MEN DOING BANDS: MAKING, SHAPING AND PERFORMING MASCULINITIES THROUGH POPULAR MUSIC

Danijela BOGDANOVIC

Ph.D. Thesis 2009
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Danijela BOGDANOVIC

Institute for Social, Cultural and Policy Research (ISCPR)
School of English, Sociology, Politics and Contemporary History
University of Salford, Salford, UK

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May 2009
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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to The University of Salford for the Graduate Teaching Assistantship which allowed me to embark on this journey, experiencing field research and developing my teaching practice. My supervisor, Brian Longhurst, has provided invaluable support and guidance during many stages of the research process. I am grateful for the constructive, informative and enlightening dialogue we had over the years. My wonderful partner, Laurence Brewer, has been accommodating, patient and encouraging as well as generous in sharing his musical knowledge and artefacts. Finally, I am most thankful to the musicians who kindly gave their time and played some great tunes along the way.
Abstract

Informed by the interdisciplinarity inherent in popular music studies, the thesis relies on qualitative research methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interview to examine popular music masculinities. Methodologically, it is underpinned by a sociological understanding of music as practice as well as a process of enculturation, permeated by manifold musical and identity forming activities. Through an examination of a range of music settings such as those of "the band", live performance and online presence, the thesis foregrounds the multiplicity of "everyday" musical masculinities thus shifting the focus away from the most visible, popularised and the spectacular masculine types.

The key themes addressed by ethnographic and participatory inquiry include: gender acculturating activities such as listening and collecting of musical knowledge and artefacts, and socialising in popular music spaces; gendering through musical practices inherent within a setting of the band; performing live and authenticating masculinities through series of verbal, visual and musical strategies; and embracing novel representational tools such as social networking sites to increase the band's visibility and represent the male body. By engaging with music as practice and music in context of everyday life, and by understanding gender as constituted through a series of culturally and musically informed activities, the thesis demonstrates that a wide range of masculine gender identities comprise creative and cultural dynamics within bands.

Finally, the thesis maintains the dialogue with the existing writing on gender within the field of popular music studies, extending the arguments about multiplicity of gender positions and implications of gendering activities. Significantly, it challenges the understanding of popular music masculinity as a monolithic entity, providing an opening for further dialogue between all musicians, hoping to result in enhanced understanding of practical and ideological challenges faced by both men and women involved in the making and performance of music.
Anonymity and consent

In consenting to take part in the research the participants have been guaranteed anonymity. Real names of people and bands have been omitted, with pseudonyms assigned and used throughout the thesis. No additional personal data that could identify a participant (e.g. date of birth, home address) have been collected.
1

Introduction

In the late summer of 2004 I moved to Lytham St. Annes, along the coast from Blackpool, in the North West of England. This move was significant for me in many ways, however, some of the most vivid memories of the time are associated with rediscovering music and starting to go to live gigs regularly, for the first time since the mid 1990s. My partner, who grew up in Blackpool, and played in a local band over 20 years ago, still had a number of local music connections through whom I was introduced to a local music scene, finding it dynamic and vibrant. Many “old”, long disbanded bands were re-forming, alongside new bands that seemed to be sprouting everywhere. There was also no shortage of live venues willing to put different types of live music on. Being new to the area I was keen to meet people and establish connections. I took interest in the town, its history, its people and its music. There was a certain degree of curiosity about me on the part of the people I was meeting. They were intrigued by the fact that I grew up in Eastern Europe and yet we shared a set of cultural references associated with music. Following nights out seeing live bands, conversations with musicians and those involved in music in other ways such as gig promoters, djs, rehearsal studio owners and others, often stretched into the early hours of the morning. At the end of one such night, braving the rain and the wind while waiting for a cab, tired and slightly vulnerable, I kept thinking how on that night, like during many other nights, I was the only female taking part in after hours socialising. Once inside of the cab, I pulled out an almost empty packet of Silk Cut and scribbled “ROOMS FULL OF MEN!”

Naturally, I encountered other women too. Woman like Juliette, a teacher, who had just split up with her long term partner and who chose going out, seeing bands and staying out late, over TV dinners. Or Vicky, who worked as a journalist for the BBC and juggled her career, motherhood and social life. And Mandy, who played the keyboard in a local band and was in the final year
of a degree course. Those women were articulate, independent and visible in music spaces, but women like them were in the minority. I heard of other women: partners, wives and short term live-in girlfriends. I heard of children too, often as a result of late night text messages informing the men I was talking to at the time that the baby was not sleeping and asking when they were coming home. Despite often delaying their return home where they would take part in late night feeding and nappy changing, I noted that the majority of musicians who were fathers spoke fondly and affectionately of their children, once the subject entered our late night musings. Occasionally, when their female partners could make appropriate childcare arrangements, I saw them at gigs. But they always rushed home while the men stayed behind. In contrast, being 32 years old at the time, with no children, no immediate ties and still excited by music and everything that surrounds it, I could afford to stay out late. And soon, I was to legitimise my forays into music spaces by my newly found role as a researcher.

Some of the early, informal conversations I had with male musicians were not simply about music as an all encompassing and all consuming, an overpowering force in their lives. They were about the place of music in their lives, alongside that of their families, part-time jobs they were forced to undertake due to rarely being able to earn enough money from music making alone, and stories of friendship brought about by playing music with other people. With a few exceptions, most men I met at this time have lived in Blackpool all of their lives. Some studied elsewhere and returned to Blackpool upon finishing their studies, struggling to find work, living in a cheap accommodation and playing music. Others left school with a few qualifications and worked in low paid local jobs, rehearsing and playing music in the evenings and on the weekends. And then there were younger musicians, still at school or college, often living at home with their parents. Despite noticing that the music narratives were never told without a context, I promptly understood that the involvement in music making and associated activities were often given the most prominent place in hierarchy of engagement with the world at large.
Undoubtedly, there are many researchers who enter the field in a structured and organised way, having secured funding, selected and targeted the gate keepers, established rapport with informants, sharpened their pencils and packed a generous supply of writing pads. Such a linear trajectory has many practical and methodological advantages, but it was not the trajectory that my research followed. In 2004 I was simply taking part in music activities and frequented music spaces, observing people and practices. This informal socialising in music spaces was to prove tremendously valuable in terms of gaining access to musicians and interacting with them in natural settings after I registered as a PhD student at The University of Salford, and embarked on a structured course of research.

I considered writing about music to be an easy task. In addition to encountering music everywhere I looked and listened, I have always been aware of the appeal of the alluring narratives and tales created by those who make and perform music as well as those who enjoy, study and write about it. Musical tales often span the past, the present and the future, uniting a sense of nostalgia with successes, losses and aspirations, aiding and shaping our experience of what it might feel “on the inside”, or simply adding to the enjoyment of listening to music or seeing live performances. Exhilarating tales of legendary musicians, iconic albums, respected producers, accomplished managers, memorable gigs, and devoted fans are abundant. However, there is a “flaw” to music, discernible in suggestions that the narratives of popular music tend to feature predominantly male protagonists who shape and steer them, leaving little or no space for female visibility and involvement, except as music fans and isolated figures of female performers scattered across the masculine musical landscapes. Such suggestions indeed become convincing when one conjures up images of the bands (as opposed to individual performers) throughout popular music history, predominantly featuring all male membership.

When told and read, musical narratives habitually imply a particular type of a musical man: passionate and driven, casually free, sexually expressive,
and emotionally reckless; but also focused, logical and practical - in various measures. Additionally, where there is a group of male protagonists a set of relationships between them is assumed, based on a shared aesthetics, common goals, friendly rivalry, creative synergy, camaraderie and so on. Combined with the relative absence of women from popular music spaces and narratives, the embracement of the above notions of musical masculinities has lead to one important strand in theorising of popular music, reliant on the critique of its sexism and masculinism, and seeking the paths for musical equality. For many who write about popular music it can be best described as “patriarchal society in microcosm” (Toynbee, 2006: 343). More often than not, such critique engages with the most prominent and most visible participants – those who have “made it”, sometimes implying that the above outlined scripts of masculinity, together with hierarchical structures of music industry, enabled them to succeed more readily than women who are involved with music, and presented with a number of obstacles which make it much harder to rise up the ranks or even be recognised as credible, serious performers.

While not denying that there is both sexism and masculinism inherent in music spaces, this study aims to examine a wider range of meanings created and encountered by men who play in bands. It aims to look beyond the most visible and most acclaimed participants and bring into focus musical lives of “ordinary” men who are involved in consuming, making and performing music. It seeks to understand what music means to the participants, how it shapes their gender identities and in turn how their gender identities shape musical practices they undertake. In sociology, there is a strong tradition of bringing the “ordinary” to the fore, understanding culture as “a way of life”, a subject of study equally worthy and significant as cultural artefacts produced by the great intellect and creative minds. Such a tradition has impacted on popular music studies, where over the past two decades there has been a noticeable development of focus, extending interest in music industries, textual analysis and audience studies to music scenes, local music making, musical diasporas,
impact of the latest technologies and role of music in everyday life. (Bennett et al., 2006: 5)

Writing about music often celebrates a sense of outsiderdom and yet studies that engage with “ordinary” men who play in bands are few and far between. Rather, the outsider that popular music’s writing tends to focus on is an “inside” performer who feels like an outsider to the inside of the music industries and strives to reconnect to his or her “authentic” roots. In the narratives of popular music such tension can give rise to creative output associated with feelings of alienation and belonging; it can even result in self-destructive behaviour and premature death thus perpetuating mythologizing of suffering, alienation and associated connotations of authenticity and realness.

Due to charges of masculinism and sexism, the focus in writing about gender and music has often been the female experience of music worlds, dealing with numerous ideological and practical obstacles faced by women who make and perform music. This study builds upon and extends some of the arguments that often go under the banner of “music and gender” but which tend to engage with women’s roles and participation in music, leaving a range of male musical experience and involvement under-theorised. In the conclusion of Frock Rock: Women Performing Popular Music Mavis Bayton (1998) acknowledges that:

Music making by either women or men is still under-researched. Because I have chosen to concentrate on women’s, rather than men’s, it is difficult without comparative research to substantiate the comments made about men’s bands by my interviewees. (Bayton, 1998: 196)

My work engages with “men’s bands” and seeks to understand the ways in which masculinities are negotiated in male dominated musical environments. It starts with an assumption that there is a range of contesting masculinities within musical spaces and seeks to understand why a particular type of masculinity may have a hegemonic position at a given point in time. It treats masculinity as a non-monolithic concept, a relational and evolving identity category. By
focusing on male musicians my work aims to develop a dialogue about music making and musical and gender meanings between musicians of both genders. It strives to question some of the rigid ideological distinctions associated with statuses and understandings of female and male performers, such as the assumption that male music making is based on competition for hierarchical positions, while women who are involved in music making subscribe to the principles of equality and co-operation. It seeks to expose many of the practical and ideological obstacles that any musician, including male musicians of all ages, may face through their involvement in music.

Work presented here does not focus on a particular musical genre nor a particular age group. Furthermore, it is not bound by the theoretical or geographical notion of the music scene. Making a decision not to focus on one particular music genre, or perhaps just young performers, allowed me to engage with a greater range of participants of different ages, classes, musical tastes and musical roles, who emerged throughout the research. Where I encountered women who played in bands I included them in my observations, formal interviews and subsequent theorisation and analysis. While maintaining the dialogue with some earlier studies in the field, my work takes advantage of and examines recent developments such as the establishment and popularity of social networking sites, and their impact on meanings and practices associated with both gender and musicianship making. It examines the concept of hegemonic masculinity in relation to men who “do” bands and questions the reductionism of approaches that perceive masculinity as a monolithic concept. It has often been remarked by fellow researchers that the subject of my enquiry was “funky and exciting”, and in a way I feel that I am betraying all those who saw it that way, in taking attractiveness, funkiness but hopefully not all of the excitement out of it, by focusing on what are seen as less glamorous and more mundane practices associated with music making and performance. My aim is a sociologically informed study of music and gender making, which while acknowledging that musical and gender meanings can be studied in relation to the society or context they originate from (structuralist approach), adopts an
interpretive approach with its focus on real people and real processes, the ways in which they make and use music and the ways in which those processes are linked to making and representation of gender. The flexibility of an ethnographic approach allows for such engagement with the participants and processes undertaken by them, while the concept and practice of interdisciplinarity is easily applied to popular music studies. This study relies on both, thus situating itself at the intersection of sociology, cultural studies, media and gender studies.

The sections that follow provide an outline of the structure of the thesis. While I maintain the “lead in” chapters where critical engagement with the most significant texts, debates and methodological concerns aids situating of the current work, I part with the more established social science tradition associated with empirical work, with the presentation, analysis and the discussion of the data and the results across several chapters following the “lead in” chapters. Instead, I opt for thematic organisation of the thesis, where each chapter engages with a particular theme (and related sub-themes) arising from the ethnographic data, contextualised and discussed within relevant theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Two situates my approach and analysis within the existing tradition of writing on popular music and gender. It introduces the concept of “musicking” (Small, 1987) foregrounding the notion of music as an activity and a practice, as well as conceptualising the usage and definition of “popular music”. In order to address the ways in which gender more generally, and masculinity specifically, have been theorised within popular music studies, it provides a brief overview of the approaches and key developments in gender studies, identifying the shift from structural to interactional notions of gender and the ways in which the sociology of masculinity mirrors the key developments in gender theory. The sections that follow engage critically with the most influential texts and debates about popular music and gender demonstrating the main strands of the arguments, their strengths and omissions, as well as providing a rationale for the work developed here.
Attempting to systematise the existing knowledge I divide the latter part of the chapter into several subsections: subcultural tradition; readers; ethnographies; sex, gender and music; gender in music education and classical tradition; genre masculinities and masculinities in focus, showing how each has engaged with the relationship between gender and popular music more generally or masculinity and popular music specifically. The chapter questions the limitations of the existing texts’ tendency to focus on the most visible, the most prominent and the most spectacular participants, calling for the need to engage with popular music masculinity as a non-monolithic concept associated with a wide range of musical and extra-musical practices that shape our social worlds.

Chapter Three addresses practical, theoretical and methodological concerns encountered by the research. It outlines the key research questions and engages with issues of methods and practice, the type of knowledge produced through employment of a range of research strategies as well as the advantages and limitations of chosen approaches. It provides an outline of plural theories and methods that influenced both the choice of the topic and the subsequent development of the study, and argues that there are many advantages to adopting an interdisciplinary approach. By considering the chosen approaches and methodologies, the chapter addresses the issue of researcher reflexivity and considers ethical implications of studying people. Additionally, it introduces the setting for the research, that is the key musical spaces, places and participants as well as debating the notion of the field. It develops the rationale for the research and sets the scene for participants’ voices to inform the key themes and the discussion in the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Four opens with the discussion of what a study of popular music ought to incorporate, foregrounding the importance of musical context and the understanding of both music and gender as forms of practice. It explores and examines the ways in which music is involved in construction of gender identities, but also the way in which gender identities impact on music practices. Furthermore, it introduces the concept of “music enculturation” which
incorporates the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge as well as familiarisation with the musical contexts that constitute a wider sense of musical experience. It combines theoretical approaches that treat music as practice situated in everyday life of the participants with the presentation and analysis of the ethnographic data related to participants’ experiences of music, examining listening, collecting and socialising as three significant and interrelated, yet not exclusive practices associated with music and gender enculturation. As a dynamic process, music enculturation is assessed through the notion of hegemonic masculinity which facilitates the establishment of hierarchies of status.

This theme is taken up and further developed in Chapter Five, within a more specific setting, that of a band, where I examine forging, negotiation and contestation of music and gender identities within tightly knit groups of men who write and perform music together. The band, as one of the perceived masculine “institutions”, is conceptualised through the notions of “bandhood” and “homosociality”, as well as through an examination of relationships, identities, roles and goals of the participants. The focus is on the way that some of the music conventions (for example a hierarchy of instruments) shape statuses and roles of the participants and the ways in which role differentiation can both stabilise and destabilise a band. Drawing on observational and interview data, the chapter provides an outline of series of creative processes taking place within a band, such as naming, learning to play an instrument and writing music or lyrics. The chapter concludes with additional examination of two of the bands I have followed and studied, The Unstoppables and The Compacts, taking a closer look at the dynamic of each band and the ways in which hierarchies of gender identity and creativity are established and negotiated. The chapter questions the degree of applicability of the concept of hegemonic masculinity to bands as gendered and gendering entities, calling for consideration of cultural specificity of each band as opposed to aiming to arrive at over-generalised, all encompassing statements about importance, role and meaning of popular music masculinity.
The focus on the bands is maintained in Chapter Six, with arguments about music and gender as practices extended to consideration and exploration of masculinity through embodiment; what Pfeil (1994) has termed "corporeal-musical thing". Taking the advantage of polysemic qualities of musical texts (reliant on multi-sensory experience), the chapter brings to the fore the male body, addressing its relation to the notions of the spectatorship and gaze, expressivity and authenticity. It examines the centrality of the concept of authenticity to popular music studies, and its links to musical and bodily expressivity. Ethnographic data provide substantial insights into the participants’ relations to their bodies, body image and style, as well as somewhat contentious relationship between notions of masculinity and male vulnerability. The chapter concludes with a comparative examination of live performances of the three bands (two of whom are introduced in Chapter Five); *The Unstoppables, The Compacts* and *The Cyclists*, and the opportunities that are provided by the live setting for the authentication of gender through visual, verbal and musical communication.

Chapter Seven focuses on the relatively recent phenomena of online social networking, and the impact it is having on music and gender practices. It examines the degree to which the new opportunities for visual (and musical) inscription present a challenge to the existing, dominant representations of gender and gender stereotypes prominent in real life musical spaces. The chapter provides an overview of the developments in theorising cyber environments and gender as well as a brief history of social networking. The focus is MySpace, a preferred online "home" of all the bands I have studied. MySpace has been both a subject of study itself and a research tool in the online dimension of my research which I define as being simultaneously an "observational ethnography" and "participatory netnography". The concepts of "bandhood" and "hmosocial space" identified and discussed in earlier chapters are revisited here through examination of images of bandhood, such as the profile photographs and music videos available on the bands' MySpace pages.
The focus is thus on visual identity markers which in online environments work in conjunction to textual anchorages.

Chapter Eight, the Conclusion, re-visits the research questions and synthesises the key arguments and messages across chapters, now grounded in the experience of both conducting the research and writing up the findings. It deals with the remit of the research, illustrating potential gaps and omissions as well as providing an indication of possible future research trajectories.
2

Texts and Debates: Popular Music, Gender, Masculinity

Introduction

As a medium of expression and mode of communication, source of enjoyment and backdrop to many everyday activities, due to its exchange value as well as its potential to disrupt the established societal norms, popular music keeps providing a scope and a space for numerous debates. Music is debated and contextualised by musicologists, popular culture theorists, sociologists, music journalists, politicians and many other, "ordinary" people who do not produce academic and journalistic texts but nonetheless engage with music on a daily basis and to a significant degree.

It could be argued that popular music's appeal lies in its accessibility and multi-contextuality, its permeability of otherwise often unconnected spheres of social lives, and lately its increased portability. Such features foreground its potential to bridge perceived gaps between production and consumption, work and leisure, the intellectual and the popular, the everyday and "the spectacular". In everyday life contexts (e.g. home, work, pub) talk about music is founded on judgements of taste, for example liking or disliking a particular album, song or an artist (Frith, 1996; Hesmondhalgh, 2002, 2007).¹ Additionally, a technologically and scientifically informed discussion, dependent on the level of musical knowledge, may take place, including the debates about the guitar solos, the bass lines, the timbre of voices, or the significance of the lyrics.

In many respects, academic writing on popular music is no different, with the choice of topics that one writes about most likely to be informed by one’s taste and one’s desire to engage with an aspect of life that has a degree of significance in informing and shaping the sense of self. This is indicative of the shift in cultural studies away from meaning and interpretation towards a greater engagement with role of music within multifaceted experiences of day-to-day life (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 121). Such cultural situatedness of music further implies an understanding of music as an activity.

Christopher Small’s (1987) concept of “musicking” introduced in *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music*, and developed in *Musicking: The Meaning of Performance and Listening* (1998) provides a helpful framework for understanding and studying music as doing. Small perceives all music (including classical) to be an activity we engage in, rather than “a thing or a collection of things”. He proposes the usage of the verb “to music” instead of the noun “music”, suggesting that “musicking” is central to all music across the world and even taken for granted, except in the classical tradition.

It follows that whatever meaning there is in music is to be found in the act rather than in the actual works themselves, and it is therefore of the musical event rather than of the musical work that we should ask our questions: the really interesting one is not, ‘What does this composition mean? but ‘What does it mean when this performance takes place at this time, in this place, with these musicians, before this audience?.’ (Small, 1987: 51 - 52)

Applied to recorded music, “the act” of listening (at a certain time, in a certain place, alone or with other people) would be of interest, as opposed to the actual sound recording in abstraction (the fact that there is a vinyl or a CD collecting dust in a sound library, with a potential of being picked up, played and heard). What distinguishes “musicking” from music is the context within which it occurs. Music (in an abstract sense) can be thought of as de-contextualised, however,
with an inherent potential to become “musicking” through the introduction of a context of its performance/listening.

Additionally, understanding of music as an activity, a process that is situated within a range of cultural practices, is central to my research. I take “musicking” as a starting point for exploration of music as a gendering social practice.

In Performing Rites Simon Frith (1996) proposes:

Culture as an academic object, in short, is different from culture as a popular activity, a process, and the value terms which inform the latter are, it seems, irrelevant to the analysis of the former. (Frith, 1996: 12)

He develops his proposition by referring to Frank Kogan’s (1991) distinction between “the discourse of the classroom” which focuses on the subject matter, and “the discourse of the hallway” which focuses on “one’s opinions about a subject matter and one’s opinions about other people’s opinions about a subject matter and one’s opinion about other people” (Frith, 1996: 12). Frith’s analysis too signifies the shift of focus from the subject matter (culture as an object of scrutiny and interpretation) to culture as a popular activity and a process informed by its own values, where how we talk about cultural texts and thus value we impose on them are an integral part in understanding their meaning (indicative of the move from structuralist to poststructuralist analysis).

Finding and tracing a distinct lineage of writing about popular music is fraught with difficulties as popular music studies, despite its obsession with the musical canon, does not provide an easy access to writing about popular music that constitutes a “canon” itself. Instead, writing about popular music is diverse, dispersed, multi and inter-disciplinary. Like music itself, it exists in multiple contexts. The reader and the observer are faced with both the discourses of the classroom and the discourses of the hallway, hence one of the challenges of this project is to bring the two together, by providing an ethnographic account interpreted through employment of theoretical tools and frameworks. While exciting, this attempt is also logistically challenging.
There have been two main and reasonably successful attempts to consolidate various strands of scholarly debates and writing about the popular music, in the form of two influential readers: *On Record: Rock, Pop and The Written Word*, (Frith and Goodwin, 1990) and a more recent publication *The Popular Music Studies Reader* (Bennett et al., 2006). While the former signifies the establishment and existence of a field of interdisciplinary study of popular music, the latter opens up with an outline of the key changes that impacted upon such pursuits over the past two decades. Three broad areas of change in contemporary popular music are identified as: fragmentation of markets and styles resulting in music taste becoming “omnivore”\(^2\), impact of globalisation on production and reception of music with increase of hybridisation of sound, and finally the invention and developments in digital technologies and their impact on the music business (Bennett et al., 2006: 2 - 4).

The aim of this chapter is to guide the reader through some key texts and debates in order to demonstrate the achievements and gaps in knowledge produced, as well as to situate the current work. It is by no means an encyclopaedic, comprehensive survey of all popular music writing, as speaking very broadly, the main theme of my project is examination of the relationship

\[^2\] Ominvorousness is discussed by Peterson and Kern (1996) in ‘Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore’, based on the *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* conducted in 1982 and repeated in 1992. They argue that high-status Americans are more likely to be involved in a range of low-status activities, including consumption of “lowbrow” music such as bluegrass, gospel, rock and blues. Omnivorousness does not, however, imply a complete lack of discrimination but rather “signifies an openness to appreciating everything”. (Peterson and Kern, 1996: 904) The “omnivore thesis” continues to inform discussion and debate within sociologies of culture and consumption. For example, in the UK the recent ESRC project *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: A Critical Investigation*, with the team consisting of Tony Bennett, Mike Savage, Elizabeth Silva, Alan Warde, David Wright and Modesto Gayo – Cal, included a national survey, focus groups and household interviews. For findings and discussion see ‘Understanding Cultural Omnivorousness: Or, the Myth of the Cultural Omnivore’ by Warde, Wright and Gayo-Cal (2007), published in *Cultural Sociology* Volume 1 (2) pp. 143 – 164.
between the popular music and masculinity and hence the focus is on gender and music. Identifying the broad theme (popular music and masculinity) immediately leads in the direction of another "discipline", that of gender studies, which can further be tapered to a more focused approach sometimes referred to as the sociology of masculinity. Furthermore, music is a common feature within cultural studies' engagement with youth subcultures, sociological concerns with production and consumption, status and meaning of culture as well as philosophical debates about the value of art. As a polysemic text, music can be studied in many different ways where the focus of study (sound, lyrics, image, music industry and so on) can situate it within a particular discipline without necessarily disconnecting it from the rest of possible fields of enquiry.

Therefore, the sphere of popular music is potentially vast. In line with academic approaches to popular culture, lineage of popular music studies can be traced to Marxist critique of the processes involved in capitalist cultural production and consumption (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979; Bernstein, 1991) and particularly Adorno's incorporation of popular music in his analysis of the culture industry (Adorno, 1976, 1990, 2007). The focus of any given approach to popular music, for example the attention given to lyrics, sound or image, further extends the field of enquiry and therefore semiological approaches informed by structural linguistics (e.g. Hebdige, 1979), as well as post structuralist concerns with time, space and narrative, play a part in popular music analysis. The extension and practice of ethnography beyond anthropology and sociology, and across the range of academic disciplines, as well as more recent employments of auto-ethnography, have had a degree of methodological significance on popular music studies resulting in accounts of popular music, its practices and meanings by both "insiders" and "outsiders", and signifying further a methodological shift from understanding of the meanings of the representational aspects of music to that of meanings of the practice.

In an attempt critically to evaluate the existing texts and debates about popular music and masculinity, this chapter begins with an outline of the main
developments in academic approaches to gender in general, and masculinity more specifically. It proceeds to provide a survey and analysis of different approaches to gender within popular music studies, grouping and classifying existing knowledge under several generic headings (subcultural tradition; ethnographies; sex, gender and music; genre masculinities and so on) often corresponding to different theoretical traditions, but sometimes combining them thus opening up a possibility for a text to be placed in more than one category. As argued throughout the thesis, popular music writing is dispersed and diverse, and any attempt at systematisation and classification presents a degree of difficulty due to texts' transgressive and interdisciplinary qualities. An attempt at generic textual classification serves additional purpose of situating my own work (itself interdisciplinary) within relevant traditions and demonstrating where it has a potential to extend and develop the existing body of knowledge in the subject area. In this chapter I focus on the most influential texts that have shaped the field of enquiry, recognising the dialogue that exists between them and many other academic and popular sources (videos, music magazines, web based sources and so on) which have informed knowledge and analysis presented in the thesis. I conclude by evaluating strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and raising some key methodological questions to be addressed in the following chapter.

**A note on definitions and terminology: pop and rock**

The debates about the definitions and meanings of popular or pop music are ongoing. Surveying the existing body of work on music as a form of social and cultural practice and an artistic pursuit, one regularly encounters two different usages “pop” and “rock”, often referring to the same field of enquiry. There have been attempts to introduce the term that synthesises the two, for example Regev (2002) who employs “pop/rock” as a concept denoting a phenomenon that according to him dominates the popular music in the second part of the 20th century, and is based on a set of creative practices which he calls “rock
aesthetic” (i.e. use of electric and electronic instruments, utilisation of studio technique and sound manipulation, techniques related to vocal delivery) (Regev, 2002: 253).

Frith (2001) acknowledges that pop music is a “slippery concept” due to its dual nature; on one level denoting differentiation from classical or art music, and on the other incorporating every contemporary music style that is accessible to a general public, “produced commercially, for profit, as a matter of enterprise not art”. (Frith, 2001: 94) However, ideologies of “rock” music imply its distance from commercially produced “pop”, suggesting that popular music is what is left when other forms of popular music have claimed their identities and secured boundaries that distinguish them from pop: “Here pop becomes not an inclusive category but a residual one” (Frith, 2001: 95). The term “rock” too is elusive and “frustratingly vague” (Keightley, 2001: 109), because it can be treated as a musical genre and as a more inclusive category denoting “larger musical culture” (Keightley, 2001: 110).

Throughout the thesis I use the phrase popular music to denote a range of musical styles emerging from social practices of music making. Musicians and bands who form a sample in my study identified their pursuits by using a multiplicity of music genre labels available to them, such as punk, indie rock, electronica, progressive rock, indie pop (with its inherent contradictions) and so on. As my study is non-genre specific, and as all the musicians and bands in the sample produced music that is performed in the public domain and is commercially available (through a record label, an independent music store or directly from the musicians), I argue that it would be appropriate to refer to all those genres as popular. This is not to deny that some of the bands and musicians aligned themselves with “indie” ideologies while others aimed their work at the “mainstream”.

As I focused on practices, constructions and contestations of masculinity, a non-genre specific approach aided an opening for a multiplicity of masculinities to emerge. Admittedly, classifying them as popular music masculinities is too broad, however, talking about indie masculinities as
opposed to indie pop masculinities or punk masculinities would have called for a different methodological approach, comparing like with like rather than seeking patterns within a range. Masculinity is performed differently within different music genres, which themselves are normative and regulatory. This difference implies that monolithic notion of masculinity is also subverted and disrupted. I therefore, adopted a non-reductionist aspect of Frith’s definition of popular music as that which incorporates a range of musical styles. Where I refer to the authors whose arguments rely on the distinction between perceived authenticity of “rock” versus disposability of “pop”, or where gender is discussed in relation to a specific genre, I keep the original definitions and terminology in order to maintain the coherence of their arguments. For example, Bannister (2006b) writes about indie masculinities, while Walser (1993) discusses heavy metal masculinities, and despite my understanding of both as “popular music masculinities” I maintain the original definitions and labels.

Gender

A body of literature on gender is extensive, and issues raised by gender studies have had a tremendous impact on almost every other field and mode of enquiry. There are several different routes into the vast body of work (e.g. Sigmund Freud’s work at the turn of the 20th century), however, it is often argued that mid 20th century anthropological and sociological studies paved the way for gender theories that were to emerge in the late 1960s and 1970s. In her anthropological study of three New Guinea societies (The Arapesh, The Mundugamor and The Tchambuli), Margaret Mead (2001 [1935]) presented a critical analysis of sex roles foregrounding the idea of their cultural specificity, that is how the ideas of masculinity and femininity have been adopted and subverted by members of different New Guinea societies.

Influenced by the functionalist analysis, in the 1950s a body of work on sex roles emerged, most notably Talcott Parsons’ analysis of the division of labour within the family and the role of the division of labour in stabilisation and
creation of equilibrium for successful functioning of the family. Men's roles of working outside of the family were contrasted with women's domestic roles.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1988 [1949]), with its influential and much cited statement “one is not born, but rather becomes, a women”, contributed to paving the way for arguments that were to aim to separate biological sex from socio-cultural category of gender. In *Sex, Gender and Society* Ann Oakley (1972) defined sex as physiological and distinguishable from socially constructed, historically and culturally determined, changeable and variable masculinity and femininity; a notion that was to open the way for body of feminist work to emerge throughout the 1970s and from the diverse range of disciplines (e.g. psychoanalysis, literary criticism, sociology, cultural studies and so on). Harold Garfinkel's (1967) famous case study of Agnes, an intersexed person who grew up as a man and was living as a woman, that is “passing”, and Erving Goffman's (1990 [1959]) notion of presentation of the self in social interaction (“dramaturgical approach”) were influential in the development of thinking about gender as culturally managed performance of masculinity or femininity, the idea taken up by Judith Butler (1990) who argued that bodies become gendered through performativity of gender, before extending the argument to the category of sex, which she argued was as much a construction as that of gender. Gender, as a category central to our identities, is instrumental in ordering of the world we live in.

Gender...denotes a hierarchical division between women and men embedded in both social institutions and social practices. Gender is thus a social structural phenomenon but is also produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interaction. (Jackson and Scott, 2002: Introduction 1)

The above definition takes into the account both structural and interactional dimension of gender, the notion that patterns of social relations create structures (Connell, 2002: 9) as well as the importance of relations themselves. The work I develop adopts and applies such understanding of gender within the
context of construction and negotiation of masculine identities in popular music settings.

**Masculinity**

But what, precisely, is masculinity? How do we measure it? Can we measure it? Can some men have more of it than others? How does it correlate to class, ethnicity, sexuality? Where does it come from? Can one lose it? How does one know if one has it? As a man, how do I know when I’m performing it? Is it constant, unchanging?

The above questions posed by Stephen Whitehead (2002: 4 - 5) in the introduction to the volume *Men and Masculinities* have been shaping masculinity studies for the past 30 years, extending to a range of enquiries such as those relating to public and private lives of men, covering topics such as workplace, health, relationships, education and sexualities, among others. The sociology of masculinity mirrors the developments in gender theory, from sex role theories of 1950s through the debates about gender and power of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to post structuralist focus on discursive practices of the self and their impact on regulation and validation of gender identities. One of the key legacies of the feminist approaches to gender has been the foregrounding of the link between masculinity and power, and on the whole studies of men and masculinities tend to take a pro-feminist approach.

...central to the sociology of masculinity is a desire to name, examine, understand and hopefully change those practices of men that hinder or confront the possibility of gender equity. (Whitehead, 2002: 8)

R. W. Connell’s (1987) *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, as well as his subsequent work (Connell 1995, 2000), focus on both theorising gender and examining the location of masculinity within wider structures and through gender relations. He perceives masculinity as
a structure of social practice, one that is reproduced within historical situations through daily actions. (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 27) [original emphasis]

Such a definition lifts masculinity out of fixity of gender essentialism, away from positivist quest of finding out “what-men-empirically-are” and normative definitions of what men ought to be. Furthermore, it is critical of semiotic approaches which “define masculinity through a system of symbolic difference through which masculine and feminine places are contrasted” (Connell, 2001: 33), instead arguing that masculinity arises through the system of gender relations. (Connell, 2001: 33)

Masculinity (and femininity) can thus be viewed as dynamic “gender projects” (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 28), something that one does, as opposed to something that one has. In different contexts men do masculinity differently, the doing potentially being determined by their age, class, sexuality, ethnicity and other characteristics. For Connell, recognising multiplicity of masculinities is the first step in the process of examination of the relations between them. He deploys Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony to develop the analysis of relations between different types of masculinities where one masculine type occupies a privileged, hegemonic position maintained by subordination, complicity and marginalisation of other masculine types. It is important to note that Connell does not define hegemonic masculinity as a fixed character type, transhistoric and unchangeable. Instead, he sees hegemonic masculinity as “masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable”. (Connell, 2001: 38)

Popular music and gender

In the sections that follow I provide an overview of the key texts constituting writing on popular music and gender. I outline and evaluate different approaches by classifying the texts in the following ways: subcultural tradition; readers; ethnographies; sex, gender and music; gender in music education and classical tradition, genre masculinities: the case of heavy metal; and masculinities in focus. In doing so, I situate my own work within thematic and methodological frameworks that informed and shaped it, as well as demonstrate where it builds upon the existing texts and debates.

Subcultural tradition

Cultural studies' engagement with youth subcultures resulted in academic discussions about the role of music in resistance of power structures (e.g. Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978). Within this tradition the concept of homology “the manner in which apparently different phenomena are structurally similar” (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 2007: 169) is used to explain the interlinking of music and other subcultural practices. In his seminal study of bikers Willis suggests that:

…the loud, strident tones of the music symbolically held and generated all the important values - movement, noise, confidence…how the general ambience of the culture could be brought down in a concrete activity to a precise conjunction of its constitutive elements - music, bikes, excitement, disregard, speed and danger. (Willis, 1978: 36 - 37)

Relevant volumes in Research on Men and Masculinities Series (1992 – 2000) have been published by Sage Publication and include contributions from a range of academic fields such as sociology, psychology, media and communication studies, history, criminology and criminal justice, literature, anthropology and ethnic studies.
In terms of gendering of musical and other cultural practices it has been argued that within biker culture the type of music (rock and roll) is further utilised as complementing the policing of their masculine identity built on notions of toughness and working class hardness (e.g. Bannister, 2006b: 5). McRobbie (1990) provided a feminist critique of marginalisation of women in what she described as “male youth cultural forms” (McRobbie, 1990: 66) as well as a critique of a noticeable lack of commitment on the part of male researchers to engage with the personal experiences’ impact on their choice of topic and manner of writing about the topic; what she terms as “absence of self” within cultural analysis (McRobbie, 1990: 68). Hesmondhalgh (2002) criticises the accounts of popular music originating from studies of youth subcultures in two ways; first he claims that they tend to contain limited description or analysis of music, and second, he calls for incorporation of multiplicity of musical experience rather than excessive focus on “music made by and for young people” (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 117). He foregrounds the importance of music for a range of experiences in everyday life and calls for engagement with issues of value, meaning and taste in music.  

Readers

In 1990, On Record: Rock, Pop and The Written Word, edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, was published with the aim of promoting popular music theory “the best arguments about pop an rock...hidden in specialist or out-of-print publications” (Preface, x), charting some of the key shifts in approaches to popular music over the period of 30 years and demonstrating current approaches to study of pop and rock. Significantly, it was a volume containing arguments about popular music, rather than mapping out histories of popular music genres that anthologies rely upon. The publication was founded in the

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4 Hesmondhalgh (2007) 'Aesthetics and audiences: Talking about good and bad music' in European Journal of Cultural Studies provides the discussion of taste and value.
recognition that the study of popular music requires an interdisciplinary effort and that “sociological, political and semiotic arguments cannot be disentangled from one another” (Preface, xi). Divided into eight parts On Record covers what remain to be the most significant approaches to the study of popular music: its sociological roots and connections with the study of mass culture, consumption, youth subcultures (drawing on textual analysis based on semiotics and Marxist and feminist approaches of Birmingham cultural studies tradition), the music industry and the organisation of music business, the creative processes and their links to both technologies and co-operation between people, popular music's link to expressions of sexualities, focus on “stars” and fan cultures.

The Popular Music Studies Reader edited by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank and Jason Toynbee, published 16 years later in 2006, re-evaluates the state of affairs in popular music studies, expanding the previous themes and introducing several new ones such as extending of the notion of subculture to that of a scene and a tribe, introducing the body of work dealing with the significance of music in everyday life, debating the global impact of music and music diasporas, as well as introducing the concept of gender (as opposed to its conflation with “sex”) to the discussion of the popular music and “sexuality”.

Each edition features several articles engaging with gender and various aspects of popular music. They encompass subcultural, textual, ethnographic and musicological approaches and include: McRobbie’s (1990) critique of Hebdige’s (1979) “homages to masculinity” through his neglect of gender in Subculture: The Meaning of Style, Bayton’s (1990) ethnographically informed account of women becoming musicians, and the discussion of being an Elvis fan by Wise (1990), questioning passivity of a female music fan and exploring the notion that Elvis has always been “a central part of the patriarchal plot”. Furthermore, there is Dyer’s (1990) exploration of rhythmic and melodic structures in relation to expressions of sexuality, Gottlieb and Gayle (2006) account of riot grrrl movement and Fast’s (2006) piece about pleasure of looking based on visual and musicological analysis of Led Zeppelin performances, to name a few. The examples demonstrate that due to
polysemic quality of popular music, as well as interdisciplinary approaches to study of gender, the writing addressing popular music and gender can be found dispersed across thematic areas within the existing popular music studies body of work.

The point from which much of the discussion about music and gender originates is Frith and McRobbie's (1990) much cited article 'Rock and Sexuality', originally published in Screen Education in 1978 (winter 1978/1979 number 29). While acknowledging the link between sexual expression/sexuality and rock music, the primary focus of the article is the relationship between gender and genre. It seeks to close the gap left by accounts of popular music that mainly focus on “its political economy or on its use in youth subcultures” (Frith and McRobbie, 1990: 372) and to examine the ways in which rock operates as a form of sexual expression, but also as a site for "ideological work" in construction of sexuality. Frith and McRobbie define rock as a male form, with the popular music business dominated by men and marked by recognisable division of roles (e.g. women as singers or women involved in publicity). In order to explore different images of “masculine sexuality” Frith and McRobbie contrast “cock rock” with “teenybop”. The performers of the former are described as “aggressive, dominating, and boastful…they constantly seek to remind the audience of their prowess, their control”, displaying their bodies, foregrounding the symbolic status of guitars as phallic symbols and creating music which is loud, aggressive and “built around techniques of arousal and climax” (Frith and McRobbie, 1990: 374). In contrast to hip swivelling macho displays of cock rockers, the male sexuality expressed by teenybop is a great deal more female friendly due to teenybop’s construction of masculinity placing men in the realm of “self-pity, vulnerability and need” often expressed lyrically, and projecting an image of “young boy next door: sad, thoughtful, pretty and puppylike” (Frith and McRobbie, 1990: 375). Such contrasting representations are extended to gendering of the fans; male fans identifying with the rock performer’s masculine displays and female fans being sold and buying into masculine vulnerabilities of teenybop.
Perhaps the most innovative part of Frith and McRobbie’s analysis is developed in the section entitled ‘Rock Contradictions’ where they explore ambiguities and flaws in cock rock/teenybop model, and foreground popular music’s potential to subvert a number of the pre-established notions of masculinity and femininity. Some of the examples include: the existence of female groupies who are engaged in an active pursuit of the objects of their desires and associated representation of men as sex objects, ambivalent displays of sexuality, “macho” performances of female groups like The Runaways, more prominent and active roles played by women in Mod and Punk subcultures, blending of masculine and feminine sound (e.g. R&B beat and vocal harmonies) by the bands like The Beatles whose image too “was ambiguous, neither boys-together aggression nor boy-next-door pathos”. (Frith and McRobbie, 1990: 383)

Despite its conflation of categories of sex and gender, and its ambivalence about the status of sexuality as a social fact or a social discourse (Frith, 1990: 420), the article opened the debate about naturalism of rock as a form of sexual expression as well as engaged with the notions of masculine activity and feminine passivity, central to and paralleling those within feminist critique at the time. Rock understood as “signifying practice through which a particular discourse of sexuality is constituted” (Frith, 1990: 421) calls for an analysis that takes into the account both the practice and the ideologies that inform the practice. Gender ambiguities introduced by the article came to serve as a starting point for numerous explorations of status and significance of gender in popular music.

Experiences and perceptions of sexism and masculinism of popular music, along with wider increases in gender equality, have resulted in a greater visibility of female engagement with music as practice (writing, performing), as well as in an increasingly significant engagement with gender in academic discourses of popular music. One of the key questions being posed is whether popular music can ever be non-sexist? Responses to the question commonly
outline and describe a multiplicity of sexist practices within music that discourage and exclude women from participation.

On the whole, writing about gender and popular music falls into three categories: ethnographic accounts of significance of gender in music making, performing and consumption of music (gendering of music practices); discursive pieces informed by music theory and textual approaches (category often problematised due to its reliance on interdisciplinarity) focusing on the ways gender is *represented* in popular music (e.g. styles, embodiments, iconography); and a musicological approach, that is a textual study of music itself. Often, accounts of gender and music attempt to combine some of the elements of all three approaches, such as Frith and McRobbie's article 'Rock and Sexuality' discussed above incorporating elements of sociological, textual (semiotic) and musicological analysis.

*Ethnographies*

Howard Becker's (1963) incorporation of the dance musician into his study of deviant groups published in *Outsiders*, with its method of participant observation, undoubtedly influenced many ethnographic studies of popular music. While Becker's main concern was a construction of a theory of deviance, his participation in music worlds as a pianist, and data collected through observations and informal conversation with the musicians, set the scene for some of the ongoing themes in popular music studies. First, there is a self-perception of the musicians as unconventional and more “authentic” individuals who experience life differently to other people and flaunt social conventions (through both choice of the career and associated behaviours) (Becker, 1963: 87). Their “hipness” stands in the opposition to “squareness” of ordinary people, including their audiences from whom they often feel segregated (Becker, 1963: 95). Second, Becker identifies the importance of “cliques”, quality of relationships that can facilitate both status and employment for musicians, a theme which is in subsequent and more contemporary writing
addressed as “networking”, “social capital” or “cultural capital”. Third, he provides an insight into roles played by the family (parents and wives) who are most likely to be unsupportive of the musicians’ chosen profession which is perceived as non-conventional. The issue of gender surfaces in accounts of jobbing musicians’ relationships with their wives, who on the whole tend to be non-musicians, concerned about economic insecurity brought about by the unconventional careers of their partners, but also the concerns about the environment they work in including “late hours and chicks that hang around bars” (Becker, 1963: 117). According to Becker, marriage is likely to turn into an ongoing struggle, with relationship between partners even determining whether or not a musician continues his musical career.

H. Stith Bennett’s (1980) *On Becoming A Rock Musician* was modelled on Becker’s approach and the symbolic interactionist tradition. His exploration of socialising experiences and group dynamics of a “rock” band falls into a category of ethnographic studies that while focusing on the “local” open up numerous possibilities for further theorising and thematic exploration. Based on fieldwork done between 1972 and 1974 in the state of Colorado, as well as additional six years of “sporadic” fieldwork, Bennett’s study focuses on “small time” local popular musicians. The “local” bands are defined as playing to regional market, playing live and self producing (Preface, viii). Within the context of a band, Bennett examines socialising and creative processes at play, that is “how skills, ideas, and human identities manage to be created and transmitted in the context of industrialized culture” (Preface, ix). My own work too takes up the notion of identity forging within a specific context and through skill and knowledge acquisition, foregrounding masculine identities as instrumental in such processes.

The book is divided into four parts. In part one, ‘Group Dynamics’, Bennett deals with processes of group formation and recruitment of members as well as instrument acquisition, finding a practice site, transportation and other practical issues encountered by a band. This section also engages with self-labelling of musicians as “rock musicians” and mutual assessment of music
abilities which can stabilise or destabilise bands (e.g. if one of the musician’s skills are perceived not on par with the rest of the band). Part two, ‘Rock Ecology’, incorporates some musicological analysis of music instruments, and significance of the instruments musicians are playing for determining what a rock group is. Additionally, it explores backstage and onstage dynamics and practices, the concept of “gigging” and different types of gigs (social, bar and steady gigs) thus providing an overview of what happens within and with a band following its formation and in the course of its existence as an active, performing unit. Part three, ‘Mastering the Technological Component’, begins with tracing cultural origins of American popular music (through African and European influences) and extends to the concept of “The Music” which according to Bennett is “...both taken-for-granted aspect of electronic distribution as well as the larger-than-life, never before possible (and, even now, not quite possible) sharing of a musical and cultural identity across thousands of alternate cultural possibilities” (Bennett, 1980: 113). “The Music” then is American popular music when experienced in its recorded and distributed form. In order to operate within “The Music” local musicians must possess a degree of technical and technological competence such as knowledge of a recording studio and recording processes. As Bennett’s focus is the copy bands, learning and performing material produced and recorded by another band or artist, an entire section is devoted to description of learning strategies (sitting in front of the stereo with a guitar and playing a record until it is learned), which to a contemporary reader may seem rather out of date, but also signifies the degree of correlation between technological developments and related types of music practices (e.g. today’s availability of music tabs on the Internet, or a play station game Rock Band allowing players to learn and perform as a virtual band using drum, bass/lead guitar and microphone peripherals). The discussion of musician - technology interaction is then extended to the discussion of musician - musician interaction (preparing and practising material together, devising the set list) with the aim of having a successful musician - audience interactional event. The final part of the book,
'Performance: Aesthetics and the Technological Imperative', focuses on live performance, constraints faced by bands (size of the audience, size of the venue, quality of sound and so on), concluding with some discussion of how playing "other people's music" impacts on individual musical identities.

Bennett’s work raises a number of relevant issues, such as that of cultural legitimacy (value of a particular type of music) through his examination of music practices of cover bands (as opposed to bands performing original material), and the issue of definition and labelling on behalf of musicians (most musicians he studied used much problematised term "rock" to describe their identities and pursuits). Empirically grounded, it provides an insight into the everyday practices of a rock musician, who hasn’t made it and is playing other people’s music. Bennett does not deal with categories of gender, class, ethnicity, age or musical style (beyond the notion of a cover band) but nonetheless provides a platform for enquiry that focuses on any of the above categories, provided that one wishes to study them within the context of a band. Bennett’s book is one of the few (others include Cohen, 1991; Bayton, 1998) that describes and discusses practices that resemble those encountered in my own fieldwork. Despite the time span of 35 years between Bennett's and my own fieldwork, and despite the differences in focus (all of the participants in my study wrote and performed their own material), as well as numerous shifts and changes within music industries and music technology, it is significant to note the degree to which some of the practices remained unchanged. When reflecting in 1980 on his early 1970s fieldwork, Bennett sums the above up by saying:

“I found that although cultural trappings change from time to time or from location to location the musical identities of “small time” popular musicians as well as the kinds of resources that make those identities remained the same”. (Bennett, 1980: Preface vii)

The thematic and the ideological significance of the book is its move away from the most popular, most visible representatives of music making (the stars) and
its focus on the local musicians, practices and scenes, thus providing contextual rather than relying on textual analysis of mediated realities of popular musicianship.

Exploration of the local and often “hidden” music making was continued and foregrounded by Ruth Finnegan (1989) in *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English town*. Finnegan sets out to examine and provide exposure of multiple forms of music making and their interwovenness with lives of “ordinary” people. Informed by her own participation in local music scenes, she documents amateur music making and performance which she argues is equally as interesting and significant as an investigation of professional performers who are usually given most of the scholarly attention. Her work deliberately cuts across a wide range of music genres (jazz, brass bands, folk, pop, rock, country and western, musical theatre) exploring both the music making and its local social contexts. Finnegan’s interests lie in engaging with “musical practices (what people do)” rather than what she terms “musical works” or “the ‘texts’ of music” (Finnegan, 1989: 8). The scene is set through the discussion of the meanings of “amateur” and “professional”, and an introduction to the context for many musics she proceeds to explore – the town of Milton Keynes. Finnegan examines “musical worlds” of Milton Keynes in greater detail, utilising Howard Becker’s notion of “art worlds” as consisting of:

…all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art.
(Becker, 1982: 39)

The section that follows provides contrasts and comparisons of “plural worlds”, exploring differences that exist in practices of learning and performing, behaviour and expectations, as well as questioning whether experience of “music worlds” accounts for multiplicity of experiences and practices of local music making. Finnegan challenges the notion that “there is just one way in which music can and should be enacted” (Finnegan, 1989: 180). The final two sections deal with the organisation and administration of local music activities,
examining the home, the school, the church, pubs and clubs as locales for music making that provide the social context and the resources, in addition to facilitating visibility of local music worlds for urban living experience.

Finnegan considers gender in passing, for example when giving an outline of the pub as a locale, concluding that although the tradition of more men than women frequenting pubs was still prevalent “nearly half of the live music events attracted roughly equal numbers of men and women”. (Finnegan, 1989: 231) However, when discussing local rock/pop bands Finnegan notes gender imbalance with only eight out of 125 players in 1982 - 1983 survey being women. Her observations reveal that where women were included in music making their creative input was on more or less equal terms as that of male musicians. She concludes:

Men were therefore strikingly in the majority among instrumentalists, but the rock world was not a totally male preserve and the few women who were members sometimes took equal, even leading roles. (Finnegan, 1989: 119 - 120)

Furthermore, Finnegan’s study revealed that the gender balance was different in younger age school children involved in music who were predominantly girls. For boys, lack of involvement with a choir or an orchestra was based on the perception that it was “'cissy' for boys to be musical but 'natural' to be sporty”. However, the imbalance was changed with teenage boys’ involvement in rock music, outside of the schools’ music provision. (Finnegan, 1989: 203)

In addition to challenging many assumptions about the significance of local music making *The Hidden Musicians* questions the notion that class plays the most important role in “musical pathways”. Finnegan proposes that the hereditary nature of the musical family, encouragement and support provided by parents to children in their uptake and pursuit of music “is seemingly of more immediate importance than class” (Finnegan, 1989: 313). She does, however, acknowledge the “partial exception” of rock to this rule, where sense of musical achievement is determinant to the sense of self, as well as foregrounding the impact of gender and age in the development of musical interests, choice of
musical activity and instruments, choice of musical practice and so on. In many ways Finnegan legitimises and sets the scene for work focusing on local musicians and music practices, which is taken up by Cohen (1991) and Bayton (1998).

Sara Cohen's (1991) book *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making* emerges from ethnographic tradition, developing and further extending the standards for empirical work focusing on the local music making practices. She recognises and addresses the lack of ethnographic, "microsociological detail", that is the lack of attention given to bands who are making music and struggling to succeed at a local level. Furthermore, she foregrounds what to anyone involved in local music making may seem obvious, and yet somehow escapes much of the music criticism – an understanding that for most participants being in a band is interlinked with social and cultural factors:

A band could provide a means of escape where fantasies were indulged but it could also play an important cultural and social role, providing an outlet for creativity and a means by which friendships were made and maintained. (Cohen, 1991: 3)

Despite not setting out to explicitly engage with the significance of gender in music making, by focusing on bands (two in particular), Cohen's analysis reveals not just the complexities of struggles of bands within their social and cultural milieu (driven by the desire to succeed) but also foregrounds the inner workings and the dynamics within bands, informed by creative processes, hierarchies and inevitably gender identities. In addition to commerce, the two bands Cohen focuses on, perceived women “to be a threat to their creativity and solidarity and indeed their very existence...” (Cohen, 1991: 4). Chapter eight entitled ‘The Threat of Women’ deals most explicitly with gender, engaging with reasons for female absence from popular music in general, and from Liverpool music scene more specifically, as well as with roles associated with female performers (backing singers and non-instrumentalists).
discusses not just absence of women from Liverpool music scene but their active exclusion and their perceived status of “intruders”, echoing some of Becker's (1963) findings.

The music-making was thus a male activity, bounded in secrecy, rituals, and masculine values. (Cohen, 1991: 199)

One important distinction that Cohen makes is that between masculinity in performance and masculinity in everyday life; important because it points towards hierarchy of masculinities at any given setting and diversity of associated meanings, where for some men involvement with bands provided a space free from women where homosocial interaction takes place, while for others being in a band represented an opportunity to attract women.

Mavis Bayton’s (1998) Frock Rock: Women Performing Popular Music is another good example of qualitative, ethnographic work which examines the gendered nature of popular music by focusing on position and constraints of women in “rock”.5 It is based on extensive research first conducted in 1980s and updated in 1990s. Bayton herself was involved in music making and performing as the member of The Mistakes – “Oxford’s first all-women band”. Utilising ethnographic methods of participant observation and interview, Bayton’s book is grounded in everyday practices and experiences of women involved in music making and performing. She approaches her subject as a “white, heterosexual woman, a sociologist, a feminist, and a musician” (Bayton, 1998: Preface viii) thus placing female musicians centre stage, challenging and displacing “male-as-norm”. Furthermore, she is concerned with local, amateur and semi-professional music making, providing an insight into the “hidden world of female musicians at the lower end of career ladder.” (Bayton, 1998: Preface

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5 Despite settling for the usage of “rock” in the title of her book, Bayton discusses the problems she encounters with terminology where the bands she interviewed in the 1980s used the term “rock” and the similar bands she interviewed in the 1990s use the term “indie”. She too opts for “popular music” as a broad enough category to encompass semantic challenges.
viii). The structure of the book follows a possible linear trajectory of a person's involvement in music (from different routes into music through to joining the band and going public to "going professional"), and identifying specific constraints faced by women en route. It provides an excellent insight into the diversity of female experience as well as multiple obstacles faced by female musicians. For someone like me, studying masculinities on the level of local music making, and by employing equivalent ethnographic methods, the book provided useful structural and theoretical frameworks. Bayton's arguments about obstacles and challenges that women face in music making through ideological and material constraints are echoed in some of my findings about male musicians, and are discussed throughout Chapters Four to Eight. As far as ideological constraints are concerned, there is undoubtedly something special about playing in an all female band, with Bayton concluding that women she interviewed rated friendship, camaraderie, loyalty, solidarity and democratic approach to music making highly (Bayton, 1998: 197). However, she acknowledges that female bands "like their male equivalents, can be competitive, argumentative, undemocratic, and split into camps" (Bayton, 1998: 197 -198). My interests lie in extending those ideas and exploring the notion of "bandhood" in an all male and mixed band environment that is perceived and often portrayed as masculinist, maleist, homosocial and oppressive, in hope that some parallels between female and male experience of music making can be drawn, possibly leading to a greater understanding about what a truly democratic space for music making may look like and questioning the very possibility of its existence.

Wendy Fonarow's (2006) Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music is an ethnography of audience members' practices and behaviours or as she calls it "the ethnography of musical performance" (Fonarow, 2006: 5), with the focus on the body, performance and interaction. Following Finnegan (1989), Cohen (1991), and Frith (1991), Fonarow treats music as a ritual and foregrounds the significance of the role an audience has in creating the meaning in musical performance thus incorporating the
importance of subject/subject relationship and “ethnography as communication” (Fonarow, 2006: 3) that informs current ethnographic practices. As the title suggests the focus is British indie music which Fonarow examines through interviews, participant observation and textual analysis of media produced for and by indie communities. The research spans over a decade and during this time Fonarow spent extended periods of time in the UK, her status changing from Plus One (the guest of someone who had access to music venues, performances and thus relevant participants) to that of the first paid employee of Domino Records and then later A&R manager for MCA Records. Given her extensive access to UK indie scene and its key players, Fonarow’s book appears surprisingly un-ethnographic compared to Finnegan (1989), Cohen (1991) or Bayton (1998), in the sense that one does not gain many impressions of her ethnographic journey, nor ethnographically shaped knowledge of the main actors whose practices informed the findings. Nonetheless, one of the highlights of the book is an informed discussion of what Fonarow terms “zones of participation”, consisting of three areas with associated practices: zone one nearest to the stage and populated by the most devoted participants, of high density and significant movement; zone two consisting of mostly still audience members focusing on stage performance; and finally zone three at the back of the venue, populated by those involved in other activities such as ordering drinks and talking. Zone three is also where industry professionals can be found and Fonarow devotes an entire chapter to it.

Fonarow engages with music and gender in several ways. In Chapter Two, ‘The Zones of Participation’, she discusses a relative absence of women from zone one (immediately in front of the stage) as well as visible lack of female participation in activities such as moshing, stage diving and crowd surfing. Most of the discussion of gender takes place in Chapter Six, ‘Sex and the Ritual Practitioners’, where she deals with gendered spectatorship and the inversion that occurs in indie where “both men and women gaze upon men” (Fonarow, 2006: 205). Furthermore, she discusses the stereotype of a groupie and its status in indie music where it is seen as an “antitype” but nonetheless
present and applied to different categories of fans, including male fans who are the most devoted and wanting to meet the performers, talk to them, have something signed and so on. The agenda of those fans in not sexual thus transgressing the groupie stereotype. In the similar vein she explains references to "the kids" within indie music, denoting desexualised, genderless mass (Fonarow, 2006: 206). As far as the use of sexual iconography is concerned she argues that "the guitar is a potent image of the union of male and female forces" (Fonarow, 2006: 219), combining phallic qualities of its neck and feminine curvature of its body. On the whole, indie music performance utilises both masculine and feminine codes and it represents a "musical terrain ...composed primarily of the androgynous blending of male and female attributes." (Fonarow, 2006: 217) This echoes an earlier Frith and McRobbie’s (1990) argument about ambivalent and contradictory displays of sexuality as well as arguments put forward by Walser (1993), Reynolds and Press (1995) and Whiteley (1997), among others.

One of the main contributions of the book is that it brings into focus members of the audience and their practices. However, in Chapter Six Fonorow devotes some space to the discussion of the musician as the trickster or "a figure of creativity that alternately amuses, disgusts, scandalises, awes, humiliates, and is humiliated by others". (Fonarow, 2006: 228) She uses the notion of the trickster to demonstrate the problematic and contentious relationship that indie musicians have with the mainstream stereotype, simultaneously rejecting and embracing aspects of it. The concept of trickster is full of possibilities but unfortunately the reader is left wanting to meet some of the tricksters Fonarow encountered on her journey, yet none seem to be brought to life.

None of the texts discussed above place masculinities at the centre of their enquiry but nonetheless those classic music ethnographies provide many insights into the musicians’ learning processes, group dynamics and interaction, negotiation of constraints – processes that can be seen as gendering and studied with significance of gender in mind thus contributing to
an understanding of music making not only as social and cultural but also a
gendering practice. Bennett (1980), Cohen (1991), Finnegan (1989) and
Bayton (1998) all focus on local music scenes and engage with music as a form
of social practice, while Fonarow’s (2006) attention is on participatory role of
the audience. All studies acknowledge an imbalance of gender in both music
making and music participation, a visible absence of women from particular
musical domains as well as stereotypes associated with both male and female
participation in music spheres. 6

6 Other significant music ethnographies that informed my work include:
Bruce A. MacLeod’s (1993) musical ethnography Club Date Musicians: Playing the New York
Party Circuit of semi professional “club date” musicians which echoes some of the earlier
Howard Becker’s work on professional dance musicians.
Barry Shank’s (1994) Dissonant Identities: The Rock’n’Roll Scene in Austin, Texas, an
ethnography of Austin music scene based on Shank’s participation as a musician as well as
extensive interviews with musicians, fans, music writers and industry personnel. Shank’s
account incorporates descriptions and discussions of music spaces/places, history of music
making and musical styles as well as the discussion of subjective power of music, that is an
impact on those who participate in music scenes, thus becoming a part of a scene that shapes
their identities.
Sarah Thornton’s (1995) Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital, an account of
club cultures as taste cultures, temporary communities build around clubs and hierarchies of
values associated with those communities such as “the authentic versus the phoney, the ‘hip’
versus the ‘mainstream’, and the ‘underground’ versus ‘the media’” (Thornton, 1995: 3 - 4).
Johan Fornäs, Ulf Lindberg and Ove Sernhede (1995) In Garageland: Rock, Youth and
Modernity. An ethnographic study originally published in Sweden in 1988, addressing youth
culture and rock music. The authors focus on three bands Chans, OH and Lam Gam seeking to
explore identity formation and “dynamic learning” within youth groups while drawing on diverse
theoretical frameworks including those of Habermas, Bourdieu and British youth culture
research, in addition to incorporating theories of subjectivity and socialisation from within
psychoanalytic tradition. Written in “dialogic” format (where interview data are displayed
alongside analysis on each page) it provides detailed cultural portraits of the three bands.
Daniel Cavicchi’s (1998) Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans,
a study of Bruce Springsteen fans informed by “processual anthropology” (Turner, 1974).
Cavicchi conducted the work as an insider (Springsteen fan himself) collecting data through
face-to-face interviews, email correspondence and participation in fan activities.
Sex, gender and music

Both The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock'n'Roll by Simon Reynolds and Joy Press (1995), and Sexing The Groove: Popular Music and Gender edited by Sheila Whiteley (1997), provide significant contributions to readings of music through gender. Reynolds and Press present a reading of what they perceive as rebellious musical expression "a kind of psychoanalysis of rebellion (male and female)" and arrive to two complimentary forms of masculine rebellion, "misogynist" and "mummy's boy". Along the route they address and explore the ways in which male and female musicians have adopted a range of gender positions, what they term as "survey" of images of masculinity and femininity which provide a scope for "gender tourism" where "shy women can glimpse ferocity in the Stones or Sex Pistols; emotionally armoured men can toy with androgyny, while male wimps can "play soldiers", taking vicarious pleasure in warrior masculinity or megalomaniac fantasies" (Reynolds and


Marion Leonard (2007) Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power based on field research with musicians (interviews), textual sources (audio and video recordings, magazines, web discussion forums, zines), biographical material (musicians). The book draws on ethnographic tradition while engaging with "rock as a masculinist tradition", status of women in rock, representation of gender in music media and riot grrrl movement. Also of interest was a comparative international project (Australia, UK, US and Germany) Playing for Life which is examining the engagement of marginalised groups of young people with popular music. It is lead by Professor Geraldine Bloustien and it employs auto-video ethnographic methodologies. Further information about the project can be found at: http://www.playingforlife.org.au/index.php with the forthcoming publication (Bloustien, G. and Peters, M. (2008, forthcoming) Playing for Life: youth and music, London: Palgrave) likely to provide relevant findings and insights.
Press, 1995: Introduction xi). While a psychoanalytic theoretical underpinning of the book (Kristeva, Cixious, Deleuze and Guattari) produces insightful analysis of gender, the book has been criticised for an unbalanced treatment of male and female performers, oversimplification of masculinity and non-inclusion of meaning that fans bring to understanding of gender. (Walser, 1997: 776 - 777) Although significant for its creative employment of psychoanalytic theory to a selection of well known artists, their musical output and associated lyrical content, the book’s situatedness outside the ethnographic tradition provides a small degree of insights into "musicking" as a dynamic, gendering activity bringing together performers, music texts and audiences.

The collection of articles in Sexing The Groove explores the relationship between popular music, gender and sexuality through arguments and debates about constructions and deconstructions of masculine and feminine identities by "performers, subcultures, fans and texts". Part one examines practices seen to reinforce masculinism of popular music. Will Straw's contribution 'Sizing Up Record Collections: Gender and Connoisseurship in Rock Music Culture' moves the discussion away from the visual representations of masculinity (guitars as phallic symbols, confrontational and aggressive performances) to the debate about the ways in which rock culture's reinforcement as masculine is based on knowledge and bonds among men. It deals with practices and associated discourses "record collecting, historical contextualism and the connoisseurist creation and ongoing revision of a canon" (Introduction, xviii), something that emerges as a relevant theme in ethnographic data I collected in conducting my research. Similarly, other contributions in part one focus on practice and experience, including Cohen's exploration of production of rock as a male form through everyday activities of the music scene, as well as Bayton's account of women's experiences of playing electric guitar.

Part two of Whiteley's collection, 'Masculinities and Popular Music', deals more overtly with representation, performance and meaning of masculinities in the popular music domain. Whiteley explores Mick Jagger's image, style and
sexuality, Gareth Palmer examines masculinity as exemplified by Bruce Springsteen and Stan Hawkins discusses the Pet Shop Boys. While textual approaches and focus on well established, media endorsed artists who have acquired a cult status provide relevant insights into the workings of both the media and rock and pop industries, they inevitably reiterate the significance of well established, mediatized and popularised forms of masculinity at the expense of engaging with the ordinary, average and common place. With its focus on gendered practices and cultures on one hand, and gendering of popular music representations on the other, Sexing The Groove covers the wide range of music themes and adopts a variety of approaches to gender, reflecting interdisciplinary qualities of the field.

Other significant contributions to gender and popular music debate by Whiteley include Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity (2000), with its case study approach and its focus on prominent female performers throughout popular music history (Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, Patti Smith, Siouxsie Sioux, Annie Lennox, Madonna, k. d. lang, Tracy Chapman, Tori Amos, Courtney Love, P. J. Harvey and Björk), as well as her engagement with gender and age in Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age and Gender (Whiteley, 2005). The original aim of Too Much Too Young was to study the exploitation of young musicians through examination of image, age and music performance. In addition to case studies of young performers (e.g. Brenda Lee, Michael Jackson, Annabella Lwin) and part two dealing with problematisation of the notion of "little girls" with reference to artists such as Kate Bush, Tori Amos and Björk, Whiteley devotes part three to "little boys" narratives, and by focusing in detail on Jim Morrison and Jimmi Hendrix examines how male artists have to "negotiate the imperatives of history where each genre has its own traditions, both in terms of music and image" usually through "the wild boys' of rock vs the 'nice boys' of pop" stereotypes (Whiteley, 2005: 14). Echoing Frith and McRobbie’s distinction between "cock rock" and “teenybop” (as music genres with ideological connotations), this part of Whiteley’s argument is useful when thinking about shifting and multiple definitions and
notions of masculinity that are available to popular music musicians, as well as through its dealing with seductive myths (e.g. originality, realness, authenticity, rebellion, living fast and dying young) associated with music, to which I return at various points in the thesis.

With its title *Queering The Popular Pitch*, a collection of articles edited by Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga (2006) is paying a homage to *Queering The Pitch* (Brett et al, 1994), landmark publication of "new gay and lesbian musicology*. *Queering The Popular Pitch* sets out to extend "queering" to domains, texts and meanings of popular music. The aim of the book is to question and subvert heteronormative connotations of popular music or "gendered heterosexual bias" thus contributing to the practice of destabilising some of its dominant readings of music and its practices. The book is divided in four thematic parts ('Performing Lives, Hidden Histories', 'Queering Boundaries', 'Too Close for Comfort and 'Glamorous Excess'), engaging with a number of themes including Judith Halberstam's exploration of dyke subcultures (riot dyke, drag kings, drag king boy-band tributes) in 'What's that smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives'; Anno Mungen's examination of performative gay cultures, practices and strategies (vocal, linguistic and performative) of queering the German cabaret songs prior to 1933 in "'Anders als die Anderen', or, Queering the Song: Construction and Representation of Homosexuality in German Cabaret Recordings before 1933"; Stephen Amico's engagement with the notion of space, sexuality and identity through discussion of "reverse diaspora" - denoting a movement and arrival of gay men from disparate locations into "gay meccas" such as New York City in parallel to crossovers in house and Latin music genres and creation of Latin house, and Sarah Kerton's reading of queering "politics" in music and performance of Russian group *Tatu*. While providing relevant readings and interpretations of queering practices the above (apart from Halberstam) focus on sexuality rather than on gender. Admittedly, heteronormativity relies on non-queer/straight masculinity and femininity and hence queering strategies could be read as destabilising notions of gender as well as sexuality.
One of the articles in the collection dealing more implicitly with gender, and in particular with masculinities, is Freya Jarman - Ivens' ‘Queer(ing) Masculinities in Heterosexist Rap Music’. Jarman - Ivens addresses the history of “excription” of women from male dominated music genres, their objectification and fetishization, as well as the alignment of linguistic prowess with masculinity. She then utilises Eminem’s lyrical “obsession” with gay sex, Eminem’s as well as other rap artists’ (e.g. 50 Cent’s) reliance on hypermasculine, powerful physiques “undoubtedly intended to assure the viewer of his male, masculine, phallic power” (Jarman - Ivens, 2006: 212). However, her analysis points at difficulties and intricacies involved in constructions and readings of gender and sexual identities in rap music as the “apparently straightforward message of heterosexist male supremacy is quickly complicated by moments of self-deprecation”. (Jarman - Ivens, 2006: 214)

Queering the Popular Pitch’s main contribution is that it builds upon work that simply provides a musical survey of contributions made by gay musicians across music genres (e.g. John Gill’s [1995] Queer Noises: Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth – Century Music), by examining the ways sexual (and gendered) meanings are inscribed through musical texts, practices and associated readings of such texts and practices.

Gender in music education and classical tradition

Some exciting evidence of the role of gendering of music in general, and popular music in particular, can be found in the body of work dealing with music education, with Lucy Green’s work providing helpful insights and examples. In Music, Gender and Education Green (1997) addresses the relationship between music and femininity through the exploration of musical meaning embedded in women’s musical practice throughout history (part one), and explores gendered musical meaning in contemporary education (part two). Green’s focus is the examination of gendered meanings encoded in musical meanings, from alignment of singing with femininity via the notion that female
instrumentalists disrupt patriarchal definitions of femininity through to the discussion of “threatening femininity” of female composers and improvisers, which interrupt masculine associations in music. The argument relies on the distinction between inherent, absolute meanings and non-musically derived meanings, termed as “delineated” (affected by gender/performing body), resulting in an attempt of development of gender theory of music. In the process she reviews another seminal work in the area, Susan Mc Clary’s (1991) Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality which deals with “musical semiotics of gender”, that is musical conventions of gender and sexuality in traditional music theory, musical narrative and gendered discourses of music, from the perspective of feminist music criticism.

Part two uses the classroom setting of English secondary school music education as a “microcosmic version of the wider society” in order to examine how gendered musical meanings and reproduction of gender in music education arise from classroom practices including those of girls, boys and their teachers (Green, 1997: 143). Green argues that gender and gendered meanings associated with music are reproduced and reiterated in the music classroom where practices parallel those identified in part one – women/girls affirming, interrupting and threatening their femininity. Although the argument is based on observations of a formal learning setting (music classroom), it reveals how music practice is gendered quite early in musicians’ lives. For many, music practices that started through formal learning will extend into informal learning which characterises the development of many popular musicians. Green (2002) examines informal learning practices in How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education. Although in this publication Green does not deal with the category of gender explicitly, the insights she gains through interviews with young musicians about informal musical learning inform an understanding of peer group (often male) dynamic. Accounts provided by Green’s respondents on popular music practices such as learning to play an instrument, listening and copying, acquiring technique and developing musicianship could be used as a starting point for an enquiry that posits gender within the examination of the
process thus exploring the degree to which such processes are gendered. Ethnographic data gathered through the formal interviews and observations I conducted address the process of skill acquisition and informal learning as one of the key stages in the development of a band, but also a stage where significant interplay between gender on one hand and musical skill, creativity and power on the other, takes place.

**Genre masculinities: the case of heavy metal**

Unsurprisingly, heavy metal invites numerous contributions about status and the construction of gender, ranging from readings of embodied masculinities in performance and representation of gender in heavy metal video and lyrical content, to gendering of heavy metal audiences and their practices. Heavy metal is often used as an umbrella term for numerous sub-genres (death, black, power, doom, gothic, nu and so on), with their own musical and performative norms. Despite the possibility that masculinities are coded and performed differently within different sub-genres, I maintain the overarching label of "heavy metal" to describe contributions to the understanding of gender and popular music that emerged in this area.

*In Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* Deena Weinstein (1991) addresses gendering of heavy metal with reference to both performers and audiences. She depicts the heavy metal genre as rejecting feminine cultural values, interlaced with misogyny which becomes explicit in status of female fans (i.e. groupies), portrayal of women as sexual objects in heavy metal videos and the fact that female heavy metal performers can "make it" only if they can out-macho their male counterparts. (Weinstein, 1991: 67 - 69) In line with the overall ideology of the genre the metal audience is described as both predominantly male and masculinist. According to Weinstein, masculinism is expressed through male solidarity and male bonding together with the exclusion of women. She provides a Freudian reading of male – female relationships stating that:
Women are part of the problem for males, not only because they are objects of lust but because they symbolize repressive authority in the persons of the mother and the teacher.... Young males are, at a minimum, ambivalent regarding women, seeking to escape from maternal and other forms of female authority and fearful of being viewed as "mama’s boys, “and yet attracted to women sexually. (Weinstein, 1991: 105)

According to Weinstein, an additional dimension of masculinism of heavy metal scenes is homophobia, found to be explicit and openly expressed, or mediated through rejection of other music forms such as disco, often associated with male homosexuality.

Robert Walser’s (1993) *Running With The Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* is widely considered not just a refined analysis of heavy metal music but one offering relevant insights in construction of masculinity, within the genre. Informed by Walser’s own experiences of performing heavy metal as a guitarist, the text incorporates sophisticated musical analysis, ethnography and cultural criticism. Walser’s interests lie not only in mapping out and analysing the role and place of heavy metal within the commercial structures, but also in foregrounding the experiential aspect of music making and performing.

Becoming a musician in any of the styles... is a process of learning to understand and manipulate the differences intrinsic to a style, which are manifested differently in each text and performance. Unlike many scholars, I think it is possible to analyze, historicize and write about these processes. (Walser, 1993: Introduction xiii)

Despite his focus on the most popular examples, specific music genre and a historical period - heavy metal bands from the 1980s, Walser’s engagement with gender in general and masculinity in particular provided many useful pointers for the development of my own work. His consideration of the processes of “forging masculinity” and “exscription” of women most visible in
heavy metal videos are taken up in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis, where I used them as a framework in my own analysis of masculine bonding. Walser, however, could be criticised for conflating masculinity and men too easily and avoiding consideration of types of relationship women involved in heavy metal may have with masculinity, as well as for not extending his debate further onto meanings of homosociality and homoeroticism for gay male subjects involved with heavy metal genre. Nonetheless, Walser's focus on "musical activities that produce texts and styles and make them socially significant" and his engagement with music as practice or "musicking" where musical practices such as performance, dancing or listening (Small, 1998) are possibly more significant than musical scores alone, is shared by my own approach to study of popular music masculinities within contexts of music enculturation, creative processes and performances, rather than a constricted focus on music in purely textual terms and through analysis of representation.

Keith Kahn-Harris (2007) takes up the "metal" theme one step further into the realm of extreme metal; a multifaceted, cross-national "scene" causing much controversy due to its involvement with the "extreme" through exploration of violence, the occult, death, neo-fascism, Satanism and so on. Based on fieldwork research in the UK, US, Israel and Sweden, and informed by Kahn-Harris's participation as both "critical insider" and "sympathetic outsider" as well as his involvement with British extreme metal magazine *Terrorizer*, the book examines definitions and meanings of the genre and scene, engaging with "transgression"—what is extreme about the scene and what it transgresses (i.e. notions about what music is). The second part of the book looks at the inside of the scene, tackling issues of hierarchy and power, followed by an examination of location of the scene and the creation of forms of "subcultural capital" by the scene. The book does not approach the genre through a focus on the negotiation and construction of gender identities but nonetheless engages with gender by relating the discussion to existing discourses of masculinity and popular music, and more specifically drawing on Weinstein's (2000) and Walser's (1993) writing about gender and genre, as well as engaging with
arguments put across by Straw (1997) and Reynolds and Press (1995) evaluated elsewhere in this chapter. Kahn - Harris utilises the concept of “abject” as a theme in rock music (Reynolds and Press, 1995), which according to him in extreme metal music is associated with “musical forms that appear uncontrolled, limitless and are associated with the feminized body” (Kahn - Harris, 2007: 34). They include feedback, syncopation, guitar solos applied excessively and melody, all of which need to be controlled and reigned in. According to Kahn - Harris, extreme metal masculinity is based on fear of feminine weakness, where violent and misogynistic themes that can be seen as excluding women but also attracting “the minority of women in the scene (who) are often quietly subversive of mainstream femininity – after all, they prefer aggressive music that ‘nice girls’ do not listen to” (Khan - Harris, 2007: 76). Similarly, the scene is described as hostile to homosexuality although Khan - Harris acknowledges that there is some degree of visibility of female bisexuals and lesbians. In addition, he points to forms of social knowledge of extreme metal scene exemplified by archivialism and collecting (Straw, 1997) as determinant in its masculinist ethos, a theme which is further explored in the context of my own work in Chapter Four.

Krenske and McKay (2000) ethnographic study of a heavy metal venue Club Thrash in Brisbane, Australia confirms the existence of gendered power structures in heavy metal outlined by Weinstein and others (Walser, 1990, 1993; Straw, 1990). Informed by Connell’s notion of hegemonic masculinity and wider constructionist positions reliant on understanding of gender as institutionalised practice, grounded in participant observation and extended by formal interviews, this study provides insights into a range of masculine and feminine “types” present on Club Thrash scene (Metalheads, Fanatics, Cool Dudes, Hardcore Bohemians – male, Metal Wenches, Glam Chicks, Hardcore Bohemians – female), their dress codes, and modes of participation in musical and wider subcultural activities (e.g. moshing, drug taking). Krenske and McKay argue that for many young women the heavy metal scene of the club represented an escape from the “stifling adolescent conditions” and
“oppressive conditions of everyday life” (Krenske and McKay, 2000: 302), however, by entering the scene young women were simply exchanging one oppressive context for another. They utilise Connell’s notion of “emphasised femininity” (e.g. Glam Chicks’ style led to their sexual objectification) to explain how through its employment women comply with the interests and desires of men, allowing men to benefit from “patriarchal dividend”. Additionally, their study exposes clear hierarchies between different groups of men, with Metalheads holding a hegemonic position subordinating Fanatics, Cool Dudes and Hardcore Bohemians, providing a good example of “multiple masculinities” co-existing within supposedly coherent space. Notably, Krenske and McKay witnessed an “array of competing femininities” in Club Thrash and explore how they may be used to sustain masculine hegemony. A few of the observed women did take part in masculine activities such as moshing and stage diving (perceived as violent but also as sites of male bonding), aiming to be “one of the boys” thus doing gender on men’s terms. Similarly to Kahn-Harris’s findings, the heterosexism of the scene was evident in mostly male participants’ homophobia, however there was a degree of visibility of lesbians associated with the Hardcore Bohemian group.

Despite my own research agenda incorporating an avoidance of “genre masculinities” through my focus on a range of local, ordinary, non-spectacular and everyday masculine identities, the work outlined above provided many relevant pointers such as Walser’s notion of “forging masculinity” - masculinity as a process, shifting and created through a series of normative practices, and depictions of gender dynamics inherent in heavy metal spaces (e.g. live venues, clubs) that can easily be applied and extended to other music settings.

**Masculinities in focus**

At this point of my literature “survey” it is becoming evident there are very few academic texts dealing specifically with popular music masculinities, making them the focus of enquiry. Such imbalance has been addressed by the two

Bannister's discussion focuses on an examination of ways in which masculinities are constructed in indie (guitar rock) "scenes" in New Zealand, the USA and the UK – "globally disparate scenes", and concentrates on well known indie acts as opposed to more obscure, lesser known artists. He accepts that although his analysis engages with "scenes" the entire notion of indie as "local", "autonomous" and "resistant" ought to be questioned (Bannister, 2006b: Introduction xxiii), and hence in terms of content his emphasis is on artists rather than scenes. He sets out to examine the construction and meaning of indie masculinities associated with the notion of "alternative" or "indie" music as "original, unique, different, non-conformist and independent of the dominant culture". Bannister's analysis incorporates a critique of approaches to masculinities that neglect the observer/the observed dichotomy and lack self-reflexivity:

> I argue that masculinities have often been reified as other to the subjectivities of researchers and writers, as a rough working – class, deviant 'other', through a middle-class gaze that disavows the involvement of the observer. (Bannister, 2006b: Introduction xxv)

He is thus critical of "authoring" and objectification taking place in the creation of subcultural accounts of masculinities whose subjects are objectified, othered and most often approached through recognised categories of deviance, repression, and physicality. (Bannister, 2006b: 10) His account relies on incorporation of the Frankfurt School’s and Foucauldian theorisation of forms of "indirect" authority (e.g. rationalisation, surveillance) and an attempt to apply the model of splitting of high and low culture to categories of feminine and masculine in music.
...the argument is not so much that high and low correspond to masculine and feminine, but that they correspond to the Freudian split between superego and id, and the implied model of repressive power relations. (Bannister, 2006b: Introduction xxv)

In short, he is interested not just in what is represented and how the representation is authored, but in what he calls an "overall economy of discourses".

Bannister's engagement with the themes ranges from those of homosociality and kinship, via the use of technologies and representation of masculinity through sound, to exploration of the link between melancholy and white masculinities. His knowledge of indie sound, its themes and characteristics of its scenes serves as anchorage for theoretical discussion, providing useful illustrations and examples for the reader familiar with his references. Bannister's work appears in its most innovative where he attempts to extend the discussion beyond textual analysis of masculine embodiments (e.g. in performance and sound) by aiming to understand indie masculinities as articulated through homosociality, aspects of which incorporate self-policing (of taste and knowledge), maintenance of "purity" and autonomousness of the genre which mirrors a particular type of "pure" and "alternative" masculinity, and the recognition that anti-intellectualist attitude towards the mainstream can itself be viewed as a form of masculine intellectualism and aesthetics. Previously addressed Connell's (1995, 2000) notion of hegemonic masculinity can be in this context applied to indie masculinity, implying the type of masculinity that has the privileged status in relation to conformist gender identities of the dominant culture.

Oh Boy! seeks to address the lack of systematised, collected writing about masculinities and popular music; to address and explore the construction and definitions of masculinity within the field. By doing so it claims to set out to destabilise and critically engage with phallocentrism that leads to uncritical representation of heterosexual masculinity (Biddle and Jarman-Ivens, 2007: 3).
By bringing masculinity to the fore and exploring a range of its enactments, this volume questions the notion of masculinity as "nonperformative"..."natural", "original" and absolute. Divided into three main sections, addressing "masculine connections", "troubled/troubling masculinity" and "other modes of masculinity", the collection combines a range of approaches to gender and popular music including ethnographic, musicological and ethno musicological. Significant contributions are made by Sheila Whiteley in 'Which Freddie? Constructions of Masculinity in Freddie Mercury and Justin Hawkins', and Stan Hawkins in '[Un]Justified: Gestures of Straight-Talk in Justin Timberlake's Song', with their focus on the interplay between vocality, musical genre, bodily display and sexuality, problematising dominant notions of masculinity. For my own work, situated within ethnographic tradition, a welcome and a refreshing addition to the volume is Jonathan Gruzelier's ethnographically informed 'Moshpit Menace and Masculine Mayhem', where he attempts to relate moshpit culture to theories of homosociality. Through what is perceived as violent interaction he explores the stereotypes of aggression and violence associated with heavy metal culture, in turn understood as male and masculine. He sees the moshpit as a space where male homosocial interaction is made visible (albeit one of its forms) and masculine dominance is asserted. In his exploration of the dynamics, rules and strategies of the moshpit, as well as bringing female experience of the moshpit to the fore, Gruzelier suggests that the diversification of the moshpit, that is its "broadening demographic" may lead to both the perception of a "dilution of subcultural meaning" of a moshpit and an increase of solidarity and inclusiveness of a musical genre and its practices (Gruzelier, 2007: 74). Despite its focus on one musical genre and one specific practice (moshing), I found Gruzelier's analysis significant in thinking about homosocial spaces and practices more widely and implications of female disruption of homosocial equilibrium and dynamics, with my own ethnographic work based on entering all male spaces being an example of such destabilisation.
Overall, with its largely textual approach to popular music masculinities, the volume succeeds in queering and challenging some of the dominant, mainstream notions of masculinity (white, heterosexual, rock masculinity), pointing towards multiplicity of constructions and meanings and demonstrating how differing approaches can work together in dismantling myths associated with its naturalism, non-performativity and originality.

Conclusion

By foregrounding a number of the key texts, debates and approaches, this chapter aimed to provide a systematic overview of existing knowledge and writing about gender and popular music in general, and masculinities and popular music more specifically as situated within wider popular music discourses. The existing texts and debates addressed here point towards both the significance of music within academic and everyday cultural discourses, and prominence of gender in this interdisciplinary field of enquiry. If music is understood as a cultural practice encompassing a range of activities, then the arguments can be extended to its gendering qualities. A particularly significant debate about gender in the field of popular music studies is an ideological one built upon examination of the correlation of gender and power with implications on musical texts, performers and audiences. Such deliberations resulted in a number of relevant and informative explorations of male and female involvement in music making and music participation. Additionally, the status of gender within music has been examined textually through readings and analysis of representation of gender in popular culture media.

The afore mentioned shift in approaches to popular music, away from meaning and interpretation and towards greater engagement with the role of music within multifaceted experiences of day to day life (e.g. Hesmondhalgh, 2002), opened up the possibilities for change of direction in discussions of music and gender where there is no longer a need to privilege the most visible, the most prominent and the most spectacular participants, texts and associated
gendering of practices and representations. Nonetheless, as the reviewed
literature signals, there is still a degree of preference for inclusion of the most
visible, most prominent and the most popular examples of participants and
practices. Masculinity in particular, as a multifaceted, non-monolithic concept,
incorporating an array of positions and practices, struggles to find its way into
publications and is instead subsumed within arguments about misogyny of pop
and rock, rockism of popular music and discussion of specific music genres
where it can be found at its most "spectacular". Everyday masculinities,
exemplified in practices of ordinary men who happen to love and play music,
somehow do not fit into the glamorous worlds of rock and pop and thus are
eluding more prominent academic engagement.

With its focus on understanding and examination of music as social
practice, my own work is strongly informed by the ethnographic tradition (e.g.
Bennett, 1980; Finnegan, 1989; Cohen, 1991; Bayton 1998). Masculinity, as a
category of interest, must thus be understood as gendered practice of the self
interwoven with a range of musical and other social practices, and allowing for
a range of hegemonic positions. Following the above definition, to gain insights
into the impact of gender on “musicking” and impact of “musicking” on gender
(the two way process) one ought to engage with the process itself within
temporal and spatial confines of its occurrence, something an ethnography
endeavours to deliver. Small (1977) defines art as:

...more than a production of beautiful, or even expressive objects...for others to
contemplate and admire, but essentially a process, by which we explore our inner
and outer environments and learn to live in them. (Small, 1977: 3 - 4)

Similarly, how we engage with music as a creative practice and an integral part
of our social worlds with their many relationships, has a bearing on our insights
about music and the types of knowledge generated a propos its meaning,
which the following chapter attempts to address.
3
Within and Beyond the Musical Field: Practices and Knowledge

Introduction

As outlined in the introductory chapter of the thesis, the research presented here was inspired and developed as an extension of my venturing and informal socialising in music spaces upon moving to the North West of the United Kingdom in 2004. It could be suggested that a significant degree of informality is one of the defining features of ethnographies of everyday life, but more so of ethnographies “at home”. There are several relevant issues that ought to be considered when reflecting on an ethnography conducted at home. First, there is a continuous need to legitimise one’s work and prove its authenticity due to its interwovenness with everyday life, which is more often than not taken for granted. Second, authenticity of research is associated with anthropological notion of “bounded field”, a locale that one travels to, spends time conducting research and leaves upon the completion of data collection (Caputo: 2000). Third, in popular music research a choice of the subject and the locale can contribute to anthropological authenticity of the research, so for example a focus on a particular town (Cohen’s Liverpool, Finnegan’s Milton Keynes, Shank’s Austin), a particular cultural or musical grouping (Hodkinson’s goth⁷, Harris’s extreme metal) or a particular space (e.g. a specific venue such as Club Thrash studied by Krenske and McKay) all contribute to the construction of the notion of the authentic field. As my research was conducted “at home” in a non-geographically bounded sense, the closest I have come to such notions of the authentic field was attending structured events such as live gigs or band rehearsals, both being temporarily bounded. Some further experience of

⁷ Paul Hodkinson’s (2002) well known ethnographic study Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture focuses on goth subcultural groupings, dealing with ways in which group identities are established and maintained.
research “away” was gained during my visits to Edinburgh where I socialised with and interviewed two bands. The sole purpose of my visits to Edinburgh was to conduct research and spend time with the participants in their own environment which required a degree of planning and preparation (e.g. booking accommodation, timing my visits so that I can attend the bands’ live gigs), but also provided me with a greater focus on task at hand as I was not disrupted by domestic chores, work and other commitments.

Pursuing the issue of accessibility, the type of knowledge produced through ethnographic research as well as the notion of insider/outsider, I was intrigued to read that Sarah Thornton (1995) classed herself as an outsider to club cultures she was studying, despite having been “an avid clubber”. She described her detachment resulting from her role as a researcher who was working in a space where everyone else, apart from club employees such as DJs and visiting journalists, was frequenting at their leisure (Thornton: 2005: 2). She writes about herself as “a stranger in a strange land” due to her age (she was 23 at the time she started her research and amazingly felt she was ageing out of the group she was studying), as well as due to her nationality (a North American studying British club scene). While I do not question that feeling such detachment is indeed possible, I can not help but wonder if she would have felt the same had she remained “at home” and not travelled to her locations. Additionally, since Thornton has conducted her research there have been other significant developments that may have impacted on the notion of the field, most significant being technologies that allow a researcher to transgress geographical distances with ease and thus contribute to further blurring of the boundaries between the home and the field.

Caputo (2000) tells an amusing story of “the box” given to her as a gift before she embarked on her research, as something she must take into “the field” to help her pass the time. It included various treats and a number of mystery novels that she could indulge in reading while waiting around for some action to take place. Upon formally embarking on research I have not been given such a box, however, I have made certain other provisions such as
making sure that my broadband connection was efficient, and that I had access to a reliable top of the range digital voice recorder doubling as an MP3 player (which allowed me to listen to the music while waiting for a respondent to turn up for an interview or travelling to another town to see a live band thus getting me into the mood) easily connected to my laptop via an USB port for convenient and quick transfer of audio files, some of which were transcribed while in transit between different locations. Additionally, I made sure my mobile phone was in a good working order and stacked with numbers of relevant contacts. I signed up to numerous email and mobile phone alerts, bulletins, forums, and news groups. I got into the habit of checking my landline telephone messages and made sure that I was easily accessible by email and telephone. Such engagement with “the field” has not always been easy as at the same time I had to maintain a number of existing roles (within working environments and the family) which overlapped with my newly found role of a researcher. Sometimes, such an overlap impacted on chronology of the key research “events”, for example negotiation of access, timing of the formal interviews and their transcription, data analysis, drafting of the chapters, and thus on the overall structure of the research and subsequent development of ideas and knowledge.

In order to situate the production of knowledge and with the aim of exposing the dynamic of processes involved, this chapter engages with practical, theoretical and methodological concerns encountered by the research. The aim is critically to address the production of knowledge and tensions inherent in any such attempt. In addition to providing an outline of plural theories and methods informing my study, this chapter aims to examine their relationship to production of knowledge. Furthermore, the much contested concept of interdisciplinarity is discussed together with its application in my study of meanings, constructions and enactments of masculinities in popular music thus presenting an evaluation of the rationale and philosophical assumptions that informed my work. I begin with a brief outline of the key research questions and provide a rationale for methodological approaches I
adopted, critically addressing the choice of research methods, their advantages and shortcomings. I provide an account of my experience of doing fieldwork within a highly gendered field as well as explain how the data gathered have been coded and analysed. The discussion then widens out to examination of different approaches employed to study gender and popular music as well as the discussion of notions of a discipline and interdisciplinarity within a wider framework of production of knowledge.

Research questions

My specific research questions evolved from a broad theme of masculinity and popular music. Informed by theoretical writing on gender and popular music and through being involved in social interaction in music spaces, I began by questioning the assertions that aligned music spaces and music practices with masculinity as a monolithic concept, often reduced to representation and informed by stereotypes, rather than focusing on people, their practices and meanings given to practices by those who were engaged in them. By focusing on people and bringing their experiences to the fore, I set out to explore if empirically derived knowledge of music participants and their practices can challenge monolithic notions of masculinity associated not just with specific music genres but wider popular music domains.

As my research evolved, within the broad theme of the construction of masculine identities through processes of social interaction within music spaces, a number of more specific questions began to emerge:

1. Why are some of the practices in music enculturation (e.g. collecting) perceived as masculine?
2. Do hegemonic, normative and "oppressive" forms of masculinity still prevail in musical settings/spaces?
3. What is the relation between "liveness", authenticity and masculinity?
4. To what extent is gender identity in music “authenticated” through live performance, interaction between participants, and collectivity of a band?

5. How does the myth of the suffering artist fit into masculine narratives of popular music?

6. To what extent do expectations of audiences determine and impact on the ways in which masculinity is constructed and performed in popular music?

7. To what extent are technological developments, especially so called democratisation of virtual spaces, contributing to a representational shift of embodied masculinity?

While the above questions are discussed and thematically organised throughout Chapters Four to Eight, the next section examines the approaches used by the study in order to explore and examine them.

Fieldwork

Beginnings

When I think about music in general there is a strong sense of my entire existence accompanied by it, from memories of jumping up and down on my bed when my parents' 45rpm found their way into my room in the mid 1970s, to the amazement of shininess of my first CD, and the intoxicating qualities and silent excitement in attending my first live gig. And then, of course, there are associations of particular sounds with particularly good or bad times, particular songs with particular people, emotions and situations. In my teenage years music acted as the background for stimulating encounters and pursuits of closeness based on shared intellectual and aesthetic engagement and consumption. Accessible due to its immediacy, addictive and entertaining, it proved to be a vehicle for discovery of a variety of other creative and
intellectual cultural practices such as Art, Literature and Philosophy. Hearing ‘Cemetery Gates’ by The Smiths introduced me in a single sweep to Keats, Yeats and Wilde (“A dreaded sunny day so I meet you at the cemetery gates, Keats and Yeats are on your side, Wilde is on mine”), the very name of the band Bauhaus stood for an art movement that I went on to explore, and Gang of Four lead me to finding out more about Chinese Cultural Revolution. There are numerous other examples; both narratives of formal interviews with musicians and stories told in informal socialising focused on music signal that I am not alone in finding music to have a powerful role in shaping the sense of self. Music in many ways provided a foundation for cultural references and texts that I accumulated as a teenager and a young adult, as well as serving as a backdrop for multiple leisure activities such as travel abroad and camping holidays with friends, wanting to learn to take and develop photographs (so that I can contribute creatively in some way to musical output of friends involved in music), learning how to use a Super 8 film camera and collaborating with a musician friend on the production of a short film. At times music stopped me in my tracks, more often it made me slow down, pause and think, but it also provided a scope for movement – away from the naivety and mundane murkiness of my pre-pubescent world into the spaces populated by exciting new ideas, with vibrancy, movement and sound.

Moving from Eastern Europe to the UK did not have an immediate impact on the way I consumed music, except for the fact that everything became more readily available. I still went to live gigs and clubs, bought records and listened to music while socialising with my friends in private spaces of our homes. Learning about a new culture meant that I was beginning to understand the contexts from which the UK music (particularly punk and indie) originated, while learning the new language meant that I was better equipped to understand lyrical content. I think it was around this time that I began to rationalise music more persistently, starting to think about it beyond the mode of entertainment or the background to a good night in or out. Due to pressures of adult working life as well as the type of sound that was around, sometime in
the mid 1990s I gradually started to lose touch with music and music scenes, stopped buying records and stopped attending gigs. All of this changed in 2003, when with the bands like *Bloc Party* and *Franz Ferdinand* appearing on the horizon I embraced music again, started using the Internet to access music related information, resumed buying records and going to see live performances. My return to music coincided with a big move, from London which was my home for the previous twelve years, to the North West of England, where I discovered vibrant local music scenes, firstly in Blackpool, then in Manchester and Bolton.

*Situating the self*

It could be suggested that for someone like me, who has been existing in close proximity to music for many years, the main challenge of writing about music lies in rationalising something that had been taken for granted for too long. How does one abandon the constraints of one's own taste connected to one's personal narratives, and engage with music and its main protagonists on their own terms? I am not convinced this is entirely possible nor desirable, and while exercising a degree of caution where "evocative autoethnography" is concerned I learned of advantages that embracement of "analytic autoethnography" may bring.⁸ Close proximity to music spaces and their participants raises a number of questions – practical, ethical and methodological. First, my role transformed from that of a complete participant in

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⁸ For a useful overview and analysis of the autoethnographic turn in ethnographic research and the discussion of analytic versus evocative autoethnography see Anderson (2006) in Special Issue of *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Anderson argues for employment of analytic ethnography characterised by: complete member researcher status, analytic reflexivity, narrative visibility of the researcher's self in the published text, the dialogue with informants beyond self and the commitment to theoretical analysis (Anderson, 2006: 378). In contrast, evocative autoethnography is characterised by narratives, storytelling, literary style, prominence of emotion and postmodern scepticism in relation to objectivity/truth.
many musical activities to that of a participant observer. While most of the people I encountered in spaces I observed were aware of my current research, and while I always maintained transparency about it in order to preserve as much of the naturalness of the setting and behaviour as possible, I tended to somewhat down play it and talk about it in general rather than specific terms, in the same way someone who is working on developing a computer programme during their working hours and socialising with their friends in the evenings would hopefully not present their friends with endless possibilities of zeros and ones. Second, there was a significant shift in power relations with me assuming the role of the researcher and thus transforming the position of my acquaintances from those of subjects I engaged with on equal terms to objects of study. This was further magnified by the choice of the subject matter – popular music and masculinity, and the fact that the majority of the participants were men. Last, throughout the research I was highly aware that my role would undoubtedly have a strong impact on the way relationships with the participants will develop in the future, upon the completion of the fieldwork. This mattered to me, as I wanted to maintain contact with some, if not all participants, and to continue to follow and take part in their musical forays. While I was never a full member of the research group or research setting (I did not play in any of the bands, and am not a musician) I undoubtedly shared many of the experiences with the participants and thus have retained my visibility within the text of the chapters that follow. Despite acknowledging the reciprocal relationship between myself as a researcher and participants and settings in the construction of knowledge, my interests do not lie in the construction of a cultural portrait of the self but rather in attempting to link my findings to broader social phenomena of hierarchies of gender identities in relation to popular music.

Through its employment of observation, description and interpretation of cultural or a social group, thus providing the reader with the cultural portrait, an ethnographic approach goes a long way in allowing us an understanding of meanings of behaviour, language and interaction of a group that shares values and a sense of culture (Creswell, 1998: 58). In relation to the research aims of
this study, observation and interviews provided useful insights into networks of relationships within the field of study. Both allowed the direct access to participants in their natural settings (venues, rehearsal rooms, other social spaces they frequented). Despite a degree of familiarity with such spaces and hence certain expectations which as a researcher I brought into the field, an ethnographic approach has highlighted and challenged a whole range of my previously held views and values about the construction of knowledge, and what was likely to be an uneasy negotiation of one's own (gender) identity.

In the ‘Prologue’ to the third edition of *Ethnography: Principles and Practice* Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) are eager to point out the “methodological turn” experienced by social sciences, exemplified by readily available training for graduate students in the techniques of social research, an increase in number of methodological texts and application and use of qualitative research spanning across wide range of disciplines. While maintaining that their focus is still on ethnography in particular, rather than qualitative research in general, they acknowledge that there are “no hard and fast boundaries”. (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: Prologue x) By emphasising flexibility offered by ethnography within local circumstances and acknowledging that:

> It is not necessary to think naively in terms of naturally occurring communities or isolated populations, nor...romantic visions of social explorations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: Prologue x)

They maintain that while ethnographic research can employ a range of methods, field research and participant observations remain its defining characteristics. Having utilised the above methods I situate my work within ethnographic tradition while maintaining that additional methods I employed, such as textual analysis of musical content on the internet, supplement the knowledge the project has produced.

In *The Ethnographic Imagination* Paul Willis (2000) defines ethnography as: "...the eye of the needle through which the threads of imagination must
pass" (Willis, 2000: Forward viii), calling for "grounded imaginings" where the aim is to:

tell 'my story' about 'their story' through the fullest conceptual bringing out of 'their story' (Willis, 2000: Foreword xi).

The proposed model is simple: a researcher should strive to engage directly with social agents and where possible participate in activities over a period of time, recording and then making sense of the meanings attached to particular activities as well as situating them within wider social contexts. This apparently straightforward model of practice is permeated with difficulties, practical and conceptual. In order to demonstrate one aspect of difficulty involved let us go back to the introductory chapter of the thesis and the note I referred to, written on an almost empty packet of Silk Cut: "ROOMS FULL OF MEN". Was this the beginning of my fieldwork and the first entry into my fieldwork diary? Or, just some throwaway remark? And have I now left "the field", sitting at my desk writing the story of the research? As I write an email arrives. It is from a musician whom I interviewed, saw perform on many occasions and kept an active correspondence with. He tells me that the band may split up. I write back, enquire, pursue. He responds. The correspondence continues, I still feel involved, I am saving his emails, I make an entry into my research diary; I am still writing my interpretation of his experience into this piece of work, and perhaps that will be the case for a little while longer, at least until the final version of the thesis has been printed. And after that, what will become of our "relationship"? In her discussion of interwovenness of personal and professional lives Sarah Pink (2000) raises the issue of informants as friends. She writes:

If fieldwork is to be defined only after the event, the 'informants' located in this field are thus situated in the past. Similarly, the label of friend tends to be conceded or withdrawn (and replaced by 'informant') in an attempt to separate, for example, past and present, fieldwork and social life. (Pink, 2000: 99)
In the case of my research there were friends who became informants, and informants who have been transformed into friends. I see such alterations of status as an inevitable and integral part of ethnographic practice taking place close to home.

Similarly, Maxwell (2002) argues that “the epistemology of popular music is grounded in objectification” due to subjectification of “the other” in order to construct knowledge. In this sense, my relationship with the participants has impacted on a type of knowledge generated by and through this study. Furthermore, while ethnographic practice of participant privileges people, the popular music as a form of social practice is also highly representational. Gender, in particular, is constructed through a series of representational practices of popular music; from music video to opportunities provided by virtual environments (websites, profiles, photographs). By trying to describe, define and categorise what is going on with and around participants, I have actively been engaged in their construction as objects of the study; by deciphering the meanings associated with the representational dimension of their existence I have taken part in construction of knowledge. But what kind of knowledge do such practices produce?

My name and my nationality (Bosnian, East European) easily identify me as “the other” and have undoubtedly impacted on some aspects of my research, primarily on the issues related to access to participants and their openness to speak to me about their musical practices. For example, when I contacted Domino and Wichita record companies, aiming to secure access to Franz Ferdinand and Bloc Party, I received swift responses, due to what I believe is the “exoticism” of my surname. As explained elsewhere in this thesis, this was followed by silence once I revealed I was a PhD student, and not an East European tour promoter. My relationships with the musicians who took part in the study were built on our shared love of music, but here too my outsiderdom could be seen as beneficial; as an added quality allowing a greater degree of openness on their part. Due to my non-Englishness the
participants found it difficult to place me in terms of social class for example, and thus some of the class associated assumptions were not present and have not impacted on the type of knowledge they shared with me. Arguably, this was counter balanced by my academic position as a doctoral candidate, closely associated with the social standing.

As a woman researching men, and associated masculine practices involved in music making, I have been aware that my gender impacted on fieldwork relations and type of knowledge produced by research. Gender, as one of the identity traits that shape relationships in the field (other prominent traits including class, age and ethnicity) has been defined as both negotiated through interactions between the researcher and the participants (Hunt, 1984 cited in Warren, 1988: 9) and “part of the structural grounds upon which negotiation takes place” (Warren, 1988: 9). Popular music spaces as spaces of inquiry are commonly perceived and described as highly gendered, dominated by men and masculinist ideologies. Even before I “formally” entered the field and embarked on a series of interviews (which for me formalised the research more than observational notes I was making for about a year prior to starting the interviewing process), I received a number of responses from fellow researchers and friends that shine some light on connotations that the field I was entering had. Below are three examples:

Fellow researcher: Aren’t you scared of being in a room, alone, with strange men?
Fellow researcher: You are going to have a great time going to all the gigs!
Friend: I bet you will run off with a good looking musician!

All three remarks are gendering and gendered. The first comment came from a fellow female researcher who reminded me that serious consideration should be given to the safety of a researcher. She informed me that violence and aggression can occur in an interview situation, a legitimate claim backed by her own experience in the field. Interestingly, the aggressive behaviour she experienced in an interview situation came from a vulnerable woman (who herself was a victim of violence) rather than a man. Researchers’ safety and
risk assessment were not the issues I actively considered prior to my colleague's comment. The only way I could justify my ignorance was to say that my experiences of sharing space with men were not negative, and although I could not predict how someone would behave in an interview situation I assumed that men I was interviewing had no reason to be violent or aggressive, and as it turned out I was correct in my assumption. The second comment is also linked to gender. This particular colleague proceeded to inform me that her social life was quite limited, mostly due to family commitments and the demands of her research, and that she wished her topic was as “funky” as mine, legitimising her venturing to gigs and clubs and meeting “interesting people”. Her partner was also involved in academic research and although responsibility for looking after children was shared, she was the one who was spending most of her time with children, thus unable to apply herself to her work fully, and longing for some adult company. My situation, however, was quite different. With no family ties and a partner enthusiastic about music, I already had all the freedom I wanted to attend live gigs and socialise in music spaces. My challenge was the opposite – trying to avoid too many late nights, and towards the end of the most intensive part of the fieldwork (when I was attending on average four gigs a week) feeling that I never wish to see another live band, or hear music, live nor recorded. The final comment, referring to running off with “a good looking musician" was quite common one that I kept hearing throughout my research. On one level it is a light hearted remark, but on the other it implied a certain lack of integrity or commitment to the research, and somehow lack of legitimacy (implying that I was doing the research not because I aim to make a contribution to knowledge about popular music and gender, but because I am looking for love and excitement). Having my partner present in music spaces helped with some of the assumptions about seeking an "adventure". I could rely on him to accompany me to gigs and if it seemed appropriate introduced him to musicians I was interviewing or observing. However, on the whole he remained on the margins of my work, providing practical support such as giving me lifts to
and from places. The only exception was the interaction with musicians from Blackpool, to whom I was introduced by him, and who were a part of his social circle.

Terry Arendell (1997) provides a pertinent insight into gender relations in the field discussing her experiences of interviewing divorced fathers. She notes that that men’s assertions of gender identities and gender hierarchies became most visible at the point of in-depth interview where a number of strategies were employed by her male interviewees such as taking charge, challenging the process, attempting to interview the researcher and thus place a researcher, testing of the boundaries, asserting superiority and being chivalrous. Following Arendell’s account I recognised some of the strategies described in the situations I was encountering. The most common example was being chivalrous. This was demonstrated in different ways, for example by men insisting on paying for any beverages or snacks consumed during the interview or even while socialising in music spaces. Following interviews in particular I felt that paying a small bill was my way of demonstrating appreciation for taking part in the interviews, however, I was often denied such a gesture. Musicians were chivalrous in other ways too, for example seemingly taking a great deal of interest in my work and putting me in touch with other musicians who they thought would be “interesting” to talk to and to whom I otherwise would not have access to. Naturally, I was grateful for those contacts but also knew that for some of them being able to display their connections by putting me in touch with relevant people was a way of asserting their importance and status, rather than a simple case of wanting to help a PhD student. Only on one occasion a participant challenged the unspoken boundary between us, by sending me a text message late at night and using a language which seemed highly inappropriate for the circumstances. I queried his use of language after which he apologised but also proceeded to find many excuses for not being able to take part in the interview we had arranged. Some of them could be read as legitimate such as the fact that at the time his band was rehearsing for a short UK tour and he did not have much time, but others seemed like a blatant
avoidance of an interview. However, he was still happy to see me socially and kept inviting me to his gigs. In the end, after many cancelled interviews, I gave up and informed him that I have moved to a different stage of my project.

Methods and practice

Between September 2006 and October 2007 I conducted 20 formal semi-structured interviews with popular music performers. Interviews were recorded using a digital sound recorder, transferred as sound files onto the computer and transcribed. Transcription was a long, painstaking process but extremely valuable as listening to recordings and transcribing them made me familiar with the data. The interviews were between one and two hours in length, averaging at one and a half hours. They were conducted in several types of locations: public venues (e.g. bars, cafes), respondents' homes, my home and rented accommodation during my stays in Scotland. The choice of venue was negotiated between the interviewer and the interviewee, usually settling for a compromise where the interviewee would not be taken far out of their natural environment and where the levels of noise allowed for audibility of the recording. For the purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews a series of interview questions have been devised (interview schedule attached as Appendix Three, p. 292). They mapped upon the themes/key research questions identified in the introductory section of this chapter, and aimed to build a body of knowledge that complements or challenges, that is extends, arguments outlined by theoretical approaches discussed in Chapter Two, as well as complementing my understanding of practices observed in a range of music settings.

In addition to conducting a series of interviews, throughout the period between September 2005 and September 2008 I engaged in participant observation in a number of music venues across Blackpool, Manchester, Bolton and Edinburgh. These varied between pubs with the tradition of putting live bands on (e.g. Dog and Partridge in Bolton, Blue Room in Blackpool), mid
sized music venues doubling as bars/cafes during the day (e.g. Night and Day in Manchester) and larger venues dedicated exclusively to performance of music (e.g. Cabaret Voltaire in Edinburgh, Academy 2 and Academy 3 in Manchester). In addition, I took opportunities to socialise with musicians outside music performance spaces attending house parties, art exhibitions, talks, theatre and cinema.

Throughout the research I kept two types of notes, a research diary and a fieldwork diary. The research diary provided a “space” to think through and write about some of the fieldwork related issues but focused on the research more generally, including writing notes and responses to the key texts I have been reading, comments and schedules following supervisory meetings, notes on research training and general reflection on my progress as a PhD student. I updated my research diary once a month or more frequently if the necessity to record something arose. In the fieldwork diary I recorded relevant information about participants (first meetings, impressions, conversations we had), general observations about types of spaces I was attending and types of people I was encountering. Entries were usually made following a night out (attending a gig or a party) thus reliant on memory. Early on in my research I carried a notebook into music venues, doing rough drawings of the spaces (stage, bar, toilets and so on) hoping that the drawings would jog my memory the following day when I was making more substantial notes. This was fairly impractical and I was often asked by people what I was doing, sometimes being mistaken for someone collecting email addresses in order to send publicity mail shots about bands that were playing on the night, and therefore not looked upon favourably. As I became more familiar with the venues I abandoned this practice and made entries retrospectively. On an odd occasion, and if I felt there was something particularly important to record, I scribbled quick notes on leaflets that can always be found in music venues. These acted as good visual clues as well. Writing from memory has the disadvantage of leaving something important out, however, I feel that the main advantage of this approach is that it allows the
time to both record the information and reflect on it in the process of recording, thus beginning the process of analysis with the events still fresh in one’s mind.

In May 2006, following the invitation by one of the musicians, I signed up on MySpace.com, a social networking site which I used throughout my research, as both a research tool (it allowed me to communicate with musicians by posting and receiving comments and by sending emails through an email facility available on the site), and as the site of investigation (research context). In 2007 many of my correspondents migrated to Facebook, another social networking site, so I followed, creating a profile and using it for communication on daily basis. Due to the technologies they utilise, MySpace and Facebook allowed me to store emails and comments, thus creating a record of my interaction. I kept my interaction as natural as possible and did not target participants with an online survey or a questionnaire. Instead, extending the ethnographic approach I focused on observation of participants and their online practices. There are some important ethical considerations to be had in relation to electronically gathered material. The standard ethical pitfalls such as exploitation, deception, revealing people’s identities when they do not agree to it (Silverman, 2006: 311) naturally ought to be considered in research utilising virtual environments. In addition, the questions about using publicly available information as data have been raised by a number of authors (e.g. Hewson et al., 2003; Hine, 2005). The key arguments focus on the definition of the public data, questioning and debating if something ought to be considered public as long as it is in the public domain. Rutter and Smith (2005) suggest that just because interaction takes place in the public domain (that is publicly visible virtual environment) it does not mean that it is public.

Surely there must be some distinction between what is said among friends in a café, pub or public arena and the talk of politicians or celebrities to open meetings or interviewers; between social chitchat and the form of pre-composed statement... Those involved have a recognition that their words and actions are viewable by others but this does not mean that everything that goes on in the

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9 I discuss social networking and associated themes in greater detail in Chapter Seven.
group is essentially public discourse and as such ethically available to the online researcher. (Rutter and Smith, 2005: 89 - 90)

In my research, online interaction observed was taking place within social networking sites where the bands and individual band members I observed created profiles. Those sites allow each user to demarcate which part of their profile is visible by all other users, and what is visible only to friends or selection of friends (Facebook). This resolves some of the issues associated with the public/private status of the data debate. Some of the communication on social networking sites is clearly private, for example emails sent back and forth, visible only to the sender and the recipient. Other interaction is public, such as the comments left on the home page, the remarks about photographs as well as the responses to blogs and notes. My observations within virtual spaces focused mostly on the publicly accessible areas, where I interacted with participants through posting comments. Where I used private email facility it was most commonly for the purpose of seeking clarification on a particular aspect of a band's work, and I always made sure that the respondent was aware that the correspondence will be used to aid research, therefore seeking and obtaining consent.

Places and spaces

Formalising fieldwork developed in several stages. As explained in the introductory section of this chapter in 2004 I was living on the Fylde coast and spending a significant part of my time seeing bands and socialising with local musicians. In 2005 I moved to Bolton, in order to be closer to The University of Salford where I was now registered as a PhD student. While I maintained contact with Blackpool musicians and regularly went to see bands play gigs in Blackpool I also began investigating the local Bolton music scene as well as

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10 My project does not focus on the concept of "the scene" nor does it engage with exploration of a particular scene or scenes as defined by academic writing on the topic, for example the
attending live gigs in Manchester. At first, I used the internet to find out what was happening locally in Bolton. Bolton Music Collective’s website (http://www.boltonmusic.co.uk) provided relevant details about local bands, live venues and gigs. Its message board featured discussion about live gigs, items for sale, “gear” and recording, room hire and so on. I started attending gigs at the Soundhouse, The Dog and Partridge and the Alma Inn. The Soundhouse promoted a variety of bands with some of the bigger names making an appearance, but mostly catering for local, unsigned indie acts. The Dog and Partridge went through a rough patch, threatened by closure, but maintained a steady stream of eclectic sounds and appearances including a Sunday afternoon open mic session, while The Alma was renowned for its metal crowd and metal gigs. My venturing into Manchester became frequent too. I was not familiar with the town and its current venues, but aware of its music tradition, myths and legacies (Factory Records, Hacienda, Tony Wilson) and associated

definition of the local scene as: "...focused activity that takes place in a delimited space and over a specific span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realize their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from others by using music and cultural signs often appropriated from other places, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene." (Bennett and Paterson, 2004: 8) As one of the key goals of the thesis is to explore the limitations of popular music masculinity perceived as a uniform concept, and broaden the debate to a range of masculinities within popular music spaces, the notion of collectivity associated with a scene seemed unhelpful. Admittedly, I could have focused on a more specific geographic location, which by default becomes associated with a notion of a music scene (e.g. Blackpool music scene) but even there the issue of coherency in terms of common musical taste, musical and gender practices could be questioned. Instead, I used the setting of “the band” to examine some of the themes more commonly associated with approaches to music scenes (participation, role distribution, goals, norms, hierarchies and so on). My usage of the term scene is much broader and most commonly I have used it to define musical spaces and events occurring within them at any given time, without burdening it with notions of common taste and distinction. For further discussion of definitions and meanings associated with the concept of “scene” see Straw (1991), Shank (1994), Bennett and Paterson (2004) and Longhurst (2007).
notion of the “scene”. 11 I frequented many venues that are a part of different circuits (local unsigned names, those on the cusp of making it, big names) such as Night and Day, Roundhouse, Star and Garter, Matt and Phreads, Big Hands, The Academy and so on. Two annual events, Sounds of the Other City in its fourth year in 2008 and taking place across Manchester and Salford venues, and In the City (Manchester music event founded in 1992 by Yvette Livesey and the late Tony Wilson) provide a great platform for unsigned bands as well as an opportunity for the researcher to get close to the bands, see them play and mix with music folk in a more intensive manner due to a variety of music related happenings on offer (panel discussion, talks, exhibitions and so on).

In addition to bands based in Bolton, Manchester and Blackpool, two of the bands I studied came from Edinburgh. Early in 2006, while on a short break in Edinburgh I came across The Unstoppables12, one of the bands that features prominently in the research. They introduced me to other musicians in Edinburgh and I went back many times, as I developed the affinity to that particular part of Edinburgh music scene and developed a good rapport with musicians I encountered. The main music venues where my observations and interaction with musicians took place in Edinburgh were Cabaret Voltaire, Liquid Rooms, Bongo Club, as well as the City Café and the Advocate as pre


12 Our first meeting was a chance meeting. I was visiting Edinburgh and exploring its music venues, finishing an evening off in a well known New Town music space, owned by a famous musician, which apart from providing a performance space for well known artists promotes unsigned bands through open mic and unsigned evenings. It was on that particular night that I first heard of MySpace, from The Unstoppables who invited the audience to listen to their music by accessing it online. As soon as I got back to my hotel room, I turned my computer on and located the band’s page. From there on it was fairly straight forward and easy to make contact with the band utilising comments and email features.
and post gig venues where musicians and fans tended to congregate. Similarly to Manchester, there is a sense of tradition associated with the "scene" in Edinburgh, albeit a lesser known one. Historically, there are associations with Postcard Records through Josef K who released a number of singles on the Glasgow based label, and the cult status of the Fire Engines whose contribution to a discordant sound of post punk has been celebrated by the likes of Franz Ferdinand. Nonetheless, Edinburgh's musicians regularly made remarks about their secondary status in relation to Glaswegian music scene, seen as more vibrant and colourful, catered for by a larger number of music venues, hence frequently seeking gigs in Glasgow and claiming that they enjoyed playing in front of Glaswegian audiences who appeared more “in tune” with musical directions and current trajectories of style and sound. 13 It was not uncommon for one or more members of an Edinburgh based band to move to Glasgow, mostly in order to study at the University, and once established there (through familiarity with social and music networks) put efforts into securing gigs in Glasgow.

Although Blackpool, Manchester, Bolton and Edinburgh music "scenes" would have individually provided enough scope for an entire research project, my primary interest lied in examining "the band" and different ways masculinities are constructed and performed within its settings. As such my

13 The perception about the advantages of being a part of Glasgow music scene is exemplified well by recent correspondence I received from Albert of Two Digit Salute. Albert writes: "We're very much the poor cousin to Glasgow in terms of a credible music 'scene'. Demonstrating this somewhat, Unesco has named Glasgow a world centre of music, apparently. Whatever that means. Too many dilettantes and crappy singer/songwriters, encouraged by open mics everywhere and a lack of proper music venues, in Edinburgh, I think. And a lot of focus on outside culture and talent for the Festival, which leaves local artists to struggle away by themselves for the rest of the year. And during the Festival, really. Glasgow City Council invests a fair amount in its local music/arts scene though unlike here, where it's all about importing things for August... Can you tell I'm fed up with the Festival by now!? And don't get me started on Edinburgh Council..."
project did not require focus on a particular genre (as discussed in Chapter Two) nor a particular geographically determined music scene.

Sample

Following my initial encounters within Blackpool music "scene" I contemplated extending my observations to an ethnographic study of a well known band and their audience, with a view of conducting a comparative study. I knew this was going to be an ambitious project for somebody without connections in the music industry but nonetheless I approached two independent record labels, Wichita and Domino Records as I was interested in studying Bloc Party (Wichita) and Franz Ferdinand (Domino Records), as well as gaining access to their audiences through online forums and subsequently arranging formal face-to-face interviews. The reasons for choosing to approach those two bands were simple; I was already familiar with their biographies and musical output, as well as enjoyed listening to their music, which I considered significant if I was to spend a long period of time surrounded by both the sound and associated narratives. After the initial positive response from both record companies, and a moderate degree of interest in my research, the correspondence died down. Bloc Party were in the process of recording their second album, to be followed by an American tour, and Franz Ferdinand were touring the world, working an incredibly demanding schedule. I quickly realised that established bands employ PR companies who deal with relevant media enquiries and that post graduate research was not at the top of their agenda. Doing the research independently and without support of the bands' management would have been extremely demanding, time consuming and costly. This realisation has led me to modify my approach so that the main focus was to conduct field observations and a series of semi-structured interviews with some established musicians (signed by a record label) that I already had access to, and some “up and coming” (unsigned) local performers that I was hoping to gain access to. They self identified as belonging to a wide range of musical genres (pop, rock, indie,
progressive rock, psychedelia, lounge, punk) which provided me an opportunity to explore the possibility that masculinities are coded differently within different genres. Additionally, my reading of the existing literature on the topic had led to the recognition that the focus on the most prominent or well known acts had many limitations. Since one of the aims of the study was to explore the multiplicity of masculinities, a non-music genre specific or age bracket limited approach seemed plausible. Access to the bands and the musicians has been made through personal contacts I established by making myself visible on local music scenes, as well as through referrals by musicians. Some of the bands I had access to have been performing for many years, or have reformed recently due to resurgence of interest in the live music. Others were young bands whom I have come across on local music scenes. In terms of their status within the music industry the bands ranged from those signed to independent record labels (Skinny Dog Records, Captain Oil) through to young bands without a record deal or self releasing their music, to bands who used to be on cult independent record labels such as Fire Records and Factory Records, who have recently reformed and were playing gigs locally.

At the beginning of the study I attempted to engage and maintain contact with as many bands as were willing to engage with me, but interacting with so many different bands and band members was leaving very little time for reflection, teaching commitments and other aspects of my life. Consideration of the scope of the study had to be and was made. As the research progressed I came to realise that I developed a good rapport with five bands in particular, and this study is to a large degree informed by observations of and interaction with those five bands. They are: The Compacts (Blackpool), Future Adventures (Manchester), The Cyclists (Manchester), The Unstoppables (Edinburgh) and Two Digit Salute (Edinburgh). Below is a brief introduction to each one.

The Compacts are a Blackpool based band who have been in existence since the mid 1980s but went through a number of changes in membership. At the time of my research only one original band member remained, with membership still evolving and changing quite frequently. They released a
number of albums and singles on their own label, and contributed to numerous compilations. The band have what is often referred to as a "cult status" within the UK underground noise scene, while at the same time receiving reviews in the mainstream music press publications such as *Mojo* and *Wire*. During my research they have played gigs across the UK and Europe.

I was introduced to *Future Adventures* by a close friend who had seen them play in Manchester and got to know them. All band members were in their early 20s at the time of the research, and have been involved in music since their early teens. During the time of my research they released an EP and played a number of gigs in Manchester and across the North West of England.

*Future Adventures* introduced me to *The Cyclists*, another young, Manchester based band. The two core members of *The Cyclists* had met at University and after jamming together for some time decided to form a band. They have released two records and contributed to a compilation put out by *Piccadilly Records* in Manchester. At the time of writing they are in the studio recording their third record as well as playing gigs across the North of England.

*The Unstoppables* are an Edinburgh based band who have so far released two EPs, and went through one major change of membership in 2006. Over the past two years they have been tipped as one of the Scottish bands that is bound to break through, receiving glowing reviews in the Scottish music press (*The Skinny, Is This Music?*) and getting airplay on BBC Radio 1, BBC 6 Music and XFM Scotland.

*Two Digit Salute* are based in Edinburgh and Glasgow and I have met them through *The Unstoppables*, at one of their gigs. The band have not released any material but have recorded several demos. They have been playing gigs in Edinburgh and Glasgow. During recent months (autumn 2008) the two leading members have started working on their individual material and performing as singer-songwriters, while still pursuing the band.

A number of other bands feature in the research through their members taking part in the interviews, providing lively email correspondence and social networking interaction as well as valuable connections within music spaces. A
systematic overview of all bands and participants can be found in Appendix One.

Data and knowledge concerns

Having embarked on the collection of four main types of qualitative data – written observations in form of fieldwork notes, entries in research diary, transcripts of interviews, and a large and extensive collection of email correspondence with participants, I had to make decisions about organising, storing and analysing data. Fieldwork notes and the research diary were written using Microsoft Word, dated and stored on the computer. Interview recordings were transferred and saved on the computer as sound files, transcribed using Microsoft Word and saved in folders indicating the respondent and the date of the interview. Emails were saved in relevant folders and sub folders (according to categories such as the band dynamics, personal life, gender and so on), while some of the comments and traces of interaction in virtual environments are still there, visible in the public domain.

The process of collection and analysis of the data was not linear. I found that at any one time I was observing and making fieldwork notes, recording my thoughts and feelings in the research journal, transcribing interviews and reflecting and reviewing my data by making analytic notes. Once the process of transcription of the interviews was completed, I engaged with the data in a more systematic manner, bringing together different types of data and beginning to code it. I have used both a priori codes (informed by theoretical framework and research design) and grounded, emergent codes to organise the data into relevant categories. In the beginning I coded descriptively, trying to make sense of the data, but as I became more familiar with the content and by incorporating previous analytic notes, coding itself became more analytical. There were some loose ends, for example my online interaction with the participants was still taking place, generating observational and email data. I maintained the practice of making analytic notes, deciding to keep this aspect
of my fieldwork alive, despite a decreased frequency of attendance of gigs and face-to-face interaction with the musicians. In order to take an aspect of research back to participants, upon finalising transcriptions of interviews I offered the transcripts to participants and provided them with an opportunity to provide feedback on accuracy as well as make any further comments and remarks. Five respondents took this opportunity and with two I proceeded to have further, less formal discussions about some of the issues emerging in the interviews. My coding has not been hierarchical as I felt that this would narrow or close certain lines of enquiry, and I allowed the same data to constitute different categories.

In ethnographic coding, there is no requirement that items of data be assigned to one and only one category, or that there be explicit rules for assigning them. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 153)

The study of music as a form of social practice results in varied types of data emerging, in the same way that music, being an auditory and visual experience, engages different senses. Sometimes the data is a recording itself. For example, it was not uncommon for the musicians to point me in the direction of a particular recording in order to illustrate a point they were making, or even send me an mp3 file by email. At other times I was guided to a particular video clip on YouTube which had significance to discussions that were taking place, for example a rare footage of a well known band discussing the time spent in the studio and raising some relevant points that participants could relate to. Then there was the data resulting from what is experienced by socialising in music spaces, most often in the form of written notes and observations. At times, however, such data were supplemented by photographs or video footage, taken by me or one of the participants, which would then serve as both the record of the event and the visual prompt for further analytical notes. In this sense, the multi-contextuality of music calls for consideration of multiplicity of approaches to study it, and the next section explores some of the options.
Approaches and methodological considerations

A brief survey of module titles in the curriculum offered to research students in social sciences by universities (Survey Design and Analysis, Ethnographic Methods, Qualitative Research Practice, Quantitative Research Methods) or at the titles of the key publications aimed at research students (Doing Quantitative Research in Social Sciences, Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires, The Research Act, Qualitative Interviewing, Ethnography: Principles and Practice), demonstrates the separateness of quantitative and qualitative approaches. This in turn results in the first time researcher's reluctance to venture outside the established modes of enquiry, not only in terms of avoidance of combining qualitative and quantitative methods, but subsequently in denying oneself a possibility of practice outside the "home discipline". There are, however, exceptions in both the level of support provided to the first time researcher and the publications produced to support him or her, with attempts to encourage more creative approaches stretching outside the confines of traditional disciplines. For example, at a recent postgraduate conference I attended a workshop focusing on interdisciplinary methods, but despite the enthusiasm and the desire to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, most of my fellow researchers reported that due to research cultures in their respective universities they felt that they would be "penalised" if they stepped outside their discipline in their choice of methods and theoretical approaches, and even that they have been warned against producing a thesis which is "difficult to examine".

The sections that follow will examine how the study relied on the concept and practice of interdisciplinarity in order theoretically and empirically to engage with the key themes and questions relating to examination of constructions and contestations of masculinities in popular music settings. The basic definition of methodology is that of "the science of method" or "a body of methods used in a particular branch of activity" (Oxford English Dictionary) with a possibility that
the enquiry utilising the best method will uncover truth about a phenomena. Positivist undertones to such definition are not particularly useful when aiming to describe and explain meanings created through interactions within complex webs of social reality. Furthermore, there are still "methodological disputes" (Blackburn, 1996: 242) among scholars working within traditional disciplines such as social science, with claims that the "best" or the most accurate knowledge is produced by following a particular methodological approach.

For a philosopher the task of methodology is to "investigate the methods that are actually adopted at various historical stages of investigation into different areas" providing "the general study of methods in particular fields of enquiry" (Blackburn, 1996: 242). Narrowing the above definition by applying it to the scope of a PhD thesis, where focus is on a specific theme or themes and on examining a set of research questions, methodology implies an investigation of the three way relation between the theory or theories, method or methods and knowledge produced by their employment, rather than an outline of a production of a hierarchy of theory, method and knowledge.

**Interdisciplinarity or a synthetic approach?**

As Geoffrey Bennington points out, 'inter' is an ambiguous prefix, which can mean forming a communication between and joining together, as in 'international' and 'intercourse', or separating an keeping apart, as in 'interval' and 'intercalate'.

(Bennington, 1999: 104 cited in Moran, 2003: 15)

The former meaning of the prefix "inter" has been applied in the interdisciplinary approach to the topic of this research, which itself exists at the intersection of traditional disciplines, some of which have in the past been described as hybrids lacking legitimacy, with cultural studies representing a well known example. Seeking to expand and develop the existing knowledge and set in motion the boundaries of a discipline a scholar often borrows tools, methodologies and knowledge from other disciplines. In sciences, this process has at times become formalised resulting in exciting new disciplines pushing
the boundaries of knowledge and research such as biotechnology, chemical engineering or biochemistry. In Arts and Humanities the dialogue between disciplines occurs in less formal but nonetheless valid ways. Writing about the theatre William F. Condie argues that the goal of interdisciplinary studies should be to:

...ask complex and vexing questions that cannot be answered adequately within the boundaries of the given discipline as it is defined at a particular moment. (Condie, 2004: 238)

The notion that the scope and the boundaries of any discipline are historically determined is relevant when thinking about both the disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge. Disciplines evolve over time, and popular music studies, as a young area of study, uses synthetic modes of enquiry. Its focus on the visual, musical, lyrical, bodily as well as their role, status and meaning within social reality calls for a number of complementary approaches to study.

In ‘Ten Cheers for Interdisciplinarity: The Case for Interdisciplinary Knowledge and Research’, Moti Nissani (1997) proposes that in academic discourse interdisciplinarity denotes four realms: knowledge, research, education and theory. While interdisciplinary education aiming to provide a programme of study based on merging components from two or more disciplines and interdisciplinary theory which takes interdisciplinary education, knowledge or research as its main focus of study, are beyond the scope of this study, it is nonetheless informed by philosophies inherent in such attempts. Nissani defines interdisciplinary research as combining “... components of two or more disciplines in the search of creation of new knowledge, operations or artistic expressions” (Nissani, 1997: 203), with interdisciplinary knowledge implying “familiarity with components with two or more discipline” (Nissani, 1997: 203). Joe Moran’s view of interdisciplinarity echoes Nissani’s definition through the claim that it in the broadest sense it always implies “…form of dialogue or interaction between two or more disciplines”. (Moran, 2003:16) Interdisciplinarity, however, should not be confused with “multidisciplinarity”
where there is no attempt at integration of two or more disciplines and instead their relationship is simply “one of proximity” (Moran, 2003: 16). In other words, multidisciplinarity implies that the same phenomenon is examined by different disciplines employing their dedicated disciplinary methods, while interdisciplinarity involves multiple, yet non-exclusive methods and approaches in a study of a phenomenon. It is important to note that academic texts often use the two terms (multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity) interchangeably, and sometimes accompanied by “trans-disciplinarity”, “post-disciplinarity” and "anti-disciplinarity".

My research is situated at the intersection of sociology, cultural studies, media studies and gender studies with the key research questions relating to construction of gender identity, negotiation of meanings of gender in interaction between men who make and perform music, and representations of masculinity in the virtual setting of www.MySpace.com. Lines of enquiry and choice of methods associated with each of the above disciplines have evolved over time in line with the development of theoretical and philosophical inquiry in social phenomena, and included a considerable range of combinations of approaches. For example, sociological and media studies have been relying on combinations of qualitative and quantitative traditions, cultural studies employ and combine sociological methods with literary modes of inquiry such as semiotics, and gender studies in developing theories of gender rely on empirical evidence, psychoanalytic approaches and textual analysis. There is also a strong tradition of biographical, autobiographical and journalistic writing within the field of popular music aimed at the readership both inside of academia and the general public with an interest in popular culture, or specifically popular music. In Introduction to Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender, Sheila Whiteley (1997), the editor, writes:

...the analysis of popular music presents problems. It is not a well-defined academic discipline, there is no single methodological approach; there are no clearly demarcated areas of investigation. (Whiteley, 1997: Introduction xiii)
Musical practices of writing music, recording music, performing music and consuming and enjoying music take place in multiplicity of contexts, are motivated by differing agendas and result in diverse experiences. Furthermore, the scholars who foray into popular music studies come from diverse disciplines thus bringing to its study differing and sometimes contesting methodologies. Whiteley proceeds to define popular music as “a young discipline” based on “interdisciplinary nature of a musical practice”, “vital and sentient”, and devoted to exploration of phenomena within a range of social contexts with a need to “identify the interrelationships between musical sounds, lyrical texts and visual narratives” (Whiteley, 1997: Introduction xiv) in order to begin to theorise the significance of music and provide interpretations of musical meaning.

Similarly, Sara Cohen (1993) argues for a need to balance statistical, textual, journalistic and theoretical models based on empirical data with ethnographic approaches. Cohen calls for an approach that:

Ideally... should focus upon social relationships, emphasising music as a social practice and process. It should also be comparative and holistic; historical and dialogical; reflexive and policy – oriented. (Cohen, 1993: 123)

This view echoes Howard Becker’s (1982) anti-elitist stance and argument put forward in Art Worlds where he calls for an approach to the study of “art worlds” which treats artists as any other workers and art as any other practice, thus producing deeper understanding of social organisation rather than merely focusing on the aesthetic value. According to Becker, the aim of sociology should not be to simply put forward “logically organised sociological theory of art”, but to engage with the ways in which people produce and consume art works without ascribing a special status to an artist and his or her art. Such an inquiry inevitably goes beyond the most fashionable, well established and well known figures and their work, extending critical analysis to a study of “the mundane” as well as aiming to understand the division of labour occurring within any creative process. According to Becker, the dominant tradition focuses on the artist and the artwork as subjects for analysis thus neglecting
cooperative networks and the division of labour that takes place in order for any art work to be created. Applied to music settings such a proposal would necessitate a study of intricacy of networks and interaction that takes place in order for a piece of music to be created, recorded, sold, performed and consumed. Applied to the study of the construction, performance and negotiation of gender in music settings, the approach calls for consideration of practices conducted not just by the best known and most prominent participants in the field but also those existing and creating on the margins:

Maybe the years I spend playing the piano in taverns in Chicago and elsewhere led me to believe that the people who did that mundane work were as important to an understanding of art as the better-known players who produced the recognised classics of jazz. (Becker, 1982: Preface ix)

Coming from a non-sociological academic background, at the outset of this study I was more at ease with abstract thought and textual analysis than with ethnographic approaches which aim to develop knowledge based on observations, interactions and participations in the field. However, beginning to develop theory and knowledge about meanings and negotiation of masculinity to participants in a specific social, temporal and spatial context, without ever directly accessing the “worlds” they inhabit, seemed implausible.

**Whom to study and why?**

Once one starts thinking not about ‘the best’ but about what people actually do – about ‘is’ not ‘ought’ – then it becomes evident that there are in fact several musics, not just one, and that no one of them is self-evidently superior to the others. (Finnegan, 1989: 6)

Finnegan (1989) proceeds to question the assumption that the music making is “the monopoly of full-time specialists” and a prime “responsibility” of institutions supported by the state, such as national orchestras and opera houses.
Finnegan's ethnographic work resulted in *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town*, and her choice of language for the title with phrases like "hidden musicians", "music making" and "an English town" unmistakably communicates the nature of her concerns to the reader, most noticeably "hidden" denoting those out of sight, out of the limelight of the media. This is then balanced by the ordinariness of "an English town" so there is no mistaking the hidden musicians for an alternative, hip, underground movement existing on the verge of being discovered by the media, popularised and included in the main stream. Furthermore, "an English town" introduces the concept of locality and we are told that the focus is indeed Milton Keynes, which undoubtedly denotes a multiplicity of meanings depending on the degree of the reader's familiarity with the place. Yet, even after finding out that the town in question is Milton Keynes, the sense that it could have been any English town lingers. I find myself wishing to insert word "ordinary" somewhere in Finnegan's title, perhaps transforming it to *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making by Ordinary People in an Ordinary English Town*. Ordinary, in the sense of previously discussed "everyday life" (Chapter Two) as wide encompassing and trans-geographic concept (hence reference to any town); where music is culturally situated within day-to-day activities and perceived as a form of doing; where it denotes an activity, a process and a practice rather than a thing in itself; thus providing an insight into relationships, social interaction and meanings given to it by its participants.  

But, how does this semantic pondering relate to my work? The idea that music making is a monopoly of full time specialists is further reinforced by existing studies and writing on popular music and gender with their tendency to focus on the most recognisable, the most successful and the most "representative" examples in the field. In terms of subject choices made, popular writing on music generally and academic writing on popular music and gender in particular, tend to fall into one of the following categories:

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14 For an informed discussion and an overview of theories of ordinary life, as well as music and ordinary life see Longhurst (2007) *Cultural Change and Ordinary Life.*
1. Writing dealing with representation and performance of gender of an individual artist or a particular member of a band (Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley, Marc Bolan, David Bowie, Jimi Hendrix, Mick Jagger, Morrissey, Madonna, k. d. lang, Courtney Love, Kylie Minogue, Patti Smith, Kate Bush, Chrissie Hynde, Bjork – to name a few notable examples).


3. Writing focusing on a particular genre and gendered themes corresponding to that genre (punk, heavy metal, rock, glam rock, new wave, riot grrrl, hip-hop and so on).

The focus in such writings is on one or more facets of the musical text such as lyrical or musical content, or visual representation. The artist, their music, their lyrics and their look are scrutinised as texts, typically from a distance, most frequently in their mediated form. Nevertheless, such studies draw upon valuable traditions from semiotics to gender and media studies, social science, musicology and communication studies.

Furthermore, in *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, Shuker (2005) identifies a number of tried and tested routes into theorising gender in the context of popular music. These include:

1. Musical canon (perceived as male dominated) with male dominated genres and "rockist" ideology underpinning it.

2. Musical genres with perception of certain genres as either masculine or feminine (i.e. female performers are prominent in folk music) which is challenged by feminist writers as socially constructed difference based on expectation, aspirations, access to knowledge and instruments/music making equipment.
3. Audiences and musical taste exploring male and female fans with the difference in taste and practice (i.e. record collecting is perceived to be a male practice).

4. Male dominated music industry with its stereotypically female roles of press and office personnel.

5. Male dominated youth subcultures with music playing an important part in the formation of subcultural identity.

6. Gender and sexuality in lyrics.

7. Representation of gender in music video.

It could be argued that all of the above identified contexts call for different approaches and associated methods. For example, studies of gender and sexuality in lyrics and representation of gender in music video lend themselves well to textual analysis, while studies of the male dominated music industry or study of audiences and fans tend to benefit from employment of qualitative ethnographic methods such as interviews and participant observation.

The sociology of masculinity is perceived as closely associated with the development of the feminist epistemologies and often located within them. Whitehead and Barrett (2001) identify three prominent theoretical waves in the sociology of masculinity, reflecting general shifts in feminist thought. The first wave starts in 1950s, and is concerned with “male gender role ‘discrepancy’”, that is expectations placed upon men to act and perform in a certain way within masculine ideology. The second wave is commonly associated with the early 1980s, and foregrounds the notion of “hegemonic masculinity”, thus placing masculinity within the realm of politics, and examining the dominant forms of male power. It is exemplified by works of Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985). The third wave of sociology of masculinity is associated to the shift in feminist thinking to post structuralist theories of post modernity, for example Butler (1990) and Nicholson (1990), and is concerned with validation of men’s sense of identity through “dominant discursive practices of self”. (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001:15)
In *The Men and The Boys* (2000) R. W. Connell recognises the contributions made by feminist psychoanalytic critique of patriarchy and social science's development of thinking about "social roles" and social construction of sex roles. However, these are complemented with research on masculinity emerging from what he terms an "ethnographic moment" which is "local in focus" (Connell, 2000: 9).

There is, nevertheless, in most of this work a focus on masculinity in a specific setting, a concern to document and explain particular patterns to be found in a definite locale. (Connell, 2000: 9)

He further argues that the "ethnographic moment" brought about a "gust of realism" absent from the previous debates on men and masculinity (Connell, 2000: 9), as well as contributed to a number of emergent patterns. These include: the notion of multiple masculinities, hierarchy and hegemony evident between and within masculinities, the importance of collective masculinities, male bodies as relevant "arenas" for inscription of gender, masculinity as a process of active construction and the discernable dynamics within the development and change of masculinities.

In addition to their focus on the most prominent figures in the world of music, on the whole studies of representation and performance of masculinity in popular music tend to fall into one of the two categories: critique of traditional (hegemonic) forms of masculinity and celebration of subversive potential of "alternative", disruptive, transgressive masculinities, for example queer masculinities, indie masculinities and black masculinities (again, with the focus overwhelmingly on well established artists). Masculine sexual ambiguity (in life or performance) has also provided a fertile ground for investigation as well as disruption of the (hetero) normative character of hegemonic masculinity.

New Pop discourses were mainly concerned to demonstrate how post-modernism, poststructuralism and postfeminism as manifested in MTV, Madonna, Prince and
digital sampling celebrated a shiny new androgynous semiotic wonderland, where continuous self-invention through artifice and intertextual pastiche erased sexual difference, problematised authorship and created polysemic and polysexual possibilities. (Bannister, 2006b: Introduction xxii)

As far as artists and bands studied are concerned, it is perfectly possible to find one and the same artist in both categories, so depending on reading and interpretation Jagger and Elvis both confirm and subvert traditional notions of masculinity. This foregrounds the complexity of meanings of masculinity, as well as the complexity of theoretical positions, and points towards multiplicity of traits, images and behaviours associated with masculinity thus pluralizing it and resulting in writing and debates about masculinities. Yet, even within such plurality of masculinities the inevitable focus is on the most visible. My position is not that of negating the significance of studies of the most prominent figures from music worlds since they provide excellent insights into the workings of the media and ideologies associated with the popular culture and society on the whole. Furthermore, they foreground the constructedness of masculinity. At the same time, exclusivity of analysis of gender/masculinity in a number of its most popularised forms within the context of popular music excludes a whole range of meanings, given to their gender identity and practice of music making by those who have not penetrated the charts or embarked on a world tour to promote their latest album. In every part of the UK (and wider) one can identify thousands of men who will be involved with music at any one time, who do not model themselves on the “usual suspects”, nor do they necessarily share subtle specificities of their gender identities with Jagger, Springsteen or Morrissey. I propose that there is much to be learned about collectivity, complexity, contradictions, hierarchies and the significance of social interaction (between band members, between a band and their audience) in the creation of meanings of gender by giving voice to less visible and less established performers. By shifting the focus from the most established and the most visible I am hoping to have created an opening for plurality and diversity of masculinities to come into view.
The theme of collective masculinities has emerged through studies such as that of Cockburn (1983) on workplace culture of printing workers and Barrett (1996) dealing with hegemonic masculinities in the US Navy, but according to Connell (2000) can be traced to a range of other settings from classrooms and playgrounds to public institutions. “The band” (further discussed in Chapter Five) can be defined as one such “institution” and a “setting” where collective processes of constructing and enacting masculinities can be found.

Masculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structure, prior to social interaction. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using resources and strategies available in a given social setting. (Connell, 2000: 12)

Status, age, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, lifestyle and culture undoubtedly have an impact on construction, enactment and meanings of gender identity, and all have to be negotiated within a band as well as within multiple social contexts that a band encounters.¹⁵ My focus on a range of bands with a range of statuses within music settings has provided me with the trajectory of their development as bands, and an insight in the way they

¹⁵ Ethnicity and sexuality, as significant identity markers, did not fall within the remit of this study. Undeniably, both are associated with the notion of cultural hegemony, which informed my understanding of gender, as well as noteworthy when building an understanding of the practices within popular music spaces. However, both are difficult subjects to tackle unless they appear “naturally” within given settings. There were no non-white or openly non-heterosexual participants in my study. Ethnicity was never mentioned by any of them, while sexuality was often understated or discussed briefly and unwillingly. While I maintained an open approach and was willing to engage with both issues should they have arisen within given contexts, in the spirit of ethnographic, observational model I did not wish to impose issues upon the participants. Had I, for example, focused on indie queer bands, sexuality would have undoubtedly been brought to the fore, whereas any potential focus on hip-hop artists would have meant engagement with the notion of ethnicity. The absence of discourses of ethnicity in particular within wider popular music genres provides much scope for discussion, however it falls beyond the remit of this thesis.
negotiated familiar and unfamiliar musical environments (i.e. implications of being signed by a record label), thus changing dynamics as the contexts evolve and change.

The idea that music making is naturally male has been challenged from a range of perspectives and through numerous examples, with authors like Cohen (1997) arguing that even rock (the ultimate “male” form) is actively produced as male through structures and practices of music scenes:

The scene thus comprises predominantly male groups, cliques or networks engaged in activities shaped by social norms and conventions, through which they establish and maintain relationships with other men. (Cohen, 1997: 20)

Furthermore, Cohen acknowledges that music making and associated activities do not take place entirely in the male dominated public sphere (that of a scene) where women are actively excluded, but instead incorporate private settings and structures such as the family with the co-operation of men and women taking place. She recognises that the scene she focuses on in this article (Liverpool indie rock of 1996) produces “contradictory masculinities” exemplified by power and freedom on one hand, but also vulnerability, powerlessness and insecurity prominent in live performances and lyrical content, on the other. The context, therefore, plays a significant part in how we construct, perceive and define gender identity. As briefly outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the aim of this study was to create a cultural portrait from which knowledge about different types of masculinities corresponding to different contexts would emerge, focusing on the possibilities and enactments of shifting, non-monolithic and multifaceted masculine identities.

Advantages and limitations

The observational/participatory model employed by ethnographers and resulting in cultural portrait has been criticised due to its partial nature, that is its
focus on the local/particular as opposed to the global/general, and its over reliance on observation and description.

The study of masculinities is about more than simply observing men. Patriarchy cannot be reduced to a model of how men behave...Masculinities are often invisible, or operate indirectly through discourses of rationality. (Bannister, 2006b: 23)

Undoubtedly, every researcher brings their own "cultural lens" to their study, but according to Creswell (1998) one of the key characteristics of the status of the theoretical framework within ethnographic work is that there is a scope for its evolution, moderation and change in the course of research:

...most ethnographers use one or two cultural theories: ideational theories, which suggest that change is the result of mental activities and ideas...(Creswell, 1998: 86)

Prominence of studies of mediated, textual representations of masculinity is mainly a result of the lack of access to real life context and settings of the most popular and established artists. There are, however, plenty of good examples of documentary film making, following an artist, or a band, and creating "on the road with" type of entertainment. Such accounts, despite their similarities with visual ethnography, are by their nature selective (ability to create something commercially viable plays a part) and unquestioning of facticity of gender. As such, they are often contributing to the reinforcement of stereotypes of masculinity, operating within an over-exploited dualism of vulnerability and aggression, and can be viewed as just another text open to analysis. The aim of filmmaking, as any representational practice, is to create meaning rather than allow it to emerge. Engaged semiotic analysis of any film, including the documentary genre, tends to foreground discrepancies between real life experiences and meanings created through representation.
Journalistic writing aside, the debate about gender and music takes place almost exclusively within scholarly settings which by their very nature are removed from spaces where music is consumed and produced. Theorising gender provides a good starting point from which to explore a myriad of practices which take place within musical spaces. My interests lie not simply in theorising about ways in which masculinities are constructed and performed within musical spaces, but also in creating access to social worlds that often go unseen due to success being validated and measured in economic terms. In other words, I am interested in drawing parallels and shifting focus away from “the extreme”, over popularised and over represented forms of masculinity, and to marginalised musical gender identities which exist within the domain of the conventional, habitual and the common place. This is not to say that a degree of overlap of representational and epistemological issues does not occur between the two “forms”.

For a number of years we have been witnessing a rapid change of climate for all music related activities, driven by advancements in digital technologies of production as well as distribution of music (e.g. file sharing). The impact of the rapid technological change can be felt across the board, by musicians, music audiences/consumers, the recording and music distribution industries. Furthermore, growing changes of music environments and practices continuously create new and different opportunities for all musicians (male and female), and I would argue expose the complexities of the meaning of the term musician. It is no longer wholly sufficient to be able to play an instrument, maintain the right look and develop and engage in an intricate series of face-to-face interactions and exchanges within music scenes. Increasingly, with the possibilities brought about by new technologies, an “amateur” musician is given an opportunity to become a web designer, music producer and music promoter, arguably all at the click of the mouse. Those new opportunities, while democratising an entire previously exclusive and heavily controlled sphere, require new sets of skills to be employed. They also have a strong impact on the dynamics within a band, the distribution of “labour”, the ways in which
creative and practical decisions are made and implemented and so on. Previously “hidden” musicians are suddenly given an opportunity to increase their visibility, but at the same time newly found freedom is bound to become regulated and controlled if not by copyright law then by newly available norms and codes of behaviour, such as those adopted through participation in social networking sites. The concept of previously “hidden” musicians comes from Finnegan (1989), and I aim to extend its meaning from that relating to amateur and semi-professional musicians to wider representational visibility, such as emerging opportunities for having a band’s photographs, music videos or live footage easily accessible in the public domain.

Influenced by constructivist perspectives on gender, theorising popular music and masculinity/gender often focuses on bodily gendered display and this aspect, I argue, must not be neglected at the expense of purely ethnographic, non-representational approach, especially taking into consideration that most people outside academia think of gender/masculinity in its embodied form. In the world of music and wider, masculinity has a specific set of connotations rooted in the 1970s rock machismo:

The words ‘masculinity’ and ‘rock and roll’ commonly conjure screaming, hip swivelling singers, virtuosos with medallions banging on their hairy chests and an electric guitar glued to their hips, groupies, sex and drugs – the whole 1970s, decadent, Spinal Tap trip. (Bannister, 2006b: Introduction x)

Masculinity as a visual text, the body imbued with meanings, is as relevant as the social context within which the inscription takes place. Ideology, undoubtedly, plays a great part in choices made in representation of masculinity, and an examination of not just what is represented, but by whom and to what end becomes relevant when engaging in visual text analysis.

Popular music, and to a great extent all music, is reliant on multi-sensory experiences. We listen to music in a range of settings, we watch performances (while simultaneously listening) live or recorded, we encounter other people in musical settings through bodily as well as visual contact. As a polysemic text,
music calls for an analysis which takes into the account the importance of both representation and reading/consumption of the visual image. The tradition of mapping visual representation of the male body includes analysis of live performances, music videos and representations of the male body in popular music press. Prior to accessibility provided by audio and visual features of social networking sites such as www.MySpace.com or www.YouTube.com there was little or no opportunity for up and coming bands to present and represent themselves visually, due to the cost of booking a photographer, shooting a video and providing good quality live video or film recordings (with the exceptions of underground practices influenced by punk ethic of DIY and fanzine culture). Additionally, the emergence of social networking sites has provided new opportunities for employment of observational research methods. Despite of not specifically setting out to communicate with performers and audiences via MySpace it has proved to be an extremely relevant tool for my study. It has provided me with ability to communicate directly with a number of bands, be informed of new material released, given access to information about live performances and be able to see what kind of image those bands are trying to promote. Over the past few months MySpace has continually provided an increasing number of facilities for visual representation, allowing artists bandwidth to upload video and expanding on space available for photographs with bands taking full advantage of each new facility. For example, in the spring of 2006 only a small number of pages featured video footage, it was an exception rather than the rule. In the spring of 2007 it was difficult to find a page that did not feature some kind of video footage such as a live performance by the band, banter from the rehearsal room, full length music video or video footage representing other artists who influenced their sound and image. Such prominence of the visual called for its incorporation and investigation alongside the ethnographic interest in participants’ practices and associated meanings. Embodied masculinities, in live performance or in their representational, mediated form within social networking sites have been examined alongside interactional narratives of bands and musicians.
Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to outline my research rationale, evaluate theoretical and methodological assumptions underlying the research and to demonstrate how they have been put into practice. Additionally, it aimed to engage with theoretical and methodological tensions through self-reflexive approach to the story of the exploration; by exposing thinking, decision making and overall evolution of the project. Finally, the chapter provided some introductions to the participants and the themes of the research, which are explored in greater detail throughout the rest of the thesis.

This study has been developed with an awareness that what we know and how we acquire knowledge are complex epistemological questions that apart from the discipline of philosophy no single methodological approach claims to have an answer to, thus being attentive to its limitation. Furthermore, it has been informed by constructivist accounts of knowledge as contingent on convention, human perception, social interaction and experiences derived from it.

Defining, examining and writing “methodology” in an interdisciplinary study has many challenges. Methodology implies an investigation of the three way relation between the theory or theories, method or methods and knowledge produced by their employment. It can be problematised due to ambiguity of the term “theory” in general and its application within an interdisciplinary approach. Whereas theory in sciences/scientific theory is closely related to practices where verification can occur, thus to a degree complying with the definition of theory as a “system of ideas explaining something”, its meaning in Arts and Humanities is closer to an understanding of it as “abstract knowledge or speculative thought” (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1986: 72).

Theory is concerned with big questions about the nature of reality, language, power, gender, sexuality, the body and the self, and it offers a framework within which students and scholars can debate about these broad-ranging issues without
getting too extensively mired in detailed arguments within disciplines. (Moran, 2002: 83)

In this sense theory is always and already interdisciplinary. Foucault’s work, for example, has been labelled as history, social theory and philosophy, without a need to have a consensus about the exact characterisation. “Intertextuality”, or the notion that a text is not a closed system existing in isolation but instead is always “in dialogue” and interaction with other texts, signifies that any scholar working in any discipline is already engaged in interdisciplinary work, if not by the virtue of their methods than through the unavoidable conversations between texts which go beyond simple influences of one author upon another. As far as interdisciplinarity is concerned on one hand there is a call for unity of knowledge that stands in opposition to specialisation, potential for flexibility of research for an interdisciplinarian and the issue of academic freedom. On the other hand, there is a danger of becoming “jack of all trades”, engaging in “naïve generalism” and being cut off from the disciplinary knowledge (Grant and Reisman 1978 cited in Nissani 1997: 212).

My claim throughout has been that I attempted to adopt some elements of ethnographic approach traditionally associated with the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, but increasingly applied across cultural and media studies, education research, health research, business studies and many other fields of enquiry, and combine it with awareness of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of popular music. The outcome is a qualitative study reliant on the dialogue between theoretical frameworks and empirically derived knowledge. In The Ethnographic Imagination Willis (2000) discusses bringing together of ethnographic and aesthetic categories, musing about throwing concepts at things (data) and seeing what comes out remembering that concepts themselves are “fallible”, “fluid” and “always provisional”. By locating myself within social world of participants, music spaces, I hoped to generate knowledge which is grounded in practices and experience, dynamic, emergent, context dependent and provisional.
An orientation to others need not entail making absolutist (colonialist) epistemological claims: an ethnographer need not claim to access, to know the experience of others in an absolute sense. (Maxwell, 2002: 110)

The following chapters attempt to further develop observations of a “localised” project as well as to situate the practices and observations of such project within wider theoretical frameworks and the debates about popular music and masculinities. Most importantly, they allow the participants a voice.
Music Enculturation and Gendering of Music Experience: Listening, Collecting, Socialising

Introduction

Sociological, musicological and cultural studies approaches to popular music have made significant contributions to our understanding of meaning and place of popular music in social life. While theoretical writing has provided a philosophical backdrop for discussions and debates about workings of popular music, empirical studies have attempted to extend the understanding and knowledge about what music means to the actors involved, the ways in which it shapes their lives and influences their actions, as well as how it impacts on their identities.

As argued earlier in this thesis, the study of popular music is an interdisciplinary project requiring interdisciplinary undertakings. As such it relies on bridging interdisciplinary and methodological gaps by redefining the existing relationships and boundaries between disciplines and methodologies. This chapter engages with music as practice situated in everyday life and examines it through a series of music related activities. I propose that the music activities participants engage in are both gendered and gendering; that is already associated more readily with one gender as well as instrumental in reinforcing gender specific behaviour. More specifically, I examine the importance of music activities in production and maintenance of masculine gender identity and associated charges of “masculinism” of popular music and its domains. Drawing on existing studies, fieldwork observations and the empirical data of semi-structured interviews, I approach the relationship between men and a multitude of interwoven music activities and practices as negotiated, adjustable and shifting. While I acknowledge that musical activities of listening, collecting and socialising in music spaces play an important part in lives of many non-musicians, I am primarily interested in learning about their significance within
the narratives of becoming a musician. Thinking about those activities as constitutive of music and gender identities is informed by Becker's (1982) understanding of art worlds as reliant on a number of joint activities, which in music extend beyond music making and music performance. Musicians themselves often use a phrase “doing a band” which implies not just a creative input, performing and recording music, but also practices extending beyond music making and music performance. “Doing a band” includes everything else associated with being in a band – establishing and negotiating relationships, resolving tensions, sharing a set of common musical goals, booking rehearsal spaces, contacting promoters in order to secure a gig, sharing and hiring of equipment, collecting and listening to music, socialising in music spaces and so on. Similarly, Small's (1987) notion of “musicking” as a process, a “musical event” extending our understanding of music as simply a musical work (text) and introducing the significance of the context, can be utilised to think about the relation of music activities and gender identities, with both denoting a process, a degree of doing. I suggest that by “doing a band”, which includes a range of associated and above outlined activities, men who play in bands are simultaneously doing gender, that is aligning themselves to a multiplicity of masculine positions.

Building on some of the key debates addressed in Chapters Two and Three, and aiming to establish a link between music and related activities, I begin this chapter by addressing a broadly methodological question about what a study of popular music ought to incorporate. The argument subsequently opens out to the discussion of music activities as dynamic processes constitutive of gender identities. I focus on the practices of listening, collecting, and socialising within music spaces as significant stages in the process of music enculturation of musicians and as integral due to their contribution to the overall music experience. I draw on fieldwork observations and themes emerging from the data collected in semi-structured interviews to examine the degree of contribution of afore outlined stages of music enculturation to
accepted understanding of popular music as a masculine pursuit that privileges men over women.

**Music as practice, music in context**

In her reflection on Adorno’s writing about music DeNora (2003) recognises Adorno’s rejection of dualism of music and society in the aspect of his work which focuses on “music’s role in relation to consciousness, to psycho-cultural foundations of social life” (DeNora, 2003: 151). DeNora perceives music as a constitutive element of social life, an assertion which incorporates all musical forms, including popular music. She calls for an analysis which treats “music as society” rather than debates “music and society”:

> The difference between the two becomes merely analytical – dependent upon temporal or spatial priority (such as whether one is interested in an extra-musical outcome of a Musical Event or in a musical outcome of a Social Event... (DeNora, 2003: 151)

While acknowledging Adorno’s contribution to discourses of popular music, DeNora is critical of what she calls “an ungrounded manner” in which his work develops and calls for a middle way approach situated between “the analysis of music-as-discourse and the analysis of music-as-action” (DeNora, 2003: 154).

Sara Cohen (1993) regards the study of popular music as the point of convergence of empirical data, textual and journalistic sources with ethnographic focus on practices, processes and social relationships. Similarly, Lawrence Grossberg (1999) argues that rock music ought to be studied in context and suggests that the question about workings of popular music has not been answered fully. According to Grossberg, the cause of such a gap in knowledge should be sought in a lack of an integrated approach and the split that exists between theoretical and empirically based research and writing:
popular music is so deeply and complexly interwoven into the everyday lives of its fans and its listeners that its study...has to recognise that the music is inseparable from the entire range of activities that fill up our lives... (Grossberg, 1999: 104)

Musicians themselves are fans and listeners of music, taking part in a range of musical activities, hence Grossberg's suggestion about music's interwovenness with everyday lives can be extended to musicians who report the role of music as instrumental in making their lives meaningful, shaping their identities and impacting on their taste within a wider cultural consumption.

Reflecting on DeNora's approach in the study of music and everyday life, Frith (2003) recognises the importance of extending analysis of popular music beyond listening, and integrating the study of music making. He calls for ethnographic approaches which would map out and examine a "timetable of engagement" (Frith, 2003: 101), that is the reasons and the manner in which music constitutes both people's lives and plays a part in their social networks. For Frith too, contextual and participatory aspects of music are essential:

...music making is less about managing one's own emotional life than about enjoying being together in groups, real or imagined. (Frith, 2003: 100)

As suggested by Hesmondhalgh (2002) when seeking to understand the role of music in everyday life, what we need to engage with is a multiplicity of musical experience; music as an activity situated and performed among other cultural practices, involving a number of roles, processes and relationships. Music as practice and music in context, with its powerful place in everyday lives of individuals and its wider societal implications, provides a scope for a range of possible investigations. In line with the overall aims of the thesis the sections that follow examine popular music's association with masculinities, men and gendered practices constitutive of music experience.
Gender as practice

The understanding of gender in popular music is inextricably linked to wider discourses of culture and power, hence the starting point of my analysis of music activities is an acknowledgement of the status of popular music as exceeding the realm of entertainment and bearing ideological powers through gendering performers, audiences and musical texts alike. At the same time, popular music and extra-musical activities provide spaces for explorations of possibilities for exceeding, challenging and subverting traditional gender roles and practices.

While there have been a number of studies exploring women’s involvement in music as well as meaning and significance of music practices for women (e.g. Evans, 1994; Bayton, 1998; Schippers, 2002; Leonard, 2007), the task of locating empirically informed writing within the field dealing with the significance and meaning of music practices for men involved in music is fraught with difficulties. This omission, I believe, is partly due to an overriding, and mostly accurate assertion that popular music spaces are on the whole populated and dominated by men who define, shape and exercise control over them. Such acknowledgement leads to either theorising categories of gender and power, or in the case of ethnographic work mapping out the experiences of women who are seen as marginalised, excluded and even actively prevented from taking part. Learning about how music and its related practices contribute to the production of knowledge about gender through examination of experiences of one gender/sex (female) can produce valid results, yet has obvious limitations. In addition, existing writing focusing on male musicians more often than not reduces men and masculinities to “texts”. Their lyrics are subjected to the penetrating power of a magnifying glass of feminist critique and post structurally deconstructed, their stage presence and performance, timbre of their voices and clothes they wear are all scrutinised closely. While providing insights into gendering of popular music spheres, such singular semiotic approach is problematic in several respects. First, in order to
understand workings of this highly gendered field we must examine the ways in which construction, negotiation and maintenance of the dominant gender and its practices is achieved. Second, despite the established view of masculinism of popular music in general and certain music genres in particular (heavy metal, hardcore, hip-hop), there is nothing inherently "masculine" in musical sound in an abstract sense. When Bayton (1998) equates rock music with masculinity she argues that the three main reasons for the continuing association between the two are: a self-fulfilling prophecy of lack of female engagement due to established dominance of men, belief that there is an association between physical and mental strength, aggression and power and playing an instrument, and finally an uneasy relationship between women and technology which "is itself interwoven with masculinity" (Bayton, 1998: 41). Titles of the songs, choices made about the instruments, behaviours on stage, as well as activities associated with production and distribution of music can all be regarded as gendered. However, aligning popular music with masculinity as a singular, uniform concept creates notions of monolithic gender identity, and while a significant body of work has emerged introducing categories of age, sexuality, ethnicity, class or a cultural context into the discussion of meaning and reproduction of femininity, the same degree of contextualisation is still to be achieved in theorising masculinities in popular music.

As outlined in the previous section Cohen (1993) recognises the significance and calls for an incorporation of practices, processes and social relations into approaches, study and understanding of popular music. Similarly, Frith (2003) points out the importance of understanding music as a significant feature of everyday life, but also the part it plays in social networks and through engagement or practice that extends beyond listening. In her article 'Gender Identity and Music' Nicola Dibben (2002) extends the above suggestions by recognising the relevance of music as one of the most prominent sites for the construction of gender identity. She writes:
...it is possible to identify general processes by which music is involved in the construction of gender identity: identity is constructed through the musical activities people participate in, through their musical preferences and through their beliefs about what constitutes gender-appropriate musical behaviour. (Dibben 2002: 130)

For Dibben, the construction of gender identity occurs on three levels: through participation in musical activities, in musical preferences which can be associated with taste, and understandings and engagement in "gender appropriate behaviour" which points towards the interconnectedness of the existing structures and norms (e.g. institutional and informal choices available to men and women in terms of their learning about music, the concept of musical genre and its association with a particular gender), and related activities individuals can get involved in (e.g. learning to play an instrument, collection of music artefacts). Arguably, women’s access to music may be limited by their access to childcare, access to technologies, opportunities of learning to play a "male" instrument (institutional gendering of instruments), representations of women as sexual objects, gendering of roles with the existence of strong patriarchal power structures within music corporations and so on. What is of interest here are other everyday musical practices that lie beyond those already addressed through focus on solely female experiences of music spaces.

In order to situate presentation and analysis of observational and interview data, two further concepts ought to be introduced as both informed my thinking and examination of music activities and their role in defining and shaping masculinities. They are: the sociological concept of enculturation in general terms and the notion forging masculinity in a more specific sense. Enculturation is defined as:

The process by which an individual adapts to a new culture, eventually assimilating its practices, customs and values. (Reber, 1985: 240)
In *How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education* Lucy Green (2002) expands the concept to encompass musical enculturation thus referring to:

...the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge by immersion in the everyday music and musical practices of one's social context. (Green, 2002: 22)

She argues that we unavoidably come into contact with music around us due to our inability to "shut our ears" (Green, 2002: 22). However, her interest lies in the examination of active involvement with musical sound through music activities of playing, composing and listening. While Green's musicologically informed approach is significant in mapping out informal processes of learning in music such as learning to play an instrument, composing and listening; the concept of enculturation calls for an incorporation of a wider range of social activities that individuals undertake in order to appreciate how their gender identities are constructed and performed. In addition to learning to play an instrument, and early listening of music, empirical data collected during my participant observation as well during 20 formal semi-structured interviews foregrounded socialising with one's peers, networking within music spaces, event promotion, djing, recording and producing music, and attending live gigs as relevant activities to be examined if one is to understand the many nuances that the participants attach to music as well as the complexity of interactions occurring within music spaces.

Forging masculinity is the concept introduced by Robert Walser (1993) in his influential book *Running With The Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. It denotes a process and its usefulness lies in its semantic potential, namely the duality implied by it. Undoubtedly, music practices do not simply present an opportunity for a performer to express their gender identity and/or sexuality, but to construct it through their chosen mode of expression (musically, performatively). *Forging* denotes shaping, forming, moulding, framing, constructing, creating (Kirkpatrick, 1996: 303) as well as fabrication, invention, falsification, imitation. Furthermore, it connotes the dynamic of
pressing on, of pushing on such as in the expression "forging ahead". The two denotative levels (creation and falsification) are entwined; creation of gender identity is falsification of established “rules” that regulate it, while falsification is informed by the existing creative processes. The two way relationship between the processes of creation and falsifications structurally echoes a method that DeNora calls for and which conceives music as an environmental feature:

A key feature of this perspective, then, is to forgo attempting to divide the social-material-cultural world into ‘parts’ a priori (e.g. music, action, furnishings), but rather to look at how, within particular environments and temporal frames, people and things are put together – to look at the shifts, movements, and flows of people and things over time and space. (DeNora, 2003: 156)

For Walser “forging masculinity” is “a conscious and deliberate ‘strategy’ “ (Negus, 1996:126) where male power and control are modelled (Walser, 1993:110) through four strategies associated with the process. These are: misogyny in the representation of women in heavy metal videos (“blatant abuse” and representation of women as femmes fatales), exscription of women “that is, total denial of gender anxieties through the articulation of fantastic worlds without women”, androgyny mainly visible in the spectacle of performance and romance “writing songs about romantic love and personal relationships” thus catering for the growing market of female fans. While misogyny associated with the music video, androgyny associated with performance and the theme of romantic love associated with lyrics of heavy metal songs provide a useful framework for arguments associated with embodiment of gender and content analysis, the notion of exscription can be extended to exploration of music related activities. Mandy, one of the three female musicians who took part in the research, and who plays the keyboard in The Compacts, wrote to me:

Mandy: Recently a website was set up for the band by a fan and I wasn’t listed among the band members. I couldn’t get paranoid however as I’m not too big on
self-promotion and so think my tendency to be low key is responsible. So I guess one of the main reasons I get treated differently is because I’m a shy and retiring person.

She did not say if the error has been corrected, but having spent time with The Compacts I am aware that all other band members see Mandy as an important contributor to the band, and I am certain they would have reminded the fan in question that leaving her out was not acceptable. Her second experience of exclusion involves what she described as “ironic sexism”.

Mandy: It’s hard not to get annoyed when other more laddish bands come out with gems like “I wouldn’t have a woman in my band unless she was fat and ugly”. A few weeks ago I could not resist responding to similar comments on a local website and regretted it instantly. I tried turning their ‘ironic sexism’ or whatever it’s supposed to be around and using it on them but predictably I got taken seriously. So I guess women are excluded from ironic exchanges. I find it’s usually better to not even acknowledge idiots like that exist and just get on with playing music.

Exscription of Mandy took place on practical levels (exclusion from a band members’ list and exclusion from an online conversation), however the absence of women (or their stereotypical depictions as sex objects) can often be noted at a level of representation. In his discussion of Judas Priest’s (1981) video for ‘Heading Out to the Highway’ Walser writes:

There are no women to be seen in this video, and what is there to be seen – the cars, the road, the leather, the poses – have long been coded as symbols of male freedom, linked with signs of aggressiveness and refusal to be bound by limits. (Walser, 1993:115)

However, in order to engage with popular music masculinities in a more complete manner they ought to be observed and studied beyond purely representation realm, such as that of a music video. For example, Cohen’s (1991) ethnographic study Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the
Making distinguishes between masculinities in performance and masculinities in everyday life, “contradictory masculinities” exemplified by power and freedom on one hand but also vulnerability, powerlessness and insecurity prominent in live performances and lyrical content, on the other. The two spheres allow for an approach which regards the interrelations between the public and the private, the stage and the life. Both are arenas where gender identities are forged and negotiated, permeable and expandable. Both are settings for musical experiences.

Gendering that occurs on stage in and through performance is examined in Chapter Six. Examining elements of music enculturation, that is processes of listening, collecting and socialising in music spaces provides an opportunity to explore the ways in which those activities grant a scope for cultural doing of gender (forging of gender identities), as well as act as a platform for reinforcement of the existing gender norms and behaviours.

Experiencing music

While examinations of the dynamics of the band or representational dimension of embodied masculinity do provide relevant dimensions to this study, the first few tentative steps I took in the field indicated that in order to gain a greater insight into the ways masculinities are constituted and negotiated, consideration ought to be given to activities participants engage in. Some of the activities instrumental to the musical experience were observable within the field, others took part in the private domain and were reported in interviews and through informal interactions with participants.

What constitutes our experiences in and of music is determined by our degree and manner of involvement in music. Some are involved directly in its production and performance, others are fans of music and followers of music trends, with the majority of musicians likely to be both (producers and consumers of music). Music can provide a backdrop to many everyday activities, where we are not purposively listening or taking part. It can be an
innocent pastime and a powerful political and politicising force. It can be an escape from the crowd or the desire to participate in a group activity. This multi-dimensionalism of music calls for varying approaches, and the proceeding discussion has been informed by three musical activities which surfaced as the most significant for participants in the process of music enculturation. The following sections address, illustrate and discuss listening, collecting and socialising in music spaces as activities constitutive of musical experience as well as activities determinant in shaping of popular music gender identities. It is, however, important to note that the above activities are not exclusive and bounding, and that music experience incorporates a myriad of other practices, some of which are addressed in different contexts throughout the thesis.

**Listening**

I press the stop button on the voice recorder and feel a familiar sense of relief that another long interview has ended. Carl immediately gets up, rummages through his record collection and proceeds to play every record that he referred to in the interview. The guests for the barbecue have arrived, it is now underway and I can hear distant voices and clinking the glasses coming from the garden. Yet, we stay in the room, indulging in a shared pastime of listening to records, me happy to let him play songs for me, him happy to oblige. And for a very long time no one opens the door, as if they all believe that we are taking part in some sacred activity that cannot be disrupted. [excerpt from fieldwork notes]

Playing a record, that is putting a record on a record player, is an act commonly performed and appropriated by men. In a room full of people men are most likely to be in charge of their or someone else's record collection, skilfully selecting records and with a perfect sense of balance and timing placing a needle on the [first] groove\(^\text{16}\) of the vinyl. If a woman attempts to do the same

\(^{16}\) I read this section to my partner, thinking he may find it amusing. He interrupts: “You can't say 'the first groove'”. Me: “How do you mean?” (I am convinced I am right and pick up an LP that is laying next to his record player). “Look, there are many grooves here, and here is the
she is asked to be careful, not to scratch the record, smudge the record sleeve, spill her drink over it or damage the sacred object in some other “unacceptable” feminine fashion. I witnessed many men unsteady on their feet pausing for a deep breath, steadying their hand and taking their time in order to perfectly execute this action. With the introduction of CDs in the 1980s women have gradually been allowed greater freedom in the revered act of selecting and playing a song for the purpose of shared listening. A friend, who is a big music fan, and an obsessive music collector, told me once that he was not concerned about allowing his female friends to handle his CDs because he thought they were indestructible. This was in the early days of CD technology when various rumours about their indestructibility were circulated, and before he scratched, burned and ruined one of his favourite albums in an attempt to demonstrate its durability. CD players do not require the same degree of precision as record players and a simple tap on open/close button can not be compared with such “complex” ritual of putting a record on (taking it out of the sleeve, flipping it skilfully several times, allowing delicate yet determined landing and placing the needle in exactly the right place). The same ease of operation applies to digital music files requiring only a click of a mouse or a gentle push of a play button on an MP3 player.

This brief detour into the world of records, broken CDs and creased up record sleeves should be taken to suggest that despite of listening to music in a range of public and private settings, as well as the emergence of prominent female djs, the act of shared listening is still associated with men selecting and playing songs. This may be due to the perception that men are more determined owners of record collections and therefore exercise their “right” (based on ownership) to be in charge of listening.

Although I have not set out to research the musicians’ listening habits in terms of providing quantitative analysis, listening to music as both a private and
a shared, public activity, became a part and one of the important features of field observations and formal interviews I conducted. The importance of social role of listening to music surfaced in several ways. First, if a choice of an interview venue was a public place (a bar, a pub or a club) those were chosen by the respondents with a type of music likely to be heard within selected spaces in mind. Interviews with eight out of 20 respondents took place in public venues. When the arrangements could not be made for interviews to take place in respondents' homes, they were asked to choose a suitable public venue and I informed them that I was prepared to travel to any place convenient for them, within Greater Manchester. Outside of the Greater Manchester one out of 20 interviews took place in Leeds, two took place in Blackpool, one took place in Stoke on Trent, and four took place in Edinburgh. My only request was that music played was not so loud that we would find it distracting, as well as resulting in a poor quality of the recording. Comments about background music within a chosen interview venue were often a way of breaking the ice, establishing rapport and beginning the conversation. I became aware that besides physical appearance of a person, both the chosen venue and the music likely to be heard in the chosen venue, were instrumental in shaping my opinion about the type of musician I was dealing with; for example a quiet, unassuming singer songwriter or an over enthusiastic punk rocker. Music within a chosen space became an element of the overall self-presentation of the participants. Second, if the arrangements were made for the interview to take place in the respondents' own homes in all cases music had been playing as I arrived, and quite often throughout the interviews; again giving an impression that it was there to assist me in forming a view about the person I was interviewing. In the latter scenario the respondents had more power to "manipulate" and change the atmosphere and thus possibly my initial impressions due to having access to their private record collections. Impression making is a significant feature of all social interactions and during my time in the field it was aided by music which participants felt contributed to their overall image and identity.
What interested me and what I pursued in the interviews was the part that listening to music played in enculturation of musicians, the ways in which it shaped and maintained their gender identity through the development of taste. In addition, I wanted to explore the link between simply listening to music and "getting into music", and more formal processes associated with forming or joining a band. If music plays a relevant part in lives of boys and girls, with both taking part in music related activities, why is it that we arrive at the point where one gender tends to dominate different types of music spheres or music styles? Are men and women acculturated to music differently, with their gender identities (and subsequent music pursuits) shaped and reinforced by existing ideologies of popular music's association with masculinity? And how early in the musical experiences does the process of differentiation occur?

Through interviews and less formal interaction I discovered that only three out of 20 respondents had some degree of formal music education. The rest claimed to have developed an interest in music through listening, rather than through a tradition of formal learning or playing an instrument associated with the culture of learning to play an instrument present in their family units. Green's (2002) work on informal music education provided some pointers:

Listening of any kind is a crucial activity for all musicians. Purposive listening, in particular, is a part of both informal music learning and formal education. However, for those who become popular musicians as well as other types of vernacular musicians, all types of listening – including attentive listening, distractive listening and even hearing – also form a central part of the learning process. (Green, 2002: 24)

Informal learning, in addition, involves a range of practices associated with listening, and it is through observation of those practices that something can be learned about forging of gender identities. The phrase "getting into music" does not denote just an act of listening, rather it incorporates a variety of social practices associated with it, such as purchasing of music, discovering and taking part in a "scene", attending live gigs and so on.
When questioned about listening habits the majority of my respondents associated listening with the past, and spoke of it with a sense of nostalgia for early, "innocent days", before they were involved with a band, had developed clear goals and ambitions associated with the band’s status, rather then referring to their current taste which was usually explained in terms of attending live gigs and serving the purpose of keeping up with what is happening within music scenes. The former can be seen as integral in enculturation, taste formation and forging of gender identity, the latter in taste maintenance as well as in expectations of knowledge and behaviour placed on those who aim to become professional musicians.

John is a filmmaker who writes his own music. Through the years he played in several bands and performed as a solo artist. For him, listening to music is associated with the family and the memory of places and events:

John: Listening to music has played a huge part in my growing up. Music has always being listened to by parents and older siblings. Because we moved so much, songs often have a special significance that relates to a time and a place.

Carl, a musician in his early 40s, who has been writing and performing music in a number of punk bands since his mid teens, explained the development of his listening habits:

Carl: I listened to music since I was really young cause my mum and dad used to play a lot of records. I had a load of 78s... Elvis and stuff like that that I used to listen to. Then I started to listen to stuff like Sweet and T Rex. Then I got into punk as well. Not so much because it was punk, but because I liked the music. Most of my friends were into it at the same time, which was 1977 and I was still at school. We were all listening to the same type of stuff but it was.... smaller groups rather than the main stream ones.

James was in his late 30s at the time of the interview. During his teenage years he was a singer in a band that got signed by an independent record label, received some airplay and a degree of positive music press coverage, but split
up due to tensions in the band. Despite working full-time, he remained involved in music and has played in a number of bands. At the time of the interview he was performing as a singer with his original band (based in Blackpool), who reformed in 2004, as well as playing bass and occasionally keyboard for another Blackpool band. James reflected on his early involvement with music, through listening:

James: I guess it is a sense of identity with my peers, but also linking my identity with a wider group of people. For instance the type of music I listened to was punk and new wave, and indie at a later stage. But punk and new wave in 78, 79 when I was at school. There were other people at school who liked punk. Also, it was on the TOTP. There were three types of music you could listen to at that time in the North; there was Northern Soul, later on there was mod, and punk...

Mostly male friends were into punk. It is an aggressive type of music.

Both Carl and James associate their introduction to popular music with school days and involvement of peer groups. There is also an emphasis on group taste “we were all listening to the same type of stuff” and “there were other people at school who liked punk”. James aligned the punk with masculinity and aggressiveness thus making a link between expected gender behaviour and musical genre. He was raised by adoptive parents who were a generation older than his peers' parents, and although his mother was fond of musicals and classical music, he was seeking out his type music that in some way reflected his own life and that of his peers. According to James, it was not a straightforward matter of rejecting his parents' music taste but rather seeking a type of music that was communicating something to him or reflecting something of his young self. His older sister was fond of Northern Soul while he, attracted by its sounds and values, settled for punk.

Dan Laughey's (2006) empirically based enquiry in music's interaction with young people's everyday lives foregrounds under-represented and "surprising" interactive two-way processes taking place in taste formation of young people where:
...young people openly acknowledged the interactive processes by which their elders had influenced their tastes and had been influenced by their children's own tastes... (Laughey, 2006: 133)

Neither Carl nor James acknowledged any such two-way processes taking place in their families (between them and their parents), which may be due to both Carl and James being much older than Laughey’s respondents and accessing popular music at the time (late 1970s) when its consumption did not extend so widely into the mainstream as it is the case today. Punk in particular would have been seen as too confrontational by their parents and not a genre likely to be embraced. However, Carl’s own sons who are in their late teens, have both been influenced by Carl’s involvement in punk music. His older son is a musician in a local heavy metal band with strong hardcore underpinnings, and both children have been brought up on vegetarian diet due to Carl’s straight edge leanings. Carl claimed that he himself became involved in punk “not because it was punk” but because he liked the music thus distancing his early involvement (as a consumer) from ideological dimension of punk music, which was to come to play a significant part in Carl’s own life and his musical output. In those early days most of his friends were listening to punk, so peer group dimension of shared taste appears to be of most significance, with the ideological dimension embraced later on.

For some of the respondents the beginnings of their involvement in music, through listening, are more closely associated with Laughey’s assertion about open acknowledgment of interactive nature of music taste formation. Steve, a guitarist from Future Adventures, who was in his early twenties at the time of the interview, and for whom Future Adventures was a first “serious” band to be involved with, explains:

Steve: My dad is a jazz pianist, and my granddad was before him as well. And so music has always been in my family. The first album I ever got was classic dance hits, and things like this, but I heard Noel mention Radiohead. And looked them up
and listened to them and just thought "that is something different" and ... liked them straight away. And from there on I got talking to Noel and he mentioned other bands...

For Steve, what started as a family affair (tradition of musicianship within the family which he pursued by taking piano lessons and by playing a cornet in a school orchestra) was extended by his introduction to popular music through his friend Noel, with whom he will go on to form a band (Future Adventures). While opening up to a new musical influence, Steve readily contributed his formal musical knowledge to the band. Noel often commented how Steve's song writing resulted in complex structures and intricate detail, which at times turned out to be difficult for other band members to understand, play and follow.

Kieran is an established drummer who has been performing and recording with a number of well known bands (signed to both independent and major record labels). Kieran's story shares some similarities with Steve's, with different music genres shaping his music taste. His parents had "rather shaky record collection" with some Elvis Presley albums which he liked and some "old time ragtime piano...cheesy pop". He then came across a music teacher who introduced him to classical music through Bach:

Kieran: ... there was this teacher who was a music graduate. And ... he always used to play Bach, Bach was his love...Bach was always getting on his piano, he would set us some work, and he would sit and practice Bach. Which was a bit annoying. We also had two snare drums in the corridor and I kept wanting to have a go...

Kieran musical taste expanded through his career as a successful drummer and included a wide range of influences from classical, jazz and pop goth music.

In the majority of the musicians’ narratives, listening and the acquisition of taste led to the idea of forming a band. Once the participants are acculturated to a particular sound or a range of sounds, once their taste is established, the desire to replicate it begins to grow. Stuart has been involved
with music for over 20 years, and he is one of the two “creators” in *The Compacts*. Apart from writing, recording and performing music, he makes sculptural work and is involved in a number of community art projects. He explains on the surface seamless transition from listening to performing, and like the majority of other participants associates early listening with media influences shared with his peer group during his school days:

Stuart: It was not a musical family, it was a peer group thing. I became sort of aware of music at the very early age, infant school, junior school. There were a few of us who used to go mad about TOTP and certain bands. I suppose looking back you could say they were glam rock bands, it was sort of *Slade, Sweet, T Rex, Suzi Quatro*, those sorts of acts. And at age of nine or ten we used to go to our friend’s house on Saturday afternoon and we were a “band”! No instruments, we had a drum kit, just mimed playing the guitar in the air.

After pursuing Stuart’s early “band” story I quickly learned that girls who constituted his circle of friends have not been involved in it, because according to Stuart, it was not something girls were expected or wanted to do. Despite punk’s status as the genre that paved the way towards greater gender equality in both consuming and performing music, James too informed me that in the “early days” most of his female friends listened to “electronic type of music”. This indicates that both gendering of a music genre and gendering of music associated practices occurs quite early on in participants’ musical enculturation. It is important to note that Carl, James and Stuart had not received any formal music education, and hence were not exposed directly to gender associated choice of music instruments usually done in a formal school setting and prevalent even today.

For a younger generation of respondents musical references were different but social relations built around music, and processes associated with music enculturation reflected those of the older generation. Ivan was in his early 20s at the time of the interview. He studied sound engineering at a university and has been writing, recording and performing music with
Manchester based The Cyclists for about three years at the time of our first meeting. He explains the development of his musical taste:

Ivan: I was really, really young, like seven or eight and my parents did not have a big record collection or anything, but they did have top ten singles for each year. Started by watching MTV and getting into things, and I also had an older cousin as well who was two or three years older than me. Whenever he was getting into things he would get me cassettes of music. That got me into Nirvana and Rage Against the Machine and stuff like that when I was about nine years old. And then....after that when I was in school just listened a lot of really heavy music and loads of indie, but then also electronic and dancy stuff as well. More like catchy sort of stuff. People at school listened to pretty much the same stuff, but perhaps not as much of dancy stuff. But as we grew up our tastes changed. When we were about 15 we stopped listening to heavy metal and getting more into like punk and hardcore, and also Aphex Twin and Squarepusher. I had sets of friends who all seem to like different types of music. I would be going to different gigs with different people. It is like people I am still good friends with now, but now they are all friends as well, so it is really cool.

Ivan’s story too confirms the significance of influence of immediate as well as extended family in acquiring a particular musical taste and his encountering of diverse realms of music. Additionally, it hints at the possibility of non-homologous practices within music consumption with the process of acquisition of taste understood as dynamic and evolving. Ivan’s friends included both males and females with some differentiation in taste and participation based on gender, which according to him was not significant as they all learned to like different types of music at different points of their lives.

Most of the respondents claimed that while the earliest memories of hearing music were hearing it in its mediated form within their homes, it was the influence of peer groups that was more fundamental in developing of their taste, of their listening habits and the desire to explore music. In the formation of his musical taste Ivan had to negotiate relationships with different groups of friends who “all seem to like different types of music” and presumably as a participant in music consumption perform different roles in different settings. As
certain genres can be described as more masculine than others (i.e.
aggressive, political and "macho" sound of Rage Against the Machine and
associated behaviour versus contemplative moodiness of Aphex Twin) Ivan
would have needed to adjust his behaviour when "going to different gigs with
different people"; performing a range of masculine roles associated with a wide
spectrum of masculine music identities.

Samantha is Ivan's band mate, also in her early 20s. She and Ivan met
at a university. Samantha's route to becoming a consumer, and later an active
producer of music shares some characteristics with her male counterparts'
enculturation, but also diverges at the point of the role played by the family. For
her, the crucial point was meeting Ivan, with whom she shared musical taste
and some time later they were to embark on forming a band together.

Samantha: Well, a lot of people I know got into music through their bigger brother
or sister or someone who got them into it. But I did not really...my older brother is
quite a bit older and he is not really into music anyway. So I kind of got properly
interested in music when I was 12 or 13. I really liked Blur. Then branched out into
the stuff that sounded like that. When I was at college I met Ivan. He is really into
the music and he bounces a lot of things off me. And I bounce a lot of things off
him. When I was about 15 I started playing a guitar.

Exscription of women, defined as a deliberate and active strategy employed by
male counterparts, does not seem to exist in listening as one of the practices
that inform music enculturation. Listening takes place in both private and public
domains which provides enough scope for a range of listening practices.
Women are not excluded from listening to music, but what and how they listen
may be determined by wider socio-cultural factors, such as how music is
spoken about, the status of certain music genres with music genre hierarchy
and existing associations of femininity with emotional responses and thus
certain types of music. In a recent daily newspaper article Laura Barton (2008)
examines the notion that there is men's and women's music based on
stereotypes associated with masculinity and femininity. Leslie Douglas, the co-
ordinator for the BBC’s popular music coverage, is reported as suggesting the following in her reference to 6 Music:

For a station that has music at its heart, it is only right to make it more open to female listeners. It’s partly how you talk about music. For women, there tends to be a more emotional reaction to music. Men tend to be more interested in the intellectual side: the tracks, where albums have been made, that sort of thing. (Douglas 2008 cited in Barton, 2008: 24)

Douglas’s suggestion extends to adding more personality DJs with the aim of enticing a greater number of female listeners is falling back onto the stereotypical associations of the female taste with the mainstream, and the male taste with the obscure, alternative and underground thus demonstrating the degree of institutionalisation of gender associated taste and practices.

While music enculturation points to the roles played by immediate and extended families in introduction of music, if not shaping of musical taste, music identities seem to be significantly developed and reinforced through peer group interaction. Moreover, music genres with their associations with a particular gender play a part in choices and practices male and female participants engage in. As listening takes place in both private and public spheres, it is interwoven in other music activities such as collecting music artefacts and knowledge, socialising within music spaces and exchanging musical knowledge. Self-presentation within music spaces thus extends beyond stories about “getting into music”, listening to music and physical behaviours such as dressing up or dancing at a gig, to presentation of musical knowledge:

Males police themselves, not only in terms of the looseness or control which mark bodily gesture, but in the way they ‘wear’ and release the knowledges they have cultivated. (Straw, 1997: 7)

The next section extends the argument about processes involved in music enculturation by examining the significance of practice of collecting, both of
artefacts and knowledge, for music enculturation generally and shaping of masculine identities more specifically.

Collecting

...the dark destroyers of all great music, reference points and irony. (Bill Drummond, 1990)

Collecting, as a social practice and a form of consumption, has been explored from psychological, sociological, anthropological and other (mostly market research) perspectives. Pearce (1995, 1998) found that while motivations for collecting and the type of artefacts collected may vary among individuals, collecting was not a gender or class specific pursuit. Similarly, based on interviews with 67 self-identified record collectors, Shuker (2004) found a combination of motives for collecting, which included:

...a love of music; obsessive-compulsive behaviour; accumulation and completism; selectivity and discrimination; and self-education and scholarship.
(Shuker, 2004: 311)

Of all forms of collecting and of all music experience constitutive practices, the one that stands out most as "masculine malady" is that of record collecting. Motivations for collecting music artefacts can vary, from simple love of music to accumulation of cultural or even economic capital (Shuker, 2004). High Fidelity's\(^\text{17}\) engagement with the theme of record collecting through representation of a "dysfunctional" male character has inspired many responses both in terms of confirming and challenging a stereotype of a record collector. My interest and engagement with the issue resided not in the act of record collecting per se, but in examining how this complex and varied social practice fits within wider narratives of musicianship and gender. On one hand

\(^{17}\)High Fidelity is a 1995 novel by Nick Hornby, and a 2000 film directed by Stephen Frears. Rob Fleming, the protagonist, is a record store owner in his 30s, with an obsession for record collecting, and a series of failed relationships.
collecting can be seen as an act of "defining self through aesthetic choices" (Reynolds, 2004: 290) or a "surrogate for connecting, a fantasy of total possession through hyperconsumption" (Reynolds, 2004: 292). At the same time, collecting I refer to here is more akin to what Shuker (2004) terms as "self-education" of a collector, related to collecting information and building a body of knowledge about music and its contexts, rather than an exclusive accumulation of the artefacts. In my study, the age of the participants surfaced as a significant category in determining what types of artefacts and information were collected.

Albert was 19 at the time of the interview. He is the lead guitarist and the lead singer of Two Digit Salute based in Edinburgh. He also performs solo as a singer-songwriter. Through our informal socialising I learned that he spends significant amounts of money on buying music, either in record shops or online. He has a large collection of CDs cutting across music genres; he is inquisitive, enthusiastic and enjoys music exploration. What was striking about Albert was that although his music consumption years overlap with approximately the last ten years of the music industry’s output, he is extremely well informed about a range of music directions and styles, from 1970s onwards. He is particularly fond of some of the New Wave acts of the 1980; something that we share and which proved to be a good starting point in establishing a rapport. I was intrigued with his music related knowledge and his ability to “collect” music related facts and narratives. This is how he responded when asked I asked him about his “music consumption”:

Albert: I really loathe the music press. I still buy the NME every week, and it gets trashier and trashier as the weeks go on. This group of girls at Uni, they are from London and they call it the indie Heat. And that is all it is. It is a celeb mag… I get Mojo, I have got a subscription to Mojo. I used to get Q but then that was just too poppy. It is kind of where a lot of my music knowledge comes from. They do cover a lot. This month it is Iggy and The Stooges on the front cover, and I really like Iggy and The Stooges, well The Stooges. And they had an article a few months ago about the band called Talk Talk, from the 80s that I never heard of. So my friend Simon mentioned them and I knew about them and I could talk to him about
them, you know. So Mojo I really like. For the articles more than the reviews. I do like reviews cause I can see what is coming out and I can get some idea of what is worth buying.

Albert, unlike some of his peers, and some of his young fellow musicians, is disparaging about the NME. His ambition is to be seen as a more sophisticated and better informed reader and collector of music related knowledge, hence his preference for and subscription to Mojo. Since even “girls at Uni” have dismissed the NME as gossip populated, music celebrity magazine (indie Heat), it would be extremely “uncool” for Albert to be associated with it. The other issue in this instance was my status and role. Through our informal socialising Albert learned something about my own taste, attitudes and pursuits; research in music being at the forefront of my activities at this time. It is possible that this knowledge affected his response. Irrespective of its status, music media that Albert claimed to be reading provided an introduction to a musical canon which he then continued exploring:

Albert: The new Scott Walker got a lot of press. I have heard Jarvis Cocker talk about it. A lot of times things I get into are recommended by artist I like. Primal Scream got me into MC5. Jarvis Cocker got me into Nick Cave and Scott Walker who are two of my favourite artists now. They are the holly trinity to me: Cocker, Cave and Walker. I wanna check some Jacques Brel, cause Scott Walker did some of his songs. I have looked at some YouTube footage, but my French is not that great.

Scott is in his late 30s and has been involved with making and performing music for about 20 years. He is the lead singer of The Compacts. I have known Scott for about two years during which I have seen The Compacts perform on many occasions. On several occasions I met him in less formal settings such as house parties and music festivals that we both attended. I interviewed Scott in his own home, to the sound of The Beatles from his stereo. When I asked him if he read any music press or collected music related knowledge in some other way he responded:
Scott: Sometimes. If I am taking a train journey, or there is nothing in the house to read or there is a good article I would buy either Record Collector or Mojo. Not religiously or anything. I have had phases. But I have not read the NME for a long time. Now and again I would buy the Wire. I still get some fanzines, there are still a few. And I am on a mailing list. And I appreciate those a lot more than I do music press. Uhmm... it is an important thing when you are younger. You really take it seriously when you are a teenager. I remember buying the NME and Sounds when I was 17, really wanting to be in there. As you get older you realise, oh yes... this is tomorrow's chip wrap! It is not much better.

For Scott, there is a clear distinction between the mainstream press (the NME, Mojo, Record Collector, the Wire) and fanzines, as the remnants of the underground scenes that he sees himself and his band belonging to. Both his music ambitions (to appear in the NME or Sounds) and his attitude towards the role of music press, have developed and changed over the years. His reference to music papers as “tomorrow’s chip wrap” simultaneously represents an ideological position associated with his views on the role and status of art in general, and his realisation of the limitations and the glass ceiling that he has perhaps reached with The Compacts. Both stand in a stark contrast with Albert’s enthusiasm and attachment of value to the collection of music related knowledge.

DB: What do you think of the quality of journalism?

Scott: I know some of these people, and some of those magazines have printed nice things about us which they did not have to do because we do not pay advertising, which is the big thing for these magazines. Even the Wire sets itself up as “we are really investigating...”. Bullshit, they only cover the bands who pay their advertisements, who have money... they are just as commercial as Q magazine... Standards of journalism have probably gone down hill over the years. I remember in the 80s, you had these very pretentious writers like Paul Morley, but at least they were trying to expand their audience’s vocabulary... now it is just... I saw the NME a couple of years ago and it really was like a children’s comic!... I think with Mojo and those middle aged magazines it is like being told children’s
tales because they keep going back to rock mythology and every few months they
will have "here is the story of The Beatles...here is the story of The Doors..." and it
is like being told a nursery rhyme..."then John met Yoko..." yes, how reassuring,
the same old story over and over again.

Due to his age, his experiences and his knowledge of how the music industry
works, Scott is noticeably wary of the role of the music press. He recognises
the profit making and canon building agendas, as well as disposability of
published "knowledge". Yet, he is well informed, he follows the trends and
despite his dismissal of the quality of writing and role of music media he
"collects" music related knowledge in order to be able to participate in music
spaces where he interacts with a wide variety of musicians. His critical outlook
on the music media's canon building comes from his understanding of creative
spheres in general, as spaces where boundaries of what is known and
accepted ought to be expanded, where expectations must be subverted and
attitudes challenged. Against such an ideological position the narrative of John
meeting Yoko is redundant.

Noel is in his early 20s and is the lead guitarist in Future Adventures who
are based in Manchester and whom I have seen perform on a number of
occasions. In addition to seeing Noel perform and the formal interview I
conducted, I socialised with Noel informally, both in real life and online
environments. His response when asked about music collecting was:

Noel: I am not into vinyl, too much of a child of the digital age. I like the
convenience of an MP3, over the beauty of piece of a vinyl. Not really that fussed.
I remember trying to lift my dad's old boxes of vinyl, we used to call them the
coffins. Could not lift them at all, horrible. Have you seen High Fidelity?

DB: Yes.

Noel: How he organises his records biographically. Crazy! Some people get
carried away with it.
Noel is clearly aware of some of the negative connotations of the *High Fidelity* stereotype, but he then proceeds to inform me that he used to be quite obsessive about collecting CD singles before deciding to sell them on eBay and making a significant sum of money from the sales. Record collecting as a form of economic investment was not an uncommon feature among male respondents. James, for example, owns a large record collection which he rarely listens to. When I asked him what he intended to do with it he explained that there was a potential in making a considerable amount of money once he decides to sell a part of it. He has done this before at the time of financial hardship, but has regrets associated with parting with a number of his favourite albums, especially due to prices of some of his already sold items soaring lately.

Unlike Albert who uses music resources to expand on his knowledge of music, Noel, although of a similar age, demonstrates more of a critical approach.

Noel: I went through the phase of reading *Melody Maker* and the *NME* quite a bit but...I have worked for Ticketmaster and while I was there I started to realise how much....how one track it all is. All these things like "oh yeah it is independent, it is indie"...it is all...the same companies that are running the magazines, the billboards, the venues...everything...they are writing about the bands, they are putting the bands on in the their venues, advertising the bands on the radio, they own the radio station...they decide everything. It is like there are a couple of people in the country like "this is gonna be popular" and it is, they decide that and it becomes popular, there is no question that it may not work. You put it on the radio enough times people will know it, buy it, dance to it in clubs. It is just a circle they completely control in every possible way and I would not mind being a part of the circle haha...I am still gonna stand outside and slag it off.

He is clearly aware of global branding, the contestable notion of “indie” and hierarchies of power inherent in the music industry. As we got to know each other through music related social activities and events we both took part in, I learned that Noel believed that knowledge of how things work in the music
industry provided him and the band with a greater chance of actually "making it". As the time went on, and we developed quite a dynamic relationship based on some shared musical taste, and a degree of a shared world view, Noel felt increasingly comfortable in developing his acquaintance with music related issues through discussing and enquiring about my understanding and knowledge of a particular band or artist, or a particular music scene. He even demonstrated an interest in sociological approaches to studying popular music, which I was only too happy to share and point him in the direction of relevant literatures. Something similar occurred as I got to know Albert better. I have recently received an email from him asking me for "some pointers for discovering The Fall", the band renowned for their many incarnations, longevity, productivity and a great number of releases. His other query related to an obscure recording by Josef K, and my possible familiarity or ownership of it. Both Noel and Albert are significantly younger than me, and they possibly saw my presence in the field (and for them music spaces they inhabit), my music related knowledge and my experience as an opportunity to increase their own knowledge base by collating the music narratives I was familiar with or a part of. In this sense, my relationship with those young musicians was one of cultural exchange – I was interested in their practices, views and experiences, while they were curious about my music related narratives and knowledge. On the other hand, the participants who were older than me, and who inhabited music spaces for a significantly longer period of time than me, aimed to instruct me in music related knowledge by demonstrating it through the size and assortment of their music collections (in shared listening where they take the control) or collections of music narratives they felt may be of interest to me; which too provided me with useful insights into their lives and practices, both past and present.

On the whole, the respondents were more willing to talk about their knowledge of music spaces, music activities associated with performing and the music canon, than provide me with detailed accounts of their record and music artefacts collecting practices. I believe there are two main reasons for
this, associated with ideologies of musicianship and authenticity. First, musicians strive to be seen as active producers of music, rather than primarily the consumers of music artefacts and sound. Second, knowledge of the music spaces, their characteristics and norms that govern them, the key actors inhabiting them and codes of behaviour appropriate to them, provides them with a degree of credibility unattainable by a non-musician.

Within the debates about popular music and gender, the masculinism of the popular music record collecting is seen as a material practice “around which the rituals of homosocial interaction take shape”. (Straw, 1997: 5) For musicians such interaction most commonly takes place in music spaces and alongside other related activities which are addressed by the following section.

Socialising

Going out, coming out into the world of music involves a number of formal and informal practices. One of the established practices of “getting into music” is going to see other live acts. This serves several purposes. First, it is a way of keeping up with what is going on musically within a particular music “scene” and wider. All of the respondents in my sample reported going to see both less known local bands and bigger, more established national or international acts. Second, it represents an opportunity for face-to-face networking (as opposed to increasingly popular networking in virtual environments). Third, musicians go to see other musicians play live in order to learn. And last, there is an element of simple enjoyment, of loving music and taking pleasure in socialising with a group of friends within music settings. Frequency of gig attendance among participants ranged from at least once a month to several times a week, and was not equally spread throughout the year. The festive winter season as well as music festivals of the summer, provided the greatest numbers of opportunities for the musicians to see other bands live, as well as to play live gigs themselves.
A perceptive account of gendered nature of music related activities in public spaces came from Marianne, Carl's partner. Like Carl, Marianne is a musician, has written music and played in a number of punk bands, both with all female and mixed line ups. Here she describes how she “missed out” on seeing certain bands due to her gender and the perception of her partner that for a woman certain music spaces were “too violent”:

Marianne: The first gig I went to knowing that there was a gig on was when I was 16 and I have met Carl. But he used to go to bigger gigs like The Damned and The Stranglers at the Apollo in Manchester. And I wanted to go, but he was always very protective cause it was very violent in them times. But he did not seem to realise that I could stand up for myself. And he always said “Oh no you can not come because it is too violent for you.” So I missed out on all that and...I do not know and it pisses me off sometimes cause I could have experienced it. But what he did say was “do you want to come to the local youth club?” and that was the first place where I saw a live band playing. And after that he must have realised that yes I could look after myself and then I started going to the Apollo, seeing the Damned.

While she seems to be won over by Carl's “protectiveness”, she clearly feels that she had missed out on certain experiences because of his assumptions about her gender (that she could not look after herself) as well as about the nature of a gendered space (“it was very violent”). She had to prove herself in a local youth club (Westhoughton) before she could engage with and participate in music activities under the bright lights of Manchester. Marianne’s enculturation into a particular scene occurred later and took much longer than that of her partner. He combined going out with rehearsing with his first band and writing music. Marianne was more focused on activities that could be done from home such as running a music “distro”:

Marianne: I used to be involved in punk in other ways, taking other roles. I used to run music distro, so I would sell tapes, put compilation tapes together and then put split tapes together. Bands would send me their stuff and I would put them together for them, get somebody to do the artwork for the covers.
After learning about the perception that music spaces can be "rough" for women to negotiate I wanted to find out how many participants witnessed a violent incident within a music space. Five out of 20 interviewees reported a violent incident at a gig while they were performing. Incidents included: a fight between the punks who came to see James's band and the "locals" who were "more into pop and rock thing"; somebody throwing bottles and glasses at Scott’s band because "all the songs were about him and we were taking the piss"; verbal abuse and homophobic remarks during a song entitled 'When Two Men Kiss' at a gig Carl played in Nottingham; and Stuart being punched in the face by an audience member who misunderstood performance art aspects of his performance. Interestingly, two out of the three female musicians I interviewed have reported no violent or offensive behaviour during their performances. They have, however, all witnessed violent behaviour when attending gigs as members of the audience.

Social enculturation in terms of negotiation of interaction and behaviour in live venues is undertaken by both men and women, but the female route is often described as more challenging. Bayton (1998) makes a connection between exclusion of women from public space in general (e.g. pubs, parks, sports facilities) and monopolisation of music spaces by men (e.g. music rooms, music shops, live venues). Being a women, and conducting a research within male dominated spaces, I was expecting to encounter and record a number of challenges. As a part of my fieldwork duties I attended live gigs on my own on several occasions. And while a sight of a woman alone at a gig is much less common than that of a lone man, I was not approached by anybody during those times, even though I was at a venue for about two hours at a time. Beyond feeling somewhat self-conscious and missing companionship in a sense of sharing an experience, I did not feel threatened, vulnerable or excluded in any way. The doormen did not give me a “funny look” and the bar staff did not ignore me when I was purchasing a drink. On several occasions I noticed other lone women in the crowd, but this was certainly less common.
than seeing lone men knowingly nodding away to the sound of music. My experience alone can not be used as evidence that gendered nature of music spaces does not have a significant bearing on female experience of such spaces, and a more systematic undertaking involving female members of the audience would be necessary.

Socialising in music spaces extends beyond a shared experience of seeing a band. The band one goes to see is often just a backdrop to numerous other “masculine” activities such as drinking, exchange of information related to music scenes, events, gig opportunities, new venues and generally networking with other musicians and personnel involved with music. Increasing one’s visibility in music spaces often leads to increasing one’s credibility. In Manchester, for example, a number of venues are frequented by both up and coming and established musicians (Night and Day, Temple of Convenience, Big Hands) as spaces where informal interaction takes place, as places where one ought to be seen in. Intricate and complex networks made up of musicians, their friends and fans, venue owners and leaseholders, people who run rehearsal spaces, djs, gig promoters, sound engineers, local radio and TV journalists, music photographers, and many others taking on formal and informal roles, have to be negotiated. Women are significantly outnumbered and fill a set of recognisable roles: friends, fans, bar maids with interest in music, photographers and journalists; while sound engineers, gig promoters, djs, venue and rehearsal space owners on the whole tend to be male. Such a split along gender lines provides young musicians with pre-existing structures that they must learn to negotiate and adapt to. What comes to constitute their wider music experience is forged through a series of gendered roles and behaviours.

I learnt that formally structured socialising by musicians is referred to as the “band’s night out”. I made several enquiries among bands whose members I interviewed and was now coming across regularly in music venues, about what such night out entailed and eventually Future Adventures invited me to come along. In the case of Future Adventures this was a relatively formal setup,
taking place once a month. The idea, I was told, was to get away from the rehearsal space or the recording studio and just “hang out” as a group of friends. Noel, whom I came to consider to be the leader of *Future Adventures* due to his outspokenness, visibility and acting as the first point of contact, explained that there can be a lot of tension during the process of creating music and that he felt it would be good to socialise with other band members in a different context. The presence of an outsider may have affected certain aspects of the evening, but what I observed is captured well in my fieldwork diary, written late on the same evening. I noted:

I am standing on the street corner in Northern Quarter with five members of *Future Adventures*, there is banter and laughter, political incorrectness and blatant ignorance. I suddenly realise that tonight is about friendship and not about music, but nonetheless friendship brought about by music. Someone lights up a spliff as the bouncer stares at the group from the nearby doorway. This is Manchester, early summer. It's a band's night out, and I am invited... I got an email this morning from Noel asking me if I would like to meet him and Steve for a drink. It turned out to be an evening with the rest of the band. We drifted through several bars in the Northern Quarter, picking up other band members along the way, Mark the singer first, then Aron the bass player and finally Rob, the drummer. I was briefly introduced as “our friend Dani who is doing some research on music” to the rest of the band and noticed a sense of unease among them which may have been due to Noel not consulting or informing the rest of the band about my gate crashing their evening. Steve and Noel were the most talkative, and then Mark the singer joined in, asking more about my work, my taste in music and so on. He told me about his long standing friendship with Noel and how they have written some of the songs together, just two of them. I enquired about how he felt being the face of the band, the singer, and he informed me that he gets extremely nervous, even physically sick prior to gigs. He wears contact lenses but avoids them when on stage so that faces in the audience are just a blur. He is worried about the reaction. The rest of the band keep buying rounds of drinks and pursuing some in-jokes which Noel attempts to contextualise and explain. In one bar they play pool in two teams but fail to ask me if I would like to join. I tell Noel I play pool well and he laughs and responds that not many girls do. The evening gets louder...[fieldwork diary excerpt]
During the evening there was some talk about music in general, but none directly related to the band’s musical output and goals. It appeared that the purpose of the evening was to re-iterate and strengthen friendship and bonds between band members rather than turn it into a discussion about which gig promoter to approach next and how much money they have to pay for the next session in the recording studio. Two out of the five band members mentioned female partners and I learned that they were not invited to the band’s nights out. Noel pointed out that the drummer had a small child and that for him nights like these represented a break from his domestic responsibilities. This is a common theme within homosocial spaces and the one that Sara Cohen encountered during her research of the music scene in Liverpool in the mid 1980s:

The five members of one particular band got on well with each other, frequently enjoying what they called ‘having a laff’, particularly on a Saturday night when they went clubbing. Their girlfriends stayed at home. I only met one of the women once... Months later I discovered that three of those ‘girlfriends’ were in fact wives and mothers. (Cohen, 1991: 208 - 209)

Those accounts signify that while women may be a potential target audience for bands, women as girlfriends and partners who are not involved in music directly tend to be sidelined and marginalised within the public image of a band, even though they may play substantial supporting roles, such as being the main earner in the household, facilitating and guaranteeing their male partner’s involvement in music making. There are, however, exceptions to this “rule”, with visible presence of women in all spaces that are perceived as male dominated. Such presence, however, often has to be legitimised through some kind of involvement in music related activities (e.g. taking photographs of the gigs, distributing leaflets, running a merchandise stall), thus providing support to men who play in bands and facilitating male visibility.
Further significance of informal networking and knowing what is happening on the local music circuit was demonstrated by Kieran's account of an audition and his subsequent joining of an established and a successful band:

Kieran: The Liars for me were my stepping stone from being in an amateur little scene in Leeds in my first band and trying to work out everything... The Liars already existed and advertised for a drummer. I decided to jump ship and take the advantage of the fact that I knew they were about to do an album, and probably go to America.

At this time Kieran was involved with another band which according to him had "only two songs worth listening to" and which existed on the fringes of Leeds's music scene. I asked him how he found out that The Liars needed a drummer.

Kieran: Well, I knew so many people involved in The Liars...I got told by the sound engineer. There was an advert in the NME I do believe...

DB: Was there an audition?

Kieran: Yeah, that was fantastic! I was so adamant that that job had to be mine. "If I can not get in a goth band then I am gonna retire", I thought. I was a bit arrogant. At the time I recognised relative standards of drumming in Leeds were low, and I was not that impressed. And you always knew who the good ones were. So...I decided I was going to come out of my jazz world and go into theirs. And I decided to find everything that The Liars have ever recorded and that was easy cause I had a friend who liked them. And I wrote out the drum part for every song. I turned up with this thick book and they said "what do you wanna play?" and I said "I do not know, you shout them out, and I will play them!"

This fragment of Kieran's story illustrates that despite playing in a band that was not successful or very well known on the local music scene, he was aware of what was happening around him and who the key "players" were. His presence on the scene, as well as his music connections, allowed him to
quickly learn who was advertising for musicians “I got told by the sound 
engineer”, to make judgements about the levels of musicianship “standards of 
drumming in Leeds were low” – demonstrating that this knowledge played a 
part in both his decision to audition “you knew who the good ones were” and 
his preparation for the audition aided by having “a friend who liked them”. 

Steve, the guitarist of Future Adventures, explained how it took a long 
time for him to gain access to a group of people which would lead to him 
eventually joining a band where he plays the keyboard:

Steve: I went to Stockport College when I was 16. I was living in Manchester at the 
time and commuting to Stockport College and there I met a really nice group of 
people, who were all a part of this larger group who lived near where my mum and 
dad lived. And this group consisted of like 20...maybe 30 people who have grown 
up knowing each other, from day one basically. There is this really strong 
relationship between all of them. And I would always hear about Phil and Davy 
who are these two guitarists in SBM, and people were saying “oh we are going to 
Phil’s house. Everyone goes to Phil’s house.”... A lot of people got together 
through them. And I always used to hear about these people but never knew them. 
And I got told how good they were in playing guitar and things like this. And then, 
when I was 18 we moved into this new area where I already knew all these people 
from college. So I quickly got introduced to these two guitarists, and at the time 
they wanted a keyboard player. So I started jamming with them.

In this example Phil and Davy represent a node around which a musical cluster 
formed, and for Steve it was extremely important to become a part of that 
cluster, as he was hoping that his musicianship would be recognised and that 
he would be asked to join the band. Existing on the edges of the creative core, 
and not knowing Phil and Davy personally, he gathered knowledge about their 
musical ability, their status and influence among the group, which helped him 
negotiate the relationship with them more readily, when the opportunity arose 
and he was introduced.

By participating in activities within music spaces male musicians are 
achieving a number of goals such as increasing their visibility, strengthening
their networks and learning. Throughout, they are creating, maintaining and present- ing an image modelled on existing notions of musicianship and bandhood, with roles allocated to women rarely exceeding those of music fans. Whether it involves informal practices such as seeing live bands together, “hanging out” and networking in music spaces, or more formalised practices such as a band’s night out, music related socialising plays a significant part in establishing and maintaining one’s music and interrelated gender identity.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with assertions about the significance of everyday life situatedness of music, and an understanding of music as an activity or a series of practices that include music making yet extending beyond. Music was further conceptualised as one of the sites for construction of gender identity, which can be achieved through various music activities that constitute a process of music enculturation. At the same time gender in general, and masculinity in particular, have been theorised as “produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interaction” (Jackson and Scott, 2000: Introduction 1). In other words, gender identity has been understood through the process of forging (Walser, 1993), as something that one does; shapes, moulds, forms, frames, negotiates - in this case through a series of music associated activities.

By focusing on male musicians and examining some of the everyday music acculturating practices my aim was to complement and extend the existing body of work dealing with experience and constraints faced by women in popular music spheres. Grounding the argument in empirical data demonstrated how music is interwoven in many aspects of everyday lives of male musicians, who like their female counterparts may face both material and ideological constraints in fulfilling and developing their musical identities. Any examination of the relationship between gender and power calls for a body of work that takes into consideration practices and challenges faced by both men and women in music. Establishing a correlation between masculinity and power
without challenging the monolithic dimension of the concept inevitably produces limited results.

Experience of music, as a constitutive element of social life extends beyond music making and covers a range of extra music activities such as practices associated with listening, collecting of knowledge and artefacts and the dynamic of socialising in music spaces; practices which are both gendered and gendering. Musical enculturation requires gaining an access and developing an understanding of existing norms and practices, which in turn allows for the dynamic process of shaping and contestation of gender identities in music settings. Gendering seems to occur as a result of normative ideologies associated with masculinities and femininities, as well as subsequent self-alignment on part of the participants. Listening, collecting (of music knowledge and artefacts) and socialising have been explored as examples of gendered and gendering music acculturating activities, with reference to the role of family and peer groups in starting and establishing the process.

While the data suggest that there is a difference in the way men and women approach listening, collecting and socialising in music spaces, there is some evidence that non-homologous practices can occur, through resistance of gender stereotypes and variation determined by the respondents' age. There appears to be a three way relation between listening, collecting and socialising. For musicians, listening is an integral part of developing their musical vocabulary. It can precede or follow collecting, or it can take place simultaneously. Furthermore, it can be suggested that listening is a form of collecting and expanding of musical knowledge. Collecting leads to exchange of information or the actual collected artefacts, with those who posses "collections" demonstrating their commitment to music, their enthusiasm and their knowledge. Additionally, those who possess knowledge and associated artefacts find it easier to take part in musical discourses, in terms of both discourses of music itself and discourses about music (Horner, 1999: 18). This in turn may lead to the acquisition of a higher status among their peer group or among their band mates. On many occasions I encountered musicians who
were unwilling to speak to me in a formal setting of an interview because they felt that there was another band member who was more "appropriate" due to their greater knowledge of music. At times it was hard to convince those musicians that I was interested in their experience of music and music worlds rather than a systematic body of knowledge about music.

My observations in male dominated musical environments have led me to conclude that there is a significant amount of pressure upon musicians to know about music. "Knowing", confidence and willingness to express knowledge create hierarchies within bands which are not necessarily based on musical skill or creative musical output. Age played a significant part in what type of knowledge about music was expressed and communicated. The respondents in the older age bracket (late 30s, early 40s) tended to provide fascinating music narratives interspersed by a sense of nostalgia and harked back to the notion of musical authenticity. Younger respondents (those in their early 20s) strived to demonstrate an encyclopaedic knowledge of music, which often incorporated some of the narratives of the older generation but discovered and mediated through music press (which play a great part in mythologizing of certain albums, gigs, musical events and so on).

As a music fan I listen, read and talk about music. When informally socialising in music spaces with male musicians there was an expectation that I would posses what they perceived a relevant degree of knowledge and experience of music; that I would be musically acculturated. This included being able to remember a year that a particular record was released, names of important producers, names and locations of studios where significant records were recorded, knowledge of music stories and narratives, familiarity with journalistic books about music, familiarity with the latest releases, familiarity with both retro and latest music technologies and so on.18 I often felt that my

18 What I have outlined here could be discussed in terms of acquisition of musical cultural capital. Drawing on Bourdieu (1984) Shuker (2005) defines musical cultural capital in terms of consumption where development of musical tastes serves as means of differentiation of one social group from another, foregrounding the idea that consumption is socially constructed.
credibility as both a music fan and a researcher would be brought into question should I have consistently failed to demonstrate my familiarity with music worlds.

Music enculturation is a dynamic process to a large degree shaped by hegemonic masculinity as a normative ideal of masculinity, where men too have to negotiate their status and roles. Music experience constituting activities of listening, collecting artefacts and knowledge and socialising in music spaces play a significant part in shaping gender identities of musicians as well as establishing hierarchies between them. Masculinities are contested and reshaped, challenged and negotiated through acquiring musical skill, policing taste and even through collecting of trivial knowledge. In addition, the opportunities and challenges faced by male musicians are linked to their social status, their age and degree of engagement with music. The process of active exscription of women may lead to the creation of homosocial spaces. The band, as an archetypal homosocial "space" is examined further in the following chapter.

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Albiez, 2003: 358

In his article 'Know history!: John Lydon, cultural capital and the prog/punk dialectic' Albiez (2003) argues that musical cultural capital can be used to support the social order, not just create an oppositional stance. He employs the phrase "idiosyncratic cultural capital" to examine both Lydon's creative output and his "narratives of the self" suggesting that "cultural capital is not fixed and cannot not be mapped onto an individual's position in a static model of social class". (Albiez, 2003: 358)
The previous chapter presented arguments grounded in empirical evidence about the ways in which musical and gender identities can be constructed and maintained through a series of music related activities (listening, collecting, socialising), all contributing to music enculturation and constituting music experience. It addressed the relationship between dynamic processes of music enculturation and forging, contestation and reshaping of masculinities through musical and extra musical activities within music spaces.

While observing the significance of music activities, this chapter extends the enquiry to the processes and practices associated with forging of gender identities through relationships established and negotiated within a band. The aim is to question what is perceived to be a "natural" connection between masculinity and popular music, and further examine opportunities presented by popular music for the construction and performance of gender identities in relationships that are forged, and through roles that are adopted.

Gender has been shown to be musically constructed not only through performance texts, images and styles but also through the relations, events and contexts that shape their form and meaning. (Cohen, 2001: 240)

As such, both music and gender are continued to be understood as forms of practice where musically constructing and performing gender is shaped by both music conventions and gender conventions. However, the two sets of conventions do not necessarily correspond within the day-to-day existence of a band. Wider social structures that impact on economic, social and cultural capital of individuals play a significant part as does a music genre with its own set of conventions.
In order to situate the discussion within theoretical frameworks, I begin the chapter by conceptualising "the band" through raising questions about what the band is, what it does, and what meanings it holds for different participants. I then proceed to examine the concept of homosociality in relation to music making and the dynamics of the band. Informed by the notions of hegemonic masculinity and homosociality associated with bandhood, my argument then moves to the examination of spheres of interest, goals, roles undertaken, choices of instruments and decision making processes as some of the significant aspects in the lives of bands. I conclude by presenting two short case studies with the aim of highlighting the hierarchies inherent within bands and types of masculinities associated with them, as well as to raise questions about the relationship between creativity and status/power.

Conceptualising “the band”: homosociality and hegemonic masculinity

In common, everyday speech references are made to rock bands and pop groups. The body of work dealing with the distinction between “rock” and “pop”, their definitions, semantic implications and associations with a particular gender is addressed in Chapter Two of the thesis. In this section I aim to conceptualise the band as the starting point in understanding and examination of its inner workings, without making specific associations with generic definitions of “rock” or “pop”.

On the most accessible, visual level, the band evokes an image of usually four men, on stage, wearing similar clothes (uniformity) and playing music together. It could be argued that this is the legacy of the early bands such as The Beatles, with their awareness of the importance of group identity and collectivity expressed through a group image. Despite the existence of all female groups throughout music history, visual association of a band with male musicians still persists in many quarters. For example, a brief glance at a row of music magazines in a newspaper shop or a library, or even my own collection
of *Uncut* magazine (a random look at front covers featuring *Oasis, The Stone Roses, Pink Floyd, Neil Young, David Bowie, The Clash* and so on) suggests that music is somehow primarily a male pursuit.

Bands are formed and disbanded, they can change their names and their membership, they are projects, brands, sites for construction of subcultural, political and gender identities. "Bandhood" is often associated with "brotherhood", and extended by the notions of collectivity, family and belonging. For Deena Weinstein, equating the band with the family is "the mother of all clichés" (Weinstein, 2004: 188). When discussing their complexity, their hybridity and their dynamic nature, she conceptualises bands as jackalopes (a cross between a jackrabbit and an antelope, often represented as rabbit with antlers) due to their instability and bringing together of characteristics that are normally kept segregated. According to Weinstein, the strain arises from the twofold understanding of the band; that of the close knit circle of friends where the value is placed on simply belonging to a group, and the fact that within the organisational structure of a band a contribution to its goal (e.g. creative, commercial, financial) is what is highly valued (Weinstein, 2004: 189). Weinstein argues that what characterises each band is the combination or the fusion of work ethic and intimacy:

They are work groups with a specialized division of labor and goals to accomplish (although you'd never guess that from the mountains of words about them in magazines, newspapers, books and online). Their interviews rarely mention this aspect. Journalists and musicians fail to discuss the details, or even mention what goes on in the extensive hours of rehearsal. But bands are also small groups that impose an intense intimacy on their members... (Weinstein, 2004: 189)

In ‘Occupational Rhetoric and Ideology: A comparison of Copy and Original Music Performers’, Stephen B. Groce (1989) makes a similar distinction between performance of music as an economic enterprise and making and performance of music as a creative, artistic pursuit. His interest lies in mapping out ideologies that legitimise self-definition of bands as either covers or original...
bands. Drawing on Becker's (1982) notion of performance of music as a social activity he defines music as an "interactional event", with interaction taking place between musicians and their audiences, but more significantly to the current context of discussion, between musicians themselves (Groce, 1989: 391). Furthermore, both performance of music and music making as social activities rely on a degree of cohesiveness within a productive unit (the band) as well as shared taste, goals and norms of behaviour. Additionally, Groce and Dowell (1988 cited in Groce, 1989) have argued that bands share certain characteristics of other social groups such as goal orientation, degree of group cohesiveness, differentiation through a role structure and hierarchy of status, as well as normative forces determining and shaping behaviours (Groce, 1989: 407).

So far the band has been conceptualised as a social grouping with certain characteristics common to all social groups; creative unit, work unit with specific economic goals and closely knit network of friends echoing characteristics of a family unit. The band is also a site of construction, articulation and contestation of masculinity, where masculinity can be defined as a form of social and cultural capital in the sense that it facilitates music progression and increases chances of success within the music industries.

Being a boy served...as a form of social and cultural capital. Girls lacked access to an entitlement that seemed to be assumed by boys. (Clawson, 1999: 111)

Masculinity and music are often conflated, from the early skill acquisition processes to later negotiation of music spaces, and yet there is no "natural" connection between popular music and masculinity. In order to understand why this may be the case we need to take a look at the meaning and status of masculinity within wider societal realms where men and women conduct their gendered lives. For R. W. Connell masculinity represents a non-coherent object which is also always an aspect of a larger structure (Connell, 2001: 30). It is both based on individual agency "built on the conception of individuality that
developed in early-modern Europe" and “inherently relational”, meaning that it does not exist outside its relation to femininity expressed through contrast (Connell, 2001: 31). Furthermore, Connell argues that we are “doing gender in a culturally specific way” thus caution ought to be exercised when making claims about gender in a trans-historical sense.

The relationship between popular music and associated masculinities has evolved over the past 50 years, as what it meant and how it felt to be a man involved in music making has undoubtedly changed within wider social and cultural shifts and their impact on music making. And yet, thinking back to Bennett’s (1980) study of local musicians discussed in Chapter Two, it is clear that some basic “mechanisms” of group dynamics within the setting of a band have on the whole remained unchanged. Nonetheless, doing masculinity within such a setting is culturally determined too; it is determined by current musical practices and taste, as well as by the music genre that a band subscribes to with its own sets of inherent normative practices. The task then becomes an examination of masculinities within their given settings (the band) and within a system of gender relations more widely. Connell defines masculinity as:

...simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (Connell, 2001: 33 - 34)

If we were to define the band as the masculine “institution” then we ought to examine what processes there are at play within its structure that determine its masculine character. In 'Masculinity and skill acquisition in the adolescent rock band' Mary Ann Clawson (1989) provides an account of how early processes of learning to play an instrument and joining a band are shaped by gender. Her account is based on the responses gathered by interviews with participants of WBCN Rumble band competition held in Boston since 1979, foregrounding the importance of peer groups based on same sex friendships that leads to the formation of same sex bands. Clawson writes:
Because friendship rather than skill or adult initiative is the basis of their earliest formation, the composition of rock bands mirrors the sex-segregated organisation of pre-teen and early adolescent social life. (Clawson, 1999: 106)

In her account, the band as the masculine institution relies on exclusion of girls from relevant social networks based on the practice of conflation of music, camaraderie and masculinity. Similar accounts can be found within the sociology of sport where the arguments are put forward about the association of strength and skill with masculinity, leading to gender segregation and creation of all male spaces. Boys become men through a series of masculinising practices, both those based on recognition of the connection between manliness and the body, and those associated with the notions of male solidarity (Whitson, 1990: 20 - 21). On the other hand, same sex environments can provide relevant opportunities for understanding of one's gender identity and opportunities to questions prevalent notions of meaning and status of gender. Matthew Bannister (2006b) reveals a significance of one of such setting, that of a men's group. He writes:

I joined because I wanted to interact with men and come to a better understanding of what masculinity meant. Since the band had broken up, I had worked in female dominated workplaces and had few male friends...I was unsatisfied with the male-male relationships that I had. I was also depressed...The social constructionist view of gender as performance may have some validity at the social and institutional levels, and in media and culture, but my experience in the group suggests that there is more to male subjectivities than an endless performance of masculine positions, and that some men want to break out of the circle. (Bannister, 2006b: 20 - 22)

Bannister's account of his own experience of participation in a men's group raises a question about roles and importance of other all male settings, for the purpose of this inquiry primarily that of a band, for re-working and coming to terms with one's gender identity. The issue of unsatisfactory friendships as well as that of depression should not be undermined as those could affect men of all
ages, social statuses and professions (including the musicians). Wanting to break out of the circle of "endless performance of masculine positions" is indeed something that was the main motivational force behind some of the bands I observed (e.g. *The Compacts* whose performances tend to undermine established notions of malehood and masculinity, both visually and vocally). For others, being in a band represented one of the few, if not the only opportunity to break away from identity positions that they were expected to take within homes or places of work. What type of positions the participants were expected to undertake in day-to-day life, and to what degree they contradicted their musical and gender identities, varied among the participants with younger participants generally being able to immerse themselves in music and associated roles for longer periods of time and with greater intensity, while older participants having to negotiate a stronger boundary that separated their work and family lives from their involvement in music. Rigidity of separation of music from other spheres of life is, however, dependent on the degree of involvement with music and on whether or not one acts and performs as a professional musician whose main source of income is music, or as someone who is a semi-professional or a part-time musician with the main income coming from a non-music related source.

The aim of this study has always been to investigate many types of masculinities that are at play within music settings thus approaching masculinity as a non-monolithic, relational concept. Music spaces are often described as dominated by homosocial relationships, closely associated with the notion of hegemonic masculinity and perceived as constitutive to its maintenance. Based on the data gathered in in-depth interviews with eight men in 'Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity' Sharon R. Bird (1996) examines how certain meanings attached to identities are either suppressed or maintained depending on their relationship to hegemonic masculinity, so for example homosexual masculinity is labelled as effeminate and readily distanced from:
...homosocial interaction, among heterosexual men, contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity norms by supporting meanings associated with identities that fit hegemonic ideals while suppressing meanings associated with nonhegemonic masculinity identities. (Bird, 1996: 121)

Similarly, within music spaces men are engaged in a series of dynamic processes through which their gender identities are shaped and understood. This becomes particularly prominent within the setting of a band where through social interaction within a closely knit circle both identification and contestations of identities occur.

I previously argued that some of the music practices such as the role of listening, collecting of music artefacts and knowledge (often associated with listening) and socialising within music spaces, can be seen as activities facilitating music enculturation as well as contributing to forging of gender identities. Knowledge of and familiarity with multiple layers of music worlds is highly valued within bands as a form of musical cultural capital that has a potential to contribute to commercial success of a band. In each band I observed there were one or two members who seemed the most informed about what was happening musically across music genres, who were reading the music press, seeking information online, going to see live acts and generally aiming to gain a global rather then simply local music outlook. At the same time, in order to maintain the local presence of their band, they were making themselves (and the band) visible within local music spaces, with its own "rules" and trends. And while the above practices exemplify the link between masculinities and knowledge, they are by no means the only "masculine" traits desirable within bands. It is important to note that:

'Hegemonic masculinity' is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable. (Connell, 2001: 38)
In the context of a band, age, social background and genre of music performed, as well as goals and ambitions can be a determinant in what type of masculinity is perceived as the norm and which (masculine) traits are the most desirable. Bird’s study identified emotional detachment, competition and sexual objectification of women as shared meanings perpetuated through male homosociality. I suggest that in the context of music making emotional detachment is not highly valued as it stands in opposition to feeling expressed in and through music, and a sense of responsiveness to one’s surroundings that is necessary to musically comment upon them. However, it may be a valued feature of rational strategies employed by the band in their seeking of commercial recognition. Competitiveness, on the other hand, is one of the desirable qualities, both within a band as it creates interesting dynamics when its status is constructive, and in relation to wider music domains. Sexual objectification of women, as a characteristic of music homosocial spaces, tends to be more strongly associated with particular music genres such as hip-hop, rock or heavy metal, than others such as indie or punk. In my own journey through music spaces I failed to observe a significant or overwhelming degree of explicit sexual objectification of women through language, which could be due to such practices taking place within confines of all male (homosocial) spaces in absence of females, and hence presenting an impossibility of me witnessing them. I return to this point later in the chapter.

Some of the most desirable, often defined as “masculine” and thus promoted characteristics within the bands I observed included: musical knowledge (music canon, current trends), creativity and musical skill, “authentic” expression and being “real”, individuality, camaraderie, loyalty and friendship, passion and excitement about different forms of music and ability and desire to experiment musically. Conversely, some of the undesirable characteristics included: musical incompetence (in both skill and music associated knowledge), lack of “originality”, self-centeredness/lack of group mentality, unreliability and lack of drive and motivation. All of the above can be associated with any person of either gender, however, there are plenty of pre-
conceptions among both musicians and non-musicians that tend to align desirable characteristics with masculinity; especially camaraderie, knowledge associated with music, skill in playing an instrument and desire to experiment. Female musicians, on the other hand, tend to be associated primarily with physical attractiveness and often criticised for their lack of skill and music incompetence. Hierarchies of desired characteristics varied among bands and were determined by the goals and aesthetic choices of bands, which are addressed in the following sections.

**Tales from within**

**Naming**

In order to establish a public identity (for example, to send recordings to promoters or record companies, or even design an online profile on MySpace) all bands must acquire a name. Most respondents in my enquiry included naming of a band into the list of important creative activities undertaken in the early days of band formation. The process of naming has been described as “fun” but also as “time consuming” and “exhausting” due to differing views among band members about what the name should express and represent. For some, the name is irrelevant and the music should speak for itself. Others appear to be more aware of the branded nature of bands, and the branding potential inherent in the name. Before settling for a long term name many bands tend to go through a number of names, often reflecting different stages of their creative output. The name is supposed to say something about the band, express a kind of “essence”, indicate a sense of belonging to a group or a scene, acknowledge and make a reference to music canon, relate to current trends in naming (e.g. current and excessive use of “the” in band names) or simply stand out and be memorable. Due to confidentiality I regrettably do not discuss the real names of the bands who took part in the research, but without the exception all bands whose members I interviewed and observed have
spent quite a considerable period of time searching for an appropriate name. Naming has been a cause of disagreements, arguments and even animosity at times. Within my sample of bands several naming strategies have been employed. First, one band member (often the “unspoken” leader as in early days such role hierarchy may not be too prominent) decides on the name and refuses to negotiate. Second, the band members jointly agree on the band name. Third, the band use the name used by one of its members (usually the leader) in his previous musical forays. Once the band becomes recognised by whatever name they agree on, and once the audience start to refer to them by that particular name, it can be too late and too unwise to change it. Some of the more established bands I encountered, those with record deals, reported that even though they were not particularly happy with their names, and often discussed their desire to change it, they could not do anything about it since it has become a brand. Hundreds of T-shirts have already been printed. There is, naturally, a scope for playfulness where the usage of the band name is concerned. Many bands, both well known and aspiring, are known to have performed under pseudonyms or one off names, including a couple in my own sample.

However, ownership of a name represents the possession of an identity and potentially ownership of a brand. As Weinstein (2004: 191) recognises, the name can also imply a sense of collectivity: *The Beatles, The Animals, The Byrds, The Monkees*, as well as maintain a sense of individuality for example in *Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young*. Or, it can clearly foreground one person as the main creative force such as *Buddy Holly and The Crickets* thus signifying something of the hierarchy inherent in the band before a closer look has been taken at its inner workings.

*Learning to play*

The consumption of music, collecting and sharing of music artefacts and associated knowledge, as well as enjoyment that music brings has lead, in the
case of the participants in this study, to the next formal step in the process of music enculturation – learning to play an instrument. While there may be a perceived marked gender differences in consumption of music in terms of preferred music genre with women being associated with “popular” and the mainstream and men with the “rock” and “alternative”, it is through the acts of learning to play an instrument, forming a band and performing that the gender identity of musicians is further shaped and maintained.

From both informal conversations I had with musicians over the past two years and through the analysis of the information recorded in interviews, I gleaned that the complexities and the demands of the process of learning to play an instrument have been significantly downplayed by the majority of male respondents. One was often left feeling that somehow they acquired a skill of playing an instrument without any considerable effort and time invested into the process of learning. Their stories often resembled that of a character named Doyle, introduced by Will Hodgkinson (2006) in his amusing volume on learning to play a guitar Guitar Man: A six-string odyssey or you love that guitar more than you love me. In his attempt to learn to play the guitar the narrator meets a number of musicians who provide advice and a practical demonstration of their skill. One of them is Doyle, who works as a safety inspector on the railways, and when asked where he learned to play guitar so well, he responds:

‘You just pick up guitars when there’re around, don’t you,’ he croaked, segueing into the intricate intro to another of my favourite songs...‘I learned in the old days, when it was five in the morning and I would be speeding out of my head, and wanted to obsess over the minutiae of hitting the notes properly.’ (Hodgkinson, 2006: 8)

As anyone who tried to simply “pick up” an instrument would witness, learning to play it is not such a straight forward task that is mastered in early hours of a single morning. This peculiar unwillingness of the majority of my male respondents to discuss the learning process could be explained by association of practice and repetition with a lack of “natural” talent, as expressed in the
saying "he is a natural drummer". Furthermore, playing is often associated with feeling; feeling for an instrument which can not be learnt as well as the feeling which is expressed through music. In addition, there is something quite “un-masculine” about learning since it implies a lack of mastery and thus destabilises the position of power. The “ideology of authenticity” which according to Green incorporates:

...romantic assumption that their music is a natural outpouring of the soul involving no commercial interest, no artifice, no imitation of anyone else's music and no work on the part of the musician. (Green, 2002: 103)

is commonly reinforced by musicians, fans and music press alike. While the mythology of feeling and its association with the “ideology of authenticity” still prevail within music spaces, I gained a degree of insight into the informal learning processes of male respondents through the narratives of a few willing to engage with the topic. Carl has always been involved in punk music, starting out as a bass player and progressing to playing the lead guitar as well as singing.

DB: How did people learn to play, how did you figure out songs?

Carl: The lad who played guitar who was from this wealthish family had some guitar lessons. But...hmmm, his guitar teacher would only teach him pop songs, and he used to come to our practice and he would start playing something about dancing and we were like “can we make it into a punk song?” The singer we had came from Atherton, after the original singer decided he was not into it any longer. He had a friend who had an industrial accident and lost three of his fingers who was a very good guitar player until that happened. And he used to come to practices and show us what to actually play on the songs. So the guy on the guitar could actually play the chords and this lad would show us where to play them for the songs we did not know.

Carl explained that music lessons were not an option for most of his peers due to financial constrains. They were often struggling to pay a bus fare to travel to
the rehearsal space and saving money for a very long time in order to buy an instrument. Additionally, the DIY ethos of punk left the space open for informal learning and peer support that extend beyond punk, and are significant features of most popular music genres.

Scott, the lead singer of The Compacts, also related the process of learning to play an instrument to informal learning and the practice of self-teaching:

Scott: I just never learned to play an instrument really. Two of the guitarists from The Compacts line up taught themselves to play. I do not know if it was a book or whatever. I think one of them had lessons...I think everyone I know taught themselves. Or had a friend to show them a few chords and then took it from there.

Albert provided further insights into the learning process, where the existence of an instrument within the family removes an obstacle of having to purchase an instrument (and possible delays in starting the learning process), and explains how he “nearly gave up”:

Albert: Then I thought of learning to play a guitar. My dad had a guitar, he had not played it for quite a while, he used to be in a band. It was just an acoustic. I picked it up and thought “Oh have a wee bash at this!” And I was trying for quite a while, I nearly gave up...but then one day I was playing something and something just clicked and then from that moment on I felt I was able to play it, I mean I was pretty awful but it felt good anyway, it felt better.

He is open about the initial poor quality of his playing but when I asked what exactly “just clicked” he could not provide me with further explanations. Noel, one of the very few respondents who had formal training, also uses the word “click” to describe the beginning of his ability to play something meaningful and to enjoy his playing:

Noel: I had lessons, guitar lessons for quite a while. It was ok, really boring in the beginning cause it is so hard and you can not actually do anything that you want to
do. There just comes the point where it clicks and you can play things and it is just the most amazing feeling, "wow I can make this noise!"

Two out of three female respondents, Samantha and Marianne, were more forthcoming when describing the requirements of the learning processes. Samantha, introduced in the previous chapter when discussing the participants' listening habits, is in her early 20s and performs as the guitarist in *The Cyclists*, an instrumental Manchester-based band. This is how she learned to play the guitar:

Samantha: My best friend and I both got guitars at the same time. Yeah, cause I did not know anyone who played I just started off with a few lessons... but the guitar teachers tend to be quite unreliable so I went through three different guitar teacher over 18 months and after that I just kind of started finding the chords of the stuff I liked off the internet. And teaching myself. Since being in the band with Ivan and John, the other guitarist, I think I got a lot better by being around people like that. Kind of now I pick things off them... if I find something a bit hard I tend to just walk away from it. I am still not as great as I should be in playing the guitar, I just play within my means.

She too sees the benefit of learning "on the job" from other members of her band, in an informal way. However, she proceeded to inform me that due to the lack of confidence in her playing ability she felt uncomfortable with certain practices, namely that of jamming with people she is not close to because she is worried about being judged on her playing ability. Even with other band members with whom she feels comfortable, she insists on learning and practising her parts at home rather than in the rehearsal studio.

Samantha: I think I am worried about being judged...I just have a problem with letting go...

Marianne, on the other hand, had a partner (Carl) who could play and who showed her the basics:
Marianne: None of us could play. Vicky had an acoustic guitar and she learned a few chords on that and that was it. After Carl taught us a few basic things we started rehearsing. We used to use practice amps in the front room. And the microphone as well!

She also was happy to talk openly about the fact that it took "months" before they were ready for even a small gig. And when it happened she claimed it was "absolutely dreadful". While women were busy mastering a few chords, men seem to begin to express themselves musically very early in the process of skill acquisition. Scott explains his first forays into music making:

Scott: As I got to my teens I started to listen to John Peel on the radio...and I had a little tape recorder in my bedroom and I would try and have imaginary bands from 11 onwards. I still got some of those tapes, we used one on one of our albums from when I was 13.

DB: So what would you do?

Scott: We would record a band but we did not have instruments, we would both shout and have biscuit tins as drums and make punk songs with lots of swearing "fuck off fucking bastard pam pam pam !" (very fast and shouting) like little high pitched pubescent voices.

Men also seemed more willing to experiment:

Ivan: At that time I also started to teach myself how to play a guitar, so I got a really cheap guitar of my cousin, second hand one, and just taught myself how to play.

DB: How do you teach yourself to play it?

Ivan: I remember like...I could not play in standard tuning where you have to move your fingers, so I just re-tuned everything so I made it easier. And taught myself just by listening to different tunes and trying to play them, then started messing
about with different tunings and ... over the time I just got more into it. I still can not
play... I can not read music at all, I can not tell you which chords I learned first...

The willingness among men to experiment with the sound, and the reluctance
among women to do so, echoes the argument put forward by Mavis Bayton
(1998) based on Rosemary Schonfeld's experience of teaching music
workshops, claiming that women tend to lack confidence and hence the desire
to experiment musically.

The first thing men want to do is impress. They want to bash the drums. It doesn't
matter if they make a terrible sound. (Schonfeld cited in Bayton, 1998: 30)

While there was a degree of reluctance to talk in detail about the learning
process, all of my respondents were quite willing to discuss subsequent
practicing of an instrument and the effort they put into it. This may be due to the
perception that once the basic skill is acquired, the true mastery of an
instrument can and should be achieved by practice and through discipline.

Overall, the musicians shunned the notion of discipline in so far as it was
associated with something unpleasant, but recognized it in so far as it related to
the systematic ways in which they approached learning. (Green, 2002: 103)

Practising takes place in private and public spaces, bedrooms and rehearsal
spaces. It is one of the constitutive practices of interactions taking place in
homosocial domains. It is associated with gaining the greater skill and
knowledge of one's instrument, with professionalism and musicianship too, and
as such contributes to forging of both gender and music identities, as well as
the establishing of hierarchies within bands.
Instruments: choices, perceptions, stereotypes

The roles musicians play within a band can often be aligned with the status of the instrument they play, mainly due to its symbolic and gendered status (e.g. electric guitar/sexual, flute/feminine) as well as with many practical issues associated with different instruments (availability, cost, transportation and so on). In different bands, I observed different levels of desirability attached to different instruments. For example, the status of the electric guitar as the symbol of masculine power, phallic symbol and the most desirable instrument to play in "rock" music is well known.19

In order to find out on what basis the decisions to play a particular instrument are made by musicians, in interviews I conducted I asked a number of questions about choosing and learning to play an instrument, as well as questions about respondents' perceptions of other instruments played in the bands they were involved with. During the process of coding elements of the data I noted that 17 out of 20 respondents claimed to be multi-instrumentalists. Single instrument players included the two female respondents in my sample (bass and electric guitar). Furthermore, the most common combination was a rhythm or a lead guitarist who is also a vocalist, or at least sings some backing vocals. Bass players and drummers in my sample were not lead singers, although in performances I noticed they were singing some backing vocals. Normally, musicians would specialise in playing one instrument which then acquires the status of the primary instrument. Through informal learning practices musicians learn to play additional instruments to varying degrees of


For a different view, that of a guitar blending the masculine and the feminine, see Fonarow (2006) Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music, Chapter 6, pp. 218 - 220.
proficiency. The reasons for acquiring knowledge of an additional instrument were multiple. For some musicians this was an opportunity to play an instrument they always wanted to play but due to early decision making and role distribution processes were not given an opportunity to learn to play. For others, who played in more than one band over a period of time, involvement with different bands itself required them to expand their musical instrument knowledge and develop one or more additional skills. One of the most common crossovers I encountered involved lead guitarists who could also play the bass guitar, or the bass players who learned to play the guitar. I interviewed two drummers and both of them could play and do play the guitar alongside the drums. Elliott, the drummer of Two Digit Salute, performs as a solo guitarist, singer-songwriter. Kieran, who played the drums in a number of well established bands, as well as working as a session drummer for a chart topping band, developed his guitar playing for the purpose of being able to contribute to song writing processes more actively. Some of the other common multi-instrumental combinations included:

1. vocalist-guitarist-keyboard player
2. vocalist-guitarist-bass player-keyboard player
3. vocalist-flutist-saxophone player
4. vocalist-keyboard player
5. guitarist-bass player

Only one respondent in the sample was just a vocalist without being an instrumentalist – Scott from The Compacts. Being able to contribute to song writing is an important aspect of being an accepted and active band member. Weinstein demonstrates that beyond the myth of an authentic, creative artist there lies the issue of royalties and power.

Once a band has a commercial goal, various leadership roles become prominent. Writing songs is a major form of domination: "Play my song," "Play these notes in this precise tempo," "Sing these words with this emotional tone." The egalitarian myth of band is almost always violated. (Weinstein, 2004: 195)
Scott, the only respondent who could not play an instrument, was very open about his inability to learn to play the instruments, as well as his understanding of the level of skill required to play the drums:

DB: I think it is very hard to learn to play an instrument.

Scott: Same here, I have tried. It is hard. Yes, and then you find their fingers were bleeding! I can play three chords. I have written a couple of songs for the band by moving around couple of chords I know, or the thickest string on the bass. Or just following the dots. But I never learned to play properly. It is really difficult. Drums is the hardest! Have you ever sat behind the drum kit?

DB: No.

Scott: Ohh, the band are playing and you think “oh, this will be easy!” And you can not do it! You really have to have this weird co-ordination, it is so hard, that is really hard. And everyone thinks..."oh drummers, they are all a bit slow or something", you know, everyone takes the piss out of the drummer. The drummer is traditionally the thick one in the band. It is such a skill the drumming, it really is.

Nonetheless, this has not prevented him in contributing creatively and being the leader of *The Compacts* where he is also the sole lyricist. In addition, he puts forward a general idea for a song and it then becomes the task of the guitarist and other band members to develop it further.

Stereotypes associated with hierarchy of instruments within bands emerged in conversations I had with musicians as well as observations in the field. Unsurprisingly, the guitar came out as the most dominant and the most desirable instrument to play. My interest lay in finding out why such perceptions are still held, and if there was a significant link between the status of the electric guitar and power structures within bands in terms of other roles, such as song writing. Some of the responses to questions about desirability of instruments included:
Adam (lead guitarist): Lead guitar, obviously. It is that thing, cause it is the lead, it
is like the solo instrument that gets solo parts more than others...Drummers get
slagged off a lot. All those drummer jokes... the lead guitar is up there and the
singing.

Elliott (the drummer and the guitarist): A lot of people want to play lead guitar,
obviously. The guitar is the one that you hear the most because it is the most
piercing sound. A lot of people want to play that because they want to be heard.

Being heard thus being seen as taking the lead is seen as an important aspect
of playing a guitar, but at the same time for Adam being a guitarist represents
disassociation from the drummer stereotypes, associated with an "uncool"
version of masculinity (thick, slow and so on). Adam was, however, quite happy
to discuss some other “de-masculinising” practices such as straightening his
hair and excessively worrying about how he looks on stage:

Adam: I am very self-conscious. There is a lot of feminine in me. I know this is
about being masculine and stuff...I try not to be masculine.

Other respondents demonstrated an awareness of the link between musical
genre and desirability or hierarchy of instruments:

James (the vocalist): Depends on types of music. For a person into rock it would
have to be the guitar. Could possibly be the drums. Bass less so. For someone
else it might be the keyboard. The guitar, the electric guitar shaped like a penis.
There you go, there is your answer...(laughs) Each instrument requires an equal
level of skill. Playing the drums is difficult and playing bass is probably also
difficult.

Carl (the bass player the, guitarist, the vocalist): In early punk stuff the bass was
often seen as the main instrument with lot of people being influence by JJ Burnel
from The Stranglers as I was. A lot of music that came before (punk)...the guitar
was the main focus. In a lot of young punk bands everybody wanted to play bass,
probably because it only had four strings. Bruce Foxton from The Jam he was a
big influence cause he was a really good bass player.
Albert (the guitarist, the vocalist): I know our bass player picked it up because he was a big fan of *Red Hot Chilli Peppers*. He was attracted cause of Flea who is the main instrumentalist in the band, pretty much.

Henry (the saxophonist, the flutist): When we were doing the electronic music to get the bass and the drums working together – that was the bare bones. Everything else after that was just fairy dust. That was the bare bones, and I think any band where the bass player and the drummer work well together the guitarist has got such an easy time then.

What the above statements illustrate is that the perceptions held about the guitar as the most “powerful” instrument can be and are challenged in different musical genres, and that the bass player or the drummer can and do acquire the most prominent role, the lead. Similarly, popular music trends shape the desirability of an instrument:

Henry: There certainly was the time in the 80s where keyboard was the king, you know. Cause it was so new.

Showing respect for other instruments and an interest in learning to play them “properly” was also expressed:

Luke (the guitarist, the vocalist): I would like to be able to play drums properly! I am like reasonably good, maybe just about average. But wish I could do all the impressive stuff. Bass can be really tricky to master. Also, the desirability of guitar, in general people desire to play the guitar, so that they can play all....big solos and Jimi Hendrix style...I stayed away from all of that. There was a radio show I was listening to a couple of weeks ago, it was called *Guitarded*. They had Jimmy Page and Johnny Marr, all their advice was philosophical stuff, nothing that will make you pick up a guitar and start to play it properly. It was just like “You got to be one with the guitar, make it like an extra layer of clothing” – one of them said.

The multi-instrumentalist’s notion of pleasure gained through discovery of additional instruments also featured in a number of the interviews as well as in
informal conversations. James (the singer) reported a great deal of excitement
in being able to learn to play the guitar and write songs, rather than just sing
songs written by somebody else. Steve undertakes different roles in different
bands, as the lead guitarist in *Future Adventures* and keyboard player in *SBM*,
allowing for different approaches to writing and playing music.

Steve (the guitarist, the keyboard player): Oh, it is really nice to have the contrast
of the two bands. Because in one band I am playing mainly guitar, and the songs
are a lot easier than in the other band so I can improvise and put a lot more of
what I like into it. With the other band, four of them...they are all working within
music, teaching at colleges and things like that...so they are very proficient in
music, the two guitarists are absolutely outstanding...Rhythms are hard, the notes
I am playing are hard, there are very intricate. With the other band a lot of things
happen in an improvised way, it is a lot simpler and I am happy to do that.

Kieran too, commented on the satisfaction of discovering the workings of an
additional instrument:

Kieran (the drummer, the guitarist): ...everyone who plays their own instruments
thinks their instrument is really the only one that is going to give them the same
sort of satisfaction. I see drumming as thoroughly satisfactory be it a mechanical
process. On the other hand I was playing a bass line the other day, there was a
series of notes and I thought "God, that was nice!" And I recognise that I could get
the same but without the mechanics, just the notes and the melody. I have never
seen a hierarchy in that sense.

Henry, whose primary instrument is saxophone with flute as a secondary
instrument, was aware of how certain instruments may play a more central role
due to their association with the writing process in music:

Henry: It is such a versatile instrument, it is expressive, that is the bare bones of a
song...guitar. Song structure can be done on the guitar or the piano.
The importance of practicalities associated with music performance (e.g. transport, cost and size of equipment) are often overlooked in writing exploring the spectacle of performance, perhaps quite rightly so where established acts, who have an army of people filling the supporting roles, are concerned. But for up and coming acts these came as the top of their concerns time and time again:

Kieran: The drummer is, despite what the people say, the sober one cause he has always got a van or is going to drive a van cause he has got the biggest equipment. So he is the organised one and he is normally going to be there first and he is normally going to be there last packing down at the end of the day.

Pete: Keyboards is probably least desirable because you have to carry them about. There are practical reasons as well, like drums – it may take an hour to set them up.

Marianne: I used to have a combo bass, this great big thing and it was far too heavy for me to carry about. I always needed somebody else out of the band to carry one side with me anyway. I got rid of that and I got a small amp and a separate speaker. So I could carry this amp separately on my own and again somebody... one of the men in the band who could carry this speaker on their own whereas I could not, they would just pick it up for me.

Economic capital, that is availability of instruments and transport, additionally can be determining factors in who gets recruited into a band. One of my respondents reported that in one of his previous bands the drummer was recruited purely on the basis of ownership of a drum kit. Another respondent reported that the band member who owned the van was "calling the shots", deciding who could travel to gigs outside of town, which often meant excluding girlfriends. The physical work of loading and unloading equipment can cause disagreements within bands and is one of the practices where relationships between band members as well as their status (or aspirations) become quite visible. Not taking part in physical work involved can be seen as a lack of commitment to common goals or perception of one's status as higher to that of
other members. James reported that Scott, the singer of The Compacts, "never lifts a finger" and "gets away with it because he's the leader".

Most respondents were aware of stereotyping associated with instruments and roles, but some also actively partook in constructing reiterating stereotypes:

Kieran: The brass? They are only carrying a box, so the brass section is notorious at the bar and they are womanisers cause they have no responsibilities (laughs). And the guitarists are the ones with all the ego, cause they are the ones who can make the most of the racket and do those solos. And can stand with one foot on the monitor if you are that kind of a band...Singers are aware that they do not necessarily play any instruments.

The respondents highlighted that the hierarchy within a band can be associated with competition and the relationship between the instruments and the level of skill a musician possesses:

Henry: It may be difficult to get a really good bass player because a lot of bass players are sometimes relegated to play the bass in a band because they do not play the guitar as well as the other member does. I spoke to somebody recently who told me he got a job as a bass player because there was already a good guitarist there.

Pete: I suppose guitar is probably cooler than keyboards, is it not? In the later, second line up of the band Alan was a very good guitarist, the drummer. Garry was the guitarist. Paul the singer had started to play some guitar by then. And I liked to think that maybe I would be able to play the guitar (laughs). That sort of undermined Garry a bit, so he never did another gig with us! (laughs)

They also hinted at the ultimate importance of the role of singer:

Henry: But at the end of the day, if you have not got a good singer...that is the thing that puts character and identity on the band, is the vocals. When you are playing an instrument you can turn your back to the audience but the singer is
there to communicate and talk to the audience which is difficult and if they do not play an instrument they have nothing to hide behind.

In the light of all of the above comments it could be suggested that an awareness of status of different instruments and associated stereotypes about musicians' identity can influence their choice of an instrument. For some musicians this is certainly the case, for example Carl's comment about the high status of bass guitar in punk was due to its prominent role in some of the influential songs but also due to the perception that it is easier to master, "it has only four strings". However, most respondents reported that when they started playing they just wanted to make a sound, to make some noise. Music making was perceived by most as an organic process, something that comes together through practice, mistakes and experimentation, rather than an activity which is thought out intellectually. Most talked about an early stage in the life of a band, described by James as "fluid", where "everyone has a go at everything", usually in rehearsals due to availability of different instruments. Because of overall low level of musical skill the person who sees themselves as the guitarist may discover that they are better in drumming than the person who plays the drums, and so on. Through continuous involvement with music making members get more established in their roles but most acquire additional skills such as proficiency in playing a secondary instrument, or a set of skills associated with recording and producing music. As each band develops and moves in a particular direction its members grow musically, in confidence where performance is concerned as well as in their ability to negotiate a range of music settings. Their musical taste can undergo significant changes too, and depending on stabilising forces operating within a band this can be beneficial or detrimental to the band.

In a such an evolving environment aforementioned types of masculinity are continually negotiated and contested. Moreover, they can be associated with the roles that musicians undertake. As previously briefly outlined, in ‘Welcome to the Men’s Club: Homosociality and Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity’, a study of mechanisms and strategies that maintain or suppress
certain meaning of gender identity, Bird (1996) identifies three main meanings perpetuated through male homosociality: emotional detachment, competition and sexual objectification of women (Bird, 1996: 122). In the context of the bands I studied emotional detachment was employed only in relation to the notion of professionalism and decision making. For Bird:

To express feeling is to reveal vulnerabilities and weaknesses... (Bird, 1996: 122)

and yet in music an investment in emotion and expression of feeling is closely associated with authenticity, genuineness and realness and therefore one of the main “priorities” of any band that sees itself as a creative unit. It is also a powerful marker of one of the masculine types and associated mythology quite prominent throughout music history, that of a “suffering artist”. Within reason/emotion dichotomy stereotypically associated with masculinity and femininity respectively, creative expression relies on the latter thus being aligned more closely with the feminine. Similarly, performing music live is about the body in abandonment (as opposed to restraint); another perceived marker of femininity. Both, an indulgently melodic love song and political statements expressed in anarcho-punk screams, are likely to be valued on the basis of how much of true, “raw” emotion they communicate. Musicians tend to be regarded for their claims that they are writing about issues that are “real” and personal, and hence often point out that they are engaged in the process of channelling, rather than suppressing emotions.

Drawing on Messner (1992) Bird (1996) posits competition in opposition to co-operation claiming that “competition facilitates hierarchy in relationships...” (Bird, 1996: 122). While it can create a hierarchy in relationships, competition can also play a positive part in many bands, by being the main productive force where creative output is concerned. It encourages continuous acquisition of additional musical skills, experimentation and creative thinking. Following in the lineage of the feminist critique of patriarchy Bird further argues that sexual objectification of women serves the purpose of
depersonalising the oppression of women (Bird, 1996: 123). Undeniably, sexual objectification of women is made visible in the representation of the female body in music videos as well as in attitudes held towards female musicians. As I pointed out earlier in the chapter such direct objectification through language was likely to occur in my absence and therefore my insights were limited. However, here are a few examples of attitudes expressed towards female performers communicated by the participants:

Albert: I know Alex has got a thing for female bass players for some reason. We were watching Ladytron the other night and he was...like aaahh...I had to keep him on the leash sometimes, it is ridiculous...

Samantha: We went to Primavera festival in Barcelona and watched The Smashing Pumpkins. They have got a different line up now cause two of them left. They always had a girl on bass and they replaced her with like another girl. And I was watching and I was thinking...she was like really attractive as well...and I was thinking it was pretty obvious what is happening here...like “our last bass player was a girl so our new bass player is not going to be the best bass player we can find”. They have specifically and obviously set out to find a really pretty girl. And on the big screens the camera was on her so much. It was basically flicking between the singer and her. Which is really odd because people do not usually think about bass players. If there had not been this girl bass player who was specifically put on bass cause she was pretty, the camera would not be going on bass player all the time. I was thinking like “Am I being a feminist or something?” but I did not really want to read too much into it.

Albert’s example of his band mate “having a thing for female bass players” is not uncommon, and other male respondents reported enjoying seeing and hearing bands featuring female bass players. For Kieran, it was to do with his belief that female bass players tend to join bands having previously played cello, and hence bringing in a particular type of sound. For others, it was a straightforward case of finding women who play an instrument sexy. Samantha’s observation signifies not just her perceptibility, but perhaps due to
her role as a female guitarist, her greater awareness about the female body on display.

*Insider/outsider*

While acknowledging the gendered nature of music spaces I argue that something greater, however, seems to be at stake within the setting of a band which can be explained through the insider/outsider dichotomy non-dependent on gender. The notion of a band as a family, a closed unit which does not allow an outsider in, has played a significant part in my attempts to observe what goes on within bands as well as the degrees of visibility and insight allowed by different bands I observed. For some bands, inviting outsiders to their rehearsals and allowing friends who are not in the band to “hang out” is an integral part of the image the band is trying to promote. Here Carl explains how one of the previous bands he was involved in rehearsed:

Carl: The practices were quite social events. Friends and girlfriends would be there, and other people would come and sit about, generally have a good time...
We practiced on a Saturday night and we would not know all of the people who were there, we would not know who was coming in or out.

When I asked him if he enjoyed the social gathering aspect of rehearsals he responded:

Carl: When there was just the band we got a lot more done. When there were other people there, there was a lot more drinking and smoking. People being distracted and going in and out. Some weeks we would be lucky to practice three or four songs because it was more of a booze up, more of a social event than a practice. We were still having to pay for it. We were virtually paying for everybody else to have a party.

During the course of my fieldwork I visited several rehearsal spaces and every time, even if I knew the band quite well, felt a quite uncomfortable sense of
intrusion into someone's private space. I compromised by agreeing with a band to come either at the very beginning and observe the band set up the equipment and interact with other bands within the rehearsal space, or at the end, as they are finishing off, going through the final few songs. And while rehearsal spaces can hardly be described as accommodating to women's needs (men using both male and female toilets, men’s magazines scattered around, computer games involving violent shooting and so on), I felt that my status of an outsider was not determined by my gender, but rather by me not being a member of a band. I overheard a musician make a remark about one of my male counterparts (someone else who was just hanging around) as "a boring twat with nothing better to do", followed by a rather swift acknowledgement of my role as a researcher thus legitimising my presence.

When I asked James what it felt to have other people around in rehearsals, he responded that he felt vulnerable with non-members around because rehearsal spaces are creative spaces where songs evolve and mistakes are made, and not performance spaces where music is delivered, where even an amateur musician takes on a role of a serious and professional performer. As a musician, he did not feel comfortable being seen and judged while he was involved in learning, experimenting, practising and making mistakes. Instead, he wanted to be judged as an entertainer and an artist – on stage.

Similar conversations and observations have led me to believe that the issue of the status, that of being an insider or an outsider to a band can be more relevant and have a greater significance than the gender of an insider or an outsider. Mixed gender bands can serve as an example to further develop this argument. Samantha talked about her experience of playing in a mixed gender band:

Samantha: A long time ago we used to have a girl viola player…but it was not really working…musically…but she really did not fit in…she could not click in with it…and…she was like really girly girl…and like did not like…could not laugh at the same things all the boys and I did. I have a similar sense of humour to all of them and…it sounds horrible…but it was really stereotypical, she was like "I am not
lugging the gear around" and like she could not laugh at the same things, and she
would not sit at the back of the van. Yeah. She did not really fit in... We are kind of
all at the level.

What seemed to be an issue here was the attitude of the viola player towards
roles and responsibilities within the band (carrying the equipment), but also the
fact that she was a "girly girl" (an outsider) whereas Samantha pulled her
weight and shared a sense of humour with the boys (an insider). In contrast to
some of the bands I interviewed who had regular band nights out reinforcing
and formalising bonds between the members (thus the sense of belonging and
insiderdom), Samantha reported:

Samantha: As a band we do not go out together all that often. I hang out with Ivan
quite a lot, and Jack our guitarist. We went on holiday together, and drinking
together and stuff like that. If there is a gig on we may all go to it if we all like that
particular band. We see so much of each other as a band that like... it is hanging
out anyway. And then we all got other friends that we want to see too.

For her, seeing other friends involved "stepping out" of the band's collective
identity and becoming an insider to a different group, albeit temporarily.

Marianne too played in mixed gender bands. Her experience of bands'
dynamics is of interest because she was both a girlfriend/partner of a musician
and a musician herself who at one point played in the same band as her
partner. Her account of one particular band that her partner played in provides
an example of an exclusive male "club", where women were seen as outsiders
and actively excluded from taking part even as members of the audience:

Marianne: When he was with BMT I went on occasion because that was when we
had our first son. And the sexist member of the band Dave decided that no
girlfriends were allowed to go to gigs with them. So they played this gig in
Liverpool, and we did not have a vehicle then, Carl was not driving, so Dave was
driving and just the band could go. And he did not want any girlfriends. That is
because he wanted to fuck about with other girls, which he did.
Although the next band that her partner played in was not concerned with actively excluding women, she was excluded from some aspects of its existence (practices, rehearsals) by what at that time were her (female) responsibilities – looking after children, while remaining involved in socialising with the band members and visiting them during their recording sessions.

Marianne: When he was with Borderline Personalities I did not really go, not because they did not want me to but I was busy with my children by then. I went when they were recording. Also, I had other things to do, like my distro. But I did use to go to the gigs. And I did know all other band members, we socialised together.

Being a musician gave Marianne a relevant degree of legitimacy to be there at recording sessions as this could have been seen as an opportunity to learn. In the context of this band she felt more accepted and more of an insider despite of her gender. When asked about her experience of playing in mixed gender bands she reported that:

Marianne: ...It was very mixed. There was no bossing people about... When we were with Apple Blossoms we all did more than one thing, more than playing an instrument or sing. Either writing lyrics, Keith used to do all the printing cause he is a print man by trade, so he would do all the artwork and printing of the CD covers...things like that. I used to organise our gigs, keep in contact with the others. Emily would do some of that with people she used to know.

DB: How did you fall in those roles?

Marianne: I think that if you want to do something you just say you are going to do it and the others generally just go along with it.

DB: Is there any difference in how activities are valued i.e. making contacts with promoters versus coming up with a really good tune?

Marianne: In that particular band I think it was all valued, which ever role you had. It is probably different in other bands.
Men who play in bands can also feel as outsiders to their band for a variety of reasons. For James and Carl it was due to the fact that they lived in different locations to other band members and could not take part in regular socialising with other band members. Others felt isolated due to their age, being older or younger than other band members. Fatherhood and associated responsibilities have also been mentioned as potentially isolating, as were the day jobs and lack of money to go on a self-financed tour.

Weinstein (2004) argues that strain may occur within bands due to their dual, hybrid (jakalope) nature, that of creative units of friends and work groups with clearly assigned roles. Bands can be stabilised or destabilised by individual members’ goals and practices. Naming of a band, writing and performing (own, authentic material), conceptualising and developing live performances, developing and working on the band’s image, talking to venue owners and promoters, advertising gigs, developing the content for band’s website and so on, are just some of the role associated activities that any band member may undertake, the uptake of which can either reinforce the group or destabilise it.

Meanings and enactments of gender within music settings are shaped by social relationships and music conventions (e.g. that of a genre); relationships in turn are shaped by dynamics created by the roles individual members undertake. In general, claims can be made about hierarchies of roles, for example the distinction in status between creators and non-creators in bands, those doing writing and performing and those just performing what is written by somebody else. In reality, however, there is a whole range of tasks that a band must undertake to maintain its existence and in order to even get to the point where, for example, it can deliver a public performance. My claim is that within different bands different roles are seen as more or less valuable. Within more established and successful acts contributing creatively is likely to be highly valued, however, within younger bands or those without management support or record company investment, other roles can be strongly valued and
acquire considerably high positions in the overall hierarchy of band related music activities.

**Role distribution**

Throughout their existence bands have to make a series of practical and creative decisions. The way in which the decision making is conducted is dependant on the size of the band (number of members), skills those members have as well as aims and goals they aspire to achieve. To some degree it may be influenced by the music genre the band perceive themselves belonging to, as well as the cultural ethos of the local scene they feel a part of. For example, the DIY ethos of punk and punk scenes imply and encourage utilisation of all available skills (musical and extra-musical), sense of solidarity within a band as well as between different bands, and an acknowledgement that a lack of expertise in playing an instrument should not be an obstacle to expressivity. In a different musical setting a high degree of technical proficiency in playing an instrument may be the most desired quality, thus promoted and encouraged over the creative expression of feelings or ideas. For some bands the ultimate goal is a commercial success and everything the band does is aimed at increasing a possibility of its fulfilment. For others, the goal is simply to play music with a group of friends. Furthermore, goals can evolve, develop and change, however, not simultaneously for all band members. Different band members can have different goals, and the meaning and satisfaction gained from “doing a band” can vary a great deal between them. On the surface many bands thrive on the romantic notions of egalitarianism, however, a closer look reveals quite a different picture:

Rock bands start from scratch. Most groups with which we involve ourselves – at work, at home, in recreation, religion, politics and other pursuits – have a model for roles and authority that precedes any specific set of people... Bands have no such models, except for genre requirements; which members sing, write music, focus...
Such state of affairs gives a scope for a multitude of roles which are not necessarily static and unchangeable. My research too demonstrates that bands learn and develop skills associated with certain roles en route of their musical development and existence. Most young bands who took part in the interviews reported that they aimed for some form of democratic decision making process, where each member is consulted, listened to and is given an opportunity to equally contribute. As the time goes on, most bands learn that certain members are better suited or better equipped for specific roles. This is usually the point at which fluidity of roles is replaced by the establishment of hierarchy structures within bands. Once established, hierarchies can be difficult to disrupt, however, such disruptions can and do occur. The disruptions and contestations of the roles are most likely to occur where what is perceived to be the best thing for the entire group conflicts with an individual's aspirations and expectations.

In the final section of this chapter I present two short case studies that address some of the aforementioned issues relating to role allocation, hierarchy and status.

**The Unstoppables**

*The Unstoppables* are a four piece band, consisting of one lead and one rhythm guitarist who both act as vocalists, the bass player and the drummer. All were aged 19 when I met them in 2006. The two guitarists/vocalists (Luke and Adam) have been the best friends since meeting at primary school. The bass player (Sam) was introduced to the band by their manager. The drummer (Finley) is a long standing friend who joined the band when he found out they were looking for a permanent drummer. They are what H. Stith Bennett terms as "joiners" who are distinguished from group "organisers" (Bennett, 1980: Preface xviii). The group's music taste is eclectic with each member being influenced by a different type of sound, from 1970s rock to jazz and world
music. This is reflected in the type of music they create and perform reliant on a range of sonic influences, and in the view of some listeners lacking a sense of “uniformity” of sound. Their main goal is a record deal with a major record label which they are failing to achieve despite a contract with a management company, quite extensive series of relatively high profile gigs (supporting well known acts), strong support from the local media (radio sessions and press coverage), winning an important band competition and even airplay on Radio One, Scotland XFM and BBC 6 Music. The two guitarists, Luke and Adam, took part in the interviews, however I have met the other two band members on different occasions in social settings. I have seen The Unstopabbles perform several times and I have kept a lively email correspondence with Luke over the period of two years. In addition, I interacted with the band through social networking web sites such as MySpace, Facebook and Bebo. This degree of interaction has provided me with many useful insights into the band dynamics. In terms of creative models available, in this particular band there are two major song writers, Luke and Adam. They, however, reported that they never write songs jointly:

Luke: The good thing is that we write most of our songs separately. So, whoever writes basically gets the final say. I can remember a couple of weeks ago Sam and Adam were talking about adding a certain rhythmic pattern to the end of one of my songs. I had to say I was going to take an artistic licence and say no, it was not really working for me. You know, it kind of offends them initially, but it is basically who ever writes it has a final say what happens to a song.

Here, creative output is clearly linked to “having a final say” demonstrating that the relationship is not complementary (e.g. a lyricist and a music writer) but rather that of friendly rivalry. The two remaining band members are the non-creators and there has been a degree of disagreement when Sam the bass player made demands for his greater creative input. Luke and Adam were quite determined that such process would not work, that it would result in an unwanted change of musical direction and ultimately disallowed it. Later on, I
learned that Sam, the bass player, is involved in another music project where he takes more of a central role, that of a song writer and the lead guitarist, hence fulfilling his desire for a greater creative contribution. Similarly, the drummer Finley is involved in performance of classical music as well as occasionally drumming in another band.

As far as the practical decisions are concerned, again there is a clear distinction between “the doers” and the “by standers”:

Luke: In a way I instigate, it is always left to me to come up with something like a date for practise. And then just run it by all of them. It is always me who tends to write set lists, and if they are not comfortable with playing certain songs, then we can try something else. It is generally me who does that type of stuff.

What seemed important for Luke was to point out that other members are perfectly capable of dealing with practical things, but that him taking the lead just makes everything easier and quicker. This was confirmed by Adam when he was telling me about the set lists:

Adam: Set lists? Oh, set lists are terrible. I hate all set list scenarios. Cause we sit there, “oh we can play this first, and what can we play last, no we can play that first” and it is just...it really gets on my nerves I really hate deciding on a set list. And being a musician you tend to think too much into it like...the average person in the audience are not going to think “oh I am expecting a rocky song next, or a chilled song seventh or the last”.

He also revealed how distribution of the tasks is based on different skills that the band members possess:

Adam: We are lucky that our new bass player can drive and so he can get lumbered with that a lot of the time.
Luke informed me that Adam has been dealing with some “legal stuff” related to the contract they have with their management, making phone calls and deciphering legal documents, which he was “entirely capable of doing”.

What stabilises *The Unstoppables* and what keeps them together is their common goal of “making it”. Getting signed and making a living would naturally bring many benefits – being recognised as talented, being able to leave day jobs and devote themselves entirely to music from which they could make a living, travelling and gigging abroad, meeting other musicians and so on.

A sense of collective identity achieved through belonging to a creative, closely knit unit, does not seem to be the most prominent and defining characteristic of *The Unstoppables*. Instead, my conversations with the band members and many observations have lead me to believe that the members of *The Unstoppables* could easily transfer their individual goals into a context of another band, or even exist as solo musicians and artists, without a great deal of disruption of their goals and routines.

Processes of the contesting and competing masculinities, and associated personal qualities become most prominent in observation of the Luke – Adam relationship. Luke’s “rationality” makes him a doer, organised, motivated and systematic person who rarely drinks or indulges in late night partying. He is the organiser and the spokesperson for the band. An outsider would probably conclude that he writes all the material as he seems to take charge of performance (mostly through interaction with the audience). Adam, on the other hand, displays recklessness both on and off stage (in the context of the band and outside), and claims to be “wearing my heart on my sleeve”. He is not diligent with his correspondence but speaks of music passionately in face-to-face interaction. His behaviour can get him into trouble and on one occasion he was marginalised by the band’s manager and labelled as a trouble maker. The impression I got is that the romantic ideal of a tortured artist appeals to him greatly, and in our conversations he often questions “the meaning and purpose of it all” (playing music). He recently remarked that he feels that he has not “self-actualised” and that it was getting rather late in the day, which I found
remarkable considering that he was only 21 years old. His loyalty to Luke is undeniable and on one occasion he was quick to acknowledge that Luke is “a much better song writer” despite of all of his “restraint”. This realisation has lead to Adam’s greater involvement in what could be seen as more technical and less creative aspects of music making, such as recording and production of music.

As far as the band’s “preferred” model of masculinity is concerned a quote from an email note I received from Luke is rather illustrative:

Luke: I’ll have you know that The Unstoppables are the most masculine, beer-guzzling, street-fighting, girl-using, tobacco-spitting, iron-pumping, vest-wearing, badger-baiting, Oasis-loving, heterosexual macho men band in existence!

He employs irony very well demonstrating his awareness of stereotypes of masculinity. The exaggerations in Luke’s remark (“tobacco-spitting”, “badger-baiting”) signify that he does not hold such “qualities” in high esteem, but also a sense of playful self-mockery which further demonstrates both a strong insight and a degree of control of the image that the band try to project to their fans.

The Compacts

When watching The Compacts perform there is a sense of observing a music collective. They have been performing for over 20 years, and during this time what appears to be an entire army of musicians, filled different roles. The only original member is Scott, and The Compacts are known and sometimes referred to as “Scott’s band”. Stuart is another long standing member. Currently, there are also three other male members, one permanent female member, one visiting female member and two additional visiting male members (who have been joining during some recent performances). They were due to play at a music festival in Belgium in April 2008, and when I expressed an interest of coming along to observe I was told that it was fine as long as I was prepared to do a performance art piece during their set, described as
something "strikingly visual", adding to the performance art dimension of the
group and demonstrating the group's openness to new things and members.
The Compacts have an iconic status within fragmented underground
noise/experimental music scene, both in the UK and Europe, but they have
also been noticed and reviewed by the main stream music press such as Mojo
and Wire. For about half of its members performing music with the band is their
occupation, although they do not make enough money from it to make a living.
The rest of the members have day jobs.

The band claim to be democratic in their approach to creating music by
encouraging and allowing creative input from all band members. At the same
time they recognise that "true democracy" is a romantic myth.

Scott: I can not really imagine a band that is a true democracy. A lot of people are
happy to take supporting roles. Our guitarist...the last time he was in a proper
band he was asked to make decisions and he does not really like making
decisions, he just likes playing the guitar...So there are two of us running it, me
and Stuart. I am the Conceptual Director and Chief Executive Officer and he is the
Musical Director.

The dynamic within the band is mostly determined by whatever the Scott -
Stuart relationship is at any given time. They both reported a great deal of
tension within the relationship. For Scott it is about "what is his role and what is
mine":

Scott: Yeah we are the leaders of the band and it can be very, very tense. I did not
understand this rock mythology stuff about song writing guys together...oh you get
your Mick and Keith or whomever...they say it is like a marriage. It really, really, is.

However, the sense of common goals, and in this case they do not include a
commercial success, acts as the stabilising force for The Compacts.
Scott: The investment is that when we are working together we can get something greater than either of us could do on our own. Certainly my solo stuff and Stuart’s solo stuff does not come anywhere near to what we can do together.

The investment here is the quality of their joint creative output rather than future possibilities of achieving commercial success, as it is in the case of *The Unstoppables*. In interviews both “leaders” acknowledged the respect they hold for the other, but also revealed something about the correlation between creativity and power.

Stuart: We take it from the rehearsal room to the recording stage. And that has always been a problem...And I think I have come to realise fairly recently that I am seeing them as my songs, and Scott is seeing them as his songs. And there have been huge rows about how things should work...the album we recorded in 2001...I think both of us thought that was the last thing we would ever record...I think it may be power, maybe there is this friction because I am thinking “I wrote this, it is my song, it should sound like this”. It’s an ownership thing.

In their performances *The Compacts* often play with the existing ideas of gender and gender appropriate behaviour. They mostly achieve this visually with Stuart performing in bright coloured tights and baby doll dresses, while Scott has been known to strip naked; all with the aim of subverting audience’s visual expectations and creating an “alternative” space.

Scott: From the outside it looks like *The Compacts* is an authentic band in that we do not do it for money, as much as we possibly can we do it for art and to create, hopefully...in the live situation create a little social space that can widen a little.

They also aim to subvert musical expectations of their audiences and the notion of “genre”, as Scott explains here:

Scott: There was a show last year, I do not know if you were there...where we were billed as punk night, and a lot of the punks were there, like at the gig the other night...and they were really clichéd *Exploited* punks, who were going
(drunken voice): “This is not punk, fuck off!” And I was wearing my suit again and Stuart had his dress on, and they really took objection to it because I was not heavily tattooed, Mohicans...and that was great! Because this big punk grabbed the microphone off me! Which I loved! I was like really into it. And loads of people piled up...and the punk was about to be thrown out and I grabbed the microphone back and shouted “no, no do not throw him out! It was a part of the show!” (laughs)

But it does not always work out so well. In summer of 2008 I followed The Compacts to an open air festival in Lancashire where they were booked to play in a tent with a theme of a ‘Working Men's Club’. They were in their usual stage outfits, they took to stage and the audience began to dance and enjoy the performance. About three songs into their set the sound engineer walked over to the mic, announced that the band “were shit” and started switching off the amps. After much argument, shouting, members of the audience protesting and climbing onto the stage and security being called, an entertainments officer and one of the festival organisers appeared in order to try to settle the matter. It conspired that a small child who was present at the tent was scared and disturbed by the performance, and hence her mother (the owner of the tent) asked the sound engineer to prevent the band from performing. Everyone (the band and their audience some of whom have paid in excess of £50 to see them perform at the festival) were disturbed and visibly distressed. It was interesting to observe how during and after the incident the band presented a united front – during the incident being ready to take on (physically) the unfortunate and misguided sound engineer, while following the incident all being involved in a long discussion with the organiser, supporting each other in putting arguments and points of view across.

What the two bands have in common is the existence of a stabilising force, that of a common set of goals. For The Unstoppables it is a possibility of achieving a degree of commercial success and signing a record deal. For The Compacts, it is maintaining their status within the fairly marginalised underground noise music scene, and a creative output which demonstrates their growth as a band. Both bands are built around two main creators whose
relationships determine the dynamics within each band as the whole. The difference between the bands, apart from that of their goals, is in the way they create music. For *The Unstoppables* there is a clear line that separates the outputs of the two creators; they write their songs separately and claim the ownership, yet are happy to perform each others' songs in the context of the band. For *The Compacts* song writing is much more an organic process and the issue of ownership thus becomes problematic. The relationship between Luke and Adam can be described as collaborative and mutually supportive. They discovered music and learned to play instruments together, and neither of them has yet been involved with another band in any significant way. They are bound together by the desire to succeed, but also by their joint creative, financial and time investment in *The Unstoppables*. The relationship between Stuart and Scott is more strained and less complementary. Both have been making music for many years and have worked with numerous other musicians. The issue of ownership of *The Compacts*’ songs and even of the band name have resurfaced lately, with each musician pulling in their own direction and being unwilling to compromise. Because the membership of *The Compacts* has always been fluid, and because Scott is the only original member (and the person who started the band) Stuart naturally feels threatened by the possibility of his own disposability, hence endless disputes over what to an outsider appear to be minor details of recording, gigging, behaviour and general direction that the band is heading in.

In order to survive and continue making music both bands are aware that a certain degree of compromising must take place. All members reported their willingness to be more flexible and to try out different approaches in creative processes of writing, recording and performing their music. It is important to note that there is a potential in each band to develop their practice as what is created and how it is created is dependent on knowledge and skills that band members acquire while they continue to make and perform music. Some members become more enthused by the recording process, others undertake side projects that teach and develop a new set of skills. In order to
better understand the ways in which roles and practices evolve and develop, participants’ engagement in music where possible ought to be studied over a period of time, following a band from its conception through its development and to its disbandment. Such longitudinal approach was unfortunately beyond the scope of this project at this time, but may be done retrospectively, at some point in the future.

Conclusion

I have started this chapter by proposing that gender in music settings is shaped by relationships, wider music conventions and music genre, and set out to examine some of the processes that take part in shaping masculine gender identities in the context of the band. Connell’s notion of “doing gender in culturally specific way” can be applied to bands as they develop their own cultures, goals, norms and expectations. For me as a researcher, studying bands as sites of construction of masculinities represented a twofold challenge. First, as the term itself suggests, the band represents a relatively closed group to which a researcher (and anyone else who is not a band member) is always potentially an outsider. Second, at all times both my status and my gender identity had a potential to disrupt “natural” dynamics and performance of the band’s identity. I therefore relied on expanding the data gathered in interviews with band members with observational notes recorded through less formal interactions within music spaces, email correspondence with musicians and networking on social networking websites such as MySpace and Facebook.

In this chapter I illustrated the complexities involved in conceptualising the band. On one hand bands are bound by notions of “bandhood”, “family” and “collectivity” where music, camaraderie and masculinity often become conflated. On the other hand there are the goals, differentiation of roles and practices that members engage in that ascribe meanings to the concept (of a band) and can act as both stabilising and destabilising forces determining the level of cohesiveness within a band. Although there is some evidence that
certain roles within bands remain the same throughout their existence (usually those undertaken by the creative core), there is also a significant degree of potential for mobility and evolution of goals, roles and responsibilities of individual band members which can be viewed as a part of their musical enculturation. New roles, and therefore changing dynamic within bands, can arise from acquisition of additional skills and musical knowledge of band members. New technologies associated with both music making and promotion and distribution of music can play a significant part in re-definition of roles and re-negotiation of hierarchies within bands, with the perceived relationship between creativity (in a traditional sense of creative contribution in the form of song writing) and power being challenged. This in turn can have an impact on the perception of the main masculinising practices within bands – alignment with the collectivity of the group, distribution of roles and establishment of hierarchies, acquirement of musical skill and musical knowledge, and exclusion of women from established homosocial spaces. While new technologies provide opportunities for musicians who wish to branch off into music production, different modes of writing music (e.g. using a computer software) and various side projects – all pointing to fluidity of roles, they can at the same time result in an exaggerated attachment of value to the notions of musicianship, music craftsmanship, liveness, authenticity and realness. Embracing music technology can therefore be seen as both another masculinising practice but also a practice that de-masculinises as it strips the performer of their musical authenticity.

Complexities involved in conceptualising the band as one of the sites for construction and contestation of masculinities should not be underestimated as many and sometimes conflicting processes are taking place. The notion of hegemonic masculinity and its re-iteration in music practice can not be reduced to a simple model which foregrounds the practice of active exclusion of women from male (homosocial) spaces, male solidarity or even the preference and desirability of certain masculine traits. Instead, its workings ought to be examined in the context of each band as each is shaped by its own cultural
specificity as well as the wider conventions of gender and musical genres. What is perceived as a desirable masculine trait in the context of one band may be seen as detrimental and undesirable for the image of another band. Even the bands belonging to a same musical genre can significantly vary in the way they negotiate their gender identities within individual band settings.

The allocation of roles and the development of hierarchies within bands are informed by values placed on individual roles within the wider music context, but also affected by the disposition of economic capital. Examination of the status and the level of desirability of musical instruments demonstrated that in some bands perceived hierarchy of instruments corresponded to the hierarchy of status of individuals, but also challenged the view that the symbolic status of an instrument can be taken as the only determinant of its desirability. Additionally, I argued that musical and gender enculturation are achieved through a series of practices, some of which take place within a culturally specific setting of a band. Understanding of music as an interactional event must take into the account not just the relationship between performers and audiences, but incorporate an enquiry into the relationships between musicians themselves.

I concluded the chapter with a closer look at the two bands, The Unstoppables and The Compacts. The focus on the two bands demonstrated that a shared or common goal can represent a stabilising force within a band and neutralise some of the differences that exist among the band members in terms of their musical taste, skill and creative ability. It also demonstrated that different band members can embody different masculine characteristics (reservedness, flamboyance, androgyne in style) which complement each other and create an attractive dynamics within bands. All of the above provided further insights in the relationship between role differentiation, creativity and power as well as highlighting contesting masculinities that exist within bands.
The Male Body in Performance

Introduction

So far this thesis has explored a range of processes and activities involved in musical and gender enculturation – listening, collecting, socialising as well explored some of the elements that determine the inner workings of the band, as the site of construction and contestation of masculinities with its own culturally determined goals, roles, statuses and overall dynamics. Throughout, the focus has been on music as an activity, a cultural practice through which one can begin to understand the shaping of gender identities. "Musicking" and "gendering" have been treated as interrelated and interdependent processes.

Masculinity has thus been understood as a cultural gender project, as something one is acculturated to through doing and negotiation, in a myriad of cultural and musical settings, hence diverse and fluid. The importance of context in understanding of masculinities has, among others, been noted by Beynon (2002) who suggests that "reading" masculinity-as-a-text ought to incorporate the key cultural factors that shape it: historical location, age and physique, sexual orientation, education, status and lifestyle, geographical location, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, class and occupation and culture and subculture. Each of the factors and combinations of factors can take a prominent position in any man's life at any time, pointing towards changeability and mobility of gender identities. In the concluding chapter of Masculinities and Culture, Beynon (2002) proposes six research modes: literary (research of representation of masculinity in books of fiction), printed media, broadcast media, visual and performative (advertising, photography, painting, sculpture, sport, dance and so on), auto/biographical and documentary, and ethnographic. Through adopting elements of ethnographic work, I aim to maintain the view of the significance of cultural doing of masculinities and musical and gender meaning created by and for participants. Additionally, I
wish to extend my query in the following way: to consider masculinity as
embodiment, that is in its material form, what Pfeil (1994: 67) terms as
"corporeal-musical thing", and to examine masculinity within the context of its
visual representation (the latter achieved in Chapter Seven dealing with social
networking and gender).

As suggested in Chapter Three, one way of approaching masculinity is
to treat it as a visual text upon which various degrees of ideological inscription
take place. Music, as a setting for the study of masculine gender identities and
a polysemic text reliant on multi sensory experience, indeed calls for such
treatment, with the practice usually consisting of textual analysis of the music
videos, live performances and representation of gender in music press. One of
the most significant aspects of musical acculturation is performing live. It allows
musicians to develop, employ or subvert codes of musical and gender
behaviour as well as foregrounding the male body as a vehicle through which
the communication with the audience is achieved. In order to demonstrate how
musicians in my sample communicate musically, lyrically and visually (bodily) in
live performances, I introduce three further concepts: the body, the gaze and
authenticity.

This chapter begins with the brief overview of arguments about the
centrality of the body and spectatorship within gender studies and sociology of
masculinity. I then provide an example of the way in which the body is linked to
the notion of authenticity/realness, by referring to Ritchey Edwards’ infamous
public scarification as well as extending the discussion by looking at the notions
of male vulnerability and expressivity where I draw on some of the fieldwork
data. This is followed by the discussion of the concept of authenticity within
popular music studies, drawing on its connotations of liveness and realness
(achieved in performance). Utilising the ethnographic data I then proceed to
illustrate and analyse the ways in which masculinities are performed and
authenticated in live music performances; through visual, verbal, and musical
communication as well as address the role of the audience in decoding the
meaning in performance. I aim to situate the (male) body within discourses of
authenticity and gender in popular music, reliant of the interrelated concept of liveness and to demonstrate that live performance can be viewed as an additional "site" where musical gender identities are learned, performed and authenticated.

**Why the body? The body and spectatorship**

The human form, the body as an image, has featured prominently throughout human history. The stronger focus in many debates about the body has been placed on the female body as a source of inspiration and an object of fascination, associated with aesthetic pleasure and desire on one hand; and hatred, fear and impurity on the other. The male body has been mostly invisible and absent from cultural discourses with many questions being raised about its elusiveness and invisibility. A good example arose following the publication of *The Female Body* by Goldstein (1991) who found himself questioned by authors and colleagues about the intensive focus on the female body:

"Why does it always have to be the female body that's presented as exotic, other, fascinating to scrutinize and imagine?" one woman asked me. "Why is it never the male body?" (Goldstein, 1994: Introduction vii)

Feminist scholars have suggested that this is due to patriarchal relations of looking (Gamman and Marshment, 1994: 1), where men looking and the female body as the object of the gaze replicates inequality of power relationships between men and women.

The body dominates the contemporary culture such as fashion, advertising and film industries, Art and Literature, as well as playing a significant part in social, philosophical and aesthetic discourses. It presents the focus for a wide range of the debates about popular culture encompassing wider themes of representation, consumption and regulation. Furthermore, there has been a significant degree of scholarly engagement with the correlation between subjectivity and embodiment, as well as a relevant degree
of examination of the relationship between the body and power, particularly by
the feminist scholars who utilised Foucault’s notion of the body as a site for
investigation of power relations where those can be studied at the micro level.
Drawing upon Foucault’s theories, feminist writers have argued that female
beauty practices are part of normalising practices of the body where the beauty
norms are there to discipline women, while providing them with an illusionary
belief that by controlling their bodies they can exercise a greater degree of
control over their lives more generally.

Following Berger’s (1972) assertions about spectatorship and the
representation of the female body in works of art where,

According to usage and conventions which are at last being questioned but have
by no means been overcome… men act and women appear. Men look at women.
Women watch themselves being looked at. (Berger, 1972: 45, 47)

and influenced by psychoanalytic approach, Mulvey (1975) developed a theory
of spectatorship in the cinema where the spectator is assumed to be
heterosexual, white and male, and where women too have to take a masculine
spectator’s position in order to make sense of the visual text and its narrative.
Neale (1983) writes about the spectacle of masculinity in the mainstream
Hollywood cinema focusing on “male genres” such as the western, and
suggesting that visual strategies are employed in order to prevent an erotic
gaze at the male body through avoidance of ambiguities in relation to the male
protagonist and visual association of masculinity with toughness, pain and
hardness. While both Mulvey and Neale examine the ways in which gender
ideology permeates cultural forms, they have been criticised for their neglect of
the role of an individual spectator’s agency in the way they perceive and
understand visual texts.

In his work The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities Burt (2007)
extends the debate to the dance arena, providing a theory of spectatorship in
dance with focus on the male body. Giving a historical overview of the status of
the male body in dance, perceptions and expectations of the male dancer, he
notes how Romanticism provided a scope for greater expressivity for a male artist:

The Romantic genius was allowed a wide range of self-expression that would have been considered unacceptable in men not considered to be gifted. The way in which the Romantic composer might pound his piano while performing his own work, or the emotionalism of the Romantic poet, or the way the brush strokes betray the painter's emotions: the implicit or explicit physicality of all these seems to have been acceptable for artists in the nineteenth century. (Burt, 2007: 18-19)

The romantic notions of "physicality" of expressivity are an important part of discourses of authenticity in popular music where passion, emotion, vulnerability and openness to experiences are all highly valued. In the context of this study the male body is understood as one of the vehicles for such expressivity (other including vocal and musical communication). According to Pfeil (1994) the body is a commodity when featuring in a video or within pages of magazines, but at the same time it is “…permanently withheld from circulation, unapproachable and unpurchaseable” (Pfeil, 1994: 68), that is, a marker of authenticity.

Within the debates on popular culture the male body has taken a more prominent position mainly due to its targeting by the consumer culture (Featherstone and Turner, 1995), and through popular media scrutiny. The publication of the edited collection of essays The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures (Goldstein, 1994) aimed to address the lack of balance in the scrutiny between the male and the female body, with the latter always attracting more attention. Connell (1987, 1995) and Peterson (1998) focused on an examination of the link between gendered body and gendered power, while Messner and Sabo (1990), Messner (1992), and McKay, Messner and Sabo (2000) scrutinised the relationship between masculinity and sport. In popular music studies work of scholars like Whiteley (1997, 2000) brought to the fore embodiments and enactments of masculinities by some of the most prominent popular musicians.
As argued throughout this thesis, in order to gain greater insights into meanings of gendered identity, masculinity ought to be addressed as both a cultural practice (lived object) and cultural representation (cultural text). Neither is possible without careful consideration being given to material, embodied masculinity that inscribes both.

The body, expressivity, authenticity and popular music

Before focusing on the male body in performance, and the examples gathered through fieldwork, I think it is important to place the embodiment within discourses of popular music, and one particular discourse that is rather prominent in popular music studies – that of authenticity. This is due to my contestation that in a highly visual and expressive domain of the popular music the body provides an important site for investigation of doing of gender identities. I wish to build upon Pfiel's (1994) argument about the duality of status of the male body – as both the commodity that can be consumed through purchasing and consumption of videos and magazines that feature it (the male body in its representational form) and its removed status as the marker of masculine authenticity (the real body), evading consumption. By focusing on the live setting I wish to suggest that during live music performances the duality of status becomes particularly pertinent; on one hand the performing body is there to be looked at and judged for its expressive ability, and celebrated for its realness. At the same time the body in performance is conforming to the existing scripts of gendered display, acting as a vehicle for confirmation and consolidation of gender identity of the performer. Furthermore, popular music (including live performances and videos) provides male musicians with a space to subvert the existing codes of gendered display, although arguably such subversive acts can be read as a part of pre-existing scripts of musical gendered behaviour. In order to situate the argument about the ways in which the male body is utilised for visual, verbal and musical communication with the audience, and address the strategies employed by the
musicians, the next section conceptualises the male body’s link to narratives of authenticity/realness and associated notions of masculine vulnerability and expressivity.

**Written on the body: the male body, authenticity and vulnerability**

A well documented, extreme and disturbing example of foregrounding one’s body and striving to be seen as “authentic” is Richey Edwards (*Manic Street Preachers*) “4 Real” public arm scarification which took place in spectacular fashion, in the public space (backstage area of Norwich Arts Centre), on 15 May 1991. Here Steve Lamacq, a well known dj, describes what happened:

‘I know you don’t like us,’ he said steadily, ‘but we are for real. When I was a teenager, I never had a band who said anything about my life, that’s why we’re doing this. Where we came from, we had nothing.’ As he’s talking, from somewhere he finds a razorblade. Turning unnervingly serious, he takes the blade and slowly and deliberately carves ‘4 Real’ into his left arm... (Lamacq cited in Pattie, 1999) [online]

Was this act to be a proof that *The Manics* were not a pastiche punk band and what does it tell us about the three way relationship between the body (object of inscription), the pain inflicted by the act of scarification and authenticity? Leaving aside psychological reasons for inflicting pain upon one’s body, "...self-mutilation is a very different issue to suicide. It is a controlled pain personal to you, allowing you to live/exist to some degree..." (Edwards, n.d.), I found Edwards’s act of inscription upon his body and verbal explanation of the act relevant in several respects. First, he relates realness to the ability to comment on real life experiences “I never had a band who said anything about my life”. Second, he sees the role of a musician as a representative of the people (common theme), someone who is one of the people and therefore understands and knows their concerns, as well as being able to express and communicate them to a wider audience. It is here that his actions cross the
gender boundary extending to a wider concept, that of “human condition”. The above notions come close to Dennis Dutton’s (2003) understanding of expressive authenticity\textsuperscript{20} as the ability truthfully to express matters of concern to the individual and society through musical performance. Third, in the Western cultural context based on mind-body split, where qualities of restraint, rationality and control are so strongly associated with notions of masculinity, turning the focus to the male body and turning one’s suffering into a public spectacle could be read as an exceedingly unmasculine act. But then, there is a history of association between suffering, expressivity and authenticity in music, extending from blues to emo rock.

For those who wanted to “experience” the spectacle of self harm from afar, in the aftermath of Richey Edwards’ disappearance Dublin based artist and programmer Oliver Moran launched Virtual Richey Manic, somewhat morbid tribute where a visitor to a web link can choose four letters for virtual Richey to inscribe on his forearm. This is done by choosing the letters (and forming a word) followed by pressing a razor icon on the web page, upon

\textsuperscript{20} Denis Dutton’s (http://www.denisdutton.com/authenticity.htm) definition of authenticity associated with discourse of authenticity in aesthetics can be utilised when thinking about popular music and its main actors (performers and audiences). Dutton distinguishes between “nominal” and “expressive authenticity”. Nominal authenticity relates to establishing the origins and authorship of a work of art “ensuring, as the term implies, that an object of aesthetic experience is properly named”. (Dutton, 2003) [online] Nominal authenticity is based on empirical facts. For example, a cultural historian could more than likely prove that Stravinsky, rather than Tchaikovsky composed the music for The Rite of Spring. However, according to Dutton the notion of nominal authenticity is more easily applied to visual art such as a painting where an original can be identified. He problematises the existence of an equivalent in music claiming that a musical score is always interpreted: “…even a composer’s own performance of an instrumental score…can not fully constrain the interpretive choices of other performers or define for ever ‘the’ authentic performance”. (Dutton, 2003) [online]

Expressive authenticity connotes a relationship between an individual’s or society’s values and beliefs, and their “accurate” expression or mediation through a work of art, or in this case, musical performance. (Dutton, 2003) [online]
which now the iconic image of Richey Edwards with blood covered arm appears, but this time featuring the word a visitor has chosen as inscription.

"Yes indeed, folks. Roll-up, ROLL-UP! For one night only, Richey Manic will cut your slogan from the sinews of his skin. Do it for a loved-one. See your name sliced into living flesh." (http://www.sony-youth.com/vrm/ ) [online]

Such mediated scarification allows the user to experience something of what a scarification may look like, rather than feel like; it is safe, controlled and virtual - thus highly representational. The familiar tale of the postmodern body is that of both something constant and solid in the changing world in flux, but also a construct itself. If the body is to be understood as a construct, open to the possibilities of inscription, then Richey Edwards' action can be read as anything but "real". The pain inflicted upon the body becomes one of many ways the body can be manipulated, it does not tell anything about the "realness" of the person, nor indeed about the authenticity of their music. This is evident in the press coverage that followed the event, where Edwards's public mutilation was perceived and described as distastefully desperate act of a desperate person, by fans and journalists alike. On the other hand, by mutilating his body Edwards drew the attention to the body's fragility and manipulability, its status of the boundary between the self and the world which ought to be inscribed (by textual representation of the self as real) in order to reveal something of the true self to the world. For the past few years the music press polls have been giving the title of a fraught and misguided soul ("unconscionable rogue"), with a bruised, scared and polluted body, to Pete Doherty of Babyshambles, who is in equal measure celebrated and reviled for his on and off stage antics. For some, public exposure of his vulnerabilities and addictions have crossed the boundary which separates the hip and the cool from the distasteful and dirty, while for others he is the savior and reincarnation of realness that has been lost somewhere along the lines of commercialisation of music and the introduction of the celebrated six pack body beautiful of a boy band. Yet, there are examples of music styles allowing for both a resistance of commercialisation
(DIY practice, refusal to sell merchandise at gigs) and demonstration of extreme exercise of control upon one’s body. The well known example is Straight Edge, hardcore punk “subculture” defined by refrain from using drugs, alcohol and tobacco, as well as its embrace of vegetarianism, veganism, working out, meditation – practices aligning rationality and control, rather than excess and indulgence, with authenticity and realness. Straight Edge lyrics, however, often express male vulnerabilities, insecurities, sense of anger and loss, thus contrasting the control echoed through aforementioned discipline and “rationality”. Furthermore, it could be argued that what is seen as authentic as well as gendered (masculine and feminine) in music, is determined by the norms and conventions inherent in music genres:

Creativity and control, and the production of music, have largely been associated with men. Music styles and genre are thus seen as gendered and have their own particular conventions concerning male and female behaviour. (Cohen, 2001: 232)

Cohen argues that masculine types in indie rock can be distinguished from those in heavy metal due to less emphasis on male power and aggression, and greater emphasis on male vulnerability (Cohen, 2001: 233). She suggests that this is realised musically through strong emphasis on melody and relatively high pitched or nasal in tone vocals. Similarly, Matthew Bannister (2006b) defines indie masculinities expressed in music as incorporating a range of non-rockist, arguably unmasculine characteristics such as a noticeable lack of prominent instrument solos and use of drone, reverberation and jangle, vocals low in the mix and avoidance of “good” singing and vocal virtuosity, obscure lyrics, dressing down, non-performance (shoegazing) and so on.

Discussing the musicians’ relations to their bodies and their display in performance, as well as thoughts and feelings expressed through lyrics and music, was one of the hardest tasks in my fieldwork. However, a few talked about their onstage image. James was forthcoming with his descriptions of how he felt about the performing body, and the importance of image and style.
When I asked him how much thought he gives to what he wears to a gig, he responded:

James: It is like being on a date. You have a shower, you know, not necessarily iron your shirt... but you put some hair wax in and try to make yourself presentable. You are a bit nervous and you create the atmosphere by getting ready. It is like going out, you are going to the gig, it is all mental preparation for it. Is that the answer you wanted Ms Bogdanovic?

For James, the performance starts before he actually steps onto a stage. He proceeded to explain that for him getting dressed for the performance is a part of mental preparation, leaving behind his administrative job persona and stepping into the shoes of a performer. But then he acknowledges that the image itself does not do much for a performer or the performance if the sound is not right, and there is no right attitude that supports it:

James: If the sound stands in its own right then there is no point in wearing a two tone suit. By wearing the two tone suit you are actually quite unsure that the sound holds up in its own right...When we were young we did not really dress like punks all that much even though we played in front of some hard core punks who were into Exploited and Discharge and stuff...with tartan bondage trousers and big Mohicans...I might wear like a big sweater that my mum got me from a catalogue or something. It is more to do with an attitude and the sound of the band than clothes.

Others like Edwin, a bass player in a rock band based in London, differ in their view on importance of visual impact and style:

If band looks like a “gang” when they’re not on stage, there is no need for them to do anything special...that’s why some bands wear suits...

Carl provided a very good outline of the way in which his stage style, which he claims to be his everyday style too, evolved. He associated changes of style with slight changes in what he called an “outlook” of the band. So he went from
wearing bondage trousers, "punky t-shirt" and a Mohican in the early days of his involvement in music, via "anarcho type of stuff...a black uniform, probably following Crass...which was what people wore in the 1 in 12 in Bradford"\textsuperscript{21}, to combat trousers, boots and a t-shirt that I saw him wear on stage, with a shaven head. He informed me that he starting shaving his hair off when he realised he was going bald and that the Mohican was becoming "an impossibility". Carl seems to have followed a familiar trajectory from what his partner Marianne referred to as "fashion punk" to more politically engaged anarcho punk (hence the reference to Crass and the 1 in 12 club in Bradford), which according to both of them developed in parallel to getting older.

Understandably, even with my general questions about vulnerability and emotions in music the participants felt that I was scrutinising them too closely, seeking to reveal something which they were unwilling to talk about publicly. Additionally, most of the participants were guarded and reluctant to discuss personal themes in their own music (sometimes linked to their body image), or those that perhaps could reveal a musician's more vulnerable, and hence more "real" side.

Elliott: Hmm...there are a couple of songs where there has been intimacy with another person...and stuff like that...and those particular lyrics are best left ambiguous.

One of my open ended questions included "What is the worst question I could have asked you?" and Pete, a keyboard player in a progressive rock band Kaleidoscope, summed up many of the responses:

\textsuperscript{21} Crass were an English anarcho-punk band in existence between 1977 and 1984. The 1 in 12 Club in Bradford started in 1981, evolving from the local Claimants Union. The club is run as a collective, it is based on anarchist principles and it provides a space for a range of social, artistic and political activities.
Pete: If you try to write some lyrics, and you are really introverted, and you are expressing yourself in lyrics...maybe asking me about the meaning of lyrics that I have written...would be the worst question...

Similarly, Luke from *The Unstoppables* answered:

Probably something embarrassing about the inspiration...if you had known about a cheesy song I had written and you asked about the inspiration for that I would just feel quite embarrassed. Or, if...like a depressing song, if you asked me what made me write that, I just get embarrassed about things like that. I remember someone asking me what I was doing when I wrote a song called X (*title omitted*), low Elliott Smith kind of song. I just felt really embarrassed, I did not want to be asked that. So I just said I needed to go to the toilet, and never answered it.

The fact that I was going to see my respondents perform live, making a particular bodily gesture, or wearing a particular shirt made them extremely self-conscious to the point where almost everything related to the body in performance became an understatement. Instead, in order to explain how they felt about the male body or male vulnerabilities they utilised the familiar (above quoted) examples, and proceeded to have a more general discussion about an uneasy relationship between men, vulnerability, body and authenticity.

Some, like Albert below, revealed somewhat more about the subject matter of their songs:

Albert:...A lot of time, I can not help it...but write about...bloody girls, basically! How much they fuck you up. It is a very clichéd subject but people will write songs like "God I love someone and they do not love me..." until the human race expires, just about. I think it is unavoidable. But I am trying to branch out a wee bit. Got some different things going. But I always write in first person...I am quite a bothered person generally speaking...I am quite a melancholy person...I am afraid of being called an emo. I do not ever wanna be called an Emo!...But trying not to be to angst ridden and teenagery, like sixth form poetry...vomit inducing, you know (*laughs*).
Yet, he refuses labelling and resists connotations associated with the label (emo). He expresses his awareness of the relationship between his gender and class, and expectations associated with the expression of emotion:

Albert: I am kind of quite typical sort of male, Scottish male not so good in expressing myself. From quite working class background, so emotional expression particularly in males is quite restricted. Not very open emotionally...

At the same time Albert is quite knowledgeable about the prominence and importance of the male body and the image in popular music:

Albert: I think it is the way the humans work, with visual element being very, very important. In certain cases, if music is good enough...it does not really matter. Like Radiohead come on and they are dressed like they...we are dressed most of the days of our life. Say Franz Ferdinand, their image is very much imprinted on our idea of them as performers, I think. The fringes, skinny trousers.

When I asked about his own image and style decisions, he replied:

... Myself, with the band, we always try to dress quite smart. And cause the lot of other bands, quite young, do not even bother, it is like "wear what you normally wear". For me...I want to go on the stage and make an impression, and try to stand out with it as well...Perhaps if you take a particular care of your appearance it can be seen as a sign of effeminacy, you know...or something like that. Cause it is quite a female thing. I think it definitely is if you dress up too much they are going to think you are poncy prick sort of thing (laughs) which I have been accused of in the past.

And while accusations of effeminacy did not deter Albert from "dressing up", he was also aware that some bands promote a non-image in order to draw the attention away from the visual and towards the musical. He referred to Radiohead and their lack of obvious image, whom he contrasted with Franz Ferdinand's well thought out stylistics.
Luke too acknowledged that painful experiences have played a part in his creative output:

Luke: ...a lot of people have said that couple of my best songs are the ones written when I was feeling pretty rubbish. And it is ironic that they are the best songs. From when you did not really want to write a song, it came out. People latch on that feeling when you are writing, and identify with it or something. That is why they do not mind if you are suffering because they can identify with it.

He then quickly proceeded to comment on some of the public figures and glamorisation of suffering:

Luke: There seems to be a lot of press adoration for that style of musician who suffers, like Pete Doherty, Kurt Cobain. They are both idealised. Someone who has a happy life never gets any press coverage. It is really a shame because I do not think Pete Doherty does anything special musically, for me at least. Lots of people love his music.

23 years old Noel was wary of exploitativeness of the music industry in order to keep the music good and "authentic":

Noel: So you know of Flaming Lips? Well pretty much the main musical source of material is Steven Drozd who plays the drums but comes up with lots of music…but he is a serious heroin addict. And you could sort him out, they could say “right, you are going to rehab to sort yourself out!” but he would not be making music which is as good. I have heard he has kicked it but do not really think he has. As long as he is still shooting up he is still making music. The others are letting him destroy himself so that they get music, get songs out of him. Especially when you are talking about legends you tend to do a lot better once you die, if you die in some dodgy circumstances, overdose on something. You become a legend. You know, they are fucked up, they should not be thought of as any better for that. And there are a lot of really big names who really screwed themselves over and benefited. Their legacy has benefited a lot from them being idiots, really. Maybe I am being a bit too cynical but…Golden example is Pete Doherty, I can not stand him! It is not a replacement of talent cause he is screwing himself up really badly.
Oh, he is the martyr (very cynical). The worst thing that could happen is for him to die from an overdose. Cause then he would be remembered as this martyr who gave his life to his art. And really he is just a junky!

All three respondents are aware of the process of mythologizing of the suffering and the ways in which it becomes commercially viable, while at the same trying to maintain a sense of rationality and distance. Masculine vulnerabilities expressed as suffering and mediated through music are both seductive and threatening for young musicians. Their own music (and gender) identities are framed by the expectations and myths associated with suffering and art, and should they completely ignore such myths they may be accused of being fake, non-genuine and inauthentic. On the other hand, embracing a self-destructive lifestyle and living up to the myth of the suffering artist brings a possibility of things getting out of hand, loosing of control or even still being accused of being a fake. Most opt for a degree of “controlled” suffering, framed by music and mediated through performance. For many this is what attracted them to music in the first place – its potential to provide an outlet for thoughts and feelings. When discussing hardcore musical styles and masculinity Sarah F. Williams suggests:

> Beyond the violent mosh pits and stage-diving crowd antics, hardcore also dealt with lyrical issues that did not find a ready audience in the 1980s in the midst of apparently superficial, “candy coated” pop – that is, depression, identity crisis, and other personal demons. (Williams, 2007: 151)

She further argues that due to changing cultural attitudes about masculinity such themes and emotional weakness found their way into lyrical and musical expression of Emo (emotionally oriented rock) of the late 1990s and early 2000s, where “the musical signifiers of emotional weakness – that is, such “undesirable” qualities line vulnerability, femininity, weakness” are combined
with “musical signifiers of aggression that are the bedrock of the punk/hardcore musical style”. (Williams, 2007: 152)

Live performances provide a scope for an “authentic”, unmediated musical expression (live as opposed to recorded sound), as well as representing an unmediated display of the male body (unlike the photographed or filmed body). This display is, of course, never fully free from mediation as all musicians are aware of a number of conventions associated with body in performance and may chose to adopt or subvert them. As such, the live embodied masculinities are mediated by pre-existing discourses of the live and values placed upon it, as well as by discourses of gender/male body. And yet, the excitement of the live lies in its scope and possibilities for rebelliousness, spontaneity and loss of control.

The next section provides a brief overview of the wider debates about authenticity and music before focusing on the live (as one of the categories

22 Within the distinct hierarchy of masculinities at any given moment some are perceived as more desirable than others, who are in turn marginalised. The critique of such approach relies on its neglect of “boring masculinities that populate our everyday” (Moller, 2007: 265) and its foregrounding of particular types of masculine power “domination, subordination, oppression” (Moller, 2007: 266). Alternative approaches called for by a number of gender theorist include understanding of masculinity through its “disavowal of power and privilege” (Brown, 1995 cited in Moller) and Susan Bordo's (1994) call for focusing on male experiences of vulnerability and lack of power: “Far fresher insights can be gained by reading the male body through the window of its vulnerabilities rather than the dense armour of its power”. (Bordo, 1994: 266 cited in Moller, 2007: 271).

Earlier versions of this chapter included a substantive discussion of what was termed “a myth of the suffering artist” and its associations with the concept of authenticity where the quest for authenticity has been taken behaviourally or performatively to the extreme through practices of scarification (Richey Edwards) or through self-destructive, excessive drug taking (Pete Doherty). Ultimately, it becomes symbolised by premature death by suicide (Ian Curtis, Kurt Cobain, Elliott Smith). While such approach is valid, in order to remain faithful to ethnographic principle inherent in the research, I decided to foreground experiences of the participants who informed this study.
closely aligned to realness and authenticity), and the way in which gender identities are authenticated in live performances.

*Authenticity and popular music: an overview of the debates*

In discourses of popular music the concept of authenticity is heavily laden by value. It has been associated with a whole range of meanings and practices. These include: uniqueness, expressivity, sincerity, originality, live performance, unmediated expression, references to traditions and roots, resistance to commercialisation and so on. Furthermore, it is underpinned by a series of oppositions:

- Mainstream versus independent; pop versus rock; and commercialism versus creativity, or art versus commerce. (Shuker, 2005:18 -19)

Another useful framework for examination of authenticity (and in this case masculinity) is proposed by Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor (2007) who distinguish between representational, cultural and personal authenticity. (Barker and Taylor, 2007: Introduction x). *Representational authenticity* refers to a musical performance or recording being what it claims to be, unlike for example the well publicised scandal of *Milli Vanilli* who it turned out did not sing on their records. *Cultural authenticity* relates to value associated with cultural context of a song or performance, thus more value being attached to a performance which is historically or culturally closer to the roots (of a musical or other event). *Personal authenticity* relies on our belief that a performer reflects and communicates something of themselves through their music. It is closely associated with the narratives surrounding lives of performers and the ways those narratives find their expression in their music. With a slight adjustment this framework can be extended to gender identity. Representational authenticity in the context of gender identity could imply visual representation (embodied masculinity) in performance or elsewhere (other visual media). Cultural authenticity is imbued with varying degrees of value according to
closeness to or a distance from a culturally specific ideal of masculinity. Personal authenticity is associated with the notion that musical and lyrical output can communicate some aspects of gender specific experiences.

As a concept so closely associated with "truth", authenticity has not escaped the scrutiny of postmodern theorists, including close examination of aforementioned connotations of liveness, resistance and uniqueness. For Moore (2002) authenticity is "a matter of interpretation", determined by a viewer or listener, and always "ascribed", and hence the focus of inquiry should be "activities of various perceivers". The concept of a "story" becomes relevant as something that is both coded (by performers) and actively decoded by listeners and viewers, with the meaning emerging from interaction of the two. Grossberg (1992) argues that the self-reflexive, self-conscious postmodern subject sees through inauthentic modes of existence and hence is capable of decoding "authentic inauthenticity" through "ironic appropriation". In his article "Loaded": indie guitar rock, canonism, white masculinities' Matthew Bannister (2006a) questions the entire notion of existence of independent or alternative music as an authentic mode of expression. He abandons the simplistic notion that the independent can be defined simply as being "resistance" and instead proposes that it is:

... not just collective, but also stratified, hierarchical, parochial and traditional. (Bannister, 2006a: 78)

Furthermore, according to Bannister there is always a complex degree of negotiation between the dominant culture and independent culture, including music scenes which are often shaped through canonisation informed by the "political" and the "selective". Additionally, he addresses the notion of "liveness" by revisiting Lester Bangs’ claim that:

Rock and Roll is not an artform – it's a raw wail from the bottom of the guts… (Bangs, 1992: 104 cited in Bannister 2006a: 83)
as well as noting that the idea that the live somehow equals real has been destabilised in indie through the importance of minimalism and unadornment of recordings. A recording, therefore, can be perceived as authentic, as long as it is raw and pure, that is, determined by directness of communication, lack of mediation, and abundance of expressivity.

US indie act Hüsker Dü’s early albums seem to have been recorded in little more than the time it took to play them. (Bannister, 2006a: 83)

Similarly, Sarah Thornton argues that with the development of technology, the record takes on the role of the original (Thornton, 1995: 27). Furthermore, dance cultures are authenticated by:

...the buzz or energy which results from the interaction of records, DJ and crowd. ‘Liveness’ is displaced from the stage to the dance floor, from the worship of the performer to a veneration of ‘atmosphere’ or vibe. (Thornton, 1995: 29)

Authentic is thus that which in any given moment is perceived as authentic by a subculture (club culture), and no longer associated exclusively with originality and aura. But who or what determines what is perceived as original and natural to a particular cultural or subcultural group? And what is excluded from "the canon" at the expense of "purity" and "authenticity" or "hipness"? Simon Reynolds suggests that:

Post-punk and New Pop had both been impure, mixing black and white, celebrating the eclectic, the hybrid, the polyglot. But by 1985, purism was back in favour. People craved ‘the authentic’ and found it in noise (The Jesus and Mary Chain, The Membranes), or in raw roots music: acoustic guitar – strumming protest singer Billy Bragg; the folk-punk of The Pogues and The Men They Couldn’t Hang; the populist Americana of Jason & The Scorchers, Long Ryders and Los Lobos. Synths and sequencers, horns and orchestras were out: guitars, bass and drums were in. (Reynolds, 2005: 519)
In spite of the quite common practice of musicians' refusal to label their work thus describing it as authentic ("it is just different to anything else out there") rather than generic, it is the category of music genre that to a great extent determines what is excluded, as well as included within the definition of the authentic (for a particular genre). Furthermore, according to Gunn (1999), in the rhetoric of music the descriptions are often limited to adjectives, for example "raw", "heavy", "easy". In his essay 'Gothic Music and the Inevitability of Genre' Gunn suggests that although there is a possibility for an "antigeneric" moment with all music:

...despite the predictably resistant rhetoric of popular musical artists, music is unavoidably destined for generic containers. (Gunn, 1999: 32)

Similar adjectives to those used by Gunn to describe musical sound have been applied to describe "masculine" performance, for example "raw sex/uality" used to describe a particular type of maleness, unlike "wobbly vocals" and "trebly guitars" associated with indie masculinities. Gunn further distinguishes between hearing music/sound as a purely physiological process, and listening where a listener is involved in an active cognitive process of interpretation:

Listening, however, is the active, cognitive interpretation of sound, the process of generating meaning out of sound by resorting to the linguistic sign in order to convey that meaning to others, as well as to make sense of what we are hearing for ourselves. (Gunn, 1999: 35)

The third, and I would argue the most relevant stage as far as establishing expressive authenticity is concerned, is the act of performance. Here, the performer's interpretation is met by an audience's expectations. This is also a site where taste is authenticated, and meaning extended beyond the bedroom walls (where listening often takes place, and gender identities are coded and encoded).

In 'Liveness: Performance and The Anxiety of Simulation' Philip Auslander problematises the debate by arguing that the live is "...only a
secondary effect of mediating technologies" (Auslander, 2006: 86). In order to challenge the notion that the live precedes the "mediatized" he utilises the example of using large video screens at rock and pop concerts as well as sporting events. For those sitting or standing in the back rows at large arenas the experience of being at a live concert or sport event is mediatized, their experience limited by the pictures relayed via big screens. In terms of gendering of the performance "mediatization" achieved through using large screens has both its advantages and limitations for performers. On one hand they pass over the power to cameramen and editing suite staff, for the decisions to be made on their behalf as to where the visual focus will lie (close up of the face, the hand strumming the string). On the other hand they can utilise their knowledge of established ways of performance coding and perform for the camera, rather than for the audience standing in the first few rows. Auslander further argues that the pop concert can be seen as a "...re-enactment of the music video...a new performance subgenre" (Auslander, 2006: 86). Music video, in this instance, is an original, "the real" which can be recreated to a greater or lesser degree in a live performance, which becomes a copy of the real. Taking everything into account, it could be argued that unpredictability of sound as well as behaviour, rather than skill or choreography, are often seen as markers of authenticity and originality. Performers who appear out of control on stage are likely to be perceived as more authentic and more original, despite the fact that "being out of control" can be learned, practiced and enacted. The following section takes a look at some of the strategies utilised in live performances by the three bands I observed to communicate with their audiences; strategies which can be read as gendered and gendering. I suggest that the focus in the live setting is the performing male body – as a marker of authenticity due to its spatial and temporal presence.
Performing bodies

Authenticating masculinities in live performances

...men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. (Berger, 1972: 47)

Men act and men appear. Women and men look at men (Fonarow, 2007). Men watch themselves being looked at – would be a more accurate description of what is occurring in live music settings during live performances. In "Looks Maketh the Man": The Female Gaze and the Construction of Masculinity', Kevin Goddard (2000) argues that the female gaze plays an integral part in the formation of patriarchal forms of culture. He proposes that the creation of masculine gender identity can never be divorced from “the social image of femaleness” but also from “the image of men that femaleness (in all its variety) projects” (Goddard, 2000: 23). Such proposal challenges the notion that the gaze is inherently monolithic; that it is by definition “masculine” regardless of the gender of the looker. Goddard suggests that men and women assume the roles that men and women would like and expect them to assume, thus arguing that adopted gender roles are always directional. I take this as the starting theoretical point for the understanding of performance and the authentication of masculinities in live music settings.

In live settings, our understanding of what popular music masculinities are, and what they represent, can readily be authenticated or subverted through iconography associated with the visual aspects of the performance, verbal communication with the audiences (and subsequent power relationship) and musical output (sound/lyrics), all of which can be regarded as embodied musical practices. In ‘Rethinking Issues of Gender in Sexuality in Led Zeppelin – A woman’s view of pleasure and power in hard rock’, Susan Fast argues that visual iconography associated with male display of power and sexuality can be “a source of erotic pleasure for women” (Fast, 2006: 365). Her argument draws upon responses from a fan survey (323 completed surveys, 73 completed by
women) and her own experiences of music. Her findings further indicate that questions of gender and sexuality are closely tied with other aspects of music experience, for example those of “power” and “emotion” associated with music. (Fast, 2006: 363). She writes:

It is much easier always to begin from the premise that the music and images are sexist and macho because not only it is a comforting notion that this kind of semiotic stability might exist, but it simultaneously locks out the dangerous possibility of women as sexual and powerful. (Fast, 2006: 369)

My own work does not incorporate conversations with the audiences, however, it assumes that the performance is always done with an audience in mind, that it can never be completely divorced from the expectations held by audiences, which in turn are culturally acquired. As such it is reliant on performances I witnessed as a member of different audiences. Live performance is an interactional event. It is an opportunity for a band to present their music to an audience in an unmediated way, spatially and temporally framed. It allows for a wide spectrum of possible meanings, and the authentication of meaning occurs in the process of interpretation on the behalf of an audience. Music is actualised not only in the act of listening (Moore, 2002), but through an uneasy negotiation of meanings implied through lyrics and sound, and their transposition on subjects’ everyday existence. Music is also highly visual as suggested by the commonly used phrase of “going to see a band”. In live settings, coding of masculinity occurs through a band’s visual, verbal and musical communication, all of which are reliant on the body as a vehicle of expression. Visual coding becomes evident in stage image and behaviour the band employs, verbal communication includes speaking to an audience between songs as well as singing of the lyrics, while musical coding occurs through employment of a particular sound. Apart from being utilised for coding of masculinities in performance, the three processes usually work in a homologous fashion to present a coherent musical message. However, there appear to be two conflicting processes at play in any live setting at any one
time. On one hand, the live can be understood as the site where performers employ a range of verbal, sonic and visual strategies that can extend beyond the entertainment and serve a purpose of reinforcing their gender identities. On the other hand, the interactional nature of the live setting may serve to disrupt the structure of performance as well as undermine the strategies employed by performers, which together with its “one offness” provides an attractive alternative to controlled, mediated performances of a music video. In any case, it foregrounds the male performing body. The link between the authentic and the live extends beyond recorded versus live sound debate, further into the realm of experience. In terms of gender, the live setting has a potential to expose the “other side of masculinity” – loss of control, abandonment, excess, apprehension and vulnerability, in a way that a mediated setting rarely can.

Performance is the negative term, because it connotes a communication that is one-way, in which the performer controls the performance and the audience merely receive it: experience is the positive term, because it connotes an event that may have some elements of performance to it, but that uses those elements to create a direct communication between the performer and the audience. (Pattie, 1999) [online]

Pattie’s view is echoed by Elliott, the drummer in Two Digit Salute, who sometimes performs solo gigs where he plays the guitar and sings. Following a joint experience of hearing and seeing The Unstoppables perform one of their showcase gigs, we had a conversation about intimacy in performance and the notion of shared experience:

Elliott: Hmm, intimacy...when someone is watching you and listening to you play and almost all their senses are engaged...If I can get even a half of the people in the room to experience that kind of connection when they do not feel a need to listen to anything else at all, I think it is a good performance...To me it is not that I am trying to share a message; it is about wanting to share an experience...
The following section explores several aspects of musical engagement through different modes of musical communication creating a musical experience, employed by the three aforementioned bands, *The Compacts*, *The Unstoppables* and *The Cyclists*, with the first two already introduced in Chapter Five. The reasons for choosing those three bands are twofold: first, I have seen each band perform more than on one occasion and in different venues in front of different audiences thus allowing for the patterns to emerge and deviations to occur, and second, they provide fine examples of a range of musical genres which to a degree determine types of masculinities coded in live performances.

**Visual, verbal and musical communication**

When asked, some people say that they go to “hear bands”, but most people go to “see bands”, linguistically demonstrating the degree of significance of the visual aspect of the performance. Female music fans in particular, whom I encountered in the field, were quite open about wanting to see what a band looks like. This is aided by opportunities provided by new technologies and social networking sites such as MySpace, which allow all bands an opportunity for visual representation. It means that one potentially can make a decision about attending an event on the basis of how a band looks as well as how it sounds. Yet, in a live setting the band is seen in an unmediated way, in flesh, away from Photoshop altered and posed images, allowing for a degree of expectation and unknowingness to be maintained.

*The Compacts* are a highly visual band due to their fusion of performance art and music. Their performances are theatrical and costumes worn on stage are often colourful. So far, they have included: baby doll dresses, pink tights worn with heavy boots and ragged stripy jumpers, slinky underwear, extravagant masks, hats, wigs, blow up toys attached to the body, to name but a few. Stuart describes his look and getting ready to perform:
Stuart: ...I seem to be the one taking the longest to get dressed because I am getting dressed in bandages and pouring blood all over myself, and my pink tights. So everyone is usually on stage and waiting for me as I stagger out from wherever I have been pouring blood over myself...wearing my pink tights and maybe a pinny and occasionally a skirt, and then swathing my top off in bandages and pouring the blood over myself so I look like I have been in a car crash. So that is what I do.

He then proceeds to tell me about an important aspect of The Compacts’ performance, the desire to break down the boundary between the performer and the audience:

Stuart: I try to do a sort of manic performance. And I find going into the audience is not something a lot of bands do. It is a little bit confrontational. There is a barrier between performer and audience, a sort of an invisible barrier. It is created by both performer and audience, a line that people do not cross. And I like to be across that line. To just sort of break something down a little bit. I have a very long lead for my guitar. I am usually just held back by that. But I am thinking of buying a radio unit, so that I can get further.

At The Compacts’ gigs that I attended most audience members were very receptive to Stuart’s crossing of the invisible line, and felt encouraged to dance and venture closer to the stage, or even mix with the band within the performance space. They were also inquisitive about whether or not he was wearing something under his baby doll dress with various comments about lack of undergarments being heard. Watching and listening from the sidelines I noticed that women were more vocal than men, making references about both Stuart’s outfits and his body (which is quite slender). I am not sure how much of what is said could be heard by Stuart as the sound created by The Compacts is discordant, jarring and loud, the performance space can get crowded by the bodies and Scott’s singing can get deafening and manic.

The practice of dress and wig wearing by men in performance has been contested in analysis of drag and criticised as misogynistic. James, who recently joined The Compacts on bass, informed me that he feels uncomfortable wearing wigs and dresses because he perceives it as
caricaturing and degrading women. Fortunately, the rest of the band put no pressure on him to dress in such way, instead going along with his desire to wear a shirt with one of the Situationist catch phrases pinned to it ("Beneath the Pavement, A Beach!"). The Compacts' second guitarist always performs shirtless, exposing and displaying the upper parts of his body which again attracts a series of comments from the female members of the audience. Scott, the singer, follows in the footsteps of extravagance, combining surrealist theatre inspired masks with naked flesh, suits with dresses, and wigs. However, I noticed that during the performances the clothes gradually come off, with Scott usually wearing nothing but his underwear by the end of the performance. I wanted to know how body conscious he felt.

DB: How do you feel about your body?

Scott: As I got older I became more aware of being looked at. Maybe it has come with "I am getting older and I do not look as good!" Oh well.

He continued:

Scott: This is where the alcohol comes in. I remember feeling very... body conscious, body conscious at the shows where I was sober. Although, apparently I was over compensating for that by acting more psychotically than normal. A friend in Brighton said "you looked really insane there!"...it is all using the body. I am not just standing there like Liam Gallagher, with the microphone, not moving.

Scott comes across as a confident performer, so I was surprised that he felt this way. I did, however, learn that a certain degree of discipline is exercised where pre gig drinking is concerned, with band members limiting themselves to maximum of two pints of lager before most performances. It appeared to be a decision made by Stuart who does not drink alcohol, and Scott who had experienced some poor playing by the band members who had too much to drink, again reinforcing their roles as leaders of the band.
The best known account of the contentious relationship between the drag and misogyny is given by Judith Butler (1993) in *Bodies That Matter* where in ‘Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion’ she provides an analysis of *Paris Is Burning*, a documentary by Jennie Livingston (1990). *Paris is Burning* focuses on drag balls in Harlem, New York City, where African American and Latino contestants (mostly transgendered) compete in a range of categories associated with societal roles (e.g. the executive, the Ivy League student) all judged by one criteria – that of “realness”. Butler utilises Althusser’s concept of interpellation or hailing (Althusser, 2001) in relation to social formation of the subject in her examination of what happens when there is a refusal of the call, and by querying if the parodying of the dominant norms is enough to displace them (Butler, 1993: 125). She perceives the drag as the site of ambivalence:

...I want to underscore that there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion, and that drag may well be used in the service of both the denaturalization and reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms. (Butler, 1993: 125)

In the context of *The Compacts*’ live displays, their politics as well as the aesthetic leanings of the band, elements of drag used in their performances have less to do with their misogynistic attitude and more to do with their desire to create a space where an audience is visually and musically challenged. They are not interested in “passing”, but on the contrary in exposing the constructedness of the performance.

Scott: Image? Is it important? It is the part of the art, it is not extricable from the music. If a band get up playing, wearing jeans and t-shirts and just stare at their feet as they are playing that is saying “oh look we are not pretentious guys!” The way we dress on stage, the visual aspect, it is there to draw the attention “yes, this is performance!” I think it is so boring, anyway, just wearing everyday clothes on stage. And also, yeah... there is no such thing as authenticity, and that to me is
really clear. They think they are being authentic, all these bands. "Here I am in my blue jeans, these are my feelings..."

The band claim to be parodying the constrains and assumptions about their own gender identity as well as the status and value of popular music performance, and the concept of authenticity through the employment of somewhat extreme visual clues. Frith (1996) points to similarities in the objectifying of the body in performance art and its status in popular music where performers' bodies become "sites of narrative and feeling" (Frith, 1996: 205). He defines the performance as social and communicative process which relies on a "kind of knowingness, a collusion between performer and (implied) audience" (Frith, 1996: 209)

_The Compacts_ are uncompromising in what they do, despite the consequences this may bring, with violence towards the band being the most extreme outcome. I include a longer excerpt from Stuart's interview because it provides a flavour of their performance as well as explains the unfortunate occurrence of violence due to misreading of the performance, due to lack of "knowingness" and "collusion" in this particular instance:

Stuart: Yeah. I played gigs where there have been full scale riots. Huge amounts of fighting and the police and all sorts. And I also played gigs where one person was objecting to what I was doing...I have been punched! There was one gig in Blackpool some years ago where I did one particular track where I announced it like a Blue Peter presenter "ok when you are making a song what you do is get a drum machine, bass guitar, and the guitar and some keyboards, and put them all together, and here is the one I did earlier". And I pressed play on the tape recorder and left this song playing, and I wandered through the audience while the song was playing. I think I had a manikin on the stage pretending to perform it. I had a megaphone, and I was doing extra vocals through the megaphone in the audience. And this one particular bloke grabbed my arm as I was walking past and very aggressively said "What is going on!!" And I said "We are having some fun, I am just performing". And he grabbed my arm again as I was trying to walk off and said something else. I just turned around and gave him one of my manic looks, and went quite close to his face and said "Fuck off!" thinking he would just step
back and leave me alone because at that point I was trying to use the barrier between the audience and performer even though I have broken it going into the audience. But he did not let go of my arm, he head butted me. I think I responded with something like “Does that make your dick grow bigger, are you fucking proud of that?” And he punched me in the face, so I walked off and just carried on shouting through the megaphone. But I did find out afterwards that all the people around him had given him really, really bad vibes and he left after about seven minutes.

The misreading of the performance on part of this particular audience member was possibly reinforced by his expectations (hoping to see a punk band perform) not being met, and as a result he proceeded to challenge Stuart in a verbally aggressive manner. Stuart, in turn, challenged both the man’s intellect (“I am just performing”) and his “manhood” (Does your dick grow bigger?), or rather the lack of it. On several occasions, during particularly manic performances by The Compacts, I noticed that men in the audience felt uncomfortable and were taking a place away from the stage and towards the back of the room, while the female audience members were dancing closer to the stage. Even when performing in their home town of Blackpool, renowned for clubs like Funny Girls and visibility of drag, there was a sense that these men wearing dresses, wigs and masks were undermining and parodying not just their own sense of masculinity but also that of the audience members (expecting a “standard” punk band and possibly mislead by an advertising blurb), which for some proves to be too confrontational and threatening.

Scott: Everyone must have their own internal system of values and judgement anyway. Obviously a lot of people will look at us and think we are a comedy band. There are aspects of humour there but certainly we are not a joke band. I guess I enjoy playing with audience perceptions in that way.

Visually, in terms of their style and image, The Unstoppables are far removed from the excess and extravagance of The Compacts. They opt for shirts and t-
shirts, trousers, shoes or trainers projecting an image of well groomed, somewhat old fashioned boys next door.

DB: What do you normally wear to a gig?

Adam: *(funny voice)* Well, my brown cords and my flared shirt. My newest item of clothing from my wardrobe probably. And what looks best on me... At this stage you can not really go up in... well you could... something crazy like leotard some of these rockers were wearing. *The Darkness.* I guess clothes are important, but you can get away with looking plain. Look at *Arctic Monkeys,* I mean how plain do they look?

Adam demonstrates his awareness of the importance of style but does not necessarily perceive flamboyance as the way to success. "At this stage" implies that given the different status of the band (i.e. commercial success which I learned matters to him enormously) he may see more scope for experimentation with his style.

Luke: We were considering... before the last gig I emailed all the band mates and I said by the way we are all wearing the native American outfits for the gig, just as a little bit of a joke. But, our bass player took it seriously and apparently he has been looking on the internet all day for these native American outfits. He is really up for wearing some sort of outfit. In general I just wear jeans and like... I bought a kinda like gay shirt *(laughs).* This pink shirt. I quite liked it. Strange. It was cool.

Luke’s answer confirms that the band are aware of the significance of the visual. By linking experimentation with “a bit of a joke” he creates a safety net should I or their potential audience feel that their stylistic decision is ridiculous. It also reinforces a sense of unity through awareness that uniformity may work. The “gay shirt” reference can be read as both wanting to present a sense of adventurerness and flamboyancy while simultaneously confirming one’s heterosexuality. Recently, Luke has been more daring with his style, introducing some skinny jeans in his wardrobe which caused a lot of teasing
from the fans and friends of the band. Here are some of the comments associated with his new style, taken from his Facebook page:

Comment one: check yer skinny jeans n pointy shoes too! X
Comment two: Get those disgusting leggings and elf shoes off right now.
Comment three: Oh and Dennis the Menace called. He wants his top back. Xx

All three comments were made by other men, shortly after Luke’s photograph appeared on his page. He responded to the comments justifying his new sense of style, but I feel he regrets putting that particular photograph on his page. And now, taking it down would make the matters worse because it will attract further comments.

In order to find out to what degree the male performers are aware of their body movements on stage, I asked a question about what they do when performing (I could see what they did in live performance but wanted to query their self-perception, notions of spontaneity and expressivity).

DB: What do you do when performing?

Adam: I do not know. Definitely for rockier songs in the set I will try and get in there...with “I am loving this” expression, or if it is laid back track just try to mill about a bit. I am not one of this types to dance cause our music is not dancy, so I am not inclined to dance. I probably make guitar playing seem easier, because a lot of people put a lot of effort. Not Pete Townsend though, not gonna trash it (waves arms, does windmills), the arm rotator.

Adam’s response shows his awareness of constructendess of performance and foregrounds his desire to be seen as a master of his instrument. Out of four members of The Unstoppables, Adam is the one who re-enacts some of rock’n’roll on stage moves most convincingly. He postures with his guitar, sways his head from side to side during the solos and generally gets into the groove with the music. Luke, despite his prominence on stage, and role of the
vocalist, is less adventures with his moves, and at times appears awkward, reserved and tense.

*The Unstoppables'* audiences consist of a significant number of young girls and remarks on their "good looks" are often made by their female fans. They are aware of girls coming to see them play, as well as hear them play. On several occasions Luke informed me of comments and compliments received by the band about their looks, given by female members of their audience. Online communities created around the band and the type of activity that takes place support this assertion, which is discussed further in the next chapter.

In contrast to *The Compacts* and even *The Unstoppables*, *The Cyclists* pay little attention to what they wear on stage. There is no sense of uniformity in terms of style, with "anything goes" philosophy, hence woollen hats and football shirts feature alongside each other. The focus in their performance is tackling an instrument which is often played aggressively and in an exaggerated manner, but without distinctive solo sections or foregrounding of one particular instrument. Lack of style, or a conscious attempt to develop a non-style, goes hand in hand with the band’s "anything goes" philosophy. Samantha, the female guitarist, blends well into this non-image, her androgynous looks making it difficult to discern her gender immediately. Her floppy fringe, loose tops and jeans, together with playing the guitar, slightly turned away from the audience in semi-darkness, make her femininity understated – which brings back to mind her earlier comments about *Smashing Pumpkings'* new female bass player, as well as her comment about one time viola player as "girly girl".

During the formal interviews I asked band members a series of questions about their body image, and body in performance, as well as a number of general questions about diet, exercise and lifestyle. For most young men, admitting that they were involved in a series of practices with the aim of improving their appearance proved difficult. At the same time references to excessive consumption of drugs or alcohol were plentiful. Perhaps because I am a novice researcher who is still learning to negotiate the line between
getting relevant information and not offending a participant, I found it exceptionally difficult to ask those questions of some of the musicians, who were overweight and using loose, baggy clothes to cover up their bodies. I regret not discussing the issues as I feel that their responses may have provided some useful alternative insights into young men’s relationship with their bodies, but at the same time I did not wish to alienate or offend any participants with whom I established good relationships and kept in touch upon the completion of my fieldwork.

Verbal communication with an audience is a relevant aspect of any performance. Various views exist among musicians (and audiences) on what is too much, what too little and whether speaking to an audience should be abandoned in favour of allowing music alone to communicate. And there are indeed some bands who adopt such “no speaking” approach. On their MySpace blog The Unstoppables have used the strapline: “Because sometime music isn’t enough” which can be extended to live performances of many bands who support their music performance with verbal cues, introductions and explanations of songs. Thus far, I have seen The Unstoppables perform four times in different size venues, and in front of different audiences. These included a singer-songwriter’s evening at a large venue owned by a prominent UK musician where they were the only band (the rest were male and female singer-songwriters) and performed to a rather small audience on a Tuesday night. I also witnessed the band supporting a well established female performer in a well known Edinburgh music venue, with the audience consisting of a loyal fan base (of the female artist) of men and women in their 30s and 40s. I saw them headline a sold out gig at the same venue in front of a gender and age mixed audience as well as headline at a charity evening in a student venue, an event the band organised for a cause of their choice, performing mostly in front of friends, family and other bands’ members. Over the past two years The Unstoppables’ ability to verbally communicate with their audience has grown noticeably, reflecting their growing experience of performing live, as well as the development of the musicianship and increase in confidence due to gigging
extensively. Holding an audience’s attention throughout a set is challenging for many musicians thus verbal communication is used to introduce stories associated with the songs and the stories that promote the idea of “bandhood”, as well as to invite the audience to take an active part (by dancing or singing). On the whole, The Unstoppables maintain a good balance between performing their songs and speaking to their audience, with Luke the guitarist and one of the two vocalists, taking on the role of the main communicator with the audience. Luke’s role reflects his emerging status within the band, that of an unspoken band leader and the main creator. Adam, the second guitarist, occasionally takes part in the verbal communication with the audience which in turn reflects his status in the band, that of a second in rank. He too contributes creatively. The bass player and the drummer do not speak directly to the audience, which in turn mirrors their roles as non-creatives. The role distribution in live performance and the degree of engagement with the audience correspond to the sense of hierarchy within this band, discussed in Chapter Five.

Between the songs Luke often makes references to his girlfriend, either by dedicating a song to her or in the context of the storytelling about emergence of songs. Such references, while personal, are verbalised in a public space and hence acquire an altogether different status, coming to connote his heterosexuality as well as his unavailability. Somewhat conversely, references to the band’s mischievous behaviour or small anecdotes including all band members serve as a way or reinforcing a type of masculinity associated with homosociality and bandhood, a closed group of men having fun and creating music together. This is used as one of the most common fillers, not just by The Unstoppables but many all male bands I have come across. It echoes Walser’s (1993) argument about exscription of women from all male (homosocial) spaces addressed elsewhere in the thesis. Such stories often rely on the accounts of male solidarity and camaraderie which have been described as strategies employed in masculinising practices (Clawson, 1999).
I have probably seen *The Compacts* perform live between 10 and 15 times, at various small venues across the North West of England and in London, both as headliners and one of the bands supporting the headlining act. Their line up has changed somewhat over the past few years, with members leaving and new members joining up. On the whole, their audiences consist of friends and other musicians with a wide age range (from teenagers to people in their 50s). Scott, the lead singer of *The Compacts*, tends to be the only member who verbally engages with the audience (beyond singing of the lyrics). Scott comes across as the spokesperson for the band, as well as the main propagator of the values the band stands for and represents; those of independence of art and DIY ethos, playfulness of performance art and a sense of value in subverting audience's expectations. His role of the spokesperson on stage points towards his status in the band, that of a band leader.

For both bands verbal communication with the audience during live performances reinforces hierarchies within bands as it is the leader of each band who addresses the audience. During the live set the leader has a role of conducting or orchestrating the performance, making sure everyone is ready for the next song and talking to the audience in between songs, especially if there is a technical issue to be resolved.

*The Cyclists*, whom I have seen perform several times across Manchester venues, differ from *The Unstoppables* and *The Compacts* as their performances tend to flow without any verbal introductions or even breaks between songs. Being an instrumental band who aim to create “soundscapes” makes verbal communication with the audience unnecessary and redundant, and potentially disrupting the fluidity of their performance and the ambience they strive to create. However, such non-verbalness makes it very difficult to discern the leader of the band or hierarchy within the band, neither of which exist, according to Ivan their bass player. Instead, in performance, each musician appears to be absorbed in playing their instrument, with very little non-verbal interaction (e.g. glances, nods) taking place between the members. Lack of verbal communication draws the attention away from personalities and
narratives, allowing the audience to focus on what is happening musically and visually. However, this had a surprising effect upon me as a spectator as due to the lack of pauses and abundance of sound my attention was quickly drawn to examining of what the band members were wearing, how they used their bodies to play their instruments, how they moved on the stage and so on. So instead of focusing on sound, which is what the band are trying to achieve, the lack of pauses and the lack verbal communication served to enhance my focus on the way the body was performing. Admittedly, other audience members may have had a different experience and a survey of those experiences would provide a more detailed account of degree to which The Cyclists’ strategy of drawing attention away from the body and style, and towards sound, was successful.

Musically, The Unstoppables rely on vocal harmonies in the tradition of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, or perhaps Simon and Garfunkel, although the references to those artists are never made by the band. This gives their sound a supple and translucent qualities, fluidity and placidity. Craftsmanship, delicacy and musical skill seem to be highly appreciated and foregrounded in their performances. The sound is clean, with little or no effects used on the guitars (sometimes arguably used by musicians to cover up mistakes). On occasion they are accompanied by the strings performed by two female musicians which ought to provide a contrast both musically and in terms of gender balance. And while the presence of additional instruments adds fullness and flavour to the sound, there is very little or no change in the band’s stage dynamics as the female musicians are often at the back of the stage or to the side, leaving the prominence of the front stage to the two guitarists/singers.

Lyrically and vocally The Compacts opt for further confrontational strategies. Scott’s singing is guttural accompanied by occasional screaming and high pitched notes. At times, it resembles primeval shouting and the strain produced by it is visible on Scott’s slender, convulsing and straining body. On stage they both destabilise and confirm some of the masculine ideals such as normative heterosexuality and aggression; visually (experimentation with the
image which at the best can be read as ambivalent), vocally (aggressive, guttural singing) and musically (angular, androgynous sounds). The ambivalence can on occasion produce tensions within the band itself, as Scott explains below:

Scott: So, it (music) makes you much more aware of the physical. The loud rock bands even if they...are not particularly inspiring you can feel the sound in your body. It brings you towards the physical. This is one argument I had with X when both him and Stuart were in the band. He was always pouring poison into my head. Because Stuart comes up with quite angular riffs that are not power chords and three chords, X would go “he doesn’t understand that music is about sex! He is asexual! He does not think sex belongs in music!” But it was just any excuse to start a row.

The ambivalence created by the ways in which The Compacts code masculinity in their performance opens up a space for re-thinking of performative aspects of gender and the ways in which music performance can be utilised to challenge and subvert audiences’ expectations. For the band it provides an outlet for experimentation with individual identities and challenge to visual, lyrical and musical conventions.

The Cyclists’ musical direction has led them away from lyrics into the soundscapes where they utilise technology, such as a range of guitar effects, for sonic experimentation:

Ivan: I would quite like to learn electronics, just to be able to tinker with these little crap pedals I bought and making them sound amazing.

Ivan proceeds to explain how the redundancy of lyrics came out of experimentation with the sound:

Ivan: The reason we started playing instrumental tunes...when it was me, Samantha and these two other guys...before we started taking it seriously as a band we used to go to somebody's house, and had everything set up in his kitchen. We would be just messing about with riffs and like the only way we knew
how to do it was to jam and play the same riffs for as long as we could. But then, with people starting to put in more we thought there was plenty going on with what we had, and it did not need any singing on the top of it. It was about working on your own parts and making them as interesting as possible, without clashing all together. But... it just developed over time.

When writing about indie masculinities Matthew Bannister (2006b: 74) argues that de-emphasising of individual instruments through the creation of a wall of sound and use of reverberation is a step away from “rockist” approaches to music (i.e. expressivity located in a solo part of an instrument, usually a guitar). It could be argued that musically (through the creation of a “wall of sound”, lack of lyrical content) and visually (shoegazing) The Cyclists evade gendering of their performance, in addition to eluding an ascription of meaning.

Ivan: I like the idea of music being quite open... like a particular piece of music you can listen to in different situations and it can take on different emotional values.

Each live event is completed by the presence of an audience who employ their own reading strategies to a performance in general, and coding of masculinity more specifically. Laura Mulvey’s (1975) ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ *Screen* publication (and subsequent ‘Afterthoughts’ originally published in 1981 in *Visual and Other Pleasures*) opened the floodgate for psychoanalytically anchoraged readings of representation of men and women in (predominantly) Hollywood cinema. Mulvey poses questions about ways of seeing and pleasure of looking in cinema, where women are coded as passive images and men as active bearers of the look. In ‘Afterthoughts’ she argues that due to phallocentrism of the cinema the female spectator must temporarily accept “masculinisation” of her position in order to take part in reading of the film. While this argument can to some degree be extended to readings of a music video with its frequent incorporation of stereotypical representation of gender, straightforward translation of the theoretical framework to live music setting is more problematic.
Pattie (1999) identifies three main features of communication between a performer and an audience that makes for an "authentic" performance: loss of control, unpremeditated quality and intimacy of the live event:

The audience does not eavesdrop on the spontaneity of the star; the audience also loses control, act in an unpremeditated way, and shares in the essential privacy of the star's performance... (Pattie, 1999) [online]

thus implying a shared, collective experience, which nonetheless allows for a variety of judgments and interpretations associated with it. Moreover, in live performances coding and encoding of masculinities may be determined by: size and type of the venue (small, intimate venues versus large, impersonal venues), status of the band (headlining or supporting act), type of audience (age, gender, cultural values) and meanings associated with a music genre (more generally, and the ways in which masculinity is coded and performed within a particular genre). There was, for example, a significant difference in the ways masculinity was coded in performances by *The Unstoppables* dependant on the status of the band on the night as well as on who was in the audience. During one of their showcase gigs, where record companies and the press were in attendance, they assumed more professional roles, cut down on references to girlfriends (thus unavailability) and band antics (over familiarity), instead reinforcing the idea of bandhood by synchronising their performances and foregrounding their musicianship. Luke, the guitarist and the singer, informed me that he may not see me before the gig (he normally mills around among the audience) because the band were trying to make it "more of a proper show" by sitting back stage and not showing their faces.

Luke (e-mail): we probably won't see you before we go on stage as we want to make this gig as much of a show as possible and so are going to hang backstage until we go on. just think it'll have more impact if we go on stage having not been milling around the audience for the previous two hours! but will catch up with you afterwards, might take a while to pack everything up (disadvantage of headlining!) so i hope you won't be in too much of a hurry! you staying the night in edinburgh?
This worked very well for the band as the audience gave them a star treatment when they came onto stage. When, however, I attended a charity event organised by *The Unstoppables* (a fund raiser for the local hospice) the opposite was the case, the band were more relaxed, mixing with the crowd, acting more "naturally" on stage, and breaking the boundary between the band and the audience by allowing their friends to invade the stage for a part of a song. Cohen too, recognised this trend in her study of a Liverpool music scene, adding that while on one hand music spaces provide an opportunity for exploration of gender and sexuality and subversion of dominant ideologies and conventions, they also restrict and constrain gender performance through corporate and commercial priorities or popular music trends (Cohen, 2001: 238 - 239). Unlike *The Unstoppables*, *The Compacts* and *The Cyclists* do not seem to adjust their performance by allowing the audience and the space of performance to significantly alter it. The reason may lie in the fact that neither of the two bands seem to be aiming for a commercial success and thus do not feel under pressure to perform according to established rules and conventions of the mainstream, nor in a "commercially appropriate" manner.

In a live performance masculinity is authenticated on three different levels; representational (visual aspect, embodied masculinity), cultural (culturally determined performance of gender and its restraints often closely associated with music genre) and personal (also determined by cultural level but may deviate from it). Individual performers, bands and music scenes operate within wider spheres of popular music trends, its corporate structures and commercial goals. Undeniably, not all bands are aiming for a commercial success, but even those whose goals include only achievement of an artistic merit rely on their audiences and expectations those audiences bring to their live encounters.
Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to build upon arguments about music and gender acculturation, and the band as a site of construction of masculinities developed by previous chapters, by examining the ways in which those processes are continued in live settings marked by the presence of the performing body. This required an introduction of additional theoretical concepts – the body, the gaze and authenticity, as well as related notions of realness, liveness and expressivity.

The chapter addressed the importance of the male body as an emerging cultural subject, and its associations with authenticity, realness and expressivity in music. My fieldwork demonstrated some of the difficulties in gathering the qualitative data about male practices of the body, male expressivity and male vulnerabilities and over-reliance on prominent popular culture examples (Ritchey, Docherty) in order to explain and discuss relationships and meanings of the body, vulnerability and realness. Some of the pre-existing scripts of popular music identities associated with expressivity, passion, emotion, suffering and vulnerability provided the musicians in my sample with several potential routes to establishing music and gender identities, but ultimately those positions were determined by other factors such as participants' age, goals of the band, existing role allocation and hierarchies, and musical genre.

Building on theories of the body the chapter problematised spectatorship and argued for an understanding of the gaze as non-monolithic, non-exclusively masculine. Instead, I suggested that within the setting of live music performance gaze positions are non-fixed and directional – always negotiated between the performer and the audience with their assumed expectations. In this I follow Fast (2006) who argues that women gain pleasure from looking at men without necessarily adopting a "masculine" viewer's position. Men also adopt a series of different positions when looking at other men's bodies in performance, while male performers who submit themselves to the gaze, can gain pleasure from it and can vary their performance based on assumed
expectations of their audiences (hence difference in performance dependent on the type of gig, i.e. showcase gig, charity gig, an intimate gig for close group of friends only). I, however, acknowledge that further research in audience's spectatorial positions is required in order to develop such arguments further.

The second part of the chapter drew on ethnographic data of live performances I witnessed, associated data collected in formal interviews and less formalised electronic correspondence practices. It examined a number of visual, vocal and musical strategies (all categorised as body practices) adopted by three different bands in live performances, which I argued served the purpose of authenticating their musical and gender identities. Performing live is an important dimension of both musical and gender acculturation. It facilitates the learning of musical performance which in turn represents cultural doing of gender/masculinities. Utilising the concept of expressive authenticity (where values and beliefs are mediated through works of art, or in this case music) associated with representational, cultural and personal authenticity, I demonstrated that the nature of the performance space, type of audience as well as goals of individual bands (commercial, creative and so on) determine the ways in which the body performs and masculinities are authenticated in live music settings. While at times relying on conventions associated with gender performance, some musicians in my sample have also engaged in practices of subversion of audiences' expectations, exposing the constructedness of performance (*The Compacts*). Others have adjusted the coding of their gender identity dependent on the type of performance space as well as the type of audience. Finally, music genres with their own normative codes have strong implications on enactment and representation of gender in live performance.

Exploration of music spaces, as spaces where meaning is created through the interactions of audiences and performers is likely to shine more light on the ways gender identity is both coded and encoded. The performer can never fully control the ways in which his music or gender identity is constructed as the meaning of music and associated practices is actualised
through values held by audiences about what a particular identity or particular performance ought to incorporate.
Bands in Virtual Spaces: Social Networking and Masculinity

Introduction

During 2003/2004, a year before embarking on post graduate research, I frequented a music forum dedicated to Franz Ferdinand, the Glaswegian band who rose to popularity following their debut album, and went on to win the prestigious Mercury Music Prize for 2004. It was the first time I actively participated in an online community, posting and replying to messages, exchanging the band related information and discussing popular music more generally. The forum was moderated by an enthusiastic and technically competent fan of the band, who was later employed by the band's management to run and maintain their website. This employment was short lived, as a new way of music related communication and consumption was lurking around the corner – social networking site MySpace was to be embraced by Franz Ferdinand, and thousands of others, both established and unknown acts.

"Social network" sites and "social networking" sites are phrases often used interchangeably. Due to their interest in the phenomenon rather than emphasis on practice of networking, boyd and Ellison (2007) opt for phrase "social network sites". Throughout this chapter I use the phrase "social networking" in relation to MySpace, to denote both a virtual space populated by individuals and communities, and the activity inherent in such presence. The activity on MySpace always involves a form of communication through networking and in the case of most bands the primary aim is creating and expanding networks in order to increase their visibility, marketability, and ultimately increase their chances of commercial success. At the same time, social networking sites advertise their "services" by focusing on the notions of friendship, entertainment and connectivity, as exemplified by the strap lines below:
"Bebo is a social media network where friends share their lives and explore great entertainment"

"My Space – a place for friends"

"Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you"

For many unsigned bands interaction on social networking sites exceeds mere befriending and creation of connections for connections’ sake. They embrace and use the new technology as a part of numerous band related practices, such as contacting record labels, recording studios, gig promoters (all with their own social networking pages), as well as building an audience and promoting a new single or an upcoming gig.

Recognising the significance of social networks and social networking has a long tradition in sociology. Some elements can be traced as far back as the 19th century and Durkheim’s notion of anomie as a form of social deregulation, contrasted by group life and associated group goals. In the latter part of the 20th century there appear to be two parallel theoretical approaches focusing on the significance of social networks: social resources theories and social capital theories. Social resources theories focus on social network analysis and status attainment, and originate in the seminal study of Mark Granovetter (1973) who conducted several hundred interviews with managerial men in Massachusetts, and whose findings linked those who utilised interpersonal connections with attainment of more prestigious and higher paid jobs. He introduced the concept of “the strength of the weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973), challenging the existing notion of exclusive validity of strong ties and foregrounding the idea that weak ties may provide equally as valuable access to ideas, information and audiences. Granovetter’s theory has been taken up, among others, by Lin (1982, 1990, 1999) who continued to examine the relationship between the social resources and attained statuses.

The second and parallel tradition originates with Bourdieu’s social capital theory, where social capital is defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or
recognition”, (Bourdieu, 1985: 248 cited in Portes, 1998: 3). Bourdieu’s argument has been developed by Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1995), among others, with Coleman focusing on the co-relation between social inequality and educational achievement, and Putnam examining the role of civic society and civic community networks in quality of public life and performance of social institutions. Lin (1999) suggests that despite the range of focus in social capital theories (e.g. education, civic organisations), what binds them together is the fact that resources are accessed in and through social networks.

As social networking sites are a relatively new phenomena, the work that extends social resources theories and social capital theories to social networking sites is in its infancy. In their writing about strong ties “that exist among close friends and families, the kinds of ties that connect dense clusters” and weak ties “the kinds of ties that exist among people one knows in specific setting”, Donath and boyd (2004) suggest that:

...the number of strong ties an individual can maintain may not be greatly increased by communication technology... but that the number of weak ties one can form and maintain may be able to increase substantially...(Donath and boyd, 2004: 80)

This certainly may have implications on how bands utilise social networking sites and the type of ties that are developed, with some bands opting for extensive, “promiscuous” networks without discrimination on the basis of value or utility, while others tend to evaluate contacts and add them on the basis of potential benefit they can bring to the band.

The previous chapters examined masculinity as constituted by and through musical activities, negotiated and contested through the notion of “bandhood” as well as treated it as “corporeal musical phenomena” – the body in performance. The aims of this chapter are twofold: first, to examine textual and visual versions of masculinity constructed and maintained by the bands participating in an online community at large, and second, to explore whether or not new forms of communication and online interaction provide opportunities for
transgression of the established gender/power relationships. Writing in this chapter is based on both participation and observation of online activity of MySpace and its offline extensions. I was introduced to MySpace in April 2006, at Jools Holland’s Edinburgh venue Jamhouse, where I was enjoying live music. Instead of the usual “and if you speak to one of us we can send you a CD” at the end of the performance, the singer (Luke) of one of the acts (The Unstoppables) announced that the audience can “hear and download our tunes from MySpace”, reciting the full address of their site. I was soon to become aware of the entire new world full of possibilities, lurking behind those casually spoken words, and MySpace was to become an important tool for my research as well as the “space” I was to examine.

The argument presented here is informed by debates and writing from a number of academic disciplines. It is both textual and contextual, that is, based on analysis drawing on visual semiotics as well as the ethnographic method of participant observation, with the aim of situating “texts” and processes under examination within wider socio-cultural contexts. In order to situate the argument about the representation of the body (embodied masculinity) specifically, as well as status of gender more generally within social networking sites, a brief overview of writing about cyberspace and cybercultures, from which social networking has emerged, is presented in the next section. This is followed by the review of the more current and most pertinent strands of thought coming from the social and cultural theory traditions, with their focus on online communities in relation to identity formation and negotiation. Finally, I examine the current arguments focusing on popular music and social networking, presenting the findings based on my own involvement as both a participant in and an observer of music related online activity.

The promise of cyberspace

As far as cyberscapes were concerned, the late 1980s and most of the 1990s were very much dominated by two strands of the debate about the status of the
body; a perception of the body loosing its ontological status and retreating into
the realm of discourse (the notion of the "disappearing body"); and a more
"cautious" approach calling for an examination of inscription of gender, race,
age and sexuality upon the postmodern body. The debate emerged as a result
of scientific and technological developments married with the excitement of the
fast approaching new millennium, in which post bodied and post human forms
of existence will no longer be just the subject of science fiction novels and
where "...the ultimate possibility of the displacement of the material body from
the confines of its immediate lived space" will occur. (Featherstone and
Burrows, 1995: 2)

Further debates addressed the issue of boundaries; our age is to
become an age in which the opposition between the technology and nature
continues to dissolve, where boundaries between the artificial and the "natural",
the mind and the body, and even male and female begin to blur. For most, such
blurring of the boundaries provided an opening; exciting and new, more
egalitarian and increasingly flexible spaces for existence.

Donna Haraway's introduction and subsequent politicising of the concept
of cyborg came to exemplify the possibilities of disruption of the dominant
binaries including those of sex and gender (male/female,
masculinity/femininity). Drawing on the fusion between the human and the
machine the cyborg's duality implies that "...the resulting hybrid is neither
purely human nor purely machine" (Balsamo, 1996: 33), thus destabilising and
disrupting both concepts. However, within the discourses of postmodern
corporeality the question of gender remained pertinent. Anne Balsamo argued
that despite many challenges encountered by the status and meaning of the
body, gender boundaries remained "vigilantly guarded" (Balsamo, 1995: 217).

A more affirming argument put forward by theorist Sadie Plant examined
a long standing relationship between women and technologies, where histories
of women's liberation and technology are "woven together", and where through
an attempt to establish their own networks women begin to represent a threat
to patriarchal order (Plant, 1995: 46). Whereas Balsamo perceived the body as
always marked by race and gendered, Plant saw the cyberfuture as belonging to women; with men having to resort to adjustments and modifications, and rethink their positions since there is something inherent in “female style” which will make it a foundation of cyberspace.

Others, like Sherry Turkle (1996), Allucquere Rosanne Stone (1996) and Claudia Springer (1996) engaged with issues of cyberspace, embodiment and identity by examining virtual communities with opportunities for and implications of identity play in cyberspace, and in the case of Springer the way cultural texts (e.g. science fiction novels, cyberpunk comics, films) represent the fusion of body and technology and treat the concept of gender. In theorising cyberspace the concept of the community has been problematised, mainly in two ways. First, cyberspace can be seen as a “space” that re-enforces real life communities, and second it has been suggested that involvement with online activities and communities is damaging and an inadequate replacement for real life communities (e.g. Robins, 2000). Writing in 1995 Howard Rheingold foregrounded the convergence of the Net with everyday practices, communities and human institutions:

Because of its potential influence on so many people's beliefs and perceptions, the future of the Net is connected to the future of community, democracy, education, science, and intellectual life - some of the human institutions people hold most dear, whether or not they know or care about the future of computer technology.
(Rheingold, 1995) [online]

The 1990s have been dominated by writing informed by our presence on Bulletin Boards (USENET) and MUDs (Multi User Domains, Dimensions or Dungeons), with the possibilities those provided for communication and representation. While no suggestion is being made that some of the philosophical underpinnings of cyberspace debates are out of date, it is important to note that virtual environments facilitated by new cyber technologies provide opportunities for novel and diverse ways of engagement. More up to date accounts of online communities have been given, among others, by Paul
Hodkinson (2007) who expanded on his work on subcultural communities by examining virtual communities, subcultural blogging (among UK goths), as well as the pertinent issues of identity and individualisation within online environments. In his recent article 'Interactive Online Journals and Individualization' Hodkinson (2007) argues that developing technologies and evolving forms of online communities and online interaction have resulted in a shift from "group centred forms of sociability" to more individually centered patterns of interaction. I return to this article later in this chapter and broaden Hodkinson’s analysis to social networking sites and music related interaction that extends beyond that of a subcultural group.

A recently published collection of articles *Cybersounds: Essays on Virtual Music Culture* (Ayers, 2006) exemplifies the scope of the current music related academic writing on the topic. It situates itself in what it defines as “a relatively underpublished area” of convergence of cyberculture and musicology.

There is a unique relationship that has been forged within cyberspace surrounding this art form, and no other art form to date can claim having as much of an impact on as many social spheres. (Ayers, 2006: 2)

The articles in the volume provide insights into "a distinct rift between the music industry, consumers or fans, and the artists responsible for creative output", by examining legal challenges surrounding music in “networked society”, for example peer-to-peer file-sharing networks (Elizabeth A. Buchanan, Chapter One - 'Deafening Silence: Music and the Emerging Climate of Access and Use'), as well as taking a look at practices employed by fans and artists within online environments (Andrew Wheelan, Chapter Three - ‘Do You Produce?: Subcultural Capital and Amateur Musicianship in Peer-to-Peer Networks’; Andre Pinard and Sean Jacobs, Chapter Four – 'Building a Virtual Diaspora: Hip-Hop in Cyberspace'). Additionally, 'Music B(r)ands Online and Constructing Community: The Case of New Model Army', by Daragh O'Reilly and Kathy Doherty, relies on employment of ‘netnography’:
...ethnographic research approach adapted to online fieldwork. This approach involves the collection of a range of raw data sources (which can include downloaded files of postings, email exchanges, sound/picture files, interviews with key informants, and field notes taken as a participant observer or "lurker" in online or related offline contexts) in order to study the distinctive meanings, customs, practices, and artefacts of the social groupings and connections between their online and offline life. (O'Reilly and Doherty, 2006: 143)

They examine online interaction between New Model Army and their fans, through the notion of branding of the band as well as "brand community" defined as:

...specialized, nongeographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand. (O'Reilly and Doherty, 2006: 141)

The non-geographic dimension of online communities is also addressed by the collection of articles in Part Three 'Virtual Scenes' in Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual (Bennet and Peterson, 2004). In 'Internet-based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt.Country Music', Lee and Peterson question if face-to-face interaction is indeed a pre-requisite for a music scene by looking at "scenelike characteristics" of web-based listserv devoted to Alt. Country. They examine interaction, recruitment, demographic composition and life span of the scene, comparing its characteristics to some common characteristics of non-virtual music scenes. They conclude that although the virtual scene appears to grow much faster and remains vital for a longer period of time, it is questionable if this would be the case should the scene remain entirely virtual, without a possibility of face-to-face interaction provided by scene related real life music events such as festivals. Laura Vroomen's article in the same section ('Kate Bush: Teen Pop and Older Female fans') is a case study of Kate Bush fans, "mature, largely middle class and female". Vroomen focuses on the degree of "sceneness" and fluidity of the scene, exploring participants' engagement and a range of meanings associated with it. She too concludes that face-to-face interaction and ideas about fandom associated with
age (fandom as teenage pursuit), persist and extend beyond networked reality of virtual scenes.

This section briefly charted the development in theorisation of cyberspace and cyber communities from the early engagement with the blurring of the boundary between the body and technology (and hence destabilising marking of the body by gender, age, ethnicity and so on), to more current debates about the characteristics of online communities, modes of interaction and their impact on identity and sociability. Over the past two decades there has been a noticeable shift from textual to visual online communities, with increasing prominence of the photographs and videos associated with the personal profiles which, while still allowing a degree of cyberplay with identity, fasten the participants to the categories of gender, age and ethnicity more readily. Furthermore, participation in online communities has become a part of everyday practices of communication which is exemplified by some employers, such as the Open University, even promoting and encouraging Facebook interaction between tutors and students, tutors and other tutors, and students and other students.

In order to contextualise the broader argument about social networking and music, the following sections briefly chart the development of the phenomena of social networking and the way it has been embraced and appropriated by the bands, before turning my attention to my own observational findings about social networking participation of specific bands who are the focus of this study.

Social networking: a short introduction

Social networking sites are emerging and evolving extremely fast, and their perpetual changes and expansion provide a challenge when attempting to define and describe the main features and functions. Scholarly writing on the phenomena is still in its infancy despite the fact that the increasing numbers of scholars utilise social networking sites for expansion of their own networks and
increase of visibility of their work. Paul Hodkinson's (2006) writing about LiveJournal and aforementioned ‘Interactive Online Journals and Individualization’ (Hodkinson, 2007) provide useful insights into the ways developing technologies and resulting newly created “spaces” have been embraced and utilised by a particular subcultural group, as well as examining their impact on status and meaning of individual and subcultural identities. Danah Boyd’s work has been mapping out the development of social networking sites in the United States over the past few years, tracing and discussing the key changes and developments as well as exploring teenage participation in social networking, while Nancy Baym (2007) focuses on the role of the Internet in the empowerment of music fan communities. As I am writing in 2008 the three most established and well known social networking sites in the UK are MySpace, Facebook and Bebo. Boyd and Ellison define social network sites as:

...web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (Boyd and Ellison, 2007) [online]

The first social networking site containing the above features was SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997 but despite attracting a million users the service closed in 2000 due to its inability to transform itself into a profitable business. According to personal communication Boyd conducted with A. Weinreich, the site’s founder, the site was ahead of its time (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). This was due to a lack of extended networks of friends online at that time, resulting in very little or nothing to do online, except meeting strangers, which most users were not interested in.

LiveJournal was launched by Brad Fitzpatrick in 1999, as a virtual community where internet users can keep a web log/blog - a journal or a diary. Other well known social networking sites include: Ryze.com launched in 2001
with the aim of expanding business networks, Tribe.net founded in 2003, LinkedIn (business oriented social networking site: "LinkedIn brings together your professional network") founded in 2002 and launched in 2003, and Friendster launched in 2002 and designed to compete with Match.com, an online dating site (boyd and Ellison, 2007):

...Friendster was designed to help friends-of-friends meet, based on the assumption that friends-of-friends would make better romantic partners than would strangers. (boyd and Ellison, 2007) [online]

However, the site experienced a number of technical difficulties. Due to its rapid growth and its systems struggling to cope many users were frustrated. Another significant development was a rise in "Fakesters" – fake profiles representing "iconic fictional characters: celebrities, concepts and other such entities" (boyd and Ellison, 2007). "Fakesters", together with the profiles of indie rock bands were actively deleted/expelled due to breach of profile regulations. This was a significant development in the evolution of social networking sites, which by this point (2003) were entering the mainstream. In 2003 MySpace was founded by Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe. It was launched in January 2004 and unlike other social networking sites who turned away musicians, MySpace embraced them, gradually adding tools so that bands could easily upload their music and their fans could easily access it.

While MySpace was not launched with bands in mind, they were welcomed. Indie-rock bands from the Los Angeles region began creating profiles, and local promoters used MySpace to advertise VIP passes for popular clubs... Bands were not the sole source of MySpace growth, but the symbiotic relationship between bands and fans helped MySpace expand beyond former Friendster users. (boyd and Ellison, 2007) [online]

In July 2005 Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation bought MySpace for $580 million. In August 2007 it had 6,379,000 unique users, just behind Facebook with 6,506,000 unique users, and ahead of Bebo with 4,449,000 in the United
Kingdom (Kiss, 2007) [25 September 2007, The Guardian online]. Facebook came into existence in 2004 and was aimed at Harvard students (one had to have a Harvard.edu email address). However, by 2005 it expanded and offered a space for high school students, professionals in other networks and subsequently everyone, regardless of their affiliation to an educational institution and their status (boyd and Ellison, 2007) [online]. The domain name Bebo (“blog early, blog often”) was purchased by its founders Xochi and Michael Birch for $8,000 in 2002. Bebo was launched in 2005 and it took off very quickly in the UK, especially among school children. In March 2008 it was acquired by AOL for $850 m (Brook, 2008) [13 March 2008, The Guardian online].

**Arriving at MySpace**

When I was introduced to MySpace in April 2006 I did not immediately realise the significance it would come to have, and the role it would come to play as both a research tool and a space for exploration and examination of relevant aspects of my research topic. At the time I was conducting numerous fieldwork observations, frequenting local venues, and chatting informally to band members and audiences, setting the scene for a series of interviews with musicians planned for later that year. Within a couple of months of my signing up and creating a profile, MySpace became a buzz word within music spaces I was frequenting. Everyone was talking about it, exchanging tips and details of encounters, or promoting their own profile. I recall a gig I attended in Liverpool accompanied by a male friend who was a fan of the band we had come to see. While I was standing in the bar area, observing pre-gig rituals (merchandise stall chaos, lukewarm pints of lager being poured into plastic glasses, an over-enthusiastic crowd gathering in front of the stage), he came running excitedly from the male toilets and informed me that the singer seemed to be “a really nice guy”, due to acknowledging my friend’s “hello”, and then proceeded to talk to someone else about MySpace. We were amused, and with some
exaggeration concluded that everybody and everywhere (including male toilets in Liverpool) was talking about nothing else but MySpace. Together with telephone numbers, MySpace profile addresses started to be passed on, and the venues were increasingly promoting bands on the bill by providing their MySpace profile details. The standard format now included:

- Date, X present: band name, ticket price, times, image, brief biography/discography, MySpace details.

The immediate impact such format has is that of immediacy of access; one tends to skip all other details and click on MySpace link, where all the above details, as well as the music can be found. Suddenly, if a band did not have a MySpace profile, the band was disadvantaged in as much as it was lacking an important “presence” as well as an immediate, albeit virtual visual identity. Promoters were increasingly asking bands for MySpace profile details so that they could listen to bands' music online, rather than be dealing with CDs or be downloading MP3 files sent via email.

Quite rapidly, I was caught up in the whole fast moving phenomena that MySpace was, and spending several hours a day “networking”. As far as utilising it for research purposes was concerned, in those early days I did not have a specific plan. Instead, I tried to use it in a most natural way, instinctually, and learn the ropes. I created a profile, completing an online form consisting of several sections (Interests and Personality, Name, Basic Info, Background and Lifestyle, Schools, Companies, Networking), with subsections inviting me to list my favourite music, books, films, interests and so on. I uploaded a profile photograph at the time of registration while the rest of the fields I completed over a period of time, expanding and developing the basic information, changing and customising my profile’s background, adding videos to my profile and so on. I acquired friends rapidly, to start with mostly the bands who were in search of an audience. There were two main types of bands I befriended, first were already established acts whose music I liked and bought in the past, and
second were lesser known bands whom I had encountered on the local music circuit. The process of “befriending” in MySpace requires a user to either send a friendship request to a chosen individual or a group, or to accept the request sent to them. Once the friendship is approved friends appear on profiles. In 2006 I seem to recall the maximum of friends immediately visible on profiles was eight, and those were known as “top friends”. As time went on top friends slots expanded, and as I write in 2008 one can display up to 40 top friends. I had to make choices about which individuals and bands I placed in my top eight, and settled for the rotational strategy where I would change the position of my top friends on weekly basis. This was later to become a feature on MySpace to which one could subscribe, hence having their top friends rotated automatically and randomly on regular basis, avoiding accusations of favouritism.

Nowadays, most active online users are accustomed to thinking about online worlds in terms of social worlds, or at least social spaces with their own etiquettes. Reciprocity with top friends position is one of the first etiquette “rules” one acquires, therefore if an individual or a band placed me in their top friends in those early days I felt someway obliged to respond by adding them to my top friends. By doing so I was both acknowledging their position within my network and my affiliation to their status, knowledge, connections and their public (self-descriptive) identity. Donath and boyd (2004) define those connections as: mutual, public, unnuanced (“there is no distinction made between a close relative and a near stranger one chatted with idly on-line one night”), and decontextualised “there is no way of showing only a portion of one’s network to some people” (Donath and boyd, 2004: 72). However, as I write in the autumn of 2008, the change is already underway, especially with Facebook where privacy settings do allow users to decide who can see what part of their profile. Donath and boyd pose a question about the meaning of public connections which on MySpace are visible and explicit. They relate it to physical world where connections are displayed through strategies such as
“name dropping”, introduction of friends to friends or even just appearing in public with someone as a display of connection. They suggest that:

Seeing someone within the context of their connections provides the viewer with information about them. Social status, political beliefs, musical taste, etc., may be inferred from company one keeps. (Donath and boyd, 2004: 72)

They further argue that the public display of connections in online communities acts as a mechanism of verification of one’s identity (Donath and boyd, 2004: 73). And yet, there is a scope for one’s online identity to come into being, to be written into pages of one’s profile, to evolve and develop.

A MySpace profile can be seen as a form of digital body where individuals must write themselves into being. Through profiles, teens can express salient aspects of their identity for others to see and interpret. (boyd, 2007a) [online]

The display of connections on MySpace bands’ pages provided an initial reference point, helping me to locate bands within the existing music genres and hierarchies within genres. I return to this point later in the chapter where I discuss strategies employed by bands in the process of “writing themselves into being”. 23

Theoretical framework, methodologies and questions

... “the body” is a social, cultural, and historical production: “production” here means both product and process. As a product, it is the material embodiment of ethnic, racial and gender identities, as well as a staged performance of personal identity, of beauty, of health (among other things). As a process, it is a way of

23 Sunden (2003) Material Virtualities: Approaching Online Textual Embodiment is of interest here. The argument presented by Sunden challenges one of the most established “narratives” of cybercultures research, that of “disembodiment”. Instead, she proposes that partaking in virtual worlds always involves a representational dimension of writing one self into being.
knowing and marking the world, as well as a way of knowing and marking a “self”.
(Balsamo, 1996: 3)

If we are to understand strategies and impact of interactions occurring in social networking spaces we ought to incorporate the duality implied by the above definition (the body as the “product” – embodied materiality marked by gender, age, ethnicity and so on, and the body as the “process” – a way of knowing the world and the self) into a theoretical framework against which they are to be examined. Social networking sites are not free from the body. Indeed, with the development of social networking sites the utopian visions of genderlessness of cyberspace (and absence of the body marked by gender) have been turned upside down, with the body inscribed by gender becoming one of the foremost markers of identity within virtual communities. In social networking environments the representation of the self privileges the body but it is also aided by the textual and contextual inscription.

Early categorisations through the infamous A/S/L (age, sex, location) have been extended in social networking sites to taste (music, books, film, TV), reasons for virtual presence (networking, friends, relationships), status (relationship status – single, married), body type, ethnicity, religion, education, profile song and so on. For bands, the layout and the categorisation are slightly different, and apart from uploading their music (up to six tracks at the time of writing) they are given an opportunity to include the band website, names of band members, influences, type of sound, type of record label (major, independent, self), photographs and videos, information on upcoming shows, and to write a blog to which their fans can subscribe. All of the above facilities are embraced and utilised by bands to “write themselves into being”, establish their identities and negotiate and maintain their online existence.

Findings presented here are based on my active participation in online community of MySpace and daily observation of activity over the period of two years (2006 - 2008). I logged in every day, on average spending between one and two hours conducting online activities. These included: updating my profile
(adding text, images, sound and so on), responding to messages sent to my MySpace inbox, approving requests for friendship (this involves going to the profile of an individual or a band, scanning information about them, or listening to their music, and granting or refusing a request), reading comments posted by "friends" on my profile, leaving comments for "friends", "lurking" and keeping an eye on profiles of the bands whom I selected for observation. The selection of bands for observation was relatively straightforward – I made a decision to engage with the online activity of the bands whose members I interviewed and whom I watched perform live thus extending the knowledge gleaned through real life interaction into the virtual space. Those bands invited me to MySpace, befriended me, wrote to me and exchanged information with me via MySpace. I learned of their gigs through their MySpace calendars and blogs, read reviews of their performances published on MySpace, was directed to their live sessions and podcasts by information provided on MySpace. I learned that the two spheres (online and offline) were inextricably linked. Exclusive cyberspace encounters with strangers prevalent in the early days of cyberspace interactions have increasingly been replaced by extensions of real life interaction through online interaction. Both boyd’s (2007a) and Hodkinson’s (2007) research indicate that online interaction is either an extension of real life networks or an opportunity to initiate real life contact which supplements online encounters. This is particularly true of the bands for whom a virtual audience, while desirable, must be translated into real life audience in order to support a band’s offline activity, such as playing live. Or for whom a virtual friendship with a record label or a gig promoter is useful only when extended into a real life connection and association.

Social networking sites are fast moving and rapidly evolving environments with an ever growing population as well as with numerous possibilities for representation and communication, which presents certain challenges for anyone embracing elements of an ethnographic approach. The practice of virtual ethnography sometimes also referred to as or “netnography”
(Kozinets, 1998; 2002) or “webnography”\(^2\) is increasingly employed in mediated settings. Most commonly the researcher becomes a participant observer or “lurker”. As outlined by O’Reilly and Doherty (2006) the participant observer in virtual environments employs a number of observational and data collection strategies, involving what they term as “raw data sources” such as downloaded files and postings, email correspondence, sound and picture files and so on; all with the aim of describing and examining practices and meanings of the group under observation as well as the relationships between their online and offline practices (O’Reilly and Doherty, 2006: 143). When discussing the practice of participant observation in a networked culture, danah boyd suggests that the researcher becomes a node who has a potential to disrupt and alter the culture being studied (boyd, 2007b). My approach combined observational ethnography (learning about participants and practices through offline observation) and participatory netnography, where the researcher becomes a part of the community she is researching and contributes to interaction. The participatory dimension of my online presence achieved through presentation of the self, interaction with band members in virtual spaces and positioning within networks of interest, has undoubtedly impacted on both the way in which online practices were conducted by the participants, and the conclusions drawn by me about those practices. The alternative would have been simply “lurking” online, without engaging the participants in any way. On balance, I felt that being a

\(^2\) Rob Kozinets is often referred to as “the father of netnography”. The approach has been established circa 1996 as an offshoot of ethnographic research on *Star Trek* fans who had a significant presence in online communities. For Kozinets’ work see:


visible researcher who engages with participants invited significant responses and provided better quality data.

What does MySpace offer?

For both established and up and coming bands, MySpace provides a whole new range of opportunities previously unavailable. Below is the selection of responses received to questions posted to bands I observed, about advantages and disadvantages of MySpace. The majority of the respondents identified the following three as the main advantages of MySpace:

1. Online presence, previously limited to having a web site, which now provides bands with an opportunity to maintain their visibility, communicate with existing fans and acquire new ones. For example:

   Jerry: I think, creatively speaking, one of the major benefits is for bands on the periphery of the industry (which would be the majority of the network; us included). We would otherwise be extinct. Say "fuck it, it's over"...now you don't ever really have to do that...you can do the myspace thing, keep it alive...it creates new motivation as an artist, it's like, well we do still have an audience (it may be small) but in fans staying loyal, the band reciprocates...says "right, we won't jack it in totally we'll feed this new format when we can"...etc. etc. It has inspired me that way.

   James: Also the success of MySpace has allowed a lot of older bands to set up sites, introducing a younger audience to a wide range of referenced music, also meaning that some of the older bands have reformed and play as interest grows in musical styles such as post-punk, c86 etc.

Prior to the existence of social networking sites, those on “the periphery of the industry”, unlike more successful bands who have a backing of a record company, had to invest their own time and money to maintain their visibility on music scenes. This could be achieved by purchasing bandwidth for a website
(and hoping somebody would access it), updating and maintaining the pages, using personal networks to spread the word about upcoming gigs or advertising gigs in the music listings sections of the press; all of which can be time consuming and costly, resulting in the bands being under-active or giving up altogether. Jerry had some degree of the main stream success with his previous bands, and sees MySpace as an opportunity to re-connect with his audience. For James, MySpace is an example of intertextuality, with bands referencing other bands (by putting them in their “tops”) and reaching to a younger audience who are accessing new bands via generic references.

2. Interactivity (keeping in touch, receiving feedback) and having a sense of control.

Jerry: I think the contact with people is key to it too…immediate feedback and exchanges between the listener and the music maker can now happen so easily and quickly that it can influence how you're thinking…and writing.

Ivan: I think the advantages are that you can update things on your own page yourself and that you have direct access to people who are actually into your band rather than things going through somebody who's running a website for you.

Immediacy of feedback achieved through interactivity and “direct access to people” can impact strongly on bands' motivation, allowing them to adjust their approach and musical and visual output on their sites. For example, it is not uncommon for fans to make demands for a particular track to be put up on the site, or for the bands to use counters on the player as an indication of what the most popular tracks are when they upload any new material. Prior to the existence of social networking sites such as MySpace, the only feedback mechanism (apart from verbal praise or a tap on the shoulder) for many bands would have been numbers of people turning up at their gigs, as facilities for any type of interactivity (for example, expressing one’s intention to attend a particular gig) on the web sites were generally under-developed, basic and
poor. On the whole, MySpace provides bands with a greater overview of what their current status is (how many people are logging onto their page each day and listening to their music, how many people are posting comments, reading blogs and so on).

3. Practicality and accessibility.

James: It is very easy to use i.e. upload songs and build profiles. It is easy to access from any place and simple to navigate. MySpace is a recognisable brand and therefore a simple one stop shop for people to access everything band related in one place.

Albert: For musicians, MySpace still seems to be the main website to go for. What it offers is a place for artists, fans, venues, promoters etc. to find each other when before it might not have been easy. For me in particular the advantage has been promoters have been able to hear my music and have offered me gigs as a result. It also makes it easy to make a website that anyone can access and hear my music or contact me through, especially when my abilities in web design are so rudimentary.

Luke: MySpace provides an instant portal into which a fan can step in and listen to a band's music, find out their tour dates and even contact the band personally.

The concept of "one stop shop" or "an instant portal" seems important to the musicians and unsigned bands, as this is the first time that bands are given an opportunity to present sound, image and text in one place and for free. The notion of uniformity brought about by MySpace's relatively fixed layout with the identical representational tools available to all (irrespective of their level of success) is also significant, with visitors to all pages likely to be acculturated to the online environment/layout and thus more efficient in accessing relevant information (e.g. latest blogs, upcoming gig section, photographs, videos and so on). A few additional advantages identified by the respondents included: possibilities of generating profit through music file download sales, re-
connecting with long lost friends (usually other musicians) and the pleasure of discovering new music.

However, the respondents were aware of and willing to point out some of the disadvantages. For some there was (now unfounded) concern about the terms and conditions of intellectual property and copyright. For others, they were related to the issue of creativity:

Jerry: The disadvantage for me, is the addictive quality. Instead of picking up the guitar to write a tune...or whatever, you go online. That's not good! That I think is an adjustment period, like now I'm getting kind of sick of the online activity...I'll peel that back, pick up the guitar more often again and set the balance right.

Albert believes that there is an over-saturation of bands and that subsequently the lowering of standards of music and performance occur:

Albert: Disadvantages I suppose are, now that every band has a MySpace (even artists who died before it was even conceived), it's easy to get lost among them all...It was 2005 when I first put up pages for both myself and the band, and it was much easier back then. Having said that, it also makes acts lazy - it's sometimes too easy to just get a gig, and I think some people just expect it. The result of that

25 Until June 2006 the fine print within the user agreement read: "You hereby grant to MySpace.com a non-exclusive, fully-paid and royalty-free, worldwide license (with the right to sublicense through unlimited levels of sublicensees) to use, copy, modify, adapt, translate, publicly perform, publicly display, store, reproduce, transmit, and distribute such Content on and through the Services." Many users, including some prominent musicians like Billy Bragg who brought the issue to the attention of the media, were concerned about the fine print. These concerns were exacerbated due to common knowledge that News Corp, the company run by media mogul Rupert Murdoch, had purchased Intermix Media, owner of Myspace.com in 2005 for £332.85m. By June 27, 2006, MySpace had amended the user agreement with: "MySpace.com does not claim any ownership rights in the text, files, images, photos, video, sounds, musical works, works of authorship, or any other materials (collectively, 'Content') that you post to the MySpace Services. After posting your Content to the MySpace Services, you continue to retain all ownership rights in such Content, and you continue to have the right to use your Content in any way you choose."
is low standards, from both acts and promoters, and that's never very desirable. Unless you’re as brilliant as we are of course! Haha.

I agree with Albert’s first point where one regularly comes across hundreds of unofficial profiles dedicated to a particular artist, often badly designed or underdeveloped. But this also provides access to songs that the creator of the profile uploads, and that the visitors may have no access to otherwise. Regarding Albert’s second point the opposite could be argued, that due to greater competition and greater accessibility of acts to choose from the promoters are raising, rather than lowering, the standards. Further disadvantages identified included the impact of immediacy and transparency on the audiences’ sense of journey and discovery.

Luke: Disadvantages are that it may remove a little mystery as, nowadays if you hear a new band you can instantly find out everything you need to know with a quick visit to their MySpace. In the past, one had to pore over details from album sleeves or ask friends about the history of the band which was quite exciting.

Apart from being exciting, poring over details of album sleeves and in general willingness to increase one’s knowledge of a band through research, is imbued with a greater sense of value when greater effort and time is invested in such a process. Luke’s point is associated with the notion of “collecting” I introduced in Chapter Four, where collecting of knowledge and music artefacts has been discussed in the context of music enculturation and in relation to musical credibility and differentiation of status.

For John, accessibility of music through technology devalues it as an art form, making it less authentic:

John: It certainly helps people to consume more music, more easily and quickly. It is dangerous in as much as it ultimately devalues the art form. It truly is as Jean Baudrillard has written, that digital recording and reproduction has brought about a simulacrum or simulation of music. Music is now too readily available on the net.
However, he admits to "dangerous nostalgia trips on YouTube".

Scott, the leader of The Compacts, had a different perspective on MySpace to most other participants, recognising the potential impact of branding and commercialisation:

Scott: MySpace and the Internet and the continuing commercialisation of anything that is underground, the things are co-opted straight away... I think... uhm... everything is for sale on the internet and everybody advertises themselves, and I dislike that angle of it how teenagers are marketing themselves and everyone is aware of branding, and how things are going to look. It is just going to create anxiety for people and unhappiness rather than generate fun. I do not know. I had two The Compacts MySpaces and I deleted them in disgust. The last one, I was trying to get it banned, cause I posted a password and a log in... then I changed one of our songs to a John Lennon song which is against the rules... and... people were joining in and changing the name of the band, and posting ridiculous pictures... and changing the layout... and that was fun for a while.

DB: Why did you delete it?

Scott: It got too addictive!

Scott's view of MySpace is to some extent echoed by that of Kieran:

Kieran: I have seen quite a few things and that is why I don't want to be on MySpace... I don't want all that marketing... false marketing. A lot of things I see on there are just displaying party lifestyle... "oooh these are all my friends and all having a good laugh! Supposedly at my gig!" Probably not at your gig!

Scott’s comment is in line with his understanding of the role and place of music in society, that of an oppositional, subversive activity which facilitates expression and generates fun. For Scott, marketing and branding inherent in social networking sites like MySpace, undercut rather than encourage such possibilities, creating uniformity and false promises which will undoubtedly result in disappointment and anxiety when the bands realise that despite their best efforts and following of the marketing and branding "rules", they are failing
to “make it”. Kieran’s comment, albeit more cynical, also points towards what he sees as a false promise and associated superficiality of a party lifestyle that MySpace offers.

**MySpace, identity and gender**

Some of the significant issues raised by the discussion in previous chapters and which can be extended to an analysis of activity associated with MySpace include: observable (gendered) practices that actively or inadvertently exclude women from music spaces, regulatory power of hegemonic masculinity and its impact on shaping of masculine identities, musical enculturation and forging of masculinities through a series of music related practices, homosociality and the notion of bandhood, and the correlation between creativity and power within music settings. Furthermore, I examined the mechanisms and strategies employed in authentication of gender in live performances.

The presence of bands in MySpace can be viewed and studied as an extension of music as an “interactional event”, where bands, fans, music promoters, venue owners and record labels come together and negotiate the newly found space, each with a set of goals attached to their presence. And while well established acts have had the opportunities for such interactions outside the realm of MySpace, most up and coming bands are negotiating an uncharted territory. The majority have to “write themselves into being” and establish their online identities through which potential audiences will eventually access their offline, real life existence by coming to see them perform live, for instance. This represents an exciting opportunity. In order to create a profile on MySpace, bands, like individuals, need to complete an online form. The sign up page features: artist of the week, featured video, search artist facility, more featured artists section, behind the scenes (live performance of a chosen band), featured download, *NME* pick of the week (with a link to an artist’s page and a brief review), MySpace tours and events and a list of top genres, together with numerous embedded adverts (mobile phones, online gaming and
so on) (24 March, 2008). All of the above are enticing and exciting for a band in search of an audience as they provide an opportunity to become visible within the community of MySpace. There is a separate signing up section for individual musicians and bands where the following warning is displayed:

Warning - MySpace Music accounts are for MUSICIANS. Uploading songs you do not own is a violation of the artist's copyrights and against the law. If you upload songs you do not own, your account will be deleted. If you would like to show support for a musical group or artist, create a fan club in our GROUP section here.

This warning is ignored on a large scale and there are thousands of accounts created by those who do not own the songs they are uploading thus violating the artists’ copyrights. In order to examine the accessibility of the band sign up process I signed up as a fictional band, deleting my band profile once the process had been completed. Basic information such as email address, band’s name, genre of music and location are required before registration is completed. There is a further opportunity to enter additional genres that define music, a chance to enter the band’s web site address as well as to declare whether the band is signed by a record label (major or indie) or unsigned, followed by many prompts for music and photograph upload facilities, and posting an invitation to friends to join MySpace. Once the email address is verified, a full membership to MySpace is granted and one is able to send and receive messages and post comments. The whole process of setting up a basic account (without adding videos, changing layout and background of the page and so on) takes about five minutes. The signing up process is a starting point for the creation the band’s identity (i.e. one is prompted to select a music genre from a drop down menu, and include musical influences), and I did not find it difficult, demanding or inaccessible in a way that it would exclude anyone with a basic level of computer literacy (for example female musicians without a high degree of “technical” knowledge).

My analysis of strategies employed by bands to manage their online identities as well as facilitate the realisation of their goals, is based on close
observation of the online activity of five bands whose members took part in semi-structured interviews, and over the period between one and two years (the period varies between the bands). The bands are: The Unstoppables, The Cyclists, Words of Leisure, Future Adventures, and Two Digit Salute, all of whom featured in previous chapters. Apart from simply observing and noting relevant aspects of online activity of aforementioned bands, at times I took an active part by commenting on their music, lyrics, blogs or band photographs. They reciprocated by leaving comments on my profile. I have seen all of the above bands perform live on more than one occasion and have developed a good rapport with various band members. My presence in MySpace has been that of a visible researcher, I have been transparent and open about my research and answered further questions if they were posed. I have not, however, written a blog or otherwise commented on the precise nature of my enquiry or my findings. From comments I received on and offline I believe that my presence online has been seen as that of a music lover and a "lurker" first, and a researcher second, which is probably a result of my downplaying the significance of the latter. My primary reason for doing so was to try and maintain as natural an interaction as possible, and avoid the perception that participants are being overanalysed thus altering their behaviour. My interventions in form of the comments posted about music or visual images remained on the level of a music lover who uses MySpace as part of one's leisure pursuits, rather than becoming over-burdened with theoretical and methodological concerns inherent in my work, which have undeniably affected my activity. Through the decisions I made about what information to include and what information to omit from my profile, I started a process of the creation of my online identity. The process has been further extended by the comments made about me and the company I keep (online friends and connections).

Seeing someone within the context of their connections provides the viewer with information about them. Social status, political beliefs, musical taste etc, may be inferred from the company one keeps. (Donath and boyd, 2004: 72)
Similarly, when a band creates a MySpace profile they are faced with a number of decisions: what songs and photographs to upload, whom to list as their musical influences, whom to select as top friends and so on; all of which contribute to the development of their online identity. As argued in earlier chapters, the process of enculturation in the context of popular music involves engagement in musical practices within one's social context. MySpace represents an extra dimension to existing musical contexts already available to musicians (rehearsal spaces and interaction taking place within them, live venues and performing in front of an audiences, face-to-face social networking within music scenes and so on) to which they are acculturated.

The key question that concerned me throughout my time and interaction on MySpace was: To what degree are popular musicians utilising or transgressing culturally available discourses of masculinity to write themselves into being in MySpace? The proceeding sections aim to provide some insights.

Images of bandhood

In Chapter Five I argued that notions of bandhood, family and collectivity are relevant attributes in the process of forging masculinities, examining inner workings of the band as one of the key sites for the construction and contestations of masculinities. MySpace, as a visual space where interaction between the bands, and the bands and their fans occurs, is a suitable site for further exploration of those practices. While pioneering writing on cyberspace encounters and interactions was determined by textual representation of identities (age, sex, ethnicity, sexuality and so on, communicated through language),

...within postmodernity the self has been fragmented and exists in pieces. Freedom lies in being able to create identities out of whatever discourses are culturally available to us. So it is that we 'are' what we present ourselves to be. (Seidler, 1997:11)
the current debates about constructing virtual identities are informed by the possibilities of visual representation of embodied selves.

Profile photographs, top friends and comments

One of the key features of any MySpace profile (and the only part of the profile that is visible when the profile is set to “private”) is the profile photograph. On bands’ profiles it tends to include all band members most commonly featuring close up shots of members’ faces or an “action” shot capturing the band in performance. Another option is a professionally done, often rather contrived and posed photograph of a band. Out of five bands I have focused on most extensively, only one, The Cyclists, are currently using an abstract image as their profile photograph. On the whole this is quite rare and usually encountered with the musicians who are involved in so called “obscure” experimental, electronic music genres, often drawing attention to abstract qualities of music itself (lack of lyrics and hence lack of non-musical narratives).

The profile photograph is selected from frequently numerous albums that are available for viewing and comments, and while some bands change it on regular basis, others have kept the same image throughout the period of my observation (two years). When asked for the reasons for keeping a single photograph as the profile image the bands who did so explained that they considered this strategy to be more beneficial in the creation of a recognisable “brand”. Additional photographs can be found in bands’ albums and fall into several categories: group or individual shots of the band in a studio during a recording session, photographs of the band performing live, informal shots (band members “hanging out” together without instruments), images of the band in a rehearsal space, gig posters, logos abstracted from promotional material, record sleeve images, band-on-tour photographs, and images of audiences captured by the band from the stage during the performance. There is a noticeable absence of images depicting any aspect of private lives of band members: locations, family members, partners, friends, pets and so on;
commonly included and visually depicted aspects of life on “ordinary” (non-band) profiles.

The focus on the group, rather than on the individual members, reinforces the idea of bandhood; the band as closed, tightly knit unit, while the absence of elements of the private aspects of lives of band members and its separation from the public is associated with the etiquette of professionalism adopted by working (touring, gigging) bands. Controlled shots of the band playing or relaxing in a rehearsal space become a window into the private domain, previously inaccessible to fans. Many well established bands like Franz Ferdinand have included rough video clips, shot by the band members, usually during the rehearsal and depicting previously unseen aspects of the band’s life. This strategy is used to provide exclusive yet selective access to private domains, and keep their fans interested during the time of low activity or “downtime” (song writing, recording), the time during which the fans are most likely to transfer their attention and loyalties to another band.

The majority of bands’ sites that I observed over a period of time can on one hand be seen as an extension of existing homosocial spaces (rehearsal rooms, privacy of backstage), while on the other hand catering for a series of twofold interactions – with fans and other participants involved in music making and promotion. This presents a significant representational challenge for any band, namely trying to maintain the balance between presenting the band as a professional, work unit and maintaining the friendliness and the degree of openness with their fans.

There is a noticeable lack of female presence in images depicting bands, both within their virtual photo albums and their top friends lists. Girlfriends and female partners, most of whom I learnt had MySpace profiles and were active participants in MySpaces activities, tend to be absent from “top friends”. Instead, those are populated with profiles of record labels, radio djs, other bands, gig promoters and venues. If women make it into top friends there seems to be a degree of tokenism associated their statuses. On several occasions I came across scantily dressed female figures in the top friends of
bands. After clicking on their profiles it became clear that those women were not actual friends of the band but rather looking for a clientele for their webcam exploits. Including such profiles in their top friends invited comments from actual friends, along the lines of “Oh, so you know Monica intimately then?”

Out of five bands I actively observed three have included me in their top friends at various times over the period of two years. I did not feel I fitted there, among record labels and other bands, and when asked for the reason one musician replied that it was good to have some “real people” there too, adding I “looked really good” in my profile photograph. However, individual band members of all the bands who had their separate private/individual profiles, included me in their top friends and proceeded to interact with me extensively.

In the context of a band’s online identity I (together with many others) was either “invisible” (not included in top friends) or included for tokenistic reasons, whereas inclusion and communication with band members outside the context of band/group identity was based on rapport we established and real life knowledge we had of each other. It could be suggested that such practices indicate that the performance of gender/masculinity and music group member identities are determined and governed by different behavioural norms within different online contexts (band profile versus individual profile).

In their discussion of *New Model Army* website O'Reilly and Doherty (2006: 139) argue that the brand of the band is reinforced through the key components of the official website (news archive, monthly newsletter, music samples, album cover artwork, record and tour news, notice board, links to other websites selling band merchandise and so on). The official website is seen as a vehicle for promoting the band as well as the space for the fans to communicate with each other. With MySpace's added functionality and the fans being given an opportunity to “speak” to the band directly, some of the notions associated with bandhood and the brand ought to be even more closely guarded as there is a danger that the site may get swamped with fans' identities and unwanted posts (comments, images); with the focus of interaction thus shifting from that with other fans to that with the band themselves, hosting
the interaction and providing the focus. Hodkinson’s account of LiveJournal activities and interactions outlines a similar shift, that from group-centred forums and blogs to individual centredness of journals:

The most high profile blogs have tended to operate in a largely one-to-many fashion, whereby individual bloggers have conveyed information and conjecture related to matters to public interest to large, dispersed audiences. Yet recent research suggests that the majority of the blogs on the internet now take the form of personal online journals, which tend to reach smaller, more intimate groups of readers. (Hodkinson, 2007:626) [online]

To maintain what they perceive as professional distance as well as to reinforce the unity of a group, most bands tend to exclude and erase female presence from their pages, unless a woman is a dedicated fan who engages with the band frequently through posting positive comments about their music, live performances they attended, videos or photographs. As an active participant the female fan is seen as contributing to the overall image of the band, her praise and approval adding to the status of the band. The Unstoppables, for example, have kept a particular photograph of the band on their site for two years due to, in my view, the positive comments from female fans. These include:

Comment one:
ach your looking braw boys
*ecchhem* its a very interesting photo you got here x

Comment two:
What a goodlooking band you are x

And a selection of comments next to a photograph of a live performance:
Comment one:
Truely Awesome. You Rocked my world woooooo!!!

Comment two:
what a night! you were amazingg. :]

Comment three:
if u cud see the first row of the audience me n fishkniiicks cud b seen! i should
throw a leaving party for her n u cud come play! woooo! ps. cya nxt saturday hehe
x x x

The above comments by female fans incorporate two of the key "ingredients" that a band needs to increase its marketability and its chances of success: physical attractiveness and entertainment value. Similarly, a well established and successful band has kept a particular band photograph on their site for the past two years due to comments written by female fans:

Comment one:
Bloodyell John, have you brushed your hair!!! blimey...looking very dapper i must say gentlemen...

Comment two:
hey!who are these minty looking boys?rock on man!x

Comment three:
love love love this pic!! x

Bands tend to get comments from other bands too, usually the ones they share a stage with on a particular night or whom they know as a part of their gigging circuit. Those too, tend to be positive. However, it is very rare to find a comment about the way bands look written by a male fan or another band's member. Both other (male) musicians and male fans tend to comment on technical aspects of performance (sound quality, levels of instruments, quality
of vocals), record sleeve artwork or quality of new songs. Here are a few examples:

Comment one:
Awesome set ye played the other night!

Comment two:
Hello. New songs are sounding lovely! Would love to hear them augmented in a full band scenario! Get on it chief! I'll play drums!

Comment three:
Hey guys! The feedback from everyone who came last night was really good! Just wanted to say thanks for your awesome performance! Your presence was much appreciated!

Comment four:
just listened to that bbc session, was quality, last song was beautiful, hats off to you guys, the harmonies were lush, take care x

Comment five:
new songs are PURE class- have been enquiring about gigs will definitely get something together this summer. really great songs and sound- it's so refreshing to hear something that isn't the shite tuneless guff that's popular at the moment. keep up the good work!

Music related interaction on MySpace is gendered in the sense that different behavioural modes are adopted by men and women, reflecting different roles played by the two genders within wider cultural domains. While undeniably there are female bands and performers with profiles on MySpace, women, on the whole, tend to be visible or invisible fans and invisible girlfriends and friends of a band. Their interaction with bands predominantly consists of making remarks and comments about visual elements of bands' output – videos, photographs and visual presence in live performances. Men who frequent MySpace profiles are likely to be other musicians, male friends or male fans,
who, on the whole, tend to focus on music rather than visual representation of bands. Their comments are most likely to refer to the musical quality of the performance or contain invitations and suggestions for collaborations. And while the male fans avoid commenting on visual aspects of bands' overall output, they like to foreground their knowledge of a particular band's musical output, to outline how many times they have seen the band live or provide in-depth information on an obscure recording, or a lesser known previous incarnations of the band.

Collecting, as discussed in Chapter Four (of artefacts and knowledge), and seen as a masculine trait, becomes visual in MySpace. If we accept that identity is verified and inscribed through visually represented connections, then who is included within the network becomes a significant determinant of self-identification of bands. The original idea behind bands' presence on MySpace is for bands to "collect" fans, who will help increase the profile of the band, spread the buzz, attend their gigs, and download their songs. For some bands, who is included in the "collection" is equally important as the numbers of acquired "friends"; the band is only as worth as the networks it is a part of and the connections it has. The Unstoppables are typical in their choice of top friends with their top 16 including: two radio djs (BBC and Scotland XFM) who play The Unstoppables' music on their radio shows, two fellow musicians whom they know personally, five bands with whom they have musical and geographic connections, one well known band whom they supported recently, one well known musician whom they supported in the past, an independent record company, one group of music promoters, and one venue. The top 16 does not include any fans, females or non-music connections. In a private MySpace correspondence Jerry confirmed some of the above patterns by saying:

Jerry: I think bands put other bands in tops, mostly as a way of tipping their hat to what has influenced them...it's a very comfortable way of doing that, rather than spelling it out to a journalist, otherwise it's bands that yr friends are in...with radio stations the band is most likely saying thanks for the support, again it's the subtlety of the message that is appealing...then that definitely extends into building an
identity, as you say...i think the building of identity is the key appeal of the whole thing...it's so easy to do yr own visuals too and that's been important part of music since day one!...though i think the real interesting part is that we don't see it as an "online" identity, we see it as "this is us", plain and simple.

Additionally, findings emerging from the current research on online interaction (e.g. Hodkinson, 2007; boyd, 2007a), indicate the direction and role of social networking sites as that of supporting and maintaining already existent relationships. The issue of social capital in relation to social networking sites (specifically Facebook) is explored by Ellison et al. (2007) who suggest that there is always an offline element that connects users, such as shared class (room) or school attendance. Furthermore, they argue that:

...there is a positive relationship between certain kinds of Facebook use and the maintenance and creation of social capital...This form of social capital - which is closely linked to the notion of "weak ties" - seems well-suited to social software applications, as suggested by Donath and boyd (2004), because it enables users to maintain such ties cheaply and easily. (Ellison et al. 2007) [online]

During his study of goth activities and interaction on LiveJournal, Hodkinson found that users utilised it for extending of their existing social networks:

Rather than broadening their range of social networks, most goths used LiveJournal to expand (albeit in a individually customised manner) their range of intra-subcultural interactions. (Hodkinson, 2007: 643) [online]

While this may be applicable to some bands with MySpace profiles (i.e. bands who reformed and are tracing their previous connections), for most up and coming bands acquiring new fans and broadening their networks is of the utmost importance. Bands (unlike individual users) are unlikely to refuse friend requests from random fans. However, individual band members who created individual profiles (in addition to a band's profile) are likely to be making
connections that are more in line with existing findings about online interaction (transferring offline connections into an online environment).

**Embodiments**

Media representations tell us who we are, who we should be, and who we should avoid. (Craig, 1992: Foreword xii)

One of the key features of MySpace is its provision of space for visual representation. For most young and striving bands this represents an exciting opportunity that they overwhelmingly embrace. In 2006 it was hard to find a band profile that did not feature a range of band photographs. By 2007 it was hard to find a profile that did not have a video of a band. Some have utilised the facility to embed videos posted on YouTube, others MySpace's own video channel.

Prior to current opportunities for incorporation (embedding) of a music video on social networking sites, one way it has been examined was in terms of its narrative and anti-narrative qualities associated with positioning and gendering of the spectator. Kaplan (1987) focused on the visual aspects of the music video which according to her provides a scope for a variety of gazes and positions. In *Rocking Around The Clock: music, television, postmodernism, and consumer culture* in reference to MTV she writes:

...the channel refuses to construct just one dominant gender address as did previous art movements and genres. It rather constructs several different kinds of gender address and modes of representing sexuality, several different positions for the spectator to take up in relation to sexual difference. (Kaplan, 1987: 89)

According to Kaplan, such positioning of the music video reflects the questioning of homogeneity of current sex roles and boundaries of wider cultural categories (Kaplan, 1987: 90). Goodwin (1993) addresses the convergence of image and music in music video, distinguishing it from
traditional film narratives. According to him, the attention ought be given to the relationship between musical and visual elements as well as contextual placing of the product and possibilities for “tie-ins” associated with the consumption of any visual text.26

There are two main types of videos featured on MySpace bands’ pages: recordings of live performances and narrative music videos created to accompany a song. The former are more prevalent and bands often have little input in their making as they tend to be recorded by friends and fans using digital cameras or even mobile phones, and uploaded on YouTube from where they are embedded on MySpace profiles. As a result they are often of a poor quality, with the aim of capturing a live performance rather than creating a piece of media in its own right. However, with increasing availability and relatively low cost of mobile recording devices, a band performing live will usually be aware of being recorded and such awareness is likely to alter their performance. Generally, individual band members will strive to adopt more of a rock’n’roll

26 Andrew Goodwin’s (1992) Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture provides a good survey of literatures on music video up to 1992, as well as employing historical, institutional and textual analysis of the music video. Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader edited by Frith, Goodwin and Grossberg (1993) remains an informative collection of writing on the music video. In Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context Carol Vernallis (2004) deals with the ways in which musical and visual codes work in the music video, discussing functions of the narrative, role of editing, the convention of use of human figures (artists) who lip sync the songs; the extras, genre and ethnicity, music video’s response to the lyrics and more generally the relations between music, image and lyrics. Paul Temporal’s (2008) The Branding of MTV: Will Internet Kill the Video Star? explores the MTV brand from its beginnings to present day, through the ways in which it positioned itself as a youth brand in response to evolving youth needs. In Chapter 11 ‘The Future of the MTV Brand’ he poses the question “Will the Internet Kill the Video Star?” and explores the way in which MTV is positioning itself in new and growing mobile and digital markets, with social networking sites such as MySpace taking their share and responding more readily to current needs of young people.
“persona” through onstage behaviour (posturing) and interaction with the audience, echoing behaviour of well polished mainstream and successful acts. The performing body, rather than music or lyrics, becomes the focus in the capturing of the performance.

In his discussion of indie rock Bannister (2006b) argues that many indie bands disliked music videos and particularly their association with MTV:

...videos required a 'fake' performance (lip synching was especially abhorred) and emphasised personal appearance, as opposed to sound. (Bannister, 2006b: 81)

Two out of five bands I was observing featured semi-professionally or professionally done videos on their pages at some point during the past two years. The Unstoppables uploaded three original videos on their site, as well as the clips of numerous live performances. The first video features the whole band and follows the lyrical narrative of the song. It includes a female protagonist (bare footed and wearing a slinky, transparent dress on a cold, cloudy day), playing a part of a seductress who fades in and out of the frame. Individual band members act out a “desperate” seeking and “hunting” of the elusive creature, only to be brought together (as a group, the band) by their chase in the end, with the woman absent. The woman is portrayed as a seductress, with siren/ghost like qualities, playing hide and seek with the band and finally abandoning them. The closure of the video reinforced the idea of bandhood and unity, with the woman safely removed from the frame. The second video presents a live acoustic roof top performance dominated by low angles and extreme close up shots of Luke’s and Adam’s faces and hands, as well as detailed, fetishising close ups of their guitars. The focus shifts between faces and other parts of the musicians’ bodies (shoulders, necks, arms and knees) and the “bodies” and “necks” of their guitars. In addition to its voyeuristic qualities and compartmentalising of the body, the video draws the viewer’s attention to musicians’ close relationships with their instruments, against the expanse of the sky and empty space around them. Close ups of picking the
guitar strings foreground the skill, mastery and the control of the instrument. This is contrasted with the lyrics describing a sense of loss and portraying vulnerability, as well as the falsetto qualities of their voices. Such deliberate focus on the performing body invited many comments on the band’s MySpace profile, for example:

Comment:
Nice video. It has some particularly nice shots of Luke’s crotch and Adam’s facial hair. Give the fans what they want eh? Xx

The third video appeared recently, in the second part of 2008. It has been recorded and edited by the band members. It is not a music video although it includes some of the band’s recordings within the footage. It is interesting because it attempts to “archive” band related practices through the themes of bandhood, having fun, being creative, being successful and being ordinary. This is achieved by the choice of content (clips from rehearsals, snippets of interviews with band members, individual members doing “ordinary” things such as riding a bicycle and ordering food, an excerpt from their BBC live in session interview), as well as through visual choices made in the process of editing (“antiquing” some parts of the footage using a particular editing tool). Additionally, the footage foregrounds their music with fragments of several songs used throughout. It literally “ties in” various aspects of the bands’ existence: song writing, practising, recording, performing, socialising – doing a band.

Most of the other attempts at video making that I observed included the use of cut-up techniques, combining live footage with various rough clips of the band playing. This may be due to financial restraints or the desire to enforce liveness (Bannister, 2006b: 81). Kaplan (1987: 55) identified five main types of video being shown on MTV: romantic, socially conscious, nihilist, classical and post-modernist, examining their style, treatment of love/sex and authority. Amateur or semi-professional music videos I observed on MySpace tend to fall into either classical (retaining linear narrative and maintaining the male gaze),
or postmodernist (a pastiche of non-linear images) style categories. Classical type limits the multiplicity of spectatorial positions (e.g. The Unstoppables' above described video featuring a young woman). However, the non-linearity and experimentation of Kaplan's postmodern type provides the spectator with a possibility to construct the meanings which are reliant less on the spectatorial gender position and more on the familiarity with the techniques used. In other words, the former is reliant on the content (plot, narrative, treatment of "characters") while the latter foregrounds the form (cinematic techniques/language).

The possibilities for visual representation brought about by new technologies are exciting for bands. Seeing one's band enacting a narrative in a music video or simply seeing a footage of oneself performing live can be stimulating and inspiring. Additionally, a visual record or live footage allow bands to assess their performance and work on their image and sound. At the same time, operating with non-existent or limited budgets bands are reliant on their own technical knowledge and limited by their creative abilities (an excellent musician does not necessarily make a decent filmmaker), subsequently following well trodden paths of music video narratives and rarely challenging what Kaplan refers to as "homogeneity of sex roles". Nonetheless, the convergence of textual (comments, blogs), visual (photographs, videos) and musical (sound) elements makes MySpace a multi-textual platform that provides its participants with many opportunities to write themselves into being. Meanings created by employment of different representational tools complement each other, bringing together a range of contexts and a variety of practices of bands, inscribing identities and expanding networks.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by looking at early promises that cyber interaction seemed to offer – freeing oneself from the constraints of bodily markers of identity such as those of gender, ethnicity and age; playfulness and disruption of the binaries
that separate, limit and segregate interaction. With their intensive focus on categorisation and identity markers, the emergence and evolution of social networking sites seem to have subverted those early promises. Characterised by visibility (creation of a profile), maintenance of existing relationships (through online activity/active participation) and the development of new relationships (through online activity/active participation), social networking sites arguably provide very little in terms of resisting the dominant representations and enactments of gender.

While facilitating a series of previously unavailable opportunities for self-presentation and increasing visibility of many bands and musicians (music upload facility, photographs, videos), MySpace, their preferred online home, relies on categorisation and creation of band identities that are in line with the existing notions of self-presentation in popular music spaces including bands' musical and gender identities being guarded through absence of women (except as fans) and an active promotion of the idea of bandhood through visual and textual cues. Ever increasing levels of awareness of corporate dimensions of branding and promotion tends to result in a little or no scope for disruption of the dominant representational norms and strategies. And while not all representation is guided by the inscription of the extreme rockist, masculinist ideologies (objectification of women, sex, drugs and rock'n'roll), there is very little attempt to provide viable alternatives that dispute or subvert them.

With the development of visual online networking communities comes a greater awareness of the importance of representation (both visual and accompanying textual), and association (display of connections) resulting in a degree of controlled management of individual and collective (the band) musical and gender identities. This in turn facilitates acquirement of additional skills associated with profile maintenance (e.g. shooting and editing music videos, organising and conducted a photo shoot, corresponding with other musicians, record labels, promoters and so on). The hierarchy inherent within a band and role distribution present in offline, real life settings (rehearsal rooms,
recording studios, social spaces) are likely to be translated into virtual environments.

In their role as "audiences" fans and friends contribute to the creation of bands' identities in an increasingly visible as well as visual fashion, through their publicly displayed comments as well as by the way of their own status and connections they have within the network, thus further foregrounding interactive and participatory nature of those sites. In order to maintain their functionality, online social networking communities rely on existing offline relationships, and with unsigned bands in particular, serve a role of reinforcing associations with fans who in most cases get to know them in real life environments (e.g. meeting band members at live performances, socialising in music spaces).

By signing up with an online social networking community the bands continue the process of musical and gender acculturation. They develop practices associated with managing their online identities where notions of homosociality and bandhood remain visible. They also utilise the male body as a representational tool and the performing entity through which their musical identities can be denoted, thus reinforcing some pre-existing popular music scripts. While social networking sites are revolutionising the ways in which the fans and the bands interact, and while they provide a range of opportunities for visual and musical representation of bands, the question remains to what degree are they destabilising existing hierarchical structures of music industries and what will be the long term impact of their proliferation.
Conclusion

The aim of the final chapter is to bring together theoretical, methodological and empirical issues addressed by the thesis, grounding them in knowledge developed throughout the previous chapters, demonstrating what has been achieved by the work presented and signalling possible future research trajectories. As such, it sets out to answer the broad question: What has been achieved by the research and what are its limitations? In outlining and comparing the key messages across the chapters, this chapter engages with theory, methodology and method as well as findings; evaluating both the process and the outcome that constitute the knowledge produced by the research. I argue that in the type of research I undertook, reliant on qualitative ethnographic tradition, addressing both the process of production of knowledge and the knowledge itself is essential, as the two are mutually dependent and can not be divorced. Additionally, addressing "doing" or the activity of research itself in relation to its theoretical background and empirical findings, seems particularly fitting as the notion of "doing" has in many ways informed theoretical and practical decisions that I made, but most significantly is associated with the participants and their musical and gender practices.

There have been many types of doing associated with the research presented here. My doing of the research in a practical sense of being "out there" and writing of the findings, participants' doing of music and gender, my doing of gender and fieldwork relationships informed by gender, participants' doing of participation, my doing of the role of the researcher and so on; none of which can be completely detached from the type of knowledge produced. While numerous publications on "conducting research" provided constructive pointers on planning and structuring research practice, it was the experience of doing research that equally informed the knowledge produced. Situating my work within the constructivist tradition where knowledge is treated as contingent on convention, insight and social interaction, freed up the space for a string of
narratives to emerge. One of those was the narrative of the self and the ways in which it has been challenged and at times almost “done in” by the demands of the field, engagements, interactions, and an attempt to translate the experiences of the field into a coherent, logical and informative narrative of the research. While acknowledging the value of self-reflexivity, I have attempted not to let it obscure the voices and experiences of the participants. Perhaps this is a sign of inexperience in research, realised as a stylistic challenge of weaving together the self-awareness with the knowledge and an account of the other. Or perhaps it is a result of a word of warning heard early in my research that “a PhD is not a piece of experimental writing”. In either case, any further foregrounding of the self would have resulted in increasingly self-determined and possibly stylistically more literary piece of writing, which in turn would have come with its own limitations and challenges in relation to representation of knowledge.

The rationale for the research was developed from the recognition that there was a gap in investigations dealing with the multiplicity of experience and meaning of music practices. The gap was particularly visible in the treatment of gender in music, where the focus tended to be on either female performers and their experiences of music spaces, or the most visible and the most iconic male performers thus reducing readings of musical and gender practices to textual, by attempting to describe and analyse gender as textually mediated, rather than relational, context dependent and a dynamic category informed by doing and practice. Further limitations were identified in tendencies to approach music through genre (itself a problematic category), narrowing the debates about popular music masculinities by accessing, describing and debating arguably spectacular genre masculinities such as those of hip-hop or heavy metal, or their alternatives of understated emo and indie masculinities. While there has been a significant move within popular music studies towards the treatment of music as an integral part of social practices of everyday life (e.g. DeNora, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2000; Frith, 2003), the same shift is still to be achieved in the treatment of popular music and gender, and popular music
masculinities upon which discourses and critique of rockism and masculinism rely. With a few notable exceptions, writing about music and gender seems to be conceived and developed from positions which have limited access and insight into musical and gender practices and associated meanings on the ground level, the level of everyday practice. The focus on the most prominent figures makes it difficult to gain access into day-to-day interactions, tensions, creative decisions, events and practices of rehearsal spaces, recording studios, musical venues and so on, thus multiplicity of musical and gender experiences and practices is reduced to discursive treatment of gender in music video or within lyrical content. And then there is the issue of those whom Finnegan (1989) named “hidden musicians”; all those who challenge the notion that music making and performance represent “the monopoly of full-time specialists”. With the above in mind, and aiming to build on the existing knowledge, I examined a series of questions relating to popular music masculinities as well as allowing for themes, perspectives and questions to emerge through research. In the ethnographic tradition’s focus on the local (e.g. Finnegan, 1989; Cohen, 1991) and within the interactionist tradition of foregrounding of the practice, I engaged with the questions relating to a range of complementary and contesting masculinities existing within music environments, thus challenging dominant notions of musical masculinity as binding, regulatory and uniform. I have utilised a number of relevant theoretical concepts as a means of exploring and discussing the empirical data including “musicking”, “music enculturation”, “forging masculinity”, “hegemonic masculinity”, “homosociality”, “bandhood”, “gendering of instruments”, “musical role differentiation”, “the gaze”, and “authenticity”.

Broadly speaking, Chapters Four to Seven dealt with a range of musical "sites" within which a number of music and gender practices occur. In Chapter Four Music Enculturation and Gendering of Music Experience: Listening, Collecting, Socialising, “the site” is a wider socio-musical context within which participants conduct their lives and musical activities. Relying on the analysis of empirical data it demonstrated that the forging of gender identities and the
process of music enculturation are interlinked as well as dependent on internal or external influences such as those of family, peer groups and wider musical trends. It demonstrated that the process of “doing a band” incorporates a range of gendered musical practices, focusing closely on listening, collecting and socialising in music spaces as constitutive of what I termed experience of music. The chapter identified and examined a three way relationship between listening, collecting and socialising in music spaces and the co-relation between knowledge gained through the above practices, subsequent music participation and acquisition of status. Furthermore, utilising the empirical data it foregrounded a range of experiences and outlined some differences in the way men and women, but also men of different ages and degrees of involvement in music, participate in music activities. Most significantly, by taking the focus away from the performance or musical texts, the chapter allowed for a range of musical and associated gendered and gendering practices to come into view, grounding music and gender in everyday life experience of the participants.

The focus narrowed in Chapter Five, entitled The Band, where I took a closer look at the way music and gender identities are negotiated within a locale of a band. This chapter raised the methodological issue of the status of the researcher as an insider or outsider, and dealt with the tension inherent in conducting research in what is perceived as a highly gendered site. The theoretical frameworks associated with the notions of hegemonic masculinity and homosociality, together with the analysis of the ethnographic data, further questioned the conflation of masculinity and music in popular music discourses, demonstrating that some of the assumptions about characteristics of bands as masculine sites such as those associated with active exclusion and sexual objectification of women, or desirability of certain masculine traits such as emotional detachment and competition, can be challenged. Instead, a much wider range of desirable and promoted musical characteristics emerged, including expressivity, musical knowledge and skill and associated ability to write and perform music (to be a creator) or undertaking a variety of musical
roles, a shared set of goals that stabilise a band, the importance of role differentiation and hierarchies among band members and so on; all of which seem rather removed from exaggerated view of bands as “beer-guzzling, street-fighting, girl-using, tobacco-spitting...Oasis loving heterosexual macho men...” (Luke). This, possibly the most ethnographic of the chapters, provides an insight into the dynamics and practices of bands which while reflecting and shaping their members' gender identities, are much more complex and multifaceted than reductionist definitions that conflate music and bands with particular type of masculinity, allow for.

In Chapter Six, *The Male Body in Performance*, the focus shifted from musical and gender enculturation and workings and dynamics of the band, to another site central to music – the stage, and associated notions of live performance, expressivity, authenticity, the gaze and the body (embodied masculinity). It incorporated the discussion of the male performing body through the analysis of fieldwork observations and data gathered in formal interviews thus providing a degree of insight in musician’s relationships with their bodies and performative styles, as well as the tensions inherent in attempts to discuss strategies and ways in which personal experiences find their way into music, lyrics and performance. By examining visual, vocal and musical strategies employed by three of the bands who took part in the research, the chapter problematised some of the assumptions associated with masculinities in performance such as the overemphasis on the display of power and sexuality. Instead, the context of the performance such as the type of audience, size and type of the venue, status of the band (the main or the supporting act), the purpose of the performance (showcase, headlining, low key) as well as the codes and conventions associated with a music genre, or at least elements of a music genre that a band strives to adopt, ought to be taken into consideration while analysing the coding and authentication of masculinities in live settings. Additionally, the chapter problematised the concept of spectatorship and argued for acceptance and examination of a range of gaze positions, negotiated between performers and audiences, outside of the “privileged”
masculine viewer's position. However, further work and research in audiences may be necessary in order to develop this particular facet of the argument about musical gender identities and spectatorial positions.

When embarking on research I did not envisage that I would be studying bands in cyberspace, however, with the emergence of social networking sites, and ever increasing presence of the participants in virtual spaces, MySpace became another key research site, but also significantly a unique research tool. The existence of Chapter Seven, *Bands in Virtual Spaces: Social Networking and Masculinity*, reflects what I see as a considerable development in the way music is presented, consumed and researched. Accessibility and so called "democratisation of music spaces", achieved through social networking, brought about an exciting opportunity for extending some of the research questions and engaging with them in the context of opportunities and possibilities provided by social networking, and embraced with a great deal of enthusiasm by almost all the bands I encountered between years 2005 and 2008. My intention was not to include social networking as an appendage to other musical practices, which sequencing of chapters may indicate, but to treat it as a complementary research site with its distinctive representational possibilities. There was an immense sense of excitement associated with using MySpace as both a research site and a research tool, allowing me a degree of accessibility to participants otherwise unavailable. It also made my research visual. There are still records of comments, song and video dedications by the participants in the public domain, on my page on My Space, as well as private email messages in my MySpace inbox, making the journey I undertook more interesting, more interactive and more public. Chapter Seven carries some of the already identified themes into the realm of virtual space and examines the ways in which social networking focus on categorisation of the self through taste (books, movies, interests) and identity markers (gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity) undermines some of the early promises of the cyberspace as a truly democratic and identity unburdened space. It examines the ways in which the bands, whom I encountered in real spaces, network, maintain and negotiate
their statuses and use opportunities for visual representation available to them. The chapter extends the discussion of the notions of bandhood and homosocial space into social networking domains, questioning the degree of gendering inherent in them, and exploring visual and textual representations of the male body and masculinity. It argues that despite its potential to liberate the representation of stereotypes of masculinity, this site heavily relies on them. I suggest that re-inscription of gender stereotypes on MySpace occurs due to participants’ reliance on replicating the visual representations of the male body, masculinity and bandhood encountered in the mainstream media. Because of the heightened awareness of the significance of image and branding, the bands follow what they perceive to be the most reliable scripts for achievement of success and recognition. Branding and selling of an image incorporated branding and selling of the notions of bandhood and camaraderie on one hand, and the image of the male body on the other. The chapter, however, acknowledges scepticism expressed by some of the participants who decided against their presence in MySpace, due to disagreements about values informing self promotion on this site. The academic work in the area of social networking sites is beginning to emerge (e.g. boyd, 2007a; 2007b), with there being much further scope for examinations of practices and identities of online communities engaging with social networking more generally, and music related social networks specifically.

In the Introduction I stated that the work presented here is concerned with men who play in bands, that is “men’s bands”. On a very broad level, the thesis has described and critically engaged with multiplicity of experiences of men who are involved in music making and performance. Rather than focusing on the most prominent or most successful artists, those of a particular age, or those belonging to a particular music genre, the thesis engaged with musicians across ages, levels of success and musical genres, demonstrating that music has a great deal of meaning and significance in lives of ordinary men. Furthermore, it showed that reasons for involvement in music can be multiple and varied, as can the goals set, meanings achieved through it, and the
obstacles encountered along the way. It could be argued that such wide focus makes it harder to arrive at categories of meaning from which a theory can be constructed. However, any such suggestion ought to be balanced by the fact that the work engaged with traditionally under researched male performers (non-stars), providing a series of cultural portraits which could be used as a starting point for a more focused future enquiry. In addition, ethnographic data presented and analysed here challenge the charges of rockism and masculinism of popular music, sometimes re-iterated from the positions that are outside of music worlds and hence providing limited insights. Particularly significant were experiences of women whom I included in the research and which often complemented those of men, above all where mixed gender bands were concerned and where the examples of inclusiveness, tolerance and support among all band members were foregrounded.

In terms of understanding the types of masculinity associated with music, the thesis demonstrated first; that there is a range of masculine identities constructing creative dynamics within bands, second; that monolithic notions of masculinity are redundant and of limited assistance when trying to understand a range of processes and practices within bands, and third; that any type of masculinity can take a prominent, hegemonic position at any time, and that the latter is very much determined by the cultural specificity of a band. By engaging with music as practice and music in context of everyday life, the thesis revealed the centrality of music in lives of the participants regardless of their goals and musical ambitions. By giving a voice to a number of older musicians (those in their 30s and 40s) it exposed a range of meanings associated with the music making, but also the ways in which music has shaped and marked their identities, existing alongside careers and family life, and sometimes retaining the most prominent position after many years of involvement. In his recent inaugural lecture at The University of Salford, Johnny Marr remarked that he was proud to still be a working musician. This echoes views of many male musicians I encountered who feel that it is becoming increasingly acceptable to be making and playing music in their 40s and even
their 50s. Such musical longevity certainly raises a number of interesting questions in relation to musical gender identity and age. One of the future directions of research in the field I envisage as innovative would include adopting an interdisciplinary approach to study continuous involvement in music making (music and age). More specifically, I am interested in the use of narrative and storytelling to construct music realities and music identities, the relationship between collecting (of artefacts and knowledge), loneliness and masculinity, and musical nostalgia.

Sara Cohen (1993) argued for an approach to music that incorporates an understanding of music as social practice and process, with focus on social relations, comparative, reflexive and policy oriented. The work presented here builds on the knowledge derived from previous studies of music and gender, thus providing an opportunity for continuous dialogical and comparative relationship. My hope is that it highlights the centrality of music in lives of people, as well as practical and ideological obstacles encountered by both men and women, leading to a greater understanding of needs of all musicians, encouraging co-operative practices among them, and ultimately resulting in the production of great and inspired music.
### Appendix One: Participants’ pseudonyms and basic characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age at the time of the interview</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Primary role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adam</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist/singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Albert</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist/singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Carl</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Edwin</td>
<td>early 30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Elliott</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>drummer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Henry</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>saxophonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ivan</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. James</td>
<td>late 30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. John</td>
<td>mid 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kieran</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>drummer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Mandy</td>
<td>mid 30s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>keyboard player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Marianne</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Noel</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Pete</td>
<td>early 30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>keyboard player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Samantha</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Sean</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Scott</td>
<td>late 30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Steve</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Stuart</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to 20 interviewees, email correspondence included the following participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Primary role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jerry</td>
<td>early 30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist/singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Peter</td>
<td>mid 30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Band members who were observed and interacted with during the fieldwork:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Primary role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Alex</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aron</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Finlay</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>drummer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Greg</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Jack</td>
<td>mid 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Keath</td>
<td>early 30s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mark</td>
<td>early 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mike</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>drummer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Paul</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>guitarist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Rob</td>
<td>mid 20s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>drummer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Simon</td>
<td>early 40s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>bassist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bands

Main bands:

Future Adventures
The Cyclists
The Compacts
The Unstoppables
Two Digit Salute

Other bands:

Apple Blossoms
BMT
Borderline Personalities
Philistines
SBM
The Liars
Words of Leisure
Appendix Two: An update on the bands

December 2008

*Future Adventures* are still together with an unchanged band membership. They have been busy recording demos and playing live across the North West. They have received some airplay, with positive reviews from local DJs and are playing Manchester Academy soon, supporting an established act.

*The Cyclists* parted with Samantha on amicable terms. She decided to devote more time to music promotion. However, together with Ivan, she has been tinkering with a side project. As for what the rest of the band have been up to, here’s the update from their MySpace page:

"Where’s the record then?" you shout.
It’s not finished :(.

Since laying down more than the majority of the tracks we’ve sat on the record for a bit … There was the intention of getting some brass players on some tracks but after two failed attempts, we’re gonna give it one more go…

So we’re getting there. Expect it to drop in…November.
It is December now. Still not finished.

*The Compacts* have decided to have some down time, following the incident at an open air festival in Lancashire. Stuart, in particular, was unwilling to continue and the rest of the band have been performing newly written, more experimental material under a different name. Stuart has been busy putting a compilation out, featuring a number of Blackpool bands and performers.

*The Unstoppables* have sacked their bass player due to ever increasing tensions over the recent recordings, replacing him by a long standing friend who is involved in a couple of other music projects. They have been doing a
number of gigs throughout the autumn of 2008 and their MySpace page continues to get hits. They are having a couple of their tracks mixed by an established producer and are announcing some important news and changes for 2009.

**Two Digit Salute** Since spring of 2008 they seem to have taken a break and have not played any gigs together. Albert has been busy writing, recording and performing new songs, seeming to go into a different musical direction to that of the band. He is also trying his hand at music journalism, writing for a few Edinburgh based music publications. Elliott has also been performing as a solo artist. The pair have plans to collaborate on music again, and are thinking of recruiting some of their siblings to a new “project”.
Appendix Three: Musicians' interview schedule

Note: The questions below have been used as a template for semi-structured interviews. Not all of the musicians were asked all of the questions, nor necessarily in the order given below. Each of the interviews had its own dynamic which determined the direction of "questioning" allowing for additional themes and questions to emerge.

Establishing rapport
Describe your typical week, including any music related activities.
Prompts: going go gigs, rehearsing, listening to music
How often do you listen to music?
How often do you play music?
What part has music played in your growing up?
What does music mean to you?

Performing
When and where was the last gig you performed?
Can you describe a pre-gig preparation/getting ready to perform?
Prompts: final rehearsal, set lists, getting ready, transporting equipment to the venue, travelling to the venue
How would you describe your feelings and thoughts before a gig?
What do you think about when performing?
What do you do when performing?
Prompts: stand, sit, dance, move about, come off stage into the audience
Imagine playing a poor gig? What happens afterwards?
Has violence ever occurred at one of your gigs? Describe what happened?

Audiences/performance
Who is in your audience?
Who would be your 'ideal' audience?
Why do you think people come to see you perform live?

Does the type of audience determine the way you perform?

*Prompts: small audience vs large audience, gender, age, ethnicity*

Does the type of venue determine how you perform?

*Prompts: small vs large, indoors vs outdoors*

How do you think your audience perceive you individually?

*Prompts: musician, sex symbol, successful, powerful, important*

How do you think your audience perceive you as a band?

How would you like to be perceived as an individual?

How would you like to be perceived as a band?

**Image**

What do you normally wear to a gig?

How important is what you wear at a gig? Why?

Is it different to what you wear elsewhere?

Generally, is the way a man dresses important in the world of music?

Do you think you are judged by other musicians on the basis of what you wear?

Do you think you are judged by your audiences on the basis of what you wear?

How important is it to be good looking to succeed in music?

Who determines/decides what is seen as “good looking”?

*Prompts: global/national media, local scene, other musicians, audiences*

Do you exercise, keep fit?

Do you watch what you eat?

What steps would you be prepared to take in order to improve your appearance?

*Prompts: health/diet/fitness regimes, take up advice/feedback from friends/family*

Do you ever feel self conscious (body conscious) when performing?

Describe a good looking man?

Describe a good looking woman?
Bandhood/masculinity/sexuality

For how long have you known other members of your band before you started playing together?

Where you good friends?

Did you like same/similar type of music?

What made you form a band?

How are practical decisions made in the band, e.g. set lists, rehearsal dates?

How are creative decisions made in the band?

*Prompts: finalising a song, working on a recording*

How do men relate to each other in your band?

Do you think this is representative of the way men relate to each other in the music industry?

How would you define masculinity in music?

Are particular instruments viewed as more desirable to play?

*Prompts: seen as more masculine, require a greater degree of skill*

How do you think women feel as musicians?

*Prompts: obstacles, environment*

Do you associate a particular sound with particular gender?

Do you associate a particular instrument with particular gender?

Is sexuality/sexual orientation important in music?

Some people see a strong link between music and sex. Would you agree? Is there something ‘sexual’ about music (e.g. beat - bodily response, can feel the beat, rhythm/sexualised)? Expand.

Do you ever discuss sexuality with other male musicians?

Miscellaneous

What is the worst question I could have asked you?

Is there a connection between power and creativity?

Do you think there should be a sense of hierarchy in a band?

*Prompts: decision making process, contacts with the media*
Sex and drugs and rock’n’roll – what is that all about?

What do you think of the UK music press?

How do you feel about the way male musicians are represented in the media?

What makes a particular musician/artist great?

Do you believe there is a need to suffer for one’s art?

What makes music authentic?
References:


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http://www.livejournal.com
http://www.match.com
http://www.myspace.com
http://www.sony-youth.com/vrm/
http://www.youtube.com
Film:

*Paris is Burning* (1990) [film] Directed by Jennie Livingston