space and time and have the potential to interact. Ruth's memory of attending a gig by the American nu-metal band Good Charlotte with Amy when they were close friends in their early teens communicates the excitement she felt at the event: 'We were right at the back and singing along and jumping with those rock hand-signs like devil horns.' This was the second gig they had attended together without a parental chaperone and their energetic participation, with the band, the music and the rest of the audience, through jumping, singing along and gesturing signals a sense of confidence, freedom and belonging.

Apart from this, my research elicited little data about singing along experiences in live music situations; however, singing along to recorded music was mentioned frequently by the girls in my research. Sometimes this was undertaken alone, and sometimes in the company of others. Rachel mentioned singing along to a particular song her mum played at home: 'My mum always puts it on while she's cleaning up so I always sing along to it upstairs cos she has it on like a hundred.' Hassan (2010) observes how singing along to music is used to ease the boredom and irritation of domestic routines and chores (Hassan, 2010, 6). As well as a resource for making tedious tasks more appealing and fun, singing along is also a pleasurable form of self-expression and a way of releasing tension. At home, I often heard Ruth singing along to the music she was listening to when alone in her bedroom, and, like some of the questionnaire respondents, she sometimes chose music to listen to specifically because it was good to sing along to, particularly that performed by female vocalists.

As previously discussed, Bethany often sang along to the music her dad played in the family car. In social situations, as Hassan (*ibid*) observes, singing along can function in different ways. In situations prone to tension, singing along can be seen as an 'attempt to project a sense of fun and joviality' in order to ease stress. As well as this, singing along in the company of others is 'connected to the articulation of self-identity', and is a way of communicating one's mood to others (*ibid*). For Bethany, as well as making car journeys more fun and enjoyable, singing along to her dad's music was perhaps a way of communicating to him that she enjoyed his music, reinforcing their close relationship.

In his analysis of instances of everyday domestic 'momentary musical performing', Hassan talks about both singing along to recorded music, and singing and humming 'in ways that [are] not dependent on the mediation of recorded popular music' (*ibid*, 7). Singing along, as he points out, is a common and popular cultural activity, epitomised by the familiar stereotype of the 'hairbrush diva' (*ibid*, 1). Examining more closely the activity of singing along to recorded music, however, it is clear that it differs from spontaneous and unaccompanied singing and humming in several significant ways. Singing along to a recording, the listener joins in with another's performance. In a sense this is participatory, although the singer/listener is absorbed into the performance on the recording. The performer on the recording remains the primary performer; the listener/singer is secondary. (This is managed in social performance contexts such as karaoke by the removal of the lead vocal track from the recording, providing a space in the music for the singer/listener to take centre

stage.) Singing along, the listener/singer can perform with the support of a primary (expert, professional) singer, and for many amateur, informal singers, who may lack confidence, this is preferable to unaccompanied, independent singing. Through participation with the recorded singing, the listener/singer can undertake identity work, extending the self and enacting a fantasy in which they are the performer. Unlike unaccompanied singing, singing along is bound to the recorded song. Rather than being free to experiment with fragments or to distractedly repeat different phrases, the listener/singer produces a structured performance that proceeds through time alongside the recording. Often, however, as Hassan's (*ibid*, 6) observations show, listener/singers dip in and out of songs, joining in at points of familiarity or ease. Singing along to recorded music seems to fall somewhere in between the two types of musical activity identified by Turino (2008): presentational and participatory. The 'primary' performance, that which is recorded, is clearly presentational; however, the audience to whom the performance is presented is not completely non-participatory. Although artist-audience distinctions exist in time and space, from the side of the listener/singer, the experience is participatory and involves performance.

Singing when alone then, whether accompanied by or independent of recorded music, can be a means of easing the tedium of routines and tasks, an emotional release, and a physical pleasure. Singing alone is also a way in which music is used for identity work, to confirm, perform and construct self-identity. This can be seen as introjection, as performing for the self, but the self is never detached from the social, as Rachel's description of her 'alone' performances suggests:

> Helen: So when you're at home what do you normally do with your time?
> Rachel: Singing. I sing in front of the mirror.

In discussions with Lucy and Bethany, both of whom self-identified strongly as singers, Rachel was reticent about her singing practices, calling herself their 'backing singer', or associating herself with sports more than music. On this occasion, neither Lucy nor Bethany was present, and for the first time she seemed to feel able to talk openly about the importance of singing in her daily life. Although she lacked the confidence and formal support necessary to identify herself, and be recognised by others, as a singer, using her own reflection in the mirror, she performed both for and to herself as an imagined audience. The image of Rachel singing to and for herself in the mirror is a vivid realisation of the notion of an ideal self performing for an imagined social.

Presentational singing was a significant aspect of musical creativity in the everyday lives of all the girls in my research, whether they were involved in formal performances and competitions, informal performances for family and friends, or simple everyday singing and singing along. Singing, as Green (1997) argues, is the musical practice most affirming of femininity, and for these girls, in the liminal phase of young teenagerhood, it was a form of musical creativity practised in a variety of ways to explore and experiment with gender identities. The girls used a range of 'different' voices to express and communicate insecure social identities, and problematic 'other' voices that expressed a breach of normative gender boundaries, most notably Olivia's rapping, were subject to negotiation and, ultimately, rejection. The playing of musical instruments 'interrupts' femininity (*ibid*) and was, as the next section discusses, far less prevalent than singing in the everyday lives of the girls.

Musical instrument playing

Of the forty-five young female questionnaire respondents who answered the question 'Do you play a musical instrument?' more than half of them answered 'no':
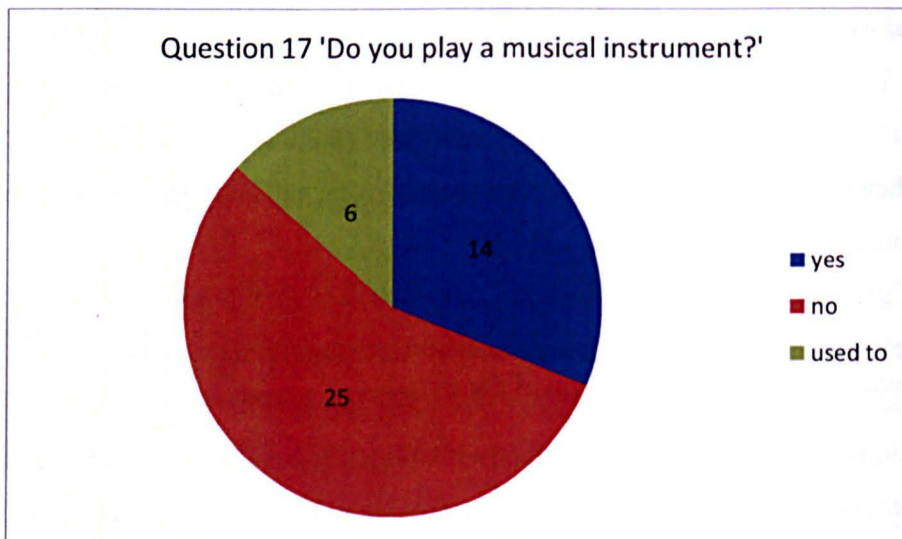

Figure 7 Chart showing questionnaire responses to question 17 'Do you play a musical instrument?'

For those who did play, the most popular instruments were flute and piano, followed by keyboard, guitar, and drums:
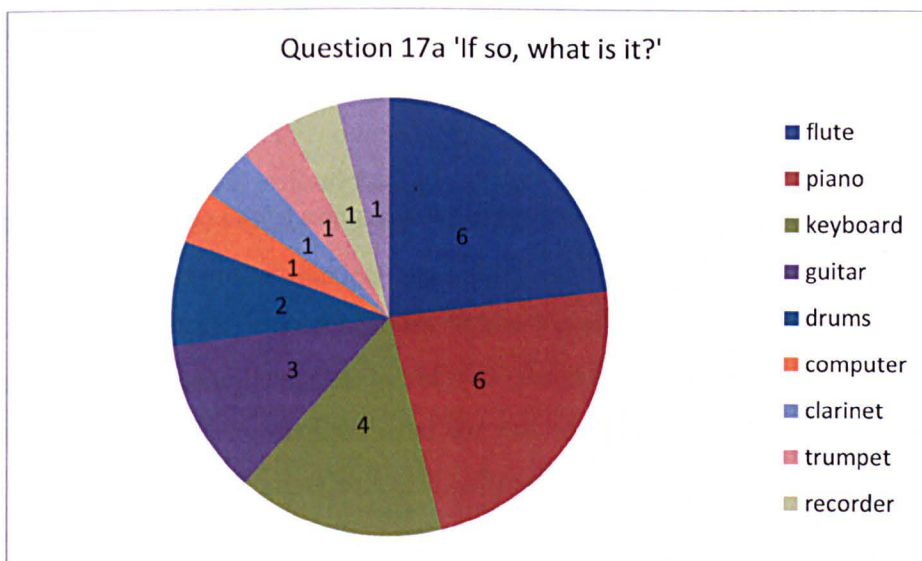
Figure 8 Chart showing questionnaire responses to question 17a 'If so, what is it?'

Eight of the girls played more than one instrument: four of them played three different instruments; and two of them played two instruments. Several reasons for not playing a musical instrument were given: three of the girls said that they simply did not want to, two said it was boring, one had no time, one gave up because she left primary school, and one could not afford it. Of the four of the girls who did not play an instrument and responded to the question 'Do you think you ever will?' two of them said they would like to when they were older, and two said they would like to play the piano. The majority (69%) of these girls, then, had never played an instrument, or had given up for various reasons. Very few of those who did not play expressed a desire to do so in the future. Just under a third of them played at least one musical instrument, but whether this was in school-based lessons and activities the data does not reveal. The types of musical instruments played, however, suggest that the girls received some kind of formal instrumental teaching. Green's (1997) research found that girls were more likely than boys to play musical instruments in school and also more willing than boys to engage in 'classical music' (Green, 1997, 153). This, she argues, is evidence of girls' attitudes towards music in school as being 'constructed [by themselves, other pupils, and teachers] as cooperative and conformist' (*ibid*, 166).

The most popular types of musical instruments played, namely the piano and keyboard, and the flute, are strongly associated with femininity, as Bayton (1997, 39) and Green (1997) have observed. The role of gender in musical instrument choice, Green (1997) argues, is

involved with degrees of 'affirmative feminine display'. Females who play musical instruments disrupt patriarchal definitions of femininity because, unlike singers, they:

> appear less locked into the vicissitudes of their bodies, less alienated from technology, less sexually available, and less the personification of the contrary image of madonna/whore (*ibid*, 53-54).

The female instrumentalist is perceived as deviant because she enacts a display of 'a more controlled and rational being who appears capable of using technology to take control over a situation' (*ibid*, 54); and the bigger, louder and more technologically advanced the instrument played, the more she represents an 'interruption' to patriarchal feminine norms (*ibid*, 58). Pianos and keyboards are exceptions to this because of their traditional associations with domestic and church environments, their use as an accompaniment to singing, and the fact that they are played in a 'demure, which is to say 'feminine', seated position' (*ibid*, 59).

All the girls in my research had experience of musical instrument playing in school music lessons, and several of them pursued it outside of school. Ruth had a weekly violin lesson in her junior school, but gave up this instrument when she left for secondary school. She then took up the piano, and had a weekly private lesson for a number of years. She received an electric piano as a joint family Christmas present when she was around thirteen years old, but became reluctant to practise and eventually gave up playing completely. Fran played the trumpet for a short time in her last year at junior school, and took private lessons in keyboard for a while. Amy did not play an instrument, although she expressed a desire to play the electric guitar. For all three girls, it seemed that the ability to play a musical instrument was desirable, and yet learning and practice were found (or imagined) to be tedious and unenjoyable.

Similarly, talking about music lessons in school, Lianna, Tallulah and Alisha\were unenthusiastic:

> Helen: So do you still have music lessons in school then?
> Lianna: Yeah every Thursday and everyone always messes so it's quite crap.
> Helen: People mess around do they in music?
> Tallulah/Lianna: Yeah.
> Helen: Why is that?

Lianna: It's horrible. This lad [...] in our class I remember a while ago, cos people were in the closet in front of him, he went 'Sir there's a ghost in the closet' and he ran out screaming, and it's mad.
Tallulah: He does it on purpose though.

It seemed, then, that school music learning was a negative experience for the girls. Both Lianna and Tallulah had played musical instruments previously:

Tallulah: I used to play the guitar.
Lianna: I used to play the piano but cos I never went I kept on forgetting.

The first time I met the three girls from the Mixed Comp, Alisha told me she played the violin. When I asked her subsequently how this was going, however, she was disillusioned:

Helen: Are you still playing your violin?
Alisha: Yeah.
[...]
Alisha: We've got a new violin teacher and she's dozy.
Helen: Why what does she do?
Alisha: She gives me the wrong date and when I go she's never in.
Helen: So have you not had a lesson for a while?
Alisha: No.

Emma and Charlotte, in contrast, were more enthusiastic about school music lessons:

Helen: So what about playing the keyboards then in school? Is that something that you're both into or do you just do it because it's part of lessons?
Emma: A bit of both really, cos it is quite good isn't it?
Charlotte: Yeah.
Emma: Learning like new songs to play and learning to read the music and stuff.
Helen: Right so you...
Emma: It's quite complicated.
Helen: So are you both learning music now – learning to read music then?
Emma: Yeah – all the crotchets and quavers and that.

Both girls used to play guitar at junior school:

Helen: So do you think you'd like to carry on and play other instruments or...
Emma: The guitars good. We both went to different junior schools but we both played guitars there didn't we?
Charlotte: Yeah.
Helen: So do you – is that something you still do, or?
Emma: No, I'd like to do it though, sometimes.

Rachel had an acoustic guitar that her nan bought her for Christmas, although she did not ask for it, and was unable to play it properly. She enjoyed 'playing' it, however, in performances she staged on the family's large outdoor trampoline for her own entertainment:

> Rachel: I play it when I'm on the trampoline.
> Helen: You play the guitar on the trampoline?
> Rachel: Yeah cos I like it when rock stars go and they go on their knees and all that but when you do it on the trampoline you go boing and bounce back up.
> Helen: So can you play the guitar or do you just like messing about?
> Rachel: I just like doing that with it [makes strumming motion] and it's all out of tune and everything.

As with her singing, Rachel seemed most comfortable performing for an imagined audience. Lucy, on the other hand, was perfectly comfortable singing for others, but her desire to play certain musical instruments was problematic:

> Lucy: I played the drums.
> Helen: What the drumkit sort of thing?
> Lucy: I've had a few lessons.
> [...]
> Lucy: I like, like all, I like doing stuff like goths will do like play drums and be in a band but I'm not though and people just get the wrong opinion of me.

Musical creativities are part of the processes of identity formation and negotiation, and clearly Lucy's difficulty with expressing her attraction to a goth identity and goth/rock music extended to musical instrument playing. Unlike singing, the desire to play rock instruments and be in a band presented a risky challenge to gender boundaries, as Green (1997) suggests:

> The greatest level of interruption to patriarchal definitions of femininity caused by women instrumental performers occurs perhaps with the rank-and-file woman player, both in mixed bands and all-women bands, and especially in music that does not require solo show or improvisation (Green, 1997, 80).

Musical patriarchy, Green argues, is not forcibly imposed, but involves the collusion of females, who give their consent in 'subtle and often unnoticeable ways, through willingness to conform, through reluctance to deviate, through embarrassment and, extremely, fear' (*ibid*, 57). In Lucy's case, the tension between her desire to embrace and express a goth identity and the desire to conform certainly seemed to arise from a 'reluctance to deviate', both self-imposed and negotiated within her friendships.

Apart from Alisha, whose school-based violin learning seemed to be thwarted by organisational issues, none of the girls in the domestic research or discussion groups was actively involved in musical instrument playing outside of school music lessons. Although physical, playing musical instruments is not 'of the body' in the same way as singing, and therefore lacks accessibility, as well as the potential to be readily incorporated into everyday life. Additionally, the commitment and work involved with learning to play a musical instrument seemed to outweigh its attractions for these girls. Giving up a musical instrument on joining secondary school seemed to be common, suggesting conformity to gender norms that privilege creativities more affirming of femininity. Further, the girls' role models in popular music culture were predominantly singers. Dancing, on the other hand, was, for many of the girls, a creative musical practice that did not present a conflict with normative femininity, and this is discussed next.

Dancing

The importance of dancing in the everyday lives of the girls emerged unsolicited from the data. As dancing did not seem to be particularly significant in the everyday lives of Ruth, Fran and Amy, in the subsequent research phases I did not ask specific questions about dancing or raise it as a topic for discussion. Nonetheless, the importance of dancing as a way of using and engaging creatively with music was clearly evident in the questionnaire and discussion group data. In Willis' (1990) theory of symbolic creativity, dancing is the 'principal way in which musical pleasures become realized in physical movement and bodily grounded aesthetics' (*ibid*, 65). Dancing 'affords a sense of personal power, energy and control through bodily movement and the flaunting of a unique style' (*ibid*, 68). However, as an inherently bodily practice, dancing, like singing, is constructed discursively as feminine. The girls at the Catholic High school recognised the gendered aspect of dance:

> Helen: So this kind of thing that you're doing now with the phone and everything, is this the kind of thing that only girls do?
> Olivia: Calling my brother a girl?
> Helen: Is it or?
> Lucy: I don't know, I think so, cos a lad wouldn't stand there like this [dances]

In school, then, it was usually girls who gathered around phones to listen and dance to music. Boys, if they danced at all, danced ironically:

Rachel: [People] normally play the music out on the phones in the toilets or sitting out on the bench, then everyone just sings or dances, they have their own little dance.
Helen: I see, so everyone just sings and dances to their own music at break, and is that girls and boys?
Rachel: Boys do it sometimes but they dance proper weird but they're only having a laugh when they do it, so they're only messing about.
Helen: So when you say weird what do you mean?
Bethany: Just all mad stuff.
Helen: So they just mess around?
Bethany: Mexican waving, things like that.
Helen: I see, so they're not really...
Bethany: And the moonwalk.

In a similar way to the use of 'different' voices to conceal identity when singing, 'messing about' with dances such as the moonwalk and Mexican wave was perhaps a way for boys to dance without contradicting their gender identity by appearing to express or represent a 'true' self that was less than masculine. For girls, on the other hand, dance is more affirming of their gender norm, as it 'exists as a largely feminine and thus accessible practice' (McRobbie, 1991, 192). Consequently, they felt more able to practise it publicly without embarrassment, although it seems it was easier for those who were considered, or considered themselves, to be 'good' dancers:

Helen: So when the girls do it, do you think they're a bit more serious about dancing?
Bethany: Yeah.
Helen: And do you work out little routines and stuff, or do you know other girls who do that?
Bethany: Just like the people who are good at dance.

Although none of the four girls at the Catholic High seemed to consider herself to be sufficiently 'good at dance' to display her skills in the schoolyard, for some of the other schools discussion participants, dancing was very important and mentioned frequently as a reason for listening to and liking certain music. In the same way as singing, a strong self-identity as a 'dancer' was facilitated and supported both by enthusiastic participation in school dance classes and performances, as well as attendance at formal dance classes outside of school. Of all the girls, Lianna was the most passionate about dancing, and wanted to pursue dance as a career:

Helen: What do you want to be when you leave school?
Lianna: A dancer. Or if I don't make it to a dancer, a dance teacher, and if I don't make it to a dance teacher then a photographer.

She was involved in numerous dance projects and shows through school, such as festivals and performances for primary schools, and attended weekly dance classes outside of school:

> Lianna: I go to dance on Saturdays...I just make up dances and all that and then at Christmas after we've done loads of dances we do a big show. We done a big massive show about three weeks ago...it was really good.
> [...]
> Helen: What sort of dancing do you do?
> Lianna: Hip hop, RnB, and sometimes like we do a bit of contemporary and a bit of ballet.

At home, dancing was one of her main activities, and she made up dances to songs she liked, sometimes copying the routines from music videos:

> Lianna: Yeah. I made a dance in my house up to Kanye West music, the song 'Stronger' and it's boss, it's like RnB, it's boss.
> Helen: So do you copy moves off like TV or anything?
> Lianna: Yeah.
> Helen: So what sort of TV do you watch to find out about the dancing?
> Lianna: I just go on the music channel.

She enjoyed watching dance-themed films:

> Lianna: Mostly I get DVDs that have got like dance on them and music, like *Step Up*[16], and all that, *Honey*[17] and everything.

Such dance narratives, as McRobbie (1991) has observed, provide 'a fantasy of change, escape, and of achievement for girls and young women who are otherwise surrounded by much more mundane and limiting leisure opportunities' (McRobbie, 1991, 192). Lianna seemed to be aware of the fantasy element of her dance ambitions, as her stated alternative career options suggest.

Similarly, Emma and Charlotte were keen dancers, taking street dance classes outside school and, while spending time together at each other's homes, making up their own dances to a

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[16] A US made feature film released in the UK in 2006, involving dance as a redemptive force for a young male delinquent.
[17] A US made feature film released in the UK in 2003, dealing with a young female hip hop dancer's dream of becoming a music video choreographer.

range of styles of music encompassing RnB, Irish folk, and Disney film songs. The girls carefully considered the suitability of certain songs for dancing:

> Helen: Do you think for you sort of music and dancing are very much kind of interconnected really? It sounds like you do a lot of dance.
> Emma: Yeah.
> Helen: So is there any difference between the sort of music that you use for dancing and the music you just use for listening? Or is it all the same kind of music do you think?
> Emma: Sometimes there's some of the songs we listen to haven't got like the right beat or tempo that you'd be able to dance to.
> Helen: What kind of music's that then?
> Emma: What would it be like?
> Charlotte: Like 'Stickwitu'.[18]
> Emma: Like some of the quite slow songs – like they're too slow to do the kind of dancing that we'd be able to do cos ours is a lot faster.
> Charlotte: We do more like ballet to slow ones.
> Emma: But we don't do much of that. I do a bit of ballet but it's more like street dance and stuff.
> Helen: So you need quite fast music for that?
> Emma: Yeah, more upbeat.

While dancing, and the music chosen to dance to, was clearly important to Emma and Charlotte, their music choices were not solely motivated by dance. For Lianna, in contrast, rather than being something to listen or sing along to, music was primarily a resource for dancing:

> Lianna: I love music. The only reason I like music is cos I love dancing. I'm just in love with dancing. If I went out on the street cos on Saturdays sometimes I go out with my mates after dance me and my mates are just like dancing in the streets, I dance anywhere. Putting in your music on your phone and just dance.

In a similar way to singing along, as for example Bethany did to engage with her dad's music choices, Lianna used dance as a way to incorporate unfamiliar songs and genres:

> Lianna: Yeah it's like me, like if I've got a CD, like an RnB CD, and if there's a bit of different music on it like a little bit of rock or something then I'd listen to it to see what it was then I'd get into it and like it, and dance to it.

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[18] A ballad performed by US pop group Pussycat Dolls, released as a single in the UK in November 2005.

Among the girls in my research, Lianna, Emma and Charlotte were the only three girls who identified themselves as dancers. They all attended dance classes outside of school and making up dances was an important everyday musical creativity. It was both a central aspect of their engagement with music, and an important element of their friendships.

Among the girls who did not identify themselves explicitly as dancers, however, dancing to music, and listening to music that was suitable for dancing to, were also important. In answer to the question 'Why do you like the music you like?', seven of the forty-nine questionnaire respondents gave the reason that it was good for dancing to. Twelve of the questionnaire respondents, as well as several of the schools discussions participants, mentioned uptempo 'dancey' music as a favourite type of music. Despite their taste for older music, Irish folk and Disney songs, Emma and Charlotte's preferred listening was 'club music'; and Rachel's favourite music was pop, dance and music with a 'nice beat'. Although she did not claim to be a good dancer, or a dancer at all, Rachel often talked about engaging with music through moving and dancing:

> Rachel: Like something come on the telly like a music channel and you know the song you'd sit down and watch it but you'd also sing along to it a bit and like bob your head or something when you're into the beat or tap your feet on the floor, you just go with the rhythm don't you?

> Rachel: Yeah, ones with big beats in.
> Olivia: I listen to clubland when I'm happy.
> Rachel: Like the Ting Tings 'That's not my name' - that's so good that song.
> Helen: The Ting Tings? Is that a good one?
> Rachel: Yeah, the way they play the drums it's nice and, it's just like a song that you can dance to.

'That's not my name' by the Ting Tings was a favourite song of Rachel's that she danced and sang along to on the family's large outdoor trampoline with her younger sister:

> Rachel: ...when I'm on the trampoline I just sing a song with my sister. But normally when we're on the trampoline we sing the Ting Tings again.
> Helen: So do you go on the trampoline a lot then?
> Rachel: Yeah. Cos 'That's not my name' is a dead, one that you'd sing along to, a dead, one that you can memorise a lot and you can just dance and sing at the same time.

The use of an outdoor trampoline as a stage for domestic dance performances was also mentioned by Tallulah:

> Tallulah: And we just make dances up and that, and show my mum.
> [...]
> Tallulah: I always do, and my cousin comes down as well in the summer holidays and that, and we all make dances up and show my mum. And we get her sometimes in the back garden and we just move the trampoline, cos we've got a ten foot trampoline, we just get it down and do a big dance.

Making up dances with friends, either to be performed for others or not, was not a feature of the everyday lives of Ruth and her friends, as far as I knew, and they did not identify themselves as dancers or talk about dancing as a music-related activity. Ruth, indeed, loathed school dance lessons that, in her first year at secondary school when she was aged twelve, involved dancing on a chair and being encouraged by the teacher to 'act sexy'. Ruth and Fran, however, both enjoyed 'Dance Dance Revolution', a Japanese manufactured video game, described by Demers (2006) as follows:

> In this game, arrows pointing in cardinal directions scroll across a monitor screen in time with the beat of a song. Players must match the pattern and speed of the arrows by touching their feet to sensors located on the dance floor. Only by achieving a high accuracy rate can a player advance from one level to the next (Demers, 2006, 401).

Each of them had a 'dance mat' (their term for the game) which they used both when alone and when together at each other's homes. A dance mat, the domestic version of the game's input device, is a thin plastic pad around one square metre in size, attached to the PlayStation games console. As Ruth explained, using the dance mat was more like playing a video game than dancing. The 'revolution' in the game, Demers (2006) reports, was in its 'combination of dance, physical exercise, music, and sophisticated graphics technology, united for the first time in a video game' (*ibid*). For Ruth, the appeal lay as much in the interaction with technology, 'passing' a song and progressing to a higher level, as it did in the pleasure of bodily movement and engagement with music. Demers (2006) emphasises the international popularity and social dimension of the game, as it has been widely played in arcades since its launch in the late 1990s. Ruth and Fran acquired their dance mats around the early 2000s, and Ruth continued to use hers, although less frequently, into her late teenagerhood. Demers (2006) points out that, despite its global distribution by a leading video game company, the game is considered by both designers and players 'to be a localised subculture in which

participants' enlightened music taste resists 'mainstream' stagnation' (*ibid*, 402). Ruth's description of the music element of the game was that it was 'mostly remixes' of old songs such as 'Video Killed the Radio Star'. She preferred the 'weirder' songs, such as those performed, she thought, by unknown Japanese artists. The remixes of songs by popular artists such as Kylie Minogue, she observed, seemed to accompany easier routines, as if intended to make the game more accessible and attractive to users with mainstream tastes. Ruth often used the dance mat when she was alone, more for a 'work-out', as she described it, as the game counted calories as well as hits and misses. When she played the game with friends, she often found she took it more seriously than they did, as they tended to 'mess around' more and make deliberate mistakes. Unlike the sexualised dance she experienced in school lessons and observed in music videos, it seems the dance mat offered Ruth a way of engaging physically with music free from the constraints of normative femininity that, in her early teenagerhood, gave rise to feelings of embarrassment and anxiety. Demers (2006) suggests that the game is successful because it combines 'cybernetic science fiction' and 'post-disco dance history' in a way that allows 'society's outsiders ... to take centre stage' (*ibid*, 407). Although Ruth most often used the dance mat alone, the opportunities offered by the game to engage physically with music in a virtual environment whose imagery resembled that of her much-loved anime, were empowering and self-affirming.

Dancing, like singing, is a bodily musical practice that is both accessible and affirmative of normative femininity. Unsurprisingly, then, it was a creative practice enjoyed by many of the young teenage girls in this study. As with singers, some of the girls were recognised to be 'good at dance', and were identified by themselves and others as dancers. Some of the girls engaged with music in a way that was specific to dancing, choosing music especially to dance to, and, in Lianna's case, activating music as a technology of self through dance. As an alternative to dancing as an affirmation of femininity, Ruth's use of the 'dance mat' allowed her to distance herself from feminine norms by incorporating technology into her dancing, and engaging with music for dance in a way that was less 'mainstream'.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the everyday musical creativities of the girls, exploring how their sense of their own and each other's identities as creative individuals were negotiated within their relationships. Alongside their creative uses of music as a technology of self and as a

166

form of cultural capital, to construct, maintain and express self and social identities, and to negotiate relationships, as discussed in the previous two chapters, all of the girls in this study engaged creatively with music in a way that was expressive, communicative, and, in a variety of ways, performed and presented. Their identities as musically creative individuals were negotiated within the boundaries of social constraints, with gender playing a significant role. As well as conforming to or subverting feminine norms of musical creativity and performance, the girls were dependent on recognition within their micro-social environments, and this was negotiated within and shifted according to relationship contexts. Musical creativities often give rise to experiences of intense emotion that, along with the emotions experienced in relation to the roles of music in their identity work and close relationships, are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 – EMOTIONS

Introduction

Kay Milton's (2007) feeling that 'emotion [is] the key to understanding something fundamental about human beings' came from her observation that emotions define the quality of her life:

> At any given moment, my feelings determine whether my life is good, bad, or somewhere in between. They motivate me to act; a niggling unease tells me if I have done something wrong. Feelings of love, guilt, anxiety, envy, hope, desire, drive me to do what I do in my everyday life (Milton, 2007, 61).

A consideration of emotions is clearly central to any investigation into the experiences and practices of everyday life; and, throughout this research, emotions were involved in all experiences and interactions. The liminal phase of young female teenagerhood is particularly emotional, with its associated crucial negotiations of age and gender. The roles of music in the girls' forging of identities, their relationships with parents and friends, and their musical creative practices all involved a range of emotions, from joy to anger, shame to boredom. Music was used actively to manage and modify emotions; and music gave rise to emotions that sometimes had a profound effect on relationships and situations. The interconnections between music and emotion reinforce DeNora's (2000) argument that:

> just as music's meanings may be constructed in relation to things outside it, so, too, things outside music may be constructed in relation to music (DeNora, 2000, 44).

Equally, the research processes that generated this data produced, and were produced by, emotions. For me, these processes were often highly emotional. As a parent-researcher, my closeness to the situations I was researching involving my daughter and her friends evoked emotions that were sometimes hard to handle. In the schools discussion groups, different emotions emerged that were related to spending time with young people whom I did not know well, and managing their interactions. Similarly, it is important to consider the emotions of the girls with regard to the research, as the experience of being researched and written about undoubtedly had emotional consequences. This chapter, therefore, analyses the relationships between emotions and music in the everyday lives of the girls, and the role of emotions in the research processes that elicited the data upon which the thesis is based.

The first section of the chapter discusses several definitions of emotions, and proposes a working definition, based on an understanding of emotion as a predominantly social phenomenon. The second section explores this idea in relation to music, arguing that music and emotions are woven together in social life, and 'musical emotions' are central to the work of negotiating and managing the tensions between self and social identities. Music can be 'a medium or device for achieving 'emotional work'' (DeNora, 2001, 171), and the third section considers some of the ways in which the girls used music for emotion management in their everyday lives. As well as actively choosing music for its emotional effects, whether to confirm, create or change a mood, the girls often experienced emotions that seemed to arise from situations involving music. Music's roles in their identities, relationships and creativities were frequently emotional, and some examples of this emotional music are examined in the fourth section. In the fifth and final section, the emotions that arose from and affected the research processes are examined, in both the domestic and schools based research contexts.

Emotions

In a useful outline of models of emotion, Milton (2007) (following Leavitt 1996) explains how studies of emotion up until the late twentieth century polarised it into either a biological or a cultural phenomenon:

> Biological approaches defined emotions as physical feelings and sought to explain them in biological terms, as innate and universal outcomes of human evolution. Cultural approaches defined emotions as cultural constructs, and therefore variable, and sought to show how they emerge out of social discourse (Milton, 2007, 62).

Milton (and Leavitt) argue that neither of these approaches is satisfactory, because neither takes account of the dual nature of emotion: the idea that emotion consists of '*both* feeling *and* meaning, as something that combines bodily processes and cultural interpretations' (*ibid*). Milton suggests an alternative approach, based on a model proposed by William James (1890), that distinguishes between an initial physical response to a stimulus (blushing, trembling, sweating, crying), and the feeling that follows it (embarrassment, fear, anxiety, sadness) (*ibid*, 63-64). These two stages are labelled by Damasio (1999) as emotion - a physical response to stimulus - and feeling - a perception of an emotion (*ibid*, 65). Self-conscious animals, such as humans, who both *have* feelings, and *know* that they do, can

'actively plan [...] activities to avoid unpleasant feelings...and to pursue pleasurable ones' (*ibid*, 66). This model, Milton argues, is neither biological nor sociocultural, but *ecological*: 'Emotions and feelings arise and operate...in the relationship between an organism and its surroundings' (*ibid*). Her argument continues with the notion that emotion (she uses the term in its looser sense, encompassing both the physical response and the perception of it) plays an important role in learning, an idea that supports her ecological model of emotion because:

> Learning is a process that takes place between an individual organism and its environment, a process through which that individual receives and interprets information from their surroundings and becomes a skilled mover within their environment (*ibid*).

Although humans live in environments that are predominantly social, the ecological model is not simply a replica of the sociocultural model of emotions, because not all environments in which humans live (and learn) are social:

> An ecological approach to emotion locates it in the relationship between an individual and its environment, whatever that environment may consist of; it does not privilege the social environment over the non-social (*ibid*, 67).

She suggests that emotions are 'part of a general learning capacity that enables us to learn from any particular part of our environment, human or nonhuman. As such they must be presocial or precultural; they must operate in every 'normal' human being prior to and independently of that individual's involvement in social relationships' (*ibid*). Unlike biological models, however, this model does not presuppose that emotions, either responses or relationships between responses and objects, are necessarily fixed. Instead, she argues:

> We do not have to assume that emotion, or any other human phenomenon, is either biological or cultural. We can assume instead that there is no clear line between biology and culture, or at least that it is not useful to draw one (*ibid*).

Her ecological model considers the stages in emotional response – stimulus, physical response, feeling, and action. She suggests learning can take place at three of these stages. First, 'bodies can learn to respond differently to specific stimuli – so that we come to fear, or love, or get angry about different things...our bodies learn, through engagement with their environment, how to respond to particular things' (*ibid*, 68). Second, the relationship between physical responses and feelings is not completely fixed, and can vary in subtle ways depending on 'cultural or individual interpretations' (*ibid*). In other words, physical feelings can have different meanings, depending on the individual and context:

170

For instance, the tightening of the stomach and a quickening heartbeat might amount to nervousness, but the feeling of nervousness in anticipation of meeting a lover is unlikely to be experienced in exactly the same way as the feeling of nervousness when about to give a public lecture (*ibid*).

Third, the action taken as a result of an emotion is also learned:

It is very well established that different societies, groups and individuals have different ways of displaying their feelings (*ibid*).

Further, I would argue, an individual may display the same emotion in different ways depending on the context. Learning and emotion, then, are interdependent, and:

There is no place in this model for a polarization between biology and culture (or society). There is no place for it because *neither* emotion *nor* learning can be allocated to one category or the other. We cannot say, according to this approach, that emotions belong to biology and learning belongs to culture (*ibid*, 69).

Milton's argument, then, challenges effectively the notion that emotions are universal, innate and biologically fixed, while retaining the physical element. Although emotions clearly have a biological component, in that the body reacts to stimuli with physical responses, these responses, their meanings and resulting actions are learned within particular environments. Some of these environments are social and cultural, but not all.

Music, however, is a social process – it is created and made meaningful by humans within social relationships. While taking Milton's argument on board, therefore, this chapter will focus on the social environments of emotions, to argue that, while emotions originate in physical responses to stimuli, their meanings are socially constructed through society's vocabulary, concepts, and discourses, and 'emotion norms and emotional experiences vary according to social, cultural and historical context' (Branaman, 2001a, 92). As Tiedens and Leach (2004) argue:

A social approach to emotion requires that we ...stop seeing it as an individual response, and start considering it as a bridge between the individual and the world that blurs the boundaries between individuals and their contexts. From this perspective, emotions are a channel through which the individual knows the social world, and the social world is what allows people to know emotion (Tiedens and Leach, 2004, 2).

They outline three ways of understanding the relationship between emotions and the social. The psychological approach sees emotions as *responsive*, in that emotions are responses to important events, most of which are social: 'Thus, social situations frequently generate

emotional responses' (*ibid*, 2-3). Another view is that emotions are *regulated* by society: 'people have internal, natural, and biological responses that are harnessed by societal practice and demands', and the influence of social surroundings on experiences of emotions is so thorough that it goes unnoticed (*ibid*, 3). Finally, following Sartre (1948) is the view that emotion is socially *constituted*:

> This perspective suggests that we cannot know anything about our social relationships without the emotions that we use to navigate ourselves through these relationships. But, similarly, emotion is fully encompassed by those social relationships. This implies that emotion does not exist within the solitary individual because it depends on social configurations not just to trigger it, but also to actually form it (*ibid*).

Sartre claims 'that emotion is more than our attempt to make meaningful a pre-existing world. In his view, by making meaning though emotion, we actually make the world itself. Thus the world is constituted – comes into existence – through our emotion' (*ibid*, 6). This view, argue Tiedens and Leach, although radical, is valid because emotional experiences and expressions *are* woven together with social relationships: 'emotions are not simply internal events that respond to the outside world. Instead emotions constitute the social context ... emotion shapes and is shaped by social life' (*ibid*, 7).

Music and emotions

What role does music play in the mutual constitution of emotions and the social world? Juslin and Sloboda (2001) point out that: 'Some sort of emotional experience is probably the main reason behind most people's engagement with music' (Juslin and Sloboda, 2001, 3). They differentiate between descriptive or representational responses that process the musical components of a piece, such as recognising and identifying musical features and style, and emotional/affective responses, which involve evaluation:

> Examples of evaluative processes would include the determination, or awareness, of music as eliciting liking or disliking; preference; emotion and mood; and aesthetic, transcendent, spiritual experiences (*ibid*, 4).

Emotional rather than cognitive responses to music are primary, as Willis (1990) argues:

> Much popular music produces feelings and affective states, first and foremost, before it produces any specific attitudes or forms of social consciousness; feelings of happiness/sadness, romance, sexual feelings, or uplifting feelings. In this sense, the

power of a particular song lies in its capacity to capture a particular mood or sentiment by a complex combination of different sounds and signifying elements (Willis, 1990, 64).

Music is seen here as capturing and producing a range of emotional states. This process, however, takes place within a social context. Focusing on everyday experiences of listening to music, Sloboda and O'Neill (2001) argue that emotional responses to music are always influenced, or even determined, by contextual factors:

> music is always heard in a social context, in a particular place and time, with or without other individuals being present, and with other activities taking place, which have their own complex sources of meaning and emotion (Sloboda and O'Neill, 2001, 415).

As emotions are not abstract entities, but 'actual moments of emotional feelings and displays in particular situations within a particular culture', investigations of emotional responses to music must take as much account as possible of social context (*ibid*). For Sloboda and O'Neill, context and content are inextricable:

> Emotional responses to music are a complex outcome of the contribution of a person's reaction to the content (i.e. the musical materials themselves and their associations) and their reactions to the social context in which the music is embedded (*ibid*, 425).

While emotions are often considered to be individual experiences, they, like music, are profoundly social, and so the emotional experiences of music are woven into social life:

> Although viewed as essentially 'private' experiences, involving a great deal of autonomy or agency, emotional feelings and displays are deeply embedded in a social context, which exerts a powerful influence (albeit often implicitly) on our music listening. Reliving past relationships, constructing identity, using music to 'siphon off' emotions that are not for public presentation: all of these depend on, and are used to negotiate and develop, the complex web of cognitions and behaviours that constitute social life. As such, music becomes part of the construction of emotional feelings and displays that are both reflective and communicative 'embodied' judgments used to accomplish particular social acts. In other words, musical emotions are a form of social representation, which is negotiated as an interaction between cultural/ideological values of society, the values and beliefs operating in a social grouping or subculture in that society, and the individual's own social and personal experience (*ibid*, 427).

The emotions involved with music, or 'musical emotions' then, can be seen as central to identity work, the work of negotiating and managing the tensions between self and social identities.

Music and emotional management

DeNora (2001), arguing that '...music can be seen as a medium or device for achieving "emotional work"' (DeNora, 2001, 171), considers the use of music as a means of emotion management. As Branaman (2001a) points out, 'Emotion management is one way in which emotions are socially constructed' (Branaman, 2001a, 92). Citing Hochschild (1990, 120), she observes:

> Management of emotions – i.e. the efforts we make to feel emotions we believe we should feel, to not feel emotions we believe we should not feel, to express emotions we believe we should express, to avoid expressing emotions we believe we should not express – modifies emotional experience and sometimes even creates emotions (Branaman, 2001a, 92).

For DeNora (2001), music is used in emotion management:

> both routinely and in exceptional circumstances to regulate moods and energy levels, to enhance and maintain desired states of feeling and bodily energy (e.g. relaxation, excitement), and to diminish or modify undesirable emotional states (e.g. stress, fatigue) (DeNora, 2001, 171).

Music can be used to 'sketch aspired and partially imagined or felt states' (DeNora, 2000, 53), and to get into a required mood:

> Here, music is used as a catalyst that can shift reluctant actors into 'necessary' modes of agency, into modes of agency they perceive to be 'demanded' by particular circumstances (*ibid*, 54).

Similarly, music can be used to wind down and 'get out of moods – bad moods in particular' by, for example, 'venting', or letting off steam by playing loud music when angry. In this case, music 'provides a simulacrum for a behavioural impulse' and 'gives respondents a medium in which to work through moods'. It provides a means by which people can 'express themselves in a (symbolically) violent manner' by choosing aggressive or anti-establishment music, or playing music loud (*ibid*, 56). Music is effective as a means for emotion management because:

its specific properties – its rhythms, gestures, harmonics, styles and so on – are used as referents or representations of where they wish to be or go, emotionally, physically and so on (DeNora, 2000, 53).

How this referring and representing actually works is described as follows:

> Respondents [in her research] made....articulations between musical works, styles, and materials on one hand, and desired modes of agency on the other, and then used music to presage, inspire, elaborate, or remind them of those modes of agency and their associated emotional forms. When respondents chose music as part of this care of self, they often engaged in self-conscious articulation work, thinking ahead about the music that might 'work' for them. And their articulations were made on the basis of what they perceived the music to afford. This perception is in turn shaped by a range of matters. Among these are previous associations respondents have made between particular musical materials and other things (biographical, situational), their understandings of the emotional implications of conventional musical devices, genres, and styles, and their perceived parallels (articulations/homologies) between musical materials/processes and social or physical materials/processes (DeNora, 2001, 72).

DeNora, then, found that particular music was actively chosen and used to manage emotional states through processes of articulation, based on what listeners felt it could 'afford'. This affordance is linked with the social, as it depends on listeners' previous experiences of music that form the basis of their existing perceptions, associations and understandings of its meanings:

> A good deal of music's affective powers comes from its co-presence with other things – people, events, scenes. In some cases, music's semiotic power...comes from its conditional presence; it was simply 'there at the time'. In such cases, music's specific meanings and its link to circumstances simply emerge from its association with the context in which it is heard. In such cases, the link, or articulation, that is made – and which is so often biographically indelible – is initially arbitrary but is rendered symbolic (and hence evocatory) from its relation to the wider retinue of the experience, to the moment in question (DeNora, 2000, 66).

However, the process is two-way, as music is used not only to express, confirm or enhance an existing emotional state, but also to create emotion:

> music is part of the reflexive constitution of that state: it is a resource for the identification work of 'knowing how one feels' – a building material of 'subjectivity' (DeNora, 2000, 57).

Music, she argues, is 'a material against which the aspects of 'how I feel' may be elaborated and made into an object of knowledge' (*ibid*). Music can take on the qualities of emotion, providing a means for externalising it and giving it a temporal existence:

to play music as a virtual means of expressing or constructing emotion is also to define the temporal and qualitative structure of that emotion, to play it out in real time and then move on (*ibid*, 58).

Using music to achieve or change emotional states was common practice in the everyday lives of the girls in this research. Five of the questionnaire respondents gave emotional reasons for liking the music they like: 'reflects feelings', 'makes me happy', 'relaxing', 'cheers me up', 'reminds me of people'. These responses suggest a use of music to manage emotions: to maintain or confirm an emotional state ('reflects feelings'), and to change an emotional state ('makes me happy', 'relaxing', 'cheers me up'); and also as a memory device, articulated with the thought of a person, allowing them to be remembered ('reminds me of people').

When she was unhappy in school and estranged from her friends, Ruth immersed herself in music, developing her music collection and choosing to listen to certain songs that provided a means of managing her emotions:

> I felt pretty bad and lonely and I don't remember a lot about it. I broke up with my boyfriend too, so I was on my own pretty much all of the time. I listened to a lot of music, I think. I spent ages downloading it and sorting it into folders, reading lyrics online and writing my diary. I had a lot of problems at school, so I liked to bury myself in music. I listened to sad songs like Gold Dust by Tori Amos and angry-sad music like Silverchair's album Frogstomp. I listened to the Final Fantasy VIII soundtrack by Nobuo Uematsu all the time too – Liberi Fatali. A song called "Baka" from the anime Ranma ½ was one – it's a really angry song, baka means idiot in Japanese. It's actually kind of funny so it cheered me up.

As DeNora (2001) points out, 'Music is a resource to which agents turn so as to regulate themselves as aesthetic agents, as feeling, thinking, and acting beings in their day-to-day lives' and people 'perceive their need for this regulation and know the techniques of auto-emotion work' (DeNora, 2001, 173). Ruth's account captures the range of ways in which she used music for 'emotion work'. Building and organising her music collection and gaining knowledge of song lyrics demonstrate her use of music as a form of cultural capital, reconstructing her damaged self-identity. Sad, angry and funny songs were used to confirm, enhance and vent emotional states, and hypnotic ambient music, such as the *Final Fantasy VIII* soundtrack, provided a means to soothe herself and relax. I was particularly aware of the Tori Amos song 'Gold Dust' playing frequently on Ruth's computer in her bedroom at this

time, and its melancholy sound seemed to fill our home. The softly sung, sometimes whispered, lyrics speak of regret for a time past:

> sights and sounds pull me back down another year/I was here I was here/whipping past the reflecting pool me and you skipping school/and we make it up as we go along we make it up we go along/you said - you raced from Langley - pulling me underneath a cherry blossom canopy/do I have of course I have, beneath my raincoat I have your photographs and the sun on your face/I'm freezing that frame/and somewhere Alfie cries and says enjoy his every smile you can see in the dark through the eyes of Laura Mars/how did it go so fast you'll say as we are looking back/and then we'll understand we held gold dust in our hands (Amos, 2002).

The lyrics suggest feelings of sadness and loss associated with a child growing up, and, combined with the slow and poignant-sounding melody, the song's particular resonance for Ruth, as she struggled to deal with the painful emotions of difficult social transitions, is clear.

Some of the girls who participated in the schools discussion groups reported a similar use of music for everyday emotional management. Bethany, like other children in her school, listened to music on her iPod in lessons to ease boredom:

> Helen: Do most people do you find bring their iPods into school with them?
> Rachel: Yeah.
> Helen: [to Bethany] And do you?
> Bethany: Yeah.
> Helen: When do you actually use it then?
> Bethany: At like break and dinner.
> [...]
> Rachel: And, Bethany, sometimes in the middle of lessons.
> Bethany: When? You're not even in my class.
> Rachel: I am in maths.
> Bethany: Sometimes I listen to it in maths, the teacher is boring.
> H: Do you notice many kids listening to their iPods actually in class?
> Bethany/Rachel: Yeah.

Emma and Charlotte chose to listen to slow music to induce a more relaxed mood towards the end of the day, and to accompany quiet activities such as communicating online:

> Helen: So when you listen to slower music, do you listen to that for any particular reason, or at any time? You know, when you're not wanting to dance, do you find that you listen to particular music for particular reasons?
> Emma: Sometimes like when you're winding down it's good to listen to like slow music.
> Charlotte: I put it on in the background while I'm on MSN.

Emma: Yeah.
Helen: [to Emma] Do you?
Emma: When you don't want something like banging in your head you just like nice soft mellowy music.
Helen: So you get some nice soft mellow music from the internet to listen to while you're talking to people on MSN then?
Emma: Yeah.
Charlotte: Yeah, Smooth FM 'The Wind Down Hour'.
Helen: What time of day is that on?
Charlotte: It starts from 9 at night.

Rachel listened to music as she carried daily routines and activities:

...normally I put [Smash Hits radio] on while I'm getting ready for school or if I'm not in school I just normally do while I'm cleaning up or getting changed, cos like listening to music like calms you down a bit.

Rachel often experienced conflicts within her family and chose slow music to calm her down when she felt angry with her siblings:

Rachel: And I listen to it when I'm angry as well but it has to be slow music, [to Bethany] like the Leona Lewis CD's full of slow music isn't it?
Bethany: Yeah.
Rachel: There's nothing really fast in it.
[...]
Helen: So you listen to that kind of music if you feel like you want to calm yourself down?
Rachel: Mmm, cos I normally get angry with my brother, cos he messes about with the dog like throws the ball in the back garden so the dog scrapes all the floor and I go out and stop him, and when I do it he proper moans at me like 'Aah Rach why d'you have to do that?' 'Oh shut up.' He does my head in.
Helen: So do have a lot of arguments with your brother then?
Rachel: Yeah, but mainly with my sister, cos she always wants me to play like Barbie dolls and stuff like that with her but I just go 'God do I have to?' And we play but then it gets boring after four minutes cos nothing happens so like 'Oh we've got to stop' but then she starts crying and you're like 'Oh God'. Then you have to play again until she gets bored and you have to put all the toys away and then it just makes me angry.

As she explained further, she used slow music to move her away from moods such as sadness and anger, but listened to fast music to enhance a happy mood:

I like slow music and I like that when I'm sad or when I'm angry cos it calms me down but I like fast music when I'm happy cos you get into the beat and then it's just dead fun.

Both Rachel and Olivia both enjoyed listening to dance music when they were happy:

> Olivia: When you're on a high.
> Rachel: Yeah, ones with big beats in.
> Olivia: I listen to clubland when I'm happy.

Olivia, however, did not like slow music at all: 'I hate slow music...depresses me. Like...depression.' Olivia, like Ruth, sometimes chose to listen to loud, fast music to confirm and enhance an angry mood:

> Helen: So do you like those bands, Slipknot and that kind of thing?
> Olivia: Yeah. I only listen to that type of music when I'm angry.
> Helen: Do you?
> Olivia: Yeah.
> Helen: So when you're already angry you listen to angry-sounding music?
> Olivia: Yeah. Headbanging things yeah.

Unlike Emma, Charlotte and Rachel, rather than using slow, calming music to counteract and change an angry mood, Olivia and Ruth both actively chose music that reflected and confirmed their anger. Rather than a feeling that had to be denied, changed or moved away from, anger sometimes had to be experienced, and listening to angry-sounding music enabled them to do this. As DeNora (2000) observes, music can be used to 'flesh out a feeling' (DeNora, 2000, 57), to define its structure, and 'to play it out in real time and then move on' (*ibid*, 58). For some of the girls, then, anger was sometimes an emotion that could be enhanced and even created using music, while for other girls, and at other times, it was an emotion that had to be dissipated, using slow, calm music to counteract its violent energy.

Tallulah and Lianna, as we have seen, enjoyed time spent by themselves at home listening to their music at high volume. This practice, however, sometimes had a negative motivation, as the girls explained:

> Tallulah: I put my music on when I'm scared.
> Helen: Do you?
> Tallulah: Like if I hear bangs upstairs in the house, cos we've got two ghosts in the house and my mum's even seen them.
> Helen: Really?
> Lianna: My Nan's got ghosts in her house.
> [...]

Tallulah: I've never actually seen it but my mum says she has when she was in the bath, it looked like my sister but my sister was playing out, and she walked through the wall.

Helen: That's strange isn't it? So when you hear nasty noises upstairs you just put your music on loud?

Lianna: Yeah that's what I do.

Tallulah: And I open the back door so if anyone comes downstairs I can run out the back, and I keep the dog with me all the time.

Helen: Really? That all sounds a bit scary. Maybe the loud music will scare them away, whatever they are?

Tallulah: I don't think I do hear banging upstairs, it's just my imagination.

Research has shown that girls, more than boys, report fear of being alone and strange sounds, and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are generally more fearful than those from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Gullone, 2000). Due to the socio-economic circumstances of their families, Tallulah and Lianna perhaps spent more time alone at home than other girls in my study and, although they enjoyed the freedom of time alone at home to listen to music without having to take account of the restricting presence of family members, they also had to deal with the fear of being home alone. As well as using music to move away from a fearful mood towards relaxation, calm and comfort, distracting them from their fear of intruders, both real and supernatural, they also used the physical presence of music to fill the silence of an empty house, masking the noises they imagined they could hear.

Emotional music

All the girls in this research had ways of managing their emotions using music. Alongside the active use of music to manage emotions in everyday life, however, emotions were involved in all of the girls' experiences of music in everyday life. The use of music to manage emotions involves music being *brought in* to a situation, and used actively and deliberately to achieve, maintain or change emotional states. However, emotions also *arise out* of experiences of music in everyday life relating to identities, relationships and creativities, in ways that are often inadvertent or uncontrolled. As Frith points out 'we need to balance accounts of how people use music to manage their emotions with accounts of how music still has the power to disrupt us emotionally' (Frith, 2002, 46). Throughout the previous chapters, talking about emotions has been unavoidable. The social nature of music, intertwined with the processes involved in identity work, relationship negotiation, and creative practices, lead inevitably to a consideration of emotion. The four themes of this thesis are inextricably interwoven, and to discuss the emotions involved in their everyday

experiences of music, therefore, would entail much repetition. The following three brief sections, however, highlight and examine some of the emotional resonances of music in relation to identities, relationships and creativities, focusing on what they reveal about the role of music in everyday life.

Music, emotions and identities

As Sartre (1948) argues, 'the world is constituted – comes into existence – through our emotion' (Sartre, 1948 cited in Tiedens and Leach, 2004, 6). Emotions are a bridge between the individual and the social world and music can be a medium for emotional work. As we have seen, music both reflects and constructs identity, as musical and social meanings are co-produced in a two-way process. Listeners can 'find themselves' in the structures of music, bringing about a merging of self and social identities; Amy, for example, identified with artists and music that reflected and reinforced her various emotional states:

> I identify with people like Avril Lavigne because obviously she's a gothy person, and Busted cos because they're happy and lively and I like Pink because she's a bit depressed and so am I.

The everyday lives of young teenage girls can be highly emotional, as their liminality entails intense identity work, in particular the continuous negotiation of age and gender identities. Individual and social identities, therefore, do not always correspond. Music, particularly in relation to taste and ownership, is a key resource for the emotive processes of identity work, and the girls in this study experienced a range of strong emotions associated with disjunctures between their self and social musical identities. Fran, linking the feeling that the music she liked *was* her identity with a sense of ownership, felt annoyed when other people started to like the same music. Similarly, for Rachel, the repeated playing of a once liked song by schoolmates led to her rejecting it as suitable cultural capital and deleting it from her phone.

The need to 'move along' from music tastes associated with past selves often involved feelings of shame or embarrassment, as current self identities collided uncomfortably with those of the past. In various ways, Amy, Tallulah, Emma and Rachel all expressed these feelings when talking about music or popstars they used to like. Although it was important to many of them to appear to fit in with their peers, some of the girls, walking a somewhat perilous tightrope between sameness and difference, continued to listen, even in public

situations, to music that was a potential source of embarrassment. As Lucy explained, headphones were used to maintain privacy:

> ...you listen to music that everyone else is into so it looks like, so it doesn't look like you're different and when you're on your own you listen to something else so you put your headphones on.

Listening to music considered by others to be 'old' was a sure way to appear to be different and an invitation to peers to be critical:

> Rachel: Cos I like, cos when songs come out, you like them and you want to just leave them cos you like it so much like, you'd have them on your phone but you'd only play music that people like, other people like outsi... out loud, otherwise people go 'Why are you listening to that, that's old?' So that's why you listen to it on your earphones.
> Helen: So that's the kind of stuff that you wouldn't want anyone to know, you wouldn't play it at break or anything?
> Lucy: Not so much Whitney Houston like but as Bethany said Abba or like Rachel said...
> Rachel: Yeah cos they all go 'Why eurgh that's horrible, why don't you listen to normal songs?', and I'm like 'Cos I don't want to', really like but they just make fun of you cos you're listening to something different.
> Helen: So who is that? Who is it that makes fun of you mainly?
> Rachel: Just all other people.
> Bethany: Loads of people.

As we have seen, the shame and embarrassment resulting from being found to listen to music not considered 'normal' developed into anger for Lucy, as she raged against Rachel for identifying her as someone who listens to rock: '*I don't*. Why put the, why say me?' For Lucy, the anger seemed to arise not only from the fear of being harshly criticised and mocked for an identity that did not fit with her peers in school, but also from the need to vehemently deny this identity that she had openly admitted to the previous week. Ruth remembered a similar incident in her early teenagerhood, although in her case, her musical identity was called into question, rather than inaccurately ascribed:

> There were a lot of dramas over music back then. A friend of ours, who none of us liked all that much really, told me randomly over MSN one day that every type of music I liked was stolen from someone else – Tori Amos was stolen from Hayley, all my gothic music was stolen from Amy. I was so hurt by this I started crying and felt really angry. It was a blow to the sense I had of my own identity. With all my gothic dress and music I was trying to stand out and be non-conformist, so to have her tell me that I'd just stolen everything from other people seemed like completely the

wrong thing. I didn't think it was true, I argued that I was just finding out about new stuff from other people – what was I supposed to do? Just find new music completely out of nowhere? I believed I was right and that I was still original, but I was still shaken by the accusation.

Clearly, identity work is a highly emotive process, and the uses of music in this work give rise to many intense emotions. Emotions arise when music taste and ownership are challenged, because this constitutes a challenge to self identity. Identity work is closely entwined with relationships, and the emotions involved with the girls' experiences and uses of music in their relationships with parents, siblings, friends and peers are considered next.

Music, emotions and relationships
The emotions associated with the roles of music in relationships often related to feelings about others' music tastes and listening. Although it was often the case that the girls shared music tastes with the other people in their everyday lives and had positive feelings towards them, negative responses were expressed more strongly. Several of the girls felt annoyance, and even sometimes hatred, towards the music played by their family and friends.

Twenty of the questionnaire respondents stated frankly that they disliked their parents' music, giving reasons such as 'it's rubbish', 'it's old and boring', 'it's boring depressing and bad' 'omg[19] it's crap'. The adjective 'boring' was used by nine of the girls and 'old' was used five times. There were eight uses of 'bad' and synonymous words and phrases such as 'crap', 'rubbish', 'not nice at all' and 'not good'. In contrast, only five girls said they liked their parents' music. Charlotte found listening to too much Irish music in the car irritating: 'It can be a bit annoying when you hear it all the time', and both she and Emma found Emma's brother's taste for Marilyn Manson irksome:

> Emma: Some of the, like the heavy metal stuff that my brother's into. D'you know like they sound like they're screaming?
> Charlotte: Oh yeah.
> Emma: Like Marilyn, Marilyn what? What's his name?
> Charlotte: Manson. It gets on my nerves.

Rachel often felt annoyance at the music played by other people. Although she liked some of her mum's music, she was irritated when her mum played music loud when she was trying to

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[19] 'Oh my god' – an abbreviation in common usage among the girls.

sleep, even suggesting that her mum did this deliberately: 'You're trying to sleep or something in the night and she puts it on to annoy you.' Her experience of listening to classical music in her uncle's car gave rise to some conflicting emotions: 'It's nice and, it cools, calms you down and makes like you feel dead light, but it's just...horrible.' Clearly, other people's use of music for emotional management can have a negative effect on those who are not involved in choosing the music – one person's emotional work is another's noise pollution.

Sometimes, playing music within earshot of others was a deliberate strategy to communicate emotion. Olivia, for example, played music on her phone at home when she felt angry:

> Helen: So in what kind of situation do you listen to music on the phone then?
> Olivia: When I'm angry.

Similarly Ruth, after a disagreement with me, sometimes retired to her bedroom and played loud and aggressive sounding music, in a clear attempt to reinforce my understanding of her anger.

Girls' friendships, as we have seen, have been observed to be more emotionally intense than those between boys (James, 1993 cited in Barnes, 2003, 73). The studies by Griffiths (1995) and Hey (1997) found that, as well as being sharing and supportive, strong negative emotions such as jealousy and hatred often permeate girls' friendships. Many of the challenges to identity experienced by the girls in this research occurred within their friendship groups. Music, as we have seen, plays an important role in negotiations of self and social identities in friendships, and these negotiations are often highly emotional. The end of the extremely close friendship between Amy and Ruth ostensibly resulted from Amy's criticism of Ruth's Tori Amos fandom. Their diverging tastes in music, and the way these were represented online through Ruth's 'White Horses' webpage and Amy's sarcastic comments, represented and compounded a separation of their identities, and involved strong feelings of jealousy and hurt. The importance of protecting and maintaining an distinctive identity, constructed and displayed online through the acquisition of social and cultural capital represented by friends and music, was demonstrated by Fran's annoyance with others who 'stole' her friends and music on MySpace. Lucy's anger and distress at being associated by Rachel with a goth identity, only a week after she had made the same association herself, and the attempts by her

friends, variously to insist upon and deny the fact, show how emotive musical identities are, and the importance of negotiating them within friendships in a way that constructs both the distinctiveness and sameness of each member of the friendship group.

Music, emotions and creativities

As well as listening to music to manage emotions, musical creativities were often used to shift mood. Singing was used on several occasions during the discussion at the Catholic High school, most often by Lucy, to attempt to solve or distract from conflict, or to change the topic of conversation. As we have seen, she persuaded Rachel to join her in singing 'Rambo had an auntie', a song they both knew from primary school, after a lengthy spate of argumentative and competitive discussion. Similarly, after a discussion among the other girls about the music their parents liked, in which she did not participate, she suddenly began to beat box, after asking 'Can anybody beat box?' On another occasion, after talking about an emotive topic, she asked me if she could sing:

> Lucy: In a way I am kind of, I'm not happy like but it is kind of nice being the only child, but I do wish sometimes I did have other people around the house, I get bored on my own and stuff like that. I don't really spend that much time with my mum and dad, like just sitting talking to them, I get bored after a while.
> Bethany: Me too.
> Lucy: After two minutes talking to them I get bored, it does my head in.
> Helen: Sometimes it's hard to find things in common isn't it?
> Lucy: I don't communicate with my dad either, we just don't get along. The only time is when I need money.
> Rachel: But he always picks us up doesn't he? When we went to the bus station and we didn't know where we was and we went to that place where your dad works.
> Bethany: I knew where I was.
> Rachel: I didn't.
> Lucy: And the only time I talk to him is when I need money.
> Rachel: [sarcastically] That's nice.
> Helen: I'm sure it won't always be like that. I'm sure relationships change, don't they, as you grow up?
> Lucy: Are we going to get to sing in here? Are we going to sing?

Some of the girls were passionate about their musical creativities. Lucy and Bethany expressed their love of singing:

> Lucy: Yeah, cos me and her [indicates Bethany], not so much you is it [to Rachel], but me and her are always in shows. We love singing, that's like our life, we just love singing.
> Bethany: And we're going to be in a show.

Lianna was equally passionate about dancing:

> The only reason I like music is cos I love dancing. I'm just in love with dancing. If I went out on the street cos on Saturdays sometimes I go out with my mates after dance me and my mates are just like dancing in the streets, I dance anywhere. Putting in your music on your phone and just dance.

However, not all the emotions associated with musical creativities were positive. Tallulah felt extreme fear when she had to sing in front of teachers at school to audition for the Teen Idol competition:

> I stopped singing and I started again and they said it's alright have another chance, cos I'd stopped singing cos I was scared and I was just shaking cos I hadn't sang in front of people, just me mum and family.

Rachel, while she clearly enjoyed singing, often felt too embarrassed to sing in front of other people:

> I don't really like singing in front of people. When I'm at home like by myself when I'm cleaning up or something, then I'd sing, but then I just won't sing when I'm in front of people, except people I know really well...

Fran dealt with her embarrassment at singing in front of others by singing in a 'not real' voice, and Olivia opted out of school assemblies singing completely: 'I just used to move my mouth then no-one could hear me.' Olivia was able to perform a rap for me and the other girls in the group, but only with the voice recorder turned off. When she performed raps with her friends at home, she often felt embarrassed if other people, not involved, were listening:

> ... my mates come round, knock for me and we just stand there and do it on the doorstep...I feel ashamed though cos all people are out looking at you and there's two people over the road from me, I hate them.

Even confident singer Lucy expressed shame at singing out loud inadvertently:

> I sang in class once and everyone looked and I just went oh no, I was on the bus as well and this song come on 'The greatest love' come on and I just can't help but sing it, and I was just singing and everyone turned round and looked at me, everyone started laughing and I went 'Oh no'.

186

Musical creativities, particularly singing and dancing, then, were often enjoyable activities that could be used to change a negative mood to a positive one, both when the girls were alone and when they were with others. However, creativities could also bring about difficult emotions, such as fear or embarrassment, if it was felt that the environment was inappropriate, challenging or hostile. Creativities, as argued in the previous chapter, require recognition in order to be fully realised, and the negotiation of this recognition activates emotion as a medium between the self and the social.

Emotions in research
The four aspects of music in the everyday lives of the girls – identities, relationships, creativities and emotions – have so far been explored in relation to the data. In keeping with the methodologically reflexive aims of the thesis, however, these aspects can equally be explored in relation to the research processes, i.e. the choice of research topic, the planning and design of the research, the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data, and the writing up.

In relation to identities in the research processes, questions arise concerning how these are constructed and what effects they may have on the research findings. In the domestic research, for example, my identity as a parent clearly affected the processes and, in the Mixed Comp school, the fact that I am female may well have been a reason for my difficulty in attracting boys to participate in the research. My adult identity indisputably had an effect on my ability to fully understand and penetrate the everyday lives of the young participants in the research; the girls at Mixed Comp, for example, addressed me as 'Miss', equating me with their teachers. Further, my status as a researcher from a university and, more significantly, as an employee of the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, an institution in which several of the girls (and their gatekeepers) had a keen interest, clearly influenced some of the girls' representations of themselves to me.

An example of the ways in which relationships affect the research processes can be found in my focus on the role of music in the relationships between the girls and their parents, which seemed to have a strong significance. At the time of the initial, domestic phase of the research, although Fran had an adult older sister, and Ruth a much younger sister, each of the girls was the only child living at home. Therefore, as the parent of an only child, researching

three children without live-in siblings, I was inevitably more focused on the role of music in parent/child relationships. Further, as a popular music researcher, with personal music preferences in the popular music realm, my tastes and interests were reasonably closely aligned with those of the girls, and I felt that music played a significant role in my relationships with them. Consequently, I included questions about music and parent/child relationships both in the questionnaires and the topic sheets given to the discussion group participants. Therefore, the children who responded to the questionnaires and participated in the groups were aware that I was interested in this aspect of music, and provided answers accordingly. If I had not asked questions about music and parents, in other words, would the topic have arisen at all?

Carrying out research and writing a thesis are clearly acts of creativity. Like the musical creativities of the girls, my research and writing are performed, and require recognition by others in order to be fully creative. While aiming to represent the roles and experiences of music in the everyday lives of the girls in a 'true' way, this thesis is based on creative choices I have made. The methods and the ways they were used, the analysis and interpretation of the data, the theoretical framework and secondary sources, the structure and themes of the argument, the style of writing – all of these are subject, to a great extent, to my creative control. This thesis, in other words, is a construct of my making, and ultimately represents myself most of all. Throughout the processes of the research that have resulted in this thesis, I have made countless decisions that have resulted in the final product. Many of these decisions have been difficult as, for ethical reasons, in a factual or 'true' account, many details must be omitted or glossed over, and I have realised that fiction exists as the only arena for 'truth'. As well as my own creativity, the girls involved were also creative in their storytelling to me about themselves and music - as Tallulah said, bargaining for the girls to stay with me for more time if the boys did not come for their session: 'We'll tell stories about music if they don't come.'

Lack of space prevents a more in-depth exploration of these three themes in relation to the research, although further analysis is undoubtedly possible and relevant. Emotions, however, form and encompass every aspect of social life, including identities, relationships and creativities and, as a social process, research can be intensely emotional, for both researchers and participants. Of the four themes that form the structure of this thesis, then, the emotions involved in the research process are the most resonant, and taking account of emotions in

research entails the recognition that subjectivity is inevitable. Walkerdine (1997) disputes the belief that subjectivity in research 'interferes with, biases and distorts the truthful view of the object of study' (Walkerdine, 1997, 59). She examines the role of her own feelings in her research, both in the context of the relationships between herself and the participants, and in the act of interpreting data. The issues raised, she argues, 'challenge the claims to truth of ethnography and demonstrate that in fact the problem lies not in taking on board one's own feelings, but in not taking them on board in a systematic way' (*ibid*, 57). Instead of denying the unavoidable truth of subjectivity in research, Walkerdine suggests, 'we should think more carefully about how to utilise our subjectivity as a feature of the research process' (*ibid*, 59).

Emotions are a central concern in relation to my research in both the domestic and schools environments, and each gave rise to a particular complexity of issues. During my preparations for visiting schools as a researcher, for example, I was so preoccupied with practical concerns, such as negotiating gatekeepers and parents and obtaining clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau, that I did not focus on how I would actually feel when I finally met the children involved in the research. As an outsider and a researcher, I hoped to feel, and to be perceived as, friendly yet detached and professional. Although the schools-based research was a predominantly positive experience, I was surprised by the range of negative emotions I felt before, during and after the meetings and discussions, which included dread, embarrassment, confusion, anger and guilt. In the domestic research context, which involved my own home, my own daughter and her friends, objectivity, whether desirable or possible, was out of the question. The relationships between the girls involved strong feelings and frequent disagreements that directly affected me as a parent. Without doubt, this part of the research was highly subjective and emotion played a significant role.

In the two following sections, I explore some of the emotions involved first in the domestic research context, and second in the schools discussion groups. In the first section, I discuss mainly my own emotions as, for the girls involved in the domestic research, emotions arising from the research process were not explicitly evident. While I am aware that my interest in the girls' uses and experiences of music in their everyday lives may have had an impact on them, what this may have been is unclear. My research in the domestic context was relatively unobtrusive, and it is probable that the events that unfolded during the research period may have occurred in any case. In contrast, in the schools discussion groups, I asked some of the girls directly how they felt about being involved in the research and, because of the relative

intensity of the research experience in a small discussion group, emotions relating to the research process were more obvious than in the domestic setting. Consequently, the second section will consist mainly of a discussion of the girls' emotions in the research process.

Too close for comfort? Emotions in domestic research

In April 2004, I presented my first postgraduate colloquium paper on the ethical and methodological issues I was encountering in the early stages of carrying out my ethnographic research with Ruth and her friends. I was concerned with issues of subjectivity, power relations, exploitation, informed consent, privacy and anonymity. I had started to read about feminist research methods and felt optimistic about the possibilities offered by collaborative and participatory research, and a reflexive, self-aware approach. One of the issues, raised by a fellow student, was the potential conflict arising from my roles as parent and researcher: how would I know when to stop being one and start being the other? I responded at the time that I could foresee no such problem, as I imagined the two roles would fluidly and seamlessly weave around each other. I was positive that this research would reveal a depth of experience lacking in other studies of young people's uses of music. Access was not a problem, and I was therefore in an ideal position to observe unobtrusively the nuances and details of the ways in which my daughter and her friends used and experienced music on a daily basis. Unlike two similar studies I had read, by Baker (2001b), who relied on tape recordings constructed for her by her young informants, and Williams' (2001) interviews about music with seemingly apathetic teenagers in school, I could observe music in everyday life as it was actually experienced.

However, although it clearly provided a unique and often intimate insight into the intricacies of the roles and significance of music in everyday life, the research in my home was far from straightforward. Of all the ethical and methodological issues and dilemmas that preoccupied me throughout, the issue of my own subjectivity and the place of my emotions in this research have been the most challenging. As well as the feelings that arose from circumstances and events of our daily lives, the act of research itself evoked a range of strong emotions that made engaging with the process frequently very difficult.

The transformation of the situation at hand into a research opportunity is a well-recognised aspect of feminist research. This, suggest Fonow and Cook (1991), may be a 'survival mechanism', used by 'scholars who juggle multiple roles...to conserve scarce resources'

(Fonow and Cook, 1991, 11-13). Reflecting on her experience of carrying out participant observation research in a feminist bookshop, in which she was closely involved as a collective member, Reger (2001) considers the role of emotion in research. Initially she was confident that the bookshop would provide an ideal research situation, because of her close involvement with the place, her sense of belonging there, and the relationships of trust she had with the other collective members. This confidence, however, soon gave way to an emotional crisis, arising from her feelings of conflict between her role as a researcher and the sense of responsibility she felt towards her colleagues and customers. Like Reger, I thought the familiar setting in which I was completely immersed would provide an ideal research situation. However, difficulties arose that severely jeopardised the straightforward progress of the research. In June 2007, I reflected on these difficulties in the following passage:

> The period during which I first wrote about popular music in the lives of my daughter and her two closest friends was 2002-03. Since that time the girls have developed from 12-year-old best friends at the same primary school to 16-year-old secondary school pupils, each at a different school and no longer in regular close contact. The social fortunes of the girls have varied greatly. After leaving primary school, my daughter gradually lost close contact with her two friends, as they formed new relationships in their respective new schools, while she struggled to fit in at hers. Ruth still meets one of the girls occasionally, but the friendship with the other ended soon after the move to secondary school and has not been rekindled. The girls are still acquaintances online, but real world meetings are chance and fleeting. Since then, Ruth has befriended a girl at secondary school and, although the relationship was slow to develop, they are now reasonably close. However, this girl has family commitments that limit her leisure time and prevent her from socialising often. Consequently, Ruth has suffered several years of relative social isolation and loneliness. She has consistently disliked her secondary school and left for half a term in the school year 2004-05, as we unsuccessfully attempted to find her an alternative school. She returned eventually, and has coped well with what she finds a very troubling environment. She is currently ecstatically crossing off the last few days on the calendar, as she is about to complete her GCSEs and finally leave for good. The stress, unhappiness and instability of the last few years, then, have not been conducive to a straightforward research situation. The opportunities to research my daughter and her friends have been few, as I have not been inclined to intrude on any social situations she has found herself in, for fear of upsetting a delicate balance. Her new friend from school has visited our house several times, but she is shy and does not talk much when I'm around, so the idea of potentially jeopardising Ruth's friendship with her by asking her about music has been completely out of the question. Instead, I have relied on observation and discussions with Ruth to understand the roles music has played in their friendship and in Ruth's life during her period of isolation. Ruth is now in a happier position socially, as she has had a close relationship with her boyfriend for the past year. She still does not have the best female friend that she would like, but the end of her school "sentence" signals a potentially more positive phase about to begin.

The role of music in friendship is one of my central research themes. The disintegration of Ruth's two closest friendships, which had promised to provide such a rich source of data on the role of music in friendship, represented a serious setback to my research. Although it may appear that the difficulties could have provided even more useful information through which to explore the complexities of friendship, it was not only the crisis in the relationships which proved problematic. Like Reger in the feminist bookshop, I was diverted from the original intentions of the research by the presence of emotion. My close emotional involvement with the subject and situation of the research, and the emotional turmoil aroused by the circumstantial difficulties, created a diversion from the research process far more effective than any normal tendency to procrastinate. Reger (2001), citing Reinharz (1979), describes this as a situation of 'blocked research' caused by 'the diversion of energy from original intentions' (Reinharz, 1979, 149 cited in Reger, 2001, 611). My emotional involvement with the situation created a conflict with the requirements of the research process. As a parent, I both shared the pain and anxiety of Ruth's isolation, and felt a sense of responsibility that what was needed from me was a different kind of engagement to that of a researcher. To retire to my study and write about her use of music after a day of emotional turmoil was the last thing I wanted to do. In short, to research my daughter under these circumstances simply felt wrong. Further, as well as the pain of observing my daughter's unhappiness, and the confusion and stress caused by the apparent conflict between my parental and research roles, I was also beset by what Walkerdine (1997) calls 'fantasies', subjective projections arising from a research situation that can lead a researcher to be 'quite painfully and nostalgically catapulted back in time' by a familiar situation (Walkerdine, 1997, 66). As a teenager, I also experienced periods of social isolation such as those suffered by Ruth, so it was clearly not only my involvement as a parent that brought me uncomfortably close to the data.

Taking account of emotions in research is an aspect of the subjective approach to knowledge production central to postmodern and feminist research methods. The subjective approach not only doubts the possibility of objectivity in research, but questions its desirability. Like Walkerdine (1997), Fonow and Cook (1991) identify a 'refusal to ignore the emotional dimension of the conduct of enquiry' as one of the signature aspects of feminist research (Fonow and Cook, 1991, 9). Their aim is to 'restore the emotional dimension to the current conceptions of rationality' (ibid, 11). The difficulties I encountered during my research in my own home highlight the importance of recognising the role of emotion in research. After

reflecting on the problems in June 2007, I started the schools discussion groups and, although this research brought its own emotional challenges, resulting from the need to build relationships with new people in new environments, these did not divert me from my 'original intentions'. Although I anticipated the challenges of carrying out research in my own home focusing on my own daughter, I wasn't prepared for its emotional impact. Advocating that unpleasant or negative emotions arising from the research process should be given 'explicit attention', their meanings analysed, and the conclusions incorporated into further inquiry, Fonow and Cook argue for the 'recognition that emotions serve as a source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality' (*ibid*, 9).

So, how could the emotions I experienced while carrying out this research serve as a 'source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality'? The feelings of helplessness and sadness that beset me, both as an empathising parent and as I was 'catapulted back' to my own teenage experiences, underline the importance of acknowledging subjectivity in research. Combine these with my feelings of guilt and responsibility as a parent, and it is hardly surprising that the research 'felt wrong'. The parent-researcher role was, for me at least, perhaps too close for comfort. However, the intensity of emotion I experienced, although difficult to come to terms with, re-emphasised the importance of investigating the relationship between music and friendship in my research. A tendency to focus on positive aspects of music as experienced within young female peer groups is noticeable in popular music studies. For example, McRobbie and Garber (1991) speculate that the 'extremely tight friendship groups formed by girls' in teenybopper culture offer girls a form of sanctuary within 'the safe space of the all-female friendship group' (McRobbie and Garber, 1991, 14). Similarly, Garratt's autobiographical account of female fandom is overwhelmingly positive. For Garratt, the appeal of becoming a dedicated Bay City Rollers fan was largely a 'desire for comradeship', with the experience of being part of a mass of other girls the most memorable and important thing (Garratt, 1990, 402). Having experienced girlhood myself, and witnessed its traumas and dramas as the parent of a girl, Garratt's memories of teenage 'social reality' seem to be characterised by the elisions of nostalgia. In contrast, Hey (1997) argues for the importance of locating 'the specific practices of girls' friendship cultures on different grounds than feminine essentialism (i.e. of femininity as 'nurturance' or even rebellion)' (Hey, 1997, 19). Hey's research produces 'a far more ambivalent account of girls located in economies of friendship as sites of power *and* powerlessness' (*ibid*), and her approach to understanding girls' friendships is more relevant to my own experiences and

193

observations. The importance of gaining an understanding of the roles of music in *all* aspects of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, not only in the positive experiences of sharing and unity, is perhaps the most valuable of the insights this experience provided.

Keeping mum? Emotions in schools research

After the difficulties I experienced during the domestic research, the idea of carrying out further research in a less personal environment was very appealing. While the schools-based research did constitute a less emotionally fraught experience for me, however, it still involved a range of strong feelings. The success of my research in schools was heavily dependent on the relationships I had with the children, and while these were not exactly difficult, neither were they entirely unproblematic. Unlike the domestic research, which involved relationships that ranged from extremely intimate to very familiar, the children I met in the schools were strangers to me, as I was to them.

My first few discussions with Emma and Charlotte at the Girls' High were slightly awkward, and Charlotte particularly often seemed shy and reluctant to speak. The girls were always very polite and well-behaved, and our relationship took some time to move away from formality. As the weeks progressed, we became more relaxed with each other and they appeared to become more used to the kinds of topics I was interested in. Consequently, they seemed gradually to enjoy the discussions more, and their contributions became more thoughtful and revealing. In contrast, I often felt tired after my visits to the Mixed Comp, as the general atmosphere was chaotic. The discussions with the girls were lively and interesting; although Alisha tended to be quiet, the other two, especially Lianna, were confident and talkative. They were friendly towards me and, after a couple of meetings, agreed that the discussions were 'good'. The environment was far from ideal, as during lesson changes, the noise in the corridor outside almost drowned out the discussion in the room. Once, we were interrupted by a group of girls knocking urgently on the door to relate a classroom trauma to the girls inside. It seemed to be my decision to determine how long the sessions lasted, and they often continued longer than I intended, as the girls begged for more time away from their lessons. It seemed that no one was around to supervise them apart from me, which often made me feel out of my depth. I did not want to behave like a teacher, although their tendency to call me 'Miss' implies that this was how they saw me, and suggests further that their friendly and familiar attitude towards me was characteristic of the

relations between the children and teachers in the school. At the Catholic High school, I was made to feel very welcome by Bernie Watson, and the girls were friendly. The disagreements between them were hard to handle, however, and I sometimes felt confused about what was going on.

In all of the discussion groups, I was able, both by direct questioning and observation, to glean some insight into emotional aspects of the research experience for the girls. The fact that the sessions were recorded, for example, was a source of various emotions. They initially expressed some interest in the recorder, different from their own portable technologies by virtue of its unusual cigar shape, and most of them wanted to hear what their recorded voices sounded like. Playback typically evoked embarrassment and horror, from me also. Lianna was apprehensive about having her voice recorded at first:

> Lianna: Is that your recorder?
> Helen: Yes this is my recorder.
> Lianna: Is it on now?
> Helen: It is yeah.
> Lianna: I'll sound horrible.
> Helen: I know, it's always a bit shocking when you hear your own voice recorded isn't it? But you get used to it - after we've chatted for a bit we can have a listen to it.

Similarly, although Emma and Charlotte both agreed to the discussions being recorded, their initial awkwardness may well have been due in part to the presence of the voice recorder. Indeed, after requesting playback of the recording of the first discussion, the girls collapsed into giggles and hid behind their hands at the sound of their own disembodied voices. Eventually, though, the recorder seemed to be forgotten about as the discussions got going. Apart from Olivia's insistence on the recorder being turned off when she performed her rap, for the girls at the Catholic High, the recorder was not obviously an issue in terms of them disliking the sounds of their voices. Rather, they feared the repercussions of their utterances being preserved and sensitive information leaking to people outside of the group, as the following two examples suggest:

> Olivia: Because of her breaking the car I can't have it.
> Lucy: I didn't break the car.
> Olivia: You did.
> Lucy: This is being recorded, shut up.
> Olivia: My mum's not going to hear that is she?

Rachel: Olivia...please.
Olivia: What?
Rachel: You were gonna say something but I was gonna say it's recording so don't.
Olivia: I'm not gonna say it.

Sometimes, however, the fact that the discussion was recorded was actively used for their own purposes. During the particularly chaotic and confrontational meeting, Olivia picked up the recorder and sang into it several times, and Lucy spoke directly into it to emphasise a point, indicating clearly that, if recorded speech was potentially dangerous, she aimed to make life difficult for Olivia:

Lucy: [to Olivia] Thought you hated Bella [speaks loudly directly into recorder] Bella Roberts that is.
L: No I don't though.
M: You do though.
L: I used to.
M: You still do, that's what you told us.

Clearly, although they sometimes seemed to forget about the research context, the girls in the discussion groups were often highly aware of the fact that their conversations were recorded. While some of them used this fact strategically to gain attention or threaten one of the others, more strongly felt was the great importance of guarded speech.

The level of openness the girls displayed was particularly evident in relation to information-sharing about their parents. Emotions are socially constitutive, and the emotional tone of the discussions sessions seemed to be established by a link between the size of the group and the level of trust between the participants, and the extent to which the girls were willing to discuss their attitudes towards their parents' music taste was a good indicator of this. Best friends Emma and Charlotte, for example, gave relatively candid accounts both of their relationships with their parents and their attitudes to their parents' music. Likewise, at the Catholic High, the three girls who participated in pair discussions, Rachel, Bethany and Olivia, were the most open about their parents' music. Conversely, Lucy participated only in group discussions involving three or four other girls, and gave away strikingly little about her parents' taste in music. Similarly, the discussions at the Mixed Comp always involved all three girls, who were unforthcoming with regard to parents and music taste.

The correlation between the positive relationships enjoyed by Emma, Charlotte and Bethany with their parents, and their liking for and incorporation of their parents' music taste into their

own, is reasonably straightforward. These accounts, however, were offered within the relative safety of pair discussions, the effect of which must be acknowledged. Emma and Charlotte were very close friends and seemed to agree on most things. Their discussions were civilised and co-operative, with each other and with me. They spent a lot of time with each other, not only at school, clubs and sports centres, but also in each other's houses and family cars. Therefore, they were both familiar with the music listened to by each other's families, and accepting of it. At the Catholic High, the group dynamic certainly had an effect on the attitudes adopted and information divulged in discussions about parents and music. Rachel and Bethany were the quietest of the four girls, and Bethany's description of her close affinity with her parents' music taste was given in a meeting when only she and Rachel were present.

Similarly, Rachel's accounts of her family relationships occur in the quieter meetings, when she was with either just Bethany or just Olivia. In the first unrecorded meeting at the Catholic High, at which all four girls were present, as well as the teenage boy Cameron, Rachel told me that her mum liked 'terrible music' such as the Jam, Elvis and REM, and also that her mum was a terrible singer. The next time we met, however, when only she and Bethany were present, her description of her mum's taste in music was much more positive, as we have seen:

> Rachel: My mum has got a very mixed thing cos she likes Eminem and then she likes Elvis, but then she likes REM and OMD and Spandau Ballet and like Squeeze and just all the bands from the 80s, and the 60s, but she likes more from the 80s, she likes all them.
> [...]
> Rachel: I like the song 'Cool for cats', it's boss.
> Helen: Yeah I like that, there's another song by them called 'Take me I'm yours' do you know that?
> Rachel: Yeah [sings quietly] 'Take me I'm yours cos dreams are made of this'.
> Helen: That's right.
> Rachel: I like that one. My mum always puts it on while she's cleaning up so I always sing along to it upstairs cos she has it on like a hundred.

As with Bethany, her singing along to the music her mum plays demonstrates her acceptance and incorporation of it. Her singing in the discussion group of the song that I expressed a liking for, furthermore, could show a similar positive attitude towards me, and an acceptance of the research situation. However, her continuing description of the domestic soundscape took on a tone of frustration and irritation as she complained about her mum's tendency to

play her music loud: 'You're trying to sleep or something in the night and she puts it on to annoy you'. She seemed to be close to her mum, despite the fraught domestic atmosphere she described, and more often than any of the other girls, she mentioned explicitly her mum's preferences and opinions. In a discussion with Bethany about the Leona Lewis song 'The first time ever I saw your face', for example, Rachel offered the following information: 'My mum likes that song but she likes it by Roberta Flack'. Similarly, in discussions about topics ranging from music magazines to Liverpool city centre, Rachel was open about sharing her mum's opinions. Of all the girls I met with at schools, I met Rachel most often, and in the greatest variety of group sizes – two, three and four. Therefore, Rachel shared her experiences with me and the other girls within the widest range of group dynamics, which could explain why her accounts of her relationship with her mum and her mum's music taste were the most complex and varied.

Of the four girls in the All Saints discussion groups, Lucy revealed the least about her parents' music taste. She was the only child at home with her mum and dad, and she represented her relationship with them as somewhat distant: 'I don't really spend that much time with my mum and dad, like just sitting talking to them, I get bored after a while'. Consequently, she seemed to have little interest in discussing them, particularly in relation to music, and only once mentioned briefly her mum's music taste:

> Helen: So is country music quite popular music among people that you know, like your parents?
> Olivia: Yeah, Duffy, Duffy.
> Rachel: No.
> Lucy: My mum likes it like but...
> Rachel: My dad likes the Jam.
> Lucy: Can anyone beat box?

Despite her apparent lack of desire to discuss her own parents' music taste, however, Lucy offered an interesting opinion concerning the role of parent's music in young people's lives:

> Lucy: To be honest like I reckon everyone in the school, cos their mums and dads will listen to old music and they like but they're just not too big to say it, that's what I think.

Lucy included herself only implicitly in this insight, and her ambiguous phrasing emphasises the problematic nature of representations of family relationships, not only in the context of school-based discussions, but in the school context as well. Emma and Charlotte, staying

behind after school to talk to me, were clearly at ease in school, and secure in their relationship with each other; therefore, their discussions of family relationships were more open and free. For the girls at the Mixed Comp and the Catholic High, on the other hand, the school environment was more challenging, which is why they took the opportunity to miss lessons or stay in at lunchtime to participate in the discussion groups, and their friendships with each other were less harmonious. Accessing and revealing family information may sometimes be too emotional, weakening the tough exterior needed for survival in a hostile environment. It could be argued, therefore, that the more threatened the girls felt, both in the school and discussion group environments, the less easy it was for them to talk about their parents.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationships between emotions and music in the everyday lives of the girls, and the role of emotions in the research processes that elicited the data upon which the thesis is based. While emotions clearly have a biological component, as the body reacts to stimuli with physical responses, these responses, their meanings and resulting actions are learned within particular environments, some of which are social and cultural, but not all (Milton, 2007). Music, however, is a social process – it is created and made meaningful by humans within social relationships – and so the social aspects of emotion, particularly the idea that emotions and the social world are mutually constructed, have been the focus. Emotional responses to music are predominant over cognitive responses, and social context is crucial to emotional experiences of music. Emotions provide a 'bridge between the individual and the world' (Tiedens and Leach, 2004, 2), between self and social identities, and music, acting as a 'medium' for achieving 'emotional work' (DeNora, 2001, 171), can be used as part of the bridging process. Music can be used actively to manage emotional states, to express, confirm, enhance and create emotions, and emotions also arise from experiences of music in everyday life, particularly from negotiations of self and social identities that take place in relationships and creative practices.

The second section of this chapter focused on emotions in the research processes. It began by arguing that all four of the aspects of music in everyday life that form the structure of this thesis are relevant and applicable to an examination of research processes, as identities, relationships, creativities and emotions all play a part in how the research is carried out and

understood. Emotions, however, imbue every aspect of social life, arising out of and feeding into identities, relationships and creativities; as a social process, research can be highly emotional for both researchers and participants. The emotional impact of the domestic research was the origin of my interest in the role of emotion in research, and the challenges of researching my daughter and her friends were multifaceted. The implications of the changing relationships between Ruth and her friends were practical, in that they presented significant obstacles for my research. Ruth's emotional pain at finding herself socially isolated was painful for me, as I struggled to find ways to help her. Added to this, the experience brought back memories of the social circumstances of my own teenage years, when I found myself in a similar situation to Ruth for a period of time. Researching in schools, in contrast, was less emotionally intense for me, although emotions were generated inevitably from the social circumstances of the discussion groups. In this phase of the research, the emotions of the participants in relation to the research were more evident. Many of them seemed to enjoy the experience of discussing music with me in a group with their friends, although they clearly sometimes felt embarrassed, shy, irritated and angry. The ways in which they discussed the music taste of their parents provided a good indication of their feelings of emotional security within the group, as their willingness to talk about, and identify with, their parents' music fluctuated according to group size and membership.

Taking account of emotions in research is essential, as the relationships between the research processes, the data, and how the data is analysed, interpreted, selected from and written about, are greatly dependent on the emotions involved. While this thesis aims to represent in as true a way as possible the roles and experiences of music in the everyday lives of the young teenage girls who participated in the research, the account is necessarily filtered through the lens of the countless emotions I have experienced throughout the process. For example, as well as the painful memories evoked by Ruth's friendship dilemmas, this thesis has been shaped by many other memories from my teenage years that arose during the research process, as the girls talked about their uses and experiences of music in their everyday lives. Fran's annoyance with people who liked the same music as her, Olivia silently moving her lips in school assemblies, Tallulah and Lianna playing loud music to mask unidentified noises in an empty house – I selected each of these particular experiences from the data, not only because they are interesting, but also because they sparked memories of experiences of my own, memorable because of their powerful emotional resonances. Emotions, in Milton's (2007) words 'drive me to do what I do in my everyday life' (Milton,

2007, 61). The experiences and uses of music in everyday life, the ways in which it operates within negotiations of identities, relationships and creativities, and the processes involved in carrying out and writing research all shape, and are shaped by, emotions.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has built on existing research into girls' cultures by exploring young teenage girls' uses and experiences of music in everyday life. The two key aims of this thesis have been, firstly, to explore the role and significance of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, particularly in relation to identities, relationships, creativities and emotions; and, secondly, to consider the relationships between the research findings and methods, the methodological issues that arose, and the role of emotions in the research processes. This thesis has argued that music plays a vital role in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, particularly in their social relationships, which are central to understanding what and how music means. Social relationships, it has argued, play an intense and formative role in the lives of children and young people, providing contexts for negotiating identities, exploring creativities, and experiencing emotions, in all of which music plays a central role. Further, in researching this role, this thesis has argued that it is crucially important to consider the relationship between research processes and data.

The first chapter, 'Methodology', began by describing in detail the story of the research process: the research participants, the environments in which the research took place, and the various research methods used. The research process was far from straightforward, taking several twists and turns, and giving rise to a wide range of methodological issues and challenges, which were discussed in the second part of the chapter. Each research phase brought specific advantages and challenges in relation to methods, access and ethics. The domestic research initially overcame the issue of accessing young people for ethnographic research and afforded a level of intimacy and insight that was particularly valuable; however, conflict and estrangement between the participants, and the complexities of the parent-researcher role made sustaining the research situation problematic. The questionnaire research was disappointing in that it did not to lead to face-to-face discussions as intended; however, it yielded some interesting quantitative data that informed and supported the qualitative data from the domestic and schools discussions research, and provided a useful insight into the ways different research methods produce different levels of data. Despite some difficulties gaining and maintaining access, the schools-based discussion groups were the most straightforwardly informative of the three research methods. The discussions offered a wealth of detail relating to the girls' uses of music, both in school and elsewhere, as well as opportunities to observe their uses of music in their interactions with each other in the

school environment. Alongside the ethical issues associated with access, the ethical considerations of researching children and young people were addressed using a framework proposed by Alderson and Morrow (2005). As they point out, 'Ethics raises questions rather than providing answers, though it offers methods of addressing the questions' (Alderson and Morrow, 2005, 4), and it is certainly the case that, although I took account of ethical considerations as much as possible, numerous issues remained unresolved. Taking a reflexive approach to research processes, therefore, the final chapter 'Emotions' included a discussion of the emotional fallout from the processes, both for me as a parent-researcher and for the girls who participated.

The second chapter 'Identities' focused on the ways in which music is used to forge identities, particularly in relation to age and gender. This chapter established the argument that identities are socially constructed, and explored some of the ways music is involved with this, before moving on in the subsequent chapter 'Relationships' to explore the roles of music in specific social relationships. In 'Identities', it was argued that identities are constructed in a continuous process of identity work, which involves telling the narrative of the self both to the self and to others: social processes in which music plays a crucial role. Both gender and age were significant in the identity work of the girls, as they struggled with both the liminal phase of early teenagerhood, and the confusions and contradictions of young femininities. Uses of music as a technology of self and as a form of cultural capital were prevalent in their everyday lives, as they negotiated and managed their self and social identities through their music tastes and their listening, sharing and ownership practices, for which they used numerous technologies in a range of creative ways.

An examination of how music is used in the girls' everyday close relationships, particularly with parents and friends, formed the basis of the next chapter 'Relationships'. Building on the idea that identities are negotiated within social interaction, this chapter explored the roles of music in the girls' relationships with their parents and friends, arguing that there were significant differences between these. In relationships with parents, the 'generation gap' seemed to be most evident in relation to modes and means of acquisition, listening and sharing, rather than music taste. While music taste was important to an extent in some of the parent/child relationships, roles of music in these relationships primarily revolved around access to technologies, negotiating control of the domestic soundscapes of the home and the car. Within their friendships, in contrast, music taste was crucial. Girls' friendships can be

particularly emotionally intense, and it was clear that issues of sameness and difference were vitally important in their friendships. Music played a crucial role in their efforts to achieve both unity and distinction of identities within their friendship groups, both offline and online.

The chapter 'Creativities' explored the everyday musical creativities of the girls, and their sense of how their own and each other's identities as creative individuals were negotiated within their relationships. As discussed in the previous two chapters, creativity was clearly integral to the girls' uses of music in self and social identity work, as a technology of self and a form of cultural capital, both offline and online. This chapter, however, considered musical creativities, focusing specifically on their musical practices and performances. Although not all of them were musically creative in formal or educational contexts, performance practices, including singing and rapping, musical instrument playing and dancing, were important to all of them to varying degrees. Their identities as musically creative individuals were negotiated within and shifted according to the social contexts of both their everyday relationships and their perceptions of age and gender norms.

In the final chapter 'Emotions' the relationships between emotions and music in the everyday lives of the girls, and the role of emotions in the research processes were examined. This chapter argued that emotions are socially constituted and provide a bridge between the individual and the world. Music, acting as a medium for achieving emotional work, can be used as part of the bridging process. The girls in this research used music actively to manage emotional states, to confirm, enhance, vent or disperse particular emotions. As well as this, emotions arose from their experiences of music in everyday life, particularly from negotiations of identities that took place in their relationships and creative practices. The processes that generated this data produced, and were produced by, emotions, and these were discussed in relation to the research findings. In the domestic context, my own emotional responses to the difficulties arising from conflicts between Ruth and her friends presented a significant obstacle to the research process that could not be ignored. In the schools discussion groups, the role of emotions was evident in the girls' levels of willingness to talk openly and positively about their parents' music tastes.

Two possible areas for further research have arisen during the process of producing this thesis. First, although the scope of the thesis has precluded a more in-depth consideration of issues of identities, relationships and creativities in relation to the research processes, this

would be a worthwhile and interesting endeavour. Second, in the context of current debates about the increasing sexual objectification and hypersexualisation of young girls in particular, it seems important to investigate the role in this of popular music. This issue was referred to in the 'Identities' chapter, but not explored fully as it did not emerge clearly from the data. Considering the crucial importance of music in experiences and negotiations of identities, relationships, creativities and emotions in the everyday lives of the girls in this study, however, it is likely that music plays a role of some kind. Ethnographic research with young teenage girls and boys, therefore, investigating the current relationship between sexuality and popular music, would be timely and valuable.

Finding music to be of crucial importance in the everyday lives of young teenage girls could be seen as a by-product of the intense and exclusive focus of the research lens on music's role. This thesis has aimed at reflexivity, however, and has argued for the importance of examining the relationships between data and research processes. The effects of the fact that this research has focused on music, therefore, is taken into account when considering the girls' representations and my interpretations. This thesis has argued, in other words, that music is greatly important in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, while acknowledging the influence of the research processes on this finding.

This thesis has highlighted the complexity and importance of the role of music in the everyday lives of young teenage girls, and contributes to the body of existing work on gender and music by considering girls in the specific developmental phase between childhood and youth. Further, it has focused more strongly on how music is used, experienced and understood in the social contexts of the close relationships of everyday life, exploring the role of music in relationships between friends, and between girls and their parents. Under the focused attention of ethnographic research with young teenage girls, the 'ordinary, banal' practices of everyday life identified by Hesmondhalgh (2002, 117) as requiring further consideration are as complex and intense as any of the 'spectacular and supposedly rebellious uses' of music previously studied (*ibid*). The research carried out in 2008/09 on behalf of UK Music found that music was the form of entertainment most important to young people (Bahanovich and Collopy, 2009, 6). Beyond being an important form of entertainment, however, this thesis has argued that music is a social process that plays a vital role in the everyday lives of young teenage girls. Despite the relative ease with which they are able to acquire, consume, share and disown music using new technologies, music is not devalued,

but rather plays a central role in their social relationships. In the everyday lives of young teenage girls, then, engaging with music - acquiring and listening to music, owning and sharing music, liking and disliking music, knowing about and performing music - is more significant than their engagement with any other cultural form or practice. By engaging with the social processes and practices of music, they also engage *through* music, in relation to identities, relationships, creativities and emotions, all of which are embedded, intertwined and negotiated within social life, and vividly experienced in their everyday lives.

APPENDICES

1. White Horses screen shot
2. Music questionnaire
3. Mixed Comp letter to parents pre-Ethics Committee
4. Discussions and topics handout pre-Ethics Committee
5. Girls' High letter to parents pre-Ethics Committee
6. Responses to Ethics Committee comments
7. Discussions and topics handout post-Ethics Committee
8. Mixed Comp letter to parents post-Ethics Committee
9. Girls' High letter to parents post-Ethics Committee
10. Child consent form

Appendix 1 – White Horses screen shot

Winte...

When you gonna make up your mind?
When you gonna love you
As much as I do
When you gonna make up your mind?
Cause things are gonna change so fast
All the white horses are still in bed
I'll tell you that I always want you n...
You say that things change
My dear...

Music Questionnaire

I am a PhD student at Liverpool University and I'm doing some research into teenagers and music. It would really help me if you could answer the following questions. Please answer as fully as you can.

If you need to write on both sides of the paper, just put the question number next to your answer.

Name_____   Female / Male (please circle)

1.   How often do you listen to music?

2.   When do you listen to music? (e.g. as soon as you wake up, at lunchtime, as soon as you get home, etc.)

3.   What kind(s) of music do you listen to?

4. Who are your favourite bands/artists at the moment?

5. Why do you like the music you like?

6. What kind of equipment do you use to listen to music?
(please tick all that apply)

- [ ] iPod / MP3 player
- [ ] Home stereo
- [ ] Computer
- [ ] Radio
- [ ] TV
- [ ] Car stereo
- [ ] Walkman

Any others? (please describe)

7. Where do you listen to music? – e.g. on the bus, in the car, in your bedroom, at friends' houses, etc.

8. Have you been to a gig? If so, how many? Who with? To see...?

9. How do you discover new music?

10. Do you buy music? If so, where from?

11. Do you swap music? If so, who with?

12. Do you download music? If so, where from? (e.g. Limewire, iTunes, MySpace, band websites, etc.)

13. What kind of music do your friends like?

14. What do your parents think about the music you listen to?

15. What do you think about the music your parents listen to?

16. If you have brothers and sisters, what do you think of their music? What do they think of yours?

17. Do you play a musical instrument? If so, what is it? Where/when do you play it? If you don't, why not? Would you like to? Do you think you ever will?

After the summer holidays, when you are in Year 8, I'd like to arrange some discussions with you about music.

If you would like to be involved in these discussions, which could be one-to-one or in small groups, please tick below:

❑ Yes I would like to be involved
❑ No I wouldn't like to be involved

Thanks for answering my questions. Have a great summer!

Helen

Appendix 3 – Mixed Comp letter to parents pre-Ethics Committee

Dear Parent / Guardian

I am currently employed in the Music Department at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, as well as teaching part-time in the Department of Music at Liverpool University. As part of my PhD in Music at the University of Liverpool, I am carrying out discussions and interviews with young teenagers about music. I am interested in how they use technology, what kinds of music they like, and the roles music plays in their friendships.

Mixed Comp School has kindly agreed to set up a weekly lunchtime club for me to do this, over a period of several months leading up to the summer break of 2007. I hope to involve the students in discussions about music, and I will take notes and also record the conversations using a digital voice recorder.

I will include what I learn from the students in my writing, but I will keep the identities of the students anonymous. Anything I write that involves information gathered at *Mixed Comp* will be made available for students and parents to read.

If you are willing to let your child participate in this research, please complete the permissions form below.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Helen Davies

Music Discussion Club Permissions Form

I / We give permission for _____ to take part in the music discussion club held at *Mixed Comp* School. I / We understand that the identities of the participants will not be disclosed, and agree that the results of the research can be used in teaching or formal publication.

Signed (parent/guardian 1) _____

Signed (parent/guardian 2) _____

Date _____

Music Discussions

What are the discussions for?

These discussions and interviews are to help me to find out more about music in young people's lives. I'm writing about this as part of the PhD which I'm doing at Liverpool University.

What will the discussions be like?

I already have a few ideas of what I'd like to find out about, but I'm mostly interested in listening to you talking about what music means to you in your life. Usually I will talk to you and one or two of your friends in a small group.

If we decide to create a MySpace account for the discussion group, then you can put your thoughts on there as well.

We will talk about how you feel in the discussion groups after every session, so you can let me know if there's anything you'd like to change about the way we're doing things.

How will the discussions be used?

I will record the discussions we have so I can listen to them again later and write down what everyone said, then I can think about it more easily.

The writing I do about our discussions will be included in my PhD thesis, which once completed, will be read by some of the Music Lecturers at Liverpool University. I may also use the writing about our discussions in lessons I give at the university and LIPA, and in conference presentations. I will tell you about anything I write based on our discussions, and you can read it yourself if you want to.

When I'm writing about our discussions, I won't use your real name, or the real name of the school.

What if I don't want to carry on with the discussions?

If you decide at any time that you don't want to take part in the discussions anymore, then you don't have to.

Discussion topics

Listening to music

- When do you listen to music?
- What equipment do you use to listen to music?
- Where do you listen to music?

Getting music

- How do you get to hear new music?
- Do you buy music? If so, where from?
- Do you download music? If so, where from?

Your music

- What kind of music do you listen to most?
- Who are your favourite bands/artists at the moment?
- Why do you like this music?

Other people's music

- What kind of music do your friends like?
- What do your parents think about your music?
- What do you think about your parents' music?
- If you have brothers and sisters, do you like the same music?

Making music

- Do you play a musical instrument?
- If you do, what instrument is it? Where and when do you play it?
- If you don't play an instrument, why not? Would you like to?
- Do you think you ever will?

Talking about music

- Do you talk about music with your friends or family?
- How does it feel to talk about music in this group?
- Is there anything else to do with music you'd like to talk about?

Appendix 5 – Girls' High letter to parents pre-Ethics Committee

Dear Parents,

I have been approached by Helen Davies, a visiting lecturer from Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA). Helen is currently undertaking her PhD in Music at the University of Liverpool. As part of her research project, she is looking for a group of 12-14 year olds in order to find out how music affects the everyday lives of teenagers.

We have decided that we will help Helen in her further studies by providing her with an after school group in order for her to ask the children the necessary questions she needs for her research. This after school club will be taking place every ...... of the school term, until the summer holidays. A healthy snack will be provided by the school for all participants. School have verified that Helen is up to date with her CRB check. I will also be present whilst the club is taking place.

The discussions will be recorded, both in writing and using a digital voice recorder. The results of the research may be used in teaching, presentations and formal publications, and will be made available to participants, their parents/guardians and the school, in an agreed and appropriate form. The anonymity of the participants will be upheld, if this requested.

Your child's participation in this research gives her an insight into the kind of work that is required at university level. It will also improve key employability skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, team work and reliability and punctuality. All that we ask of your daughter is that she shows a full commitment to the research project by turning up regularly. It also means that school will have a contact at LIPA which we see as a valuable resource.

If you agree to your daughter taking part in this research, please complete the parental consent form below. Should it be necessary, places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Abby Johnson
Careers/Aim Higher/Study Support Co-ordinator

Music Discussion Club Consent Form

I / We give permission for _____ to take part in the music discussion club held at *Girls' High* School. I / We agree that the results of the research can be used in teaching or formal publication, and the identities of participants will not be disclosed if this is requested.

Signed (parent/guardian 1) _____

Signed (parent/guardian 2) _____

Date _____

217

Appendix 6 – Response to Ethics Committee comments

Responses to RETH000110 Reviewer Comments - 20/11/2007

Reviewer 1

Mandatory

1. There doesn't appear to be any mechanism of gaining consent from the students themselves. While the Schools have agreed, and parental consent is sought, no provision is made for the children.
   An additional consent form specifically for the children to sign will be given to those children wishing to participate, along with the information sheet.

2. The information sheet mentions a MySpace account, but this is not mentioned in the application, or in the letters to parents. Please clarify.
   This has now been removed from the information sheet and will not be pursued.

3. Discussion Topics: what is the responsibility of the applicant if students reveal illegal activity (eg. breaching copyright material by 'burning' or illegally downloading music)? Please clarify.
   I would not report any such illegal activity disclosed to me by the participants, and would maintain confidentiality with the use of pseudonyms for participating pupils and schools in any writing or presentations. I have amended the information sheet and consent forms to reflect this.

Advisory
3. F3: Marion Leonard will have access to the data. Marion's role in the project is unclear, and she is not mentioned anywhere else in the application.
   Marion Leonard is the second PhD supervisor – I have amended the application form to clarify this (F3).

4. Letter to *Girls' High* parents: the paragraph starting with *"Your child's participation ..."* suggests that there are benefits to the students; these are inconsistent with the benefits as outlined in D6 of the application form.
   I have deleted this paragraph.

5. Letter to *Mixed Comp*: probably should include reassurance of CRB check.
   I have added this to the letter.

Reviewer 2

1. The study is not clearly defined as a qualitative study. The methods comprise paired interviews/focus groups, but there is no clearly stated methodology or an account of where it is situated within qualitative methods - while this is important for the academic nature of the study/qualification it is also important for the participants. Since nowadays kids fall out over the brand of clothes they wear it is possible (perhaps unlikely) that the focus groups may generate heated debate - how will this be handled and what happens if some children in the group feel distressed because of the attitude of other kids in the group to their choice of music. I think the

researcher needs the methodology of focus groups to enable them to understand the dynamics that develop within such groups and the importance of strategies to handle them.

The purpose of the discussions is not to instigate heated debate, but rather to allow small groups of friends to talk about music in their lives. Rather than the focus group, the method used can be described more accurately as the planned discussion group. O'Reilly (2005, 132-135)[20] identifies the key differences between focus groups and planned discussion groups (PDGs)as follows: the number of participants in PDGs is likely to be smaller in order for the discussion to be more manageable; the participants in a PDG are more likely to be a naturally occurring group rather than a group specifically chosen because of their relation to the topic; participants in a PDG are unlikely to be strangers; in a PDG the researcher is more likely to learn from spontaneous interaction, rather than controlling/directing the discussion; a PDG is usually conducted in a setting with which the participants are familiar rather than an institutional setting. I have amended the application form to clarify this (B2).

The *Abby Johnson* letter needs the penultimate paragraph deleting - it is coercive and it should actually be replaced by your child has a right to withdraw at any stage.
I have removed the paragraph and replaced it with the required statement.

2. The Information sheet has no researcher contact details attached and has a reference to a MySpace account - is this an internet type chatroom???? Not sure but it is not mentioned in the protocol and we would need more information on this if it were.
Mixed Comp School requested that I remove my contact details from the information sheet and consent letter, as they wanted enquiries to go directly to them. I understand this is to protect my own privacy. For parity, I removed them from the *Girls' High* documents as well.
I have removed the reference to the MySpace account from the information sheet and this aspect of the research will not be pursued.

Also instead of just stating that the PhD thesis will be read by some music lecturers in the Dept of Music at the Univ of Liverpool it would be more straightforward to say that once completed and examined it will be available through the University Library for anyone to read.
I have amended the information sheet as suggested.

These are my main comments all of which **must** be addressed.

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[20] O'REILLY, K. (2005), *Ethnographic Methods*. London: Routledge.

Music Discussions

What are the discussions for?

These discussions and interviews are to help me to find out more about music in young people's lives. I'm writing about this as part of the PhD which I'm doing at Liverpool University.

What will the discussions be like?

I already have a few ideas of what I'd like to find out about, but I'm mostly interested in listening to you talking about what music means to you in your life. Usually I will talk to you and one or two of your friends in a small group.

We will talk about how you feel in the discussion groups after every session, so you can let me know if there's anything you'd like to change about the way we're doing things.

How will the discussions be used?

I will record the discussions we have so I can listen to them again later and write down what everyone said, then I can think about it more easily.

The writing I do about our discussions will be included in my PhD thesis, which once completed, will be available through Liverpool University library for anyone to read. I may also use the writing about our discussions in lessons I give at the university and LIPA, and in conference presentations. I will tell you about anything I write based on our discussions, and you can read it yourself if you want to.

When I'm writing about our discussions, I won't use your real name, or the real name of the school. If you tell me that you download music illegally, or make copies of CDs, I may include this information in my writing, but I won't use your real name.

What if I don't want to carry on with the discussions?

If you decide at any time that you don't want to take part in the discussions anymore, then you don't have to.

Discussion topics

Listening to music

- When do you listen to music?
- What equipment do you use to listen to music?
- Where do you listen to music?

Getting music

- How do you get to hear new music?
- Do you buy music? If so, where from?
- Do you download music? If so, where from?

Your music

- What kind of music do you listen to most?
- Who are your favourite bands/artists at the moment?
- Why do you like this music?

Other people's music

- What kind of music do your friends like?
- What do your parents think about your music?
- What do you think about your parents' music?
- If you have brothers and sisters, do you like the same music?

Making music

- Do you play a musical instrument?
- If you do, what instrument is it? Where and when do you play it?
- If you don't play an instrument, why not? Would you like to?
- Do you think you ever will?

Talking about music

- Do you talk about music with your friends or family?
- How does it feel to talk about music in this group?
- Is there anything else to do with music you'd like to talk about?

Appendix 8 – Mixed Comp letter to parents post-Ethics Committee

Dear Parent / Guardian

I am a part-time lecturer at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts and Liverpool University, where I am also undertaking my PhD. As part of my research project I am carrying out discussions and interviews with young teenagers about music. I am interested in how they use technology, what kinds of music they like, and the roles music plays in their friendships.

Mixed Comp School has kindly agreed to set up a weekly lunchtime club for me to do this. I hope to involve the students in discussions about music, and I will take notes and also record the conversations using a digital voice recorder.

Mixed Comp School arranged a Criminal Records Bureau check on my behalf, which is clear and up to date.

I will include what I learn from the students in my writing, but the identities of the students will not be disclosed. Anything I write that involves information gathered at *Mixed Comp* will be made available for students and parents to read. Any disclosure by the students of activity such as illegal music downloading will remain confidential.

If you are willing to let your child participate in this research, please complete the permission form below.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely
Helen Davies

Music Discussion Club Permission Form

I / We give permission for _____ to take part in the music discussion club held at *Mixed Comp* School. I / We understand that the identities of the participants will not be disclosed, and agree that the results of the research can be used in teaching or formal publication.

Signed (parent/guardian 1) _____

Signed (parent/guardian 2) _____

Date _____

Appendix 9 – Girls' High letter to parents post-Ethics Committee

Dear Parents,

I have been approached by Helen Davies, a visiting lecturer from Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA). Helen is currently undertaking her PhD in Music at the University of Liverpool. As part of her research project, she is looking for a group of 12-14 year olds in order to find out how music affects the everyday lives of teenagers.

We have decided that we will help Helen in her further studies by providing her with an after school group in order for her to ask the children the necessary questions she needs for her research. This after school club will be taking place every ...... of the school term, until the summer holidays. A healthy snack will be provided by the school for all participants. School have verified that Helen is up to date with her CRB check. I will also be present whilst the club is taking place.

The discussions will be recorded, both in writing and using a digital voice recorder. The results of the research may be used in teaching, presentations and formal publications, and will be made available to participants, their parents/guardians and the school, in an agreed and appropriate form. The anonymity of the participants will be upheld. Any disclosure by the participants of activity such as illegal music downloading will remain confidential.

If you agree to your daughter taking part in this research, please complete the parental consent form below. Should it be necessary, places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

If your daughter decides she no longer wishes to take part in this research, she is free to withdraw at any time.

Abby Johnson
Careers/Aim Higher/Study Support Co-ordinator

Music Discussion Club Consent Form

I / We give permission for _____ to take part in the music discussion club held at *Girls' High* School. I / We agree that the results of the research can be used in teaching or formal publication, and the identities of participants will not be disclosed.

Signed (parent/guardian 1) _____

Signed (parent/guardian 2) _____

Date _____

Music Discussions

I am willing to participate in discussions about music with Helen Davies.
I have read the information sheet and understand what is involved.
I understand that if I decide I don't want to take part in the discussions any more, I am free to leave at any time.

Signed
Name of pupil …………………………………………………………………………..
School ……………………………………………………………………….
Date ………………………………………………

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