

**‘Guerrilla Radio’: An empirical study into the relationship between music and political participation**

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 **ABSTRACT**

This study uses a grounded theory approach to empirical research in order to investigate the influence that political music can have on the individual, particularly in regards to their degree of political participation. The thematic analysis of eight interviews identified communication, identity, and mobilization as key themes. An exploration of these themes found that, if perceived to be authentic, music can significantly increase public knowledge of political and social issues, it can result in a shift in attitudes and behaviours of individuals, and it can mobilise people towards political action through either agency and empowerment or a sense of collective identity. The results of the thematic analysis are discussed in full, using existing literature to support any claims made by participants.

**INTRODUCTION**

Throughout modern history, popular music has always been inextricably linked to political and social movements of its time, with many claiming that the music is a driving factor of these movements. The power music can wield over society is emphasized by many great thinkers and philosophers, including Plato, who claimed that ‘[new] modes of music are never distributed without the unsettling of the most fundamental political and social conventions’ (Plato et al, 1961). The outlandish nature of these claims even led to the myth that music was responsible for ‘tearing down the walls of Jericho’ (Volgsten, 2014, p.114). Despite passionately supporting these long-standing claims, many academics have failed to ‘prove’ that music can have a significant influence on political and social issues (Street et al, 2007), never mind being able to form a method of measuring these hypotheses.

In order to examine whether music can increase political participation, it is first imperative to outline what constitutes as active participation. Parry et al (1992) have a fairly narrow definition of participation and exclude ‘symbolic activities’ (p. 16), only including actions that relate directly to policy formation such as protesting, canvassing for a political party, or raising specific issues as a community (p.3). The latter of these activities is defined by Parry et al (1992, p.15) as ‘expressive participation’ that involves the active expression of political stance or opinion. Sarah White (1996, p.8) labels this as ‘transformative participation’, which takes the form of any activity that empowers others and raises awareness of social and political issues. Alternatively, Hay (2007) offers a much broader view, encompassing less significant activities such as everyday conversations regarding formal political processes. The complex and highly disputed nature of political participation has led some academics to state that the aim to define such activity is ‘obsolete’ (Deth, 2016, p.1), although Deth continues to argue that ‘political participation can be loosely defined as citizens’ activities affecting politics” (p.2).

The most common method of analysing the impact that music has had on social movements is through the examination of case studies and past events. Popular case studies have come to include the Rock Against Racism movement of the mid 70’s UK punk rock scene (Roberts, 2009; Goodyer, 2009; Farrar, 2004), the American civil rights movement’s relationship with artists such as Sam Cooke and Nina Simone (Turino, 2008; Rose, 2007), and various examples of war or violent conflict (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010). It is indisputable that music has represented these movements and expressed the concerns of many people within them. Attali (1985, p.6) concurred this notion with his assumption that “in noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men”.

The vast majority of studies into the relationship between music and politics, therefore, are overwhelmingly written from a sociological perspective and rely solely on secondary research as a form of evidence (Street, 2012). As argued by Bergh & Sloboda (2010, p.11), ‘more attention needs to be given to the nature and extent of engagement that music interventions in conflict bring about or encouragement in the participants that are the targets of the intervention. This needs to be informed by a better understanding of the diverse ways in which music and musical engagement can impact on non-musical behaviour’.

**METHOD**

**Aims**

The aim of this study is to use a phenomenological approach to empirically research the effects of musicking on political participation. This shall be done using qualitative research, in the form of semi-structured interviews, followed by a thematic analysis in conjunction with the guidelines set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was chosen in order to address current gaps in the literature regarding primary qualitative research from a psychological perspective that focussed predominantly on the individual. Preconceptions and pre-existing hypotheses were relinquished upon the start of the research process in accordance with conventional phenomenological research methods (Husserl, 1970). The use of a grounded theory method allows the results of the thematic analysis to inform the secondary literature research and the exploration of existing theories through a combination of both inductive and deductive reasoning. Robinson (2006) exemplified the importance of using this method, as they found that their ungrounded methods needed to be revised following the collection and analysis of empirical data.

**Participants**

Participants were recruited using convenience-sampling methods. The sample consisted of five musicians and three politically engaged individuals. Musicians were identified and recruited through the researchers’ current network including pre-existing contacts and/or mutual contacts from the local area. Politically engaged individuals were identified and recruited either through the researchers’ current network or as known representatives of local political groups or social movements. The musical participants were Rich Huxley (a guitarist in an indie band), Marcus Clarke (an electronic artist), Dillon Usher (an MC), Joe Angus (a guitarist in a rock band) and Jim Osman (vocalist in a post-punk band). The political participants were Ian Pepper (an events organiser at an environmental organisation), Daniel Evans (a historian of Spanish anarchist movements and employee at a refugee and migrant support group), and Theo Routh (a previous MP candidate and a representative from a left-wing political party).

**Materials**

Two slightly different interview schedules were constructed for the musical participants and the political participants respectively. The main difference in the interview schedule was regarding questions that explored the individual’s experience in their particular field of expertise. For example, whereas musicians were asked about their process of including political themes in their musical work, political participants were asked about the inclusion of music in their political work. The emphasis on *process* was informed by DeNora (2000) who argued its importance in order ‘to try to specify how the social comes to be inscribed in the musical’ and further understanding of how ‘structural affinities or homologies between music and social formations might arise and change over time’ (p.3). Participants were also asked open-ended and non-loaded questions to ensure that the researchers own reflexivity would have no influence on the discussion and data collection (Henwood, 2008).

**Procedure**

The empirical research took the form of semi-structured interviews with participants that addressed particular topics whilst allowing points of interest to be explored further with additional questioning (Patton, 2002). The interviews took between 20 minutes and an hour, with the average length being around half an hour. Participants were sent an information sheet (see Appendix C & D) after expressing interest in taking part and were then given a week to decide if they wished to do so. Prior to commencing the interviews the participants also signed consent forms (see Appendix E) and were informed about all potential ethical implications. The interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. The interview schedule (see Appendix A & B) started with basic and unchallenging questions regarding the amount of time participants have been involved with politics or music and details regarding their own music or roles at political organisations. This was done in order to give the participants time to relax and feel comfortable before more challenging questions later on in the schedule. Topics covered in the interview schedule included musical preferences, political participation, whether they have been influenced by music, the process and motivation for representing political themes in their music, examples of music being used for political purposes, and their opinion on how music may influence political and social issues.

**Analysis**

The interviews were recorded using an iPhone 6 and HccToo Digital Voice Recorder. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically in accordance with Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines. The interview transcripts were analysed thoroughly and key points of interest were highlighted. From these key points, codes were created and were then grouped together based on topic or subject matter. These groupings then informed the themes and subthemes that were identified as distinguishable points of discussion and exploration. From here, further research into the subthemes could begin and writing of the essay could commence.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The thematic analysis highlighted three predominant themes that arose from the eight interview transcripts: communication, identity, and mobilisation. The complex nature of these themes means that in certain areas, they are inextricably linked, although this section will analyse and discuss some of the individual sub-themes that reoccurred throughout the interview process. Firstly, the area of ‘communication’ shall be explored. This initial section will analyse how politically charged music can communicate with its audience, why artists choose to communicate these messages, what effects these forms of communication have on audiences and the ways in which musical communication can be more effective in sharing its message.

**Communication**

Mark Mattern (1998) views music as a form of conversation that is able to represent communities and also able to significantly contribute towards particular areas discourse. In Mattern’s book, *Acting in Concert* (1998, p. 146), he describes music as a “communicative arena in which various political actors can pursue multiple, often contradictory, agendas”. Whilst he ascertains that music can have a substantial influence on social and political discourse, he stresses the complexity of these situations and the fact that music is one of many communicative domains. Music’s similarity to language and capability to effectively communicate is agreed upon by many academics (Nussbaum, 2001; Street, 2012; Way, 2016), including Eyerman and Jamison (1998) who argue that it is able to disseminate political ideology and is part of many social movements ‘frameworks of interpretation’ (p. 23). Some notable philosophers, however, have not only agreed with these studies but also contested that it is a *superior* form of communication.

German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1999), explored music’s superiority as a form of communication and expression of emotion, concluding that language ‘only touches the surface of music’ (P. 79). This is echoed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who claimed that, ‘[music’s] language, though inarticulate, is lively, ardent, passionate, and is a hundred times more vigorous than speech itself’ (Rosseau, 1997, p. 287) There are various arguments for why music may communicate or engage audiences more effectively than speech or mediums, but one of the primary reasons is its accessibility and popularity within mainstream culture.

*Theo Routh: “God Save The Queen [by The Sex Pistols] got a lot of vitriol at the time but it was saying a really important message. Whether you agree with that message or not, it was a great example of politics hitting mainstream music. I think that’s really important, because I think everyone should be engaged with politics in one way or another, and most people enjoy music. It’s a great way of doing that and a great way of getting there.”

Jim Osman: “I think with a lot of people, they don’t to listen to you talk about your opinions and they don’t want to hear about politics, but putting it in a song is a way for them to think about it and it’s a way to speak to those people.”*

Statements such as these emphasise how music can be considered as a shortcut for important messages to reach a wider range of publics and find their way into popular discourse. Another major benefit of music is its repeatability, in the sense that fans will likely listen to a piece of music more than once, and if it’s commercially successful then it is likely to be repeatedly played on the radio and other forms of media. Music, and the messages that it contains, can also be repeated within one’s own mind, as discussed by Freya Bailes in her studies on musical imagery (2007; 2015). The notion that musical content can involuntarily stick in someone’s mind and be repeated throughout a day, in what Bailles refers to as an ‘earworm’ (2015, p. 58), is also shared by the Japanese-American scholar, Kenneth Yasuda, who wrote that song lyrics can form “echoes in your head” [as cited in Lederach, 2005].

*Joe Angus: “It’d be naïve to think ‘I’m gonna write this song and it’s going to suddenly change the world just from my song and nothing else’, but at the same time, it makes it so much more potent and so much more accessible.”*

The accessibility of music and its ability to often enter into public discourse easier than speech, or indeed other forms of media such as film and television, is concurred by John Street (2012, p. 79) who states that music is “the most accessible of mass culture forms”. The element of ‘potency’, as mentioned by Joe Angus however, can be interpreted in a number of ways. This may reflect music’s efficacy at staying prevalent in the listener’s mind long after exposure (Bailes, 2015), although it may also refer to music’s emotional charge that can ‘grip’ its audience and engage them in a way that other methods of communication cannot (Rousseau, 1997).

**Non-lyrical representation of politics**

The unique aspect of popular music is its multimodal nature, which can encompass all of the features and benefits of sound, poetry, and visual aesthetics. Lyrics are one of the predominant ways in which artists can communicate with their audiences, although important messages or political statements can also be expressed through the sonic and structural elements of a song, as well as through visual aspects such as album artwork and music videos. In this preliminary section of the results, some of the many ways in which music can communicate with audiences will be highlighted in order to show how the politicised music that is discussed throughout this essay is not strictly limited to its lyrical content.

Interviewee, Ian Pepper, contended that in recent years the rise and prominence of capitalism has encouraged the general public to think of themselves solely as consumers rather than autonomous producers of entertainment goods. Pepper cited the supposed decrease in popularity of musical instruments in family homes due to the rise of digital entertainment as the primary reason for this, concluding his argument with the statement:

*Ian Pepper: “creativity itself is a political act.”*

This statement is closely related to Small’s self-coined concept of ‘musicking’, in which he claims that the verb, ‘to music’, can encompass performing, practising, listening, and even dancing to music (1998, p. 9). In Small’s many essays on the topic (1987, 1995, 1998), he argued that musicking is an almost essential aspect of our lives that plays a role similar to that of verbal communication, in regards to how we learn, communicate, and build relationships with one another. In his study, ‘Musical Revolutions in German Culture’, Hall (2014) analyses Small’s concept of musicking in depth, looking specifically at a range of works from German philosophers such as Theodor W. Adorno. He also echoes Ian Pepper’s statement by arguing that musicking in itself can often be a political act and that it can be an effective form of resistance against late capitalism.

Studies on musicking are often weighted towards the physical act of performance or creation of music, although many of the interviewees mentioned how the ‘energy’ of seeing someone else musicking was able to communicate with them on an emotional level. The examples provided included the birth of rock’n’roll, the rise of Punk music throughout the 70’s, and the British Rave scenes of the late 80’s and early 90’s.

*Joe Angus: “By watching clips of [MC5] perform live, it’s just pure authenticity, pure energy, pure anger, and that spoke a lot to me as well.”*

*Ian Pepper: “The impact it had on the people involved in [those subcultures] is phenomenal. … art challenges people and opens them up to ideas away from [the mainstream]. It doesn’t even need to be intellectual; sometimes it’s just an energy.”*

Lyndon Way (2016) analysed the use of political music videos during the Gezi Park protests in Turkey during 2013, claiming that an artist’s image can be strategically used to ‘articulate popular discourses’ (Way, 2016, p.434). According to Jane Sugarman (2010), in preparation for war during the late 90’s, Kosovo Albanians used music videos to spread nationalist propaganda. Joe Angus, one of the interviewees, also shared this use of an accompanying video to communicate specific political messages; his daughter featured in one of his music videos behind a backdrop of 10 Downing Street in order to juxtapose the two realities and express how unlikely working-class children are to ever work in that office.

Way (2016) also noted how political messages and themes could be expressed through an artist’s use sonic elements such as pitch, tempo, melody and instrumentation. Way likens the piece of music he is analysing to the soundtrack of the film Jaws, which uses notational constraining and minor notes to signify danger and menace (p. 438). Communicating a certain politicised message or theme via a piece of music’s aesthetic qualities was also discussed by some of the musicians that were interviewed.

*Joe Angus: “Yeah, [politics] does literally translate into the lyrics, and I know it sounds ridiculous, but even like the noises and stuff too. The older I’ve got, the less attached I’ve got to making something sound ‘nice’. As a band, we’ve loosened up. If it’s a song about resentment and frustration, why would you want to try make that sound clean, and a steady progression, and aesthetically pleasing, when that’s not what that feels like?”*

*Jim Osman: “The interesting thing with Kraut Rock is that it’s repetitive and it’s hypnotic, so it’s kind of escapist, but it comes from a need for escapism. It’s music that could only have been created under the conditions of being in Germany before the fall of the Berlin wall. … I think that all music anthropologically tells a story of where it was made and who made it, and you can often hear that in the music”*

Jim Osman’s statements about Kraut Rock are agreed upon by the German musicologist, Peter Wicke, who has gone on to claim that, despite the psychedelic music of the time having relatively few lyrics compared to other genres, 'rock musicians were instrumental in setting in the actual course of events which led to the destruction of the Berlin Wall’ (1992, p. 81). Another primary example of political discourse through musical aesthetics - which was mentioned by multiple interviewees - is the parallel between Brian May’s performance of ‘God Save The Queen’ to celebrate the Golden Jubilee and Jimi Hendrix’s rendition of the American national anthem, ‘Star Spangled Banner’.

 *Joe Angus: “[Jimi Hendrix] did the Star Spangled Banner but screwed with it so much and completely subverted it. And then we had Brian May on top of Buckingham Palace trying to do some weird pastiche of the same thing but not in any way similar. What Hendrix did was a brave act though … for him to take a sacred thing for the American people, their national anthem about how great the country is, then just fuck with it completely.”*

*Dillon Usher: “With metal and rock it’s a little more discrete. Not necessarily in the way that the lyrics are written out or the way that it’s said, but for example with Jimi Hendrix and ‘Star Spangled Banner’, I didn’t make that link [when I was younger] that it was such an iconic and revolutionary song. It was so anti-establishment and in your face, and one of the biggest events in rock history.“*

Hendrix completely subverted the anthem using his own technical and musical prowess, emulating the sounds of war and violence, and representing the ugliness of American oppression through the use of musical dissonance and heavy distortion (Cush, 2016). This was a bold feat given the circumstances of him being an African American male at the height of the Vietnam War. The parallel between Hendrix and May’s performances are also discussed by Street (2012) who states that, ‘While Hendrix was seen as defying the White House, May was seen as deferring to the British establishment. And in these differences, different communities and politics were summoned into existence’ (p.171).

*Marcus Clarke: “I don’t think you can really avoid [the influence of political/social issues on music]. Even if you make music that’s purely instrumental without vocals or lyrics then - for me personally - it will come through either in the song title, the samples I use, or the ideas and concepts behind the music.”*

As is implied through this quotation - and this section as a whole - political themes can be present both explicitly and implicitly through the creation and distribution of music. Political and social issues can also influence the creation, and perception, of music due to factors outside of the physical act of musicking, such as the ideas, motivations and the wider context in which the music is created. This is most prominent in the history of African American music that could easily be defined as ‘political’ simply because of the situation in which it was created. For example, the French theorist Jacques Attali described the US free jazz of the 1950’s as “the first attempt to express in economic terms the refusal of the cultural alienation inherent in repetition, to use music to build a new culture” (1985, p.138). Other notable examples of this include American soul music, disco, and funk, as discussed by Daniel Evans in the following extract:

*Daniel Evans: “The most important political aspect of that music is its association with the black freedom struggle going back centuries. I think its political content goes beyond just the lyrics or the politics of any one individual singer or anything. … Think of the context that it was recorded in. The politics of the music isn’t always obvious just from the lyrics. I mean, Chic are like - and all of disco music in some ways - a celebration of black sexuality, sexuality generally, joy, liberation. Things that, at various times, have been perceived as political threats, particularly in the black community. I think often there is political power to music that is written off as apolitical.”*

The civil rights movement and history of African American music is one of the most popular case studies in the field of music and politics due to generation after generation of genre-spanning protest music (Street, 2012); although, as discussed by Daniel Evans in the previous quotation, sometimes the mere association to personal or cultural struggles is enough for artist to be able to communicate political or social themes through their work.

**Expression**
In order to fully understand the role that music plays within the realm of political and social issues, it is important to recognise the motivations artists have for politicising a piece of work. If musicking itself is considered a political act, and we are to assume that this musicking has an influence on others, then discovering the motivations for politicising music may be vital in understanding how artists, musicians, and political or social movements may be affected in future. The first of two core reasons uncovered by the thematic analysis was the *need* for musicians to express their thoughts and feelings through their art.

*Dillon Usher: “I feel like it’s a lot easier to write when there’s a good amount of content there and it’s something that stirs me up. If I can get passionate about something, sometimes I can just write a song in like an hour. … If something gets me angry or upset, the music just comes out. That’s the way I express”*

This notion of expressing passion and emotion is something that seemed to resonate with all of the musicians spoken to during the research. This particular topic has been analysed at great length by the 18th-century philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued that passion is the fundamental element that has inspired expression within human society and that it is passion alone that first brought communication of all forms into existence (Rousseau, 1997, p. 255). Rousseau eloquently summarises this theory in his declaration, “Not hunger nor thirst, but love, hatred, pity, anger wrung their first voices from [our ancestors]” (1997, p. 253). The philosopher continues to discuss the intrinsic relationship between melody, passion and expression with the - equally as eloquent although far more ambiguous - statement, ‘teach [the musician] that he must render noise with song, that if he wished to make frogs croak he would have to make them sing’ (Rousseau, 1997: 288)**.** This line is particularly poetic as it encompasses how passion is at the very core of language and human interaction whilst echoing the importance of music and song as the vehicle in which these emotions are expressed.

*Jim Osman: “I guess [political/social themes are presented through] the lyrics mainly. It’s all quite personal stuff, and a lot of it doesn’t necessarily have a message, but it’s stuff that has frustrated or angered me, or things that I have found difficult to understand, so I would discuss it through the music.”*

*Joe Angus: “[Political and social issues are] my main source of inspiration … It’s only when I see something that grinds me, or like I get an inexpressible ball of anger in me, and that only ever comes out through the music. … For me, there’s nothing happy about writing or playing these songs, it’s just channelling. If I didn’t have that I don’t know how I’d channel my anger.”*

For Joe, Jim, and Dillon, frustration and anger at the current state of political and social affairs was overtly prominent in their reasoning behind representing politicised themes within their music and it was also their favoured outlet to adequately express these emotions. This supports the theories put forward by Rousseau (1997) that expression only emerges from feelings of passion, and that music can often express these passions in a way that is unrivalled by other methods of communication (p. 287). The relationship between music and expressing emotion is discussed further by Charles O. Nussbaum (2001), who regards music as form of ‘symbolic representation’ that is akin to language and poetry in both its ability to effectively communicate and act as a ‘media of expression’ (p. 270) as well as its ‘intimate connection with our emotional depths’ (p. 264).

*Marcus Clarke: “Music is just an expression and an extension of you. It’s how that comes into collision with the world around you. Politics is a part of your life and your being, so it’s impossible to avoid it. If you’re expressing yourself, you have to move through that mode of politics at some point.”*

This quote from Marcus echoes the sentiments of the other musicians in the sense that music is a form of expression, similar in nature to language. It does, however, highlight that through expressing one’s self, an artist is communicating from a point of view that reflects their own upbringing, social status, life experiences, and all of the other aspects that contribute to the formation of standpoint on political and social issues. The sense of musical expression being intrinsically linked to someone’s entire being is shared by John Street, who claims that, “Music does not just provide a vehicle of political expression, it is that expression’ (Street, p. 1)”. Rich Huxley recapitulated all of the previously discussed ideas very much in layman’s terms, with the clarification:

*Rich Huxley: “It’s the stuff that’s on your mind. That’s what we write about, it’s the stuff that we care about and the stuff that we’re thinking about at that time”*

The second core reasoning - found through the study’s thematic analysis - for representing political themes in music shall now be explored. However, Huxley’s explanation provokes secondary questions to consider throughout the rest of this text: Why are these artists so passionate about politics? And, does their exposure to music have any role to play in that passion?

**Awareness**

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts highlighted that awareness of political and social issues is not only a motivating factor behind creating politicised music, but also an important product of it. As discussed earlier in this chapter, music’s ability to spread awareness may be due to its supposed superiority over other forms of communication (Nietzsche, 1999; Rosseau, 1997). One of the primary methods used by NGOs, activist groups, and politically engaged publics to spread awareness is through the use of protests, strikes, or street marches.

*Ian Pepper: “I’ve noticed when there are protests and rallies and stuff, the media just doesn’t really cover it. Even if it’s a really big event, they’ll just act as if nothing’s happening and it won’t get any press or on TV or anything. … Because of the press and the media, people’s associations with protests and rallies is them turning violent or being disruptive.”*

The flaws of popular tactics such as these are just some of the reasons why music is an effective alternative in the effort to spread awareness among mainstream society. Many of the interviewees, including Dillon Usher, in particular, expressed similar discontent with the media’s lack of coverage of specific issues and felt that they had a certain responsibility or urge to inform people on topics they felt were unjustly ignored.

*Dillon Usher: “If it’s something that you feel like not enough people know about, then it’s something that you want to write about. Even if only a few of your friends listen and give it a share, if it raises ten people’s awareness and they tell a couple of people, then eventually a little bit of word spreads and it’s always good.”*

*Joe Angus: “I did a journalism degree because I was eager to get the word out, investigate stuff, and get to the bottom of things, and then put it across to people in a way that they can understand. Then after my degree, I figured that I could do the same thing through music.”*

This perceived urge for politically engaged individuals to share information with others has also been discussed by Eyerman and Jamison (1998). In their book ‘Music and Social Movements’, they repeatedly referred to musicians as being ‘truth bearers’. The reason why musicians wish to promote such awareness is likely in the hope of mobilising publics to become politically active, which will be discussed later in this text, although it is also important to look at other ways in which a heightened awareness of political issues can impact upon an audience.

*Rich Huxley: “[Music] can shine a light on things and bring people’s attention to an issue.”*

As Huxley has identified, communicating a politicised message can focus someone’s thoughts on a specific subject or issue. Nussbaum (2001) also shared this sentiment as he claimed that music and lyrics are “well equipped to cut through inattention and to promote both intense concern and acknowledgement” (p. 429). The spreading of awareness is not always positive, however, and may be used for seemingly negative effects (Mattern, 1998) such as through the use of propaganda. Spreading awareness of propaganda through music has been explored by Bergh & Sloboda (2010) who stated that music could be a “distribution mechanism of ideology” that can be “often used to foment conflicts” (p. 4). Examples of this were raised by Theo Routh, who regarded an increase in all forms of political awareness as an intrinsically positive process for social and political movements as a whole.

*Theo Routh: “Whether that’s punk rock bands that want to get rid of the Queen, or Christian rock bands selling their particular brand of Christianity, or a Nazi death metal band, they all exist and they’re all giving a poltical message. Some of the messages are better than others, but they are all engaging in politics and making people think about it, and I guess that has to be a good thing”*

Gaining a heightened awareness through music is not constrained to overtly political themes or ideologies; it is often merely through gaining a greater understanding of the circumstances of the artist who created the piece of work. Street (2012, p. 67) argued that music is an effective method of ‘seeing into the inner life of political participants’. Brian Ward (1998) also shares this view, although he focused more specifically on the struggles of African-Americans, stating that music such as soul and hip-hop displayed the ‘state of black consciousness’ and provided people with greater knowledge and empathy of their fight for freedom and equality (p. 6). In the words of the writer and music journalist, Mark Fisher (2009), the majority of hip-hop is a ‘hard-headed embracing of a brutally reductive version of reality’ (p.12) that has ‘stripped the world of sentimental illusions’ regarding the world of African-American culture (p.13). A great example of this was referenced by Joe Angus, in the form of a song lyric by The Notorious B.I.G., also known as Biggie Smalls.

*Joe Angus: “There’s a lyric in a Biggie song (‘Things Done Changed’), “It's hard being young from the slums, eating 5 cent gums, not knowing where your meal's coming from”. He hasn’t set out to topple the government or anything; he’s just speaking about his experience of life. That becomes political because that’s what society is made of at that point.”*

Tricia Rose (1994) described rap music and hip-hop as a ‘theatre of the powerless’ where members of minority groups can tell the true stories of the oppression and inequality that they encounter in their everyday lives (p. 100). Nussbaum (2001) explained that this feature of African American music by stating that it incites empathy in its audiences; this perceived impact of awareness creating empathy is also agreed upon by Bennett (2001). He described this phenomenon as ‘compassionate imagining’, which could then lead to a sense of ‘compassionate citizenship’ among its publics when they become both aware and empathic of other’s situations (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 431). Putnam (2000, p. 411) also celebrates the power of rap music in spreading awareness of political and social issues, citing an increase in ‘social capital’ among attendees of festivals.

*Marcus Clarke: “Loads of stuff [has had a significant influence on me]. I suppose the gateway to music like that for me was Rage Against The Machine because you could take all of the lyrics on face value. They were all there, and you had the material inside the album to read. They’re very upfront with their political views.”*

Simon Reynolds (2010) adopted the term ‘portal bands’ to describe acts that provide their fans with “rich sources of brain food” and “a whole universe of inspiration and ideas beyond music” (p. 132). Reynolds (2010) goes on to explain how being a fan of experimental acts such as Throbbing Gristle or Coil was “like enrolling in a university course of cultural extremism, the music virtually coming with footnotes and a ‘Further Reading’ section attached” (p. 132). Interviewee, Ian Pepper, spoke about how The Manic Street Preachers influenced him during his youth by increasing his awareness of a broad range of different topics and showing him a ‘wider world’.

*Ian Pepper: “They reference all sorts of different philosophical theories such as existentialism and nihilism, and political issues such as the Spanish Civil War, all kinds of stuff. They’re a band that are full of ideas, and so when you’re young you can go off and explore all of that. You might have come to these things yourself eventually, but a band like that can give you like a shortcut into all these different places, and they’re really valuable.”*

Pepper also referenced the opening line of the Manic Street Preachers’ song ‘A Design For Life’, a lyric that has remained particularly meaningful to him and encompasses much of what portal bands represent, ‘libraries gave us power’. Mark Fisher, the journalist who first coined the term ‘portal’ in this context, argued that portal bands were most effective when they opened up their audiences to various cultural domains outside of the realms of music, such as literature, film, philosophy, or art (Fisher, 2009). Reynolds (2010) claimed that the post-punk scene in the late 70’s was a fertile ground for portal bands and that song lyrics and interviews by musicians like Mark E. Smith could easily introduce fans to writers such as Dostoevsky or Wyndham Lewis (p. 132). Jim Osman, an avid fan and creator of post-punk music, mirrors this observation by Reynolds.

*Jim Osman: “I love bands like Joy Division, songs like ‘Dead Souls’ and all the references to Russian literature and Dostoyevsky, and that very much informs the films I watch and the books I read. I feel like my interest in art, and books and films is very much informed by the music that I like.”*

Osman’s deep-rooted interest in these romanticised topics of literature and art - that he claims are directly informed by his music tastes - remain present, as the post-punk band he is currently in take inspiration for their name from the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas. These correlations reinforce the impact that these acts can have on their fans, as certain genres or artists can generate an individual’s interest in specific themes or topics. This correlation continued when analysing statements made by Dillon Usher and Marcus Clarke, the only two interviewees who - not only create hip-hop inspired music themselves - but also explicitly spoke about overtly politicised hip-hop and rap music as some their favourite genres of music to listen to.

Dillon Usher: “*Through music I’ve learnt about things such as the East India Company, and the atrocities, and how the empire was built through slavery. ... From Lowkey I was learning about the Israel / Palestine conflict and the intifada that’s going on over there.”*

*Marcus Clarke: [on political themes in his own music]* ***“****I think the biggest thing is like colonialism and imperialism in terms of the British Empire and things like that. That’s at the root of a lot of the things that I do.”*

The two artists’ list of interests regarding music that they enjoy listening to, as well as the political issues that they represent in their own music, are almost identical parallels of one another. Not only have both of the interviewees discussed learning about the British Empire through their own music tastes, but both of them have gone on to participate politically by representing these exact issues in their own musical works. Furthermore, when asked about their own political activity outside of music, the interviewees spoke about the first protest that they had attended; both of which was in objection to the Israel/Palestine conflict. It is worth noting that no other interviewees mentioned attending rallies for these specific issues, nor did they mention including them in their own artistic works. For Dillon, he was also seemingly self-aware of how his awareness of topics raised by his favourite artists has gone on to inform his own political activity.

Dillon Usher: “If it wasn’t for music, a lot of the people that do know about what’s going on that join these marches, go on protests, and sign these petitions, they wouldn’t know about these kind of things. And that does make a difference, I guess, even on a small scale.”

In opposition to what might have been initially expected, and despite strong correlations between artists’ musical tastes and the political/social issues that they choose to express in their own music, at no point during the interview process did the concept of emulation or mimicry of other musicians emerge as a reason for communicating political messages.

**Authenticity**

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts uncovered a major factor that every participant emphasised on at least one occasion and was seemingly vital in a piece of music’s ability to effectively communicate its political message: authenticity. The notion of authenticity has been explored by Machin (2010) who stated that, according to Romantic tradition, a piece of music will be deemed inauthentic if it is merely a product of society rather than a mode of true expression emanating from the soul. In a 1996 essay on hip-hop featured in The Wire magazine, Simon Reynolds claimed that defining how ‘real’ a piece of music is comes down to two primary features; the extent of which the music is uncompromised and hasn’t deviated from the true artistic vision for the sake of commercial goals, and also the extent of which the music reflects a true representation of ‘reality’ and the current societal situation (as cited in Fisher, 2009, p. 12).

*Daniel Evans: “If you think of someone like Nina Simone who really did go heart and soul into the civil rights movement, and you think about the emotional power of the songs that she wrote, I think it would be pretty foolish to dispute that her emotional investment into those issues gave those songs an additional power.”*

Moore (2002) has defined the notion of musical authenticity as the quality of ‘sincerity’ among the performers and the extent as to which they are ‘playing from the heart’ (p.210). Hall (2014) also concluded that a piece of music’s inherent ‘truth’ is dependent on the right motivation of the individual composers (p. 103). It has been claimed, however, that musicians - and their respective managers, labels, and press teams - sometimes manipulate their music or visual style in order to present themselves as ‘authentic’ (Machin, 2010). This sense of, what could be defined as ‘faux-authenticism’, has cultivated a significant level of scepticism and distrust in artists that present political themes in their music.

*Rich Huxley: ”I think there’s an argument that, in some situations, people write political songs because they want to be taken seriously. There are people who explicitly write a song that is protesting a thing or a person, and I think that can be slightly contrived.”*

*Ian Pepper: “In terms of music or art that is actively political, I’m a bit suspicious about it; I don’t think it’s always that good. I think it’s usually better when it’s someone who is just making art and feels so strongly about something that they just want to make a comment or a statement about it. If you have some one who is like “I am a political artist and all of my work is about politics”, it perhaps loses its ability to engage and perhaps ends up not being powerful enough because it ends up being more about the intellect than the emotion … but if [political themes are] there and I feel like the message is coming from a real place, and the heart of the person who’s saying it, then yeah, I respond to it.”*

*Jim Osman: “I think a lot of musicians and celebrities jump on the bandwagon of party politics, but just do it for their own egos. … I’m always sceptical of musicians using their music to support party politics.”*

As stated by Street (2012, p. 72), for an artist to effectively communicate political messages to an audience in a manner that is both engaging and persuasive, they must be legitimate representatives for the issues that they represent and be perceived as credible participants. Street goes on to argue that a musician’s legitimacy can be formed by their portrayal within the media, for example, in the way that Bob Geldof and Bono were considered as ‘experts’ on political and social issues within Africa (2012, p. 93). In recent times, this phenomenon has occurred once again with the musicians within the Grime community, based in London.

Daniel Evans: “Suddenly there’s a real presence of Grime musicians in political debate. Then you get somebody like Akala, who’s on television talking about the racial blindspot in E.P. Thompson’s ‘Making of The English Working Class’ and giving a really sophisticated analysis of left wing history. … Then in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, you then had the media again having recourse to these Grime musicians who have become much more public figures than what they were previously. They were suddenly entering the living rooms of people across the country.”

*Joe Angus: “It’s not necessarily made it through to the music of Grime yet, but the scene of Grime has suddenly become massively politicized because it’s often written from the point of view of a community that’s sort of been downtrodden. And that’s where the most authentic stuff comes from.”*

Joe then compares this to how The Clash spoke for the downtrodden youth under Margaret Thatcher’s government, how Zach De La Rocha from Rage Against The Machine represented the Puerto Rican American and Hispanic American minority groups, and how Hip-Hop artists have been able to voice the concerns of African American minorities. As argued by Street (2012, p. 72), popularity of an artist is not a predominant factor in whether or not they possess political credibility.

*Daniel Evans: “If you’re not a part of a social movement then just writing a political song that you think might influence or galvanise people, it doesn’t have the same kind of effect, as it doesn’t have any organic connection to what it’s trying to address.”*

These sentiments were shared by all of the participants as they expressed their scepticism of political music and the importance of legitimacy and credibility in an artists’ ability to engage their audiences and effectively communicate their political messages.**IDENTITY AND TRANSFORMATION**

Our relationship with music and politics can transform the very essence of our identities, from our behaviours and our emotions to the music we listen to and the ways in which we perceive the world around us. Juuti & Littleton (2010) examined how the collective nature of musicking affected identity, and they concluded that “Identity negotiation is an agentic process, but one that is collectively shaped and anchored in social relations, communal experiences and interaction” (p. 494). Rosseau (1997, p. 288) even went a step further and attributed music to, not only identity, but also to emotion and the very formation of human society. Rosseau’s (1997) statements may be bold and potentially hyperbolic, although many of the conclusions made by the 18th-century philosopher have since been supported by various empirical studies and examples of academic research (Volgsten, 2014; Nussbaum, 2001; Hallam, 2010; Levitin, 2008). In this chapter, the aforementioned studies shall be discussed in relation to the results of this study’s thematic analysis, which also supports academics and philosophers such as Rosseau (1997) that have made bold claims regarding music’s inherent link to the formation and transformation of our personal identities.

**Emotion and Mood**

Evidence from academic studies on music’s relationship with emotion and mood are key signifiers in music’s ability to affect an individual psychologically. Garrido‘s (2015) systemic literature review and database analysis found that music is directly linked with changes in mood as a result of at least five mechanisms: reflection, catharsis, solace/connection, rumination, and aesthetic pleasure (p. 9). The researcher stated that reflection was a result of an ‘opportunity to reflect on life events and engage in cognitive reframing or reappraisal’ and that solace was a result of ‘giving the listener a feeling that they are understood and connected to other people in the emotions they experience’ (Garrido, 2015, p. 9). Nussbaum (2001) corroborated these assumptions by concluding that the music that we engage with can influence our entire emotional lives (p. 249) due to its ‘intimate connection with our emotional depths’ (p. 265). As expressed by Dillon, both active musicking and music listening can have an impact on mood.

*Dillon Usher: “I feel like [positive music / ‘party hip-hop’] keeps me in a better mind frame, as it can get a bit dark if you listen to political music all of the time.”*

*Dillon Usher: “I’m not very good at expressing these things to people, but through the music, it just comes quite easily. It makes me feel so much better as well”*

This sentiment is also stressed by Joe Angus who claimed that a ‘break for your brain’ is needed after writing, performing, and listening to an extended amount of political music. This mood changing effect is not only a short-term and temporary consequence of musicking, but Hallam (2010, p. 15) found that it might increase the development of emotional sensitivity among young children, and as a result, have an influence on their identity throughout later life. Hallam (2010, p.14) specifically noted heightened levels of conscientiousness among musicians, a character trait that may influence an individuals political views or likeliness to politically participate (Bennett, 2001).

Neuroscientist, Daniel Levitin (2008), conducted empirical research into brain activity whilst listening to music in an effort to prove the psychological effects that music can cultivate and explore the reasons why mood changes often occur. Levitin’s (2008) study found that the ‘cerebellum’s contribution to regulating emotion through its connections to the frontal lobe and the limbic system’ paired with enhanced levels of dopamine in the nucleus accumbens are both primary factors in music’s ability to alter mood in individuals (p. 191). A practical and political use of these mood and emotion altering effects can be found during conflicts such as the Second World War and the Bosnian War in which the non-fighting population used music as a source of morale, and also in active warfare where the euphoric feelings of music could also bolster morale and marshal the troops into battle (Bergh & Slaboda, 2010). A prime example of the latter is in the 2003 invasion of Iraq where US troops strategically adjusted their moods and emotions by listening to rap, metal, and hardcore music during military operations (Bergh & Slaboda, 2010).

**Musical preference**

Individual preferences in regards to art forms or cultural activities form part of what can be regarded as our personal identities. Musical preferences across certain styles, artists, or genres are also often linked to our political identities. Simon Reynolds (2010) discussed the perception of enjoying 60’s rock music as an active form of rebellion, stating that ‘musical style was not a consumer choice but a matter of expressive urgency, generational allegiance or identity politics’ (p. 200). In the current study interviewees were asked how regularly they listened to ‘political music’ and whether they had a preference for music that represented political or social themes. All of the participants claimed to be fans of both political and apolitical music and more than half of the interviewees expressed an explicit preference for music of a political nature.

*Joe Angus: “If someone said to me “there’s a new band breaking through and they’ve got a really overt political stance” I’d be a lot more inclined to listen to that band … I’m not sure if it’s true for all members of the band, but I would definitely say that’s something I give preferential treatment.”*

Joe Angus didn’t suggest a preference for any particular political themes or points of view, although many of the interviewees went on to cite the reasons for their musical preferences. Garrido’s (2015) suggestion that music can provide people with solace when listeners feel like they are connected to or understood by the artists is a prevailing theme in regards to the interviewees preference of specific political music.

*Jim Osman: “I like music that connects to me and speaks to me, and that can often be through politics. … I definitely do [have a preference for political music]. If an artist claimed that their work was completely apolitical, I think that I’d like it a lot less.”*

*Marcus Clarke: “I think I tend to be fairly balanced, but I do have an affinity with music that is quite political. I guess that’s music that specifically fits more of my political ideology.”*

*Dillon Usher: “I do like political themes in music, especially if it’s more towards the left as that is the way that I fall, but I think it comes down to whether it’s something that I can relate to. It’s about whether it resonates.”*

This notion of musical preference directly reflecting an individual’s own political views or social circumstances was common throughout the research process. Theodor W. Adorno (2002) alleged that aesthetic distinctions and preferences across different musical styles and genres was a clear expression of an individual’s political and moral values. This conclusion is corroborated by Simon Frith (1996) who claimed that musical preference is ‘not just a matter of taste, it is also a matter of morality’ (p. 72). Assumptions such as these have also more recently been reiterated by Street (2012, p. 142) who linked musical taste to both morality and also political order.

*Theo Routh: “I like to listen to music from - what I would describe as ‘queer artists’ - and artists that use their music to raise awareness of, not necessarily just LGBT issues, but general equality issues, rights issues, things like that. … It definitely switches me onto a song more. If it’s a catchy song I’ll like it anyway, but it definitely gives me a positive bias towards that song if there’s some kind of political aspect to it that I agree with.”*

As a member of the LGBT community, Theo’s listening habits reflect Frith’s (1996) assessment that a consumers liking and responsiveness to a piece of music is often reliant on a shared ethical view. Dillon Usher also stressed that his enjoyment of Dead Prez records was linked to his ability to relate to the themes of financial difficulty and impoverished communities.

In analysing musical preference’s relationship with political identity it is incredibly difficult to ascertain whether it was an individual’s musical taste that informed their political views, or their political views that informed their musical taste. This dilemma was noted by Daniel Evans, who likened it to the infamously hard to answer question of, ‘what came first, the chicken or the egg?’.

*Daniel Evans: “Asian Dub Foundation had a particularly big impact [on my life]. I maybe wouldn’t have gotten into them as much if I hadn’t already been becoming politicised. So it’s a bit of a chicken and egg situation … becoming more politicised and then coming across bands that were explicitly about opening your eyes and broadening your horizons to different types of experiences and different types of music, it was important to me, definitely. … The way that Asian Dub Foundation talked about [The Beatles] was totally different; they put them into a different kind of musical tradition, one of transnational exchanges and influences. That really affected the way that I think about music to this day.”*

Explicitly concluding whether political identity informs musical preference or vice versa may be impossible to prove, as the two characteristics likely share a symbiotic relationship with one another and the volume of life experiences that inform these character traits can be remarkably varied. Past research can conclude, however, that music listening can increase an individual’s awareness of political and social issues (Reynolds, 2010), it can provide an opportunity to engage in cognitive reframing or reappraisal (Garrido, 2015, p.9), and - as shall be discussed in the next section - it may also have a transformative affect on an individual’s political identity and psychological state. As told by Street (2012), ‘in responding to, and in evaluating, music we do not just give expression to our tastes, but to our political values and ideas. Music is, to this extent, part of the way that we think politically’ (Street, p. 159).

**Personal transformation**

Music can be a method of transformative political participation and Sarah White (1996, p. 8) states that transformative participation often has an empowering effect on others. White (1996) continues to argue that the resultant empowerment gained from exposure to transformative political participation, such as explicitly political music, ‘transforms people’s reality and sense of it’ (p. 9). This notion of transforming a person’s reality is shared by Bennett (2001), who passionately argued that the way we perceive ourselves, and the world around us, could be shaped by the music that we listen to. The cultural phenomenon of music transforming our own personality and nature is not only a recent concept or topic of study. Aristotle (1962) cited music as a ‘stimulus to goodness’ and a facilitator of psychological change.

David Widgery (1986) analysed the influence of Rock Against Racism and music’s potential to challenge cultural norms. The writer declared that, “How people find their pleasure, entertainment, and celebration is also how they find their sexual identity, their political courage and their strength to change” (Widgery, 1986, p.56). In regard to the way that music can affect ones ability to explore their sexual identity, Daniel Evans provided anecdotal evidence to support the claim.

*Daniel Evans: “When Bowie died everyone was talking about their memory of seeing him on Top Of The Pops and when he put his arms around his guitarist (Mick Ronson), and how that had a serious impact on people’s thoughts upon sexuality”*

The influential impact of the androgyny of David Bowie’s persona, and his highly notorious Top of The Pops performance in particular, has been discussed at length by academics such as Volgsten (2014). Volgsten (2014, p.120) identified David Bowie as having a significant influence in systematically challenging opinions on gender-norms and sexuality within popular culture. The opportunity for music to allow a listener to reframe their current views on political and social issues (Garrido, 2015), however, is far from restricted to gender politics or LGBT issues. Some interviewees claimed that music listening, and the increased awareness of political and social issues that came with it, have not only changed their perceptions of individual topics, but altered their entire outlook and approach to life itself.

*Dillon Usher: “[Music] has definitely changed my views … it changes you as a person. … For me, it’s changed my outlook completely and I’m sure it has for millions of people around the world”*

Garrido (2015) argued that *at least* five mechanisms of music exist that constitute towards psychological change, making it difficult to identify exactly which mechanisms were more predominant in the personality shifts that interviewees such as Dillon claim to have experienced. Theo Routh however, highlighted the opportunity for reflection on life experiences, beliefs, and values. Theo asserted that the reflective period whilst listening to songs that represent political or social themes has a continuous and permanent impact on his thought processes.

*Theo Routh: “When I hear a song that reminds me of something because I know something about that song or something deeper about that artist, it makes me think a little more and it engages me more. I’d say that it does change the way I think every time I hear it, and that has to be quite a significant thing for a song to achieve.”*

Another potential explanation for music’s ability to transform people’s personalities and identities is the relationship between musicking and conscientiousness (Hallam, 2010, p.14). Hallam’s (2010) argument corresponds with similar studies that link music listening to heightened degrees of compassion for others in the form of ‘compassionate imagining’ and ‘compassionate citizenship’ (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 431). It is also argued that music can increase empathy within individuals, which can result in changes in behaviour and a significant urge to participate politically (Bennett, 2001). In the following extract, Marcus Clarke explains how he hopes his music will affect consumers and implies that music has allowed him to gain a greater understanding of his own identity.

*Marcus Clarke: “I hope it to - I guess - change people’s point of view and make people think about stuff in a way that they haven’t already. I think that’s what’s good about music, and lyrics especially, compared to a politician just running off spiel. Poetry allows you to reconfigure the way that you see the world; you are able to relate to somebody else. It’s the same in film or other forms of art, it’s about recontextualising what’s around you so you can find your place in the world.”*

The perceived effect of music encouraging reconfigurement and recontextualisation is examined by Small (1998), who considered musicking as a key factor in our understanding of ourselves, our social relationships, and the world around us. The potential for reformation of character, which is attributed to music by various researchers and participants of this study, is discussed by Volgsten (2014) who relates this affect to an exchange of transnational and intercultural values. Volgsten (2014, p. 115) claims ‘music harbours a special capacity for its listeners to sympathetically relate to foreign sets of values’ and that ‘this capacity to sympathetically relate may then lead to a critical assimilation of these values”. Rosseau (1997, p. 288) believes that this is due to music’s ability to generate emotions and thoughts in a more direct manner than any other form of art; an opinion which is shared by Nussbaum (2001) who argued that music can ‘pierce like a painful ray of light directly into the most vulnerable parts of the personality’ (p. 269).

Volgsten (2014) also explored group identities as well as personal identities. The researcher contended, ‘music is not just an interchangeable stimulus, but an important aspect of many persons’ and groups’ identity processes’ (Volgsten, 2014, p. 116). Volgsten (2014) labelled music as an ‘identity marker’ (p. 117) and went on to discuss how group identities are linked to specific genres and subcultures, each possessing their own inherent system of values, attitudes, and beliefs. The following extract provides a case study for this theory and is from one of the most interesting and thought provoking segments of the research process; it takes the form of Daniel Evans discussing how his preference of brit-pop music was reflected in the personal, social, and political attitudes that he held at that time.

*Daniel Evans: “I think that Brit-pop was extremely negative politically. And musically (laughs), but particularly politically. Thinking about myself at about 12 or 13 getting into Oasis and whoever, to some extent those bands and the ‘new lad’ attitudes and the nationalistic attitudes that went along with it were pretty retrogressive. It probably had a negative effect on my own thinking and behaviour. … One of the things that I would associate with brit-pop is that there was suddenly a celebration of being ‘normal’, and normal was defined as being a straight, white, young man. If you were a straight, white, young man - or if you thought you were - you were almost encouraged to celebrate that instead of questioning those categories. Popular music, particularly popular music in this country, has always been about questioning those categories. … With brit-pop it wasn’t about questioning or opening yourself up, it was more about drawing lines about what was already established.”*

Whilst the interviewee was joking about brit-pop being musically negative, there is some truth to the statement, as the concept of musical conservatism applies to both the political and social themes expressed as well as the aesthetic nature of the music itself, most specifically the lack of innovation or experimentation found in genres such as country, heavy metal, and indie rock (Street, 2012, p. 152). Street (2012) contested that this is a juxtaposition compared to other musical genres that ‘challenge the status quo, that innovate, and liberate’ (p. 152). Hesmondhalgh (1999) has also noted that indie music has an abundance of ‘nostalgic classicism’, which mirrors the supposed popularity of retrogressive attitudes as noted in the previous extract. The genre-based divide among social groups, particularly in a school environment, was underlined by Daniel Evans as he recollects the way in which schoolmates who were fans of non-conservative music held different attitudes and approaches to life.

*Daniel Evans: “[Fans of ‘heavier’ American rock music] were much more experimental in the way that they presented themselves, and brit-pop sort of legitimised a conservative reaction against that. Of course, you cant just blame brit-pop for your own failings, but when you’re young and easily influenced I think those aspects do count.”*

The interviewee’s use of the word ‘failings’ implied that he regretted his conservative reaction towards experimentation and open-mindedness, although as stated by John Street (2012, p. 173) ‘Music has the capacity to make us do and feel things that we would not otherwise, and it does so with immediacy and directness’. Daniel then returned to the notion of ‘the chicken and the egg’ as he pondered the influence of music on the identity of himself and his friends throughout their formative years.

*Daniel Evans: “When I was young, we all thought it was the be all and end all, you know, the music you’re into and stuff. Obviously, it’s hard to decide where one thing starts and one thing finishes. So to what extent would the music influence you, or would it just be a validation and you finding the music that reflected your own attitudes at that time?”*

The research discussed in this chapter suggests that these truths are not mutually exclusive and that both of these effects occur simultaneously. Individuals do in fact gravitate to music that reflects their own attitudes and beliefs (Frith, 1996), although music also has the ability to introduce fans to new ideas and ways of thinking (Reynolds, 2010; Eyerman and Jamison, 1998) which can then go on to transform their personal identities and also their likelihood of active political participation through an increased sense of compassion or a shift in attitudes, values, and beliefs (White, 1996; Widgery, 1986). In the next section we discuss how music can mobilise people towards political participation through the use of empowerment and collective action.

**MOBILISATION**

Jonathan Githens-Mazer (2008, p. 45) found that political participation relied on three primary components: a feeling of injustice or social strife; a collective identity held among potential participants; and agency, defined as the hope that social or political change is possible given sustained collective action. The initial component is simply a product of the current political or social environment, whereas in this chapter we will discuss how collective identity and agency can be effectively fostered through music.

**Agency**

Eyerman and Jamison (1998) agree with academics such as Mattern (1998) that music is a form of communication. They claim, however, that it has a more active role to play in inspiring political action. The notion of music inspiring listeners to do things that they otherwise would not have done was mentioned by multiple interviewees, and also supported by Street’s research (2012, p. 173). Jim Osman noted that, not only was he inspired by music, but also that he considers it an important factor in his own music making process.

*Jim Osman: “I think that any art that I make, including my drama work, I guess that the intention is to be inspiring. When I’ve listened to music when I’ve been younger, I’ve felt a connection with the message and the lyrics, but the main thing is that it inspired me*

Many songs provide explicit calls to action within their lyrics. One of the most prominent and striking examples of this is in Rage Against The Machine’s song ‘Guerrilla Radio’, in which Zach De La Rocha whispers, ‘It has to start somewhere. It has to start sometime. What better place than here? What better time than now? All hell can’t stop us now’. De La Rocha’s rhetorical questions aim to provoke the listener into a sense of agency, and the use of the collective noun “us” also reinforces the notion of a collective identity. Whilst lyrics such as this can easily be construed as empowering, Sarah White (1996) argues that ‘empowerment must involve action’ and that the ‘process [of empowerment and participation] never comes to an end, but is a continuing dynamic which transforms people's reality and their sense of it’ (p. 9).

*Daniel Evans: “Music has reflected [social] movements, inspired people within those movements, and to some extent it has been a product of those movements as well. One of the most famous would be Sam Cooke’s ‘A Change Is Gonna Come’ which is a clear attempt to respond to the civil rights movement and also to galvanise people within it.”*

The American civil rights activist, Rev. Jesse Jackson, once stated that whilst the political participation of vast numbers of people attending protests and boycotts provided the infrastructure of the civil rights movements, it was the music of artists such as Sam Cooke and Nina Simone that ‘breathed it’s soul’ (as cited in Rose, 2007, p. 65). The reverend’s argument was supported by the American writer and activist, Frank Joyce, who has argued that the Freedom Singers involved in the Civil Rights Movement “inspired generations in ways that even the most powerful oratory of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, ... or Stokely Carmichael could not.” (Joyce, 1997, p. 8).

*Marcus Clark: “I think for galvanising people together it’s one of the strongest things. For example, when I saw Run The Jewels at Primavera last week… How often do you get around 50 thousand people in a crowd together, all watching the same thing, and they’re being told to stick together to fight against the oppression that’s on them through political forces. That’s a very powerful tool. I don’t think many people weren’t listening to that, or weren’t affected by that. I think that they’ll carry that on through their lives. It might not be an immediate change that’s noticeable, but it’s something that they will carry out in their philosophy and the way that they approach politics.”*

This extract from Marcus Clarke exemplifies how music can provide a platform to try and galvanise a large audience into political action and a sense of agency. In his essay on social capital, Putnam (2000) validates Marcus’ statements by contending that rap concerts are an ideal location to mobilise publics towards political participation, as they can galvanise the audience in a shared sense of togetherness.

*Joe Angus: “[Music has] definitely made me more politically active. Definitely. All the way through my life I’ve been reenergized and reenergized by different stuff coming out.” … “listening to all of those artists speaking about their lives or representing their cultures that have been suppressed, every time I listen to something like that I’m reenergised. And when new things come out I’m reenergised to keep on doing it. … So yeah, for me, it does have a real impact on me.”*

The term ‘energised’ is also used by Bennett (2001), who argues that our motivations behind creating art with a political focus must be ‘energised’ and require an ‘embodied sensibility’ (Bennett, 2001, p. 131). The writer goes on to state that cultural events and artistic activities that result in ‘enchantment’ have a dynamism that ‘revivifies your wonder at life, their morphings inform your reflections upon freedom, their charm energizes your social conscience, and their flexibility stretches your moral sense of the possible’ (Bennett, 2001, p. 33). A rejuvenated perspective on life, an energised social conscience, and a renewed sense of hope all lend themselves to a feeling of agency that can directly impact on political participation (Githens-Mazer, 2008).

*Marcus Clarke: [On protest music released during The Arab Spring] “It might not have been the only factor that started off the uprising there, but it was definitely significant because something like music can be very easily shared and it speaks to a lot of people. It can move very fast through access to the Internet, so I think it still is a very powerful form of political change.”*

The journalist, Andy Morgan, has written extensively about the influence of music throughout The Arab Spring revolution. He stated in one of his blog articles on the subject that, despite growing discontent with the current political regime that was emerging prior to the revolution, ‘it took a rapper to light a firecracker and lob it at Tunisia’s youth’ (Morgan, 2011). The highly politicised protest song by Hamada Ben Amor, aka El Général du Bled, was shared online - as the government strictly forbid music concerts - and ‘within hours the song had lit up the bleak and fearful horizon like an incendiary bomb’ (Morgan, 2011). The wide-scale dissemination of music using the Internet gives the political messages a worldwide reach and allows for the message’s permanent and long-term survival (Bergh & Slaboda, 2010, p. 11). This situation in the months prior to the Arab Spring is highly comparable to the events preceding the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Turkey, in which politicised music videos provided listeners with a method of feeling rebellious and ‘were one of the few spaces where political issues rooted in populism became popularised and may have contributed in a limited capacity to public dialogue or even the scale of the protests’ (Way, 2016, p. 442). El Général’s politicised music eventually led to his imprisonment, and many of his other musical peers were even tortured because of their public opposition to the regime, although the music that they produced sent ‘shockwaves’ across Arab nations, actively incited a mass sense of agency, and dispelled peoples fear of rebellion (Morgan, 2011).

**Collective Identity**

Bergh & Slaboda (2010) analysed a case study of two conflicting tribes using collective music making to improve social relations. The researchers concluded that relationship building is a vital component of conflict transformation and that musicking is a powerful tool that can be used to nurture and strengthen these relationships (Bergh & Slaboda, 2010). Collective identities can be formed through both active music making as well as music listening. Thomas Turino (2008, p. 2) discusses the formation of subcultures and social groups, arguing that music is a way for people to articulate these collective identities. A prime environment for the establishment of collective identities is at live concerts or musical events, as expressed by many of the interviewees.

*Daniel Evans: “I was into Asian Dub Foundation so I went to see them when I was 17, and they were an explicitly political band. That was probably the most exciting gig I’ve ever been to. I saw them a few times after that, but that was like an epiphany kind of a gig. You had politicised music and a really mixed crowd, it wasn’t a typical indie crowd or whatever. There was a real political atmosphere at the gigs themselves, even though it was mostly just young people there to dance and enjoy the music.”*

This extract shows that an event does not have to be explicitly political for it to contribute to the growth of collective identity and mobilisation of publics, music can however provide a meeting place for people meet and share a ‘collective emotional experience’ (Ramet, 1994, p. 1). This is similar to the Rock Against Racism movement which saw ‘dreadlocked blacks and safety-pinned whites’ (Farrar, 2004, p. 229) triumphantly come together and bond during concerts that celebrated both reggae and punk, effectively dispelling a vast amount of Nazi symbolism and ideology from the punk subculture. Street (2012, p. 95) argued that the Rock Against Racism movement and the collective identity that is created helped to reduce the risks of participation and encourage political agency.

*Daniel Evans: “The other main objective [of the bi-monthly fundraiser event] is to provide a space of sociability for people who are sympathetic to the aims of the organisation - but also to a potentially wider public who might not be aware of it, who might just want to come to a party and then end up meeting people involved in this kind of stuff.”*

Events such as these, that provide a social environment that is driven by the desire for social or political change, is directly related to Habermas’ concept of the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas, 1992). Habermas defined the public sphere as an environment where ‘private people come together as a public’, often with the aim to challenge the current political system or societal norms (Habermas, 1992, p. 27). The writer considers these spaces, and the conversations and relationships that form within them, to be an invaluable aspect of political participation. These type of events have been described by Hauser (1999, p. 61) as “a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them”. Joe Angus spoke about music festivals and football matches, two social spaces that he is regular involved in that both embrace the use of communal singing.

*Joe Angus: [on chanting] “We put things we care about into song. Instead of just talking about it there’s always a draw to put it into a song or into something artistic. … It’s that simple thing of, singing makes me feel communal, and the community makes me feel like I’m part of something, and the something that I’m a part of is this group of people saying ‘this is shit, but it could be better’.”*

Putnam (2000, p. 411) argues that communal singing can strengthen collective identity and bring about social capital, regardless of participants’ own political views or ethnic backgrounds. Bennett (2001) echoes this argument as she claims that group singing can make people reconsider their individual and collective identities, whilst also motivating people to pursue their commitments through a sense of shared agency. It has also been argued by academics that communal singing is not simply an expression of community spirit, but it is a creator of it (Gracyk, 2007, p. 170).

*Theo Routh: “People like to feel like they are part of a community. Whether they’re supporting football, or fans of a certain band, or members of a political party, and people like that sense of community and that sense of attachment. I think what you get from musicians engaging in politics is that it’s creating or portraying these communities. … You’re making one bigger community, which I think is quite a fundamental human thing to do. I don’t think it’s necessarily restricted to music, but music and politics is quite a good way of doing it.”*

Music acts as a method of ‘social solidarity’ and is a form of ‘exemplary social action’ (Eyerman and Jamison, p. 77). Thomas Turino (2008) compared the Nazi and Civil Rights movements and found that the use of mass singing in both of these movements was able to generate a strong sense of cohesion, collective courage, unity, and shared identity, as well as eliminating the self-doubts of those involved (p. 210 & 215). Joe Angus speaks about the empowerment that group singing provided to the civil rights community in the following extract.

*Joe Angus: “Without music’s influence you would suck so much of the community from [social movements]. Music is about community, and people accessing the same thing and understanding each other. … When [Civil Right Activists] got on those marches and people throwing stuff at them, spitting on them, bombing them, and whatever - they had the songs that they were singing to link them all together in something common. They were able to link that music to their religious beliefs and that increased their ability to be able to take the shit that was being thrown at them.”*

According to Rose (2007, p. 65) the combined power of communities, communication, and music galvanised a vast amount of people to unite together for the March on Washington that brought about the Civil Rights Act of 1964. On top of the many benefits identified by Turino (2008), the social cohesion fostered by musical synchrony and communal singing can lead to more positive attitudes and also ‘encourage tolerance and the development of social ethics’ (Hallam, 2010, p. 15).

*Daniel Evans: “I’m a historian of the Spanish Anarchist movement, and I was in contact with a woman who lived through that period just before she died a few years ago. One of her most evocative memories that she would constantly go back to were the revolutionary songs that they used to sing and the sense of togetherness that that gave her.”*

This extract does not only reflect the development of a collective identity through music, but it also emphasises the importance that music plays in people’s lives. The occurrence of music creating such powerful and vivid memories was another constant theme throughout the research process, as many interviewees were able to recall exact days or moments where they had musical experiences or listened to a specific piece of work for the first time. This phenomenon can be explained by the neuroscientist, Daniel Levitin (2008), who studied elderly individuals with Alzheimer’s, finding that they could easily remember songs from their youth because of musical experiences being ‘tagged’ as neurologically important.

*Rich Huxley: “As a band, there’s a number of general themes that we keep on returning to. They seem to be based around the notion of ‘here comes the apocalypse, so get your mates together, lets drink and get through this’, so that’s kind of what [my band] are about really. Everything is a mess, so all we can do is bring some of the party to it. I think that’s one of our mission statements, I suppose, to try and spread a bit of joy by rallying against the stuff that is shit!”*

As identified by Nussbaum (2001, p. 431), during particularly difficult times music can provide a ‘fellowship’ that helps to alleviate the situation. The effect of music on communal relationships bring people closer together, but it also relates to a greater understanding of one another, as Rousseau (1997, p. 292) stated that it ‘always gives us some idea about our own kind’.

The dissection of literature in this chapter - with the support of the empirical research gathered during this study - has shown how music can galvanise publics and creates a sense of agency among individuals (Morgan, 2011; Putnam, 2000; Bennett, 2001). The chapter has also shown how music can create or strengthen collective identities, which can reduce the risk of participation, eliminate self-doubts, and push members of communities towards political participation (Hallam, 2010; Turino, 2008; Rose, 2007). These assessments lend themselves to the final two primary elements of political participation, as identified by Githens-Mazer (2008, p. 45). Whilst this research suggests that music does indeed encourage political participation, it is important to ask ourselves whether this actually has a significant effect on the overall effectiveness of social and political movements.

**Does music make a change?**

In the final question in the interview schedule, participants were asked whether they believe that music can have a significant influence on political and social issues, and if so, how? The answer was a resounding ‘yes’ from all of the participants, although some of the responses and subsequent conversations were as follows.

*Joe Angus: “When ‘To Pimp A Butterfly’ came out, I was like ‘Shit, this is amazing and massively political’. Since then bands have come up like Fat White Family, Sleaford Mods, and I just feel like its sort of becoming OK again. Not just OK, but commercially viable to be political and still be part of a mainstream music scene.”*

Whilst the aforementioned bands have been releasing politicised music prior to Kendrick Lemar’s landmark album in 2015, Joe implies that the resurgence of politically themed music led by such a popular mainstream artist has made engaging with politics somewhat ‘cool’ again. If this were true, it may have lifted some of the social stigma attached to protest music, the presence of which is evident from the analysis of the interview transcripts alone; key examples of this social stigma include the overarching cynicism and negativity towards explicitly political music and the repeated use of terms such as ‘cliché’. If politics is ‘cool’ again due to politicised mainstream artists such as Kendrick Lemar and Kanye West, it may be the explanation for ‘2017's political rock resurgence’ that has seen new bands emerge, such as Cabbage and Idles that are tackling political issues directly (Beaumont, 2017). In conjunction with this theory, the recent upsurge in politically active artists may be inspired be a *need* to address current issues. The post-Brexit UK and the Trump-led US are both, arguably, headed by the most right-wing governments that either nation has seen in centuries, and the rise of both terrorism and nationalism has been evident worldwide. In the words of Volgsten (2014, p. 116), ‘conflict is appreciated as a source for new ideas and development’. Nevertheless, new music such as this is bringing political discourse back into homes across the country and may be opening people up to new ideas or making them question their current beliefs (Reynolds, 2010).

Joe also spoke about how, although his band have not broken into popular culture or ‘the mainstream’, people have informed him that listening to his music has inspired them to create their own bands or also become more politically active through their art.

*Joe Angus: “It just feels like its part of building the momentum, it’s building the movement, and you’re part of something that’s bigger. Because we’ve pushed this sort of thing to the fore, it has been really important for me to see. Even if it’s just a handful of people or a handful of bands, I consider that a success. Maybe the 21 year old me wouldn’t agree, but the 29 year old me can say that I’ve influenced someone to pick up a guitar or get involved in politics.”*

Rich Huxley also held the belief that music could mobilise people to the point of political action, but he mirrored the previous extract by similarly emphasising the importance of having an influence on just a single individual, rather than an entire movement or societal group.

*Rich Huxley: “I think it rarely solves an issue, but in some circumstances, it does come to the point where it does inspire action. I don’t think that’s always the case, but yes, I think it can. It has the power to. And if not in terms of hundreds of thousands of people, if it just makes one person think slightly differently, then it has had an affect. And music certainly does do that!”*

Another common theme that arose in peoples arguments for music’s ability to influence social or political change were examples of it supposedly doing so in the past. The compulsion to relate to past events to validate theory is also present in the analysis of case studies both in this study and in previous research. Despite also adhering to this approach, it has been criticised by Street (2012, p. 68) who stated that “The role is understood in retrospect only; music is important because music *was* important”. Jim Osman’s, Theo Routh’s, and Ian Pepper’s responses to the concluding question also reflected this prevalent use of the past to validate a current hypothesis.

*Jim Osman: “*Do I think that music can influence political and social issues? I’m quite cynical, but I really hope it would … I think, yes, it certainly can and it certainly has.”

The sense of hope among most interviewees that music possesses a significant power was expected, although it is likely to lead to bias regarding the accuracy of their responses (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010).

*Daniel Evans: “Significant change always happens for a multiplicity of reasons, it’s never just because of one thing. So music can be a contributing factor in any widespread change, in fact, you would probably expect it to be. … Music is an expression of, a driver of, and a product of a movement and a struggle for freedom.”*

Daniel Evans stressed the complexity of the situation and the difficulty in attributing a single element, such as music, to any one political or social change, arguing that they are in fact inseparable from the wider societal changes taking place. Evans’ closing statement was akin to Street (2012, p. 170) who proclaimed that music is a ‘product of, and producer of, forms of social organisation’.

**CONCLUSION**

This study has identified three key themes through a process of thematic analysis that identifies and explains how music can influence individuals and potentially lead them towards political participation. In the first section of the results, the notion of music being used as a form of communication was explored. The extracts from the transcripts highlighted that music can: communicate via a range of multi-modal mediums including lyrics, musical aesthetics, and visual elements; act as an effective form of expression; disseminate political messages to a wide audience; open up individuals to new avenues of thought and topics that they had no previous knowledge of; and that it’s ability to communicate and engage with audiences was helped or hindered by the extent of perceived ‘authenticity’.

The second theme explored how music can psychologically influence our identities and the very essence of who we are. Evidence was provided to show how music can alter mood states in order to demonstrate that musicking can have a significant psychological effect on people’s minds. The section then identified a strong preference among interviewees for music that they could relate to or that matched their specific political perspective. The concept of personal transformation was then discussed to portray how music has seemingly changed the participants’ ways of thinking due to a shift in attitudes, values, and beliefs.

The analysis of the final theme investigated how political mobilisation of individuals could be increased. The thematic analysis and literary research showed that music could galvanise publics into a sense of agency and that the mobilisation of publics was often made possible by collective identities that could be both created or strengthened through musicking. The interviewees finally reflected on whether this mobilisation was significant enough to impact upon social and political issues; of which the answer was a unanimous ‘yes’, despite the acknowledgement that such psychological effects are only likely to directly influence a minimal number of publics.

The results of this study’s thematic analysis support claims by well-respected academics such as Professor Susan Hallam (2010) who claimed that music can encourage ‘co-operation, pro-social behaviour, belongingness, relationships, collaborative learning, social advancement, group identity, solidarity, taking turns, teamwork and helping others.” (p. 15). The three identified themes of communication, mobilisation, and identity were also directly reflected by John Street (2012) in his claim that music can ‘communicate, organize, and move people in its name’ (p. 96) in turn, contributing to the very creation of social and political order (p.146). The sub-themes of awareness and agency were also identified by Eyerman and Jamison (1998, p. 23) who argued that music is a fundamental aspect of ‘both knowledge and action’ among social movements. Furthermore, DeNora (2000) also identified many of the same themes as this study, stating that music’s role in mobilising publics was directly linked to its ability to “invoke, stabilise and change the parameters of agency ... feeling, perception, cognition and consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct and comportment” (p. 20).

Whilst this study, and many previous studies, have been able to identify a multiplicity of factors and ways in which music can contribute to social and political movements, none have been able to effectively measure these supposed effects. Lederach (2010) faced a similar struggle when trying to reach a hypothesis regarding how music could benefit peace building efforts, contesting that the answers to his query were ‘imminently available and yet extraordinarily elusive’ (p. 171). This difficulty to measure or distinguish such complex and conceptual factors was even noted by the late-Romantic era conductor and composer, Gustav Mahler, who claimed that “all the most important things are almost impossible to pin down” (Bauer-Lechner, 2013, p. 46). This study does, however, confirm that music can influence specific individuals by making them more aware of political and/or social issues, by either validating or transforming their attitudes and beliefs, and by providing them with a sense of agency or collective courage to politically participate. The results of this study may help make it possible to predict how future political and social movements could be influenced by utilising music as a political tool. Having greater knowledge of this area would increase our understanding on how the music that we engage with may impact upon our lives and could increase the effectiveness of conflict transformation strategies, for example, used by NGO’s in areas of civil unrest.

**Reflexivity**

The current qualitative study has aimed for epistemological reflexivity, in accordance with guidelines by Henwood (2008), in order to have minimal impact on the results of the data collected and the interpretation of such results. Many factors may have influenced the reflexivity of the study, including the researcher’s social background, personality, behaviour, and pre-existing assumptions (Lipson, 1991). My own deeply passionate interest in the fields of both music and politics may have also affected the subjectivity of the research and, despite trying to remain actively objective throughout the study, my own personal biases may have influenced the collection and interpretation of the data (Finlay & Gough, 2008).

Wilkinson’s (1998) variants of reflexivity also outline how the sampling methods and data collection may have been influenced by my gender and level of qualitative research experience respectively. Wikinson (1998) found that her own gender and her placement in the social hierarchy of the workplace improved her ability to recruit participants. In contrast to Wilkinson’s (1998) findings, during the recruitment process of the current study multiple participants withdrew interest - perhaps due to the researcher’s lack of authority or social standing - and no female participants took part in the study - perhaps due to the researcher’s male gender and the uncomfortable nature of a formal interview. A lack of qualitative research experience meant that, due to a lack of further exploratory questioning that semi-structured interviews allow for, some of the initial interviews were shorter in length than later interviews therefore potentially omitting important data from the study that could have been insightful.

**Limitations & future recommendations**

As argued by Bergh and Slaboda (2010), the hyperbolic statements regularly made about the power of music by philosophers, writers, and researchers are often made without any significant evidence (Lederach 2005; Ramet, 1994). The pair also highlight a primary issue with studies, such as this one, that analyse interviews with artists and event organisers; claiming that ‘they tend (rather unsurprisingly) to report success’ and that there ‘exists an overly optimistic view of what music and art can achieve in conflict transformation situations which has a negative effect on the outcomes’ (p. 8). This bias and subjectivity also lends itself to many of the researchers and philosophers referenced throughout the text, such as Rousseau (1997) and Levitin (2008), who are both musicians. The positive bias of both the interview participants and the cited literary works should be deeply considered before making assumptions based on the text.

The sample group used in this study was 100% male and every participant implied - either explicitly or implicitly - that they had at least a ‘left-leaning’ political view. A more representative sample of genders and political outlooks could have made a significant impact on the outcome of the data. A more representative sample was intended although time restraints, availability issues, and unexplained withdrawals of interest meant that, despite interest shown by potential participants, multiple interviews were unable to take place. Were these interviews to take place, issues such as feminism, LGBT movements, and the role of music in right-wing political participation could have been explored in greater detail with empirical data to support claims made by previous researchers. Due to the demographic of the convenience sample used, the generalizability of the results cannot be assumed.

Future research should continue to use empirical methods to validate hypotheses, as many previous studies are over-reliant on case studies and anecdotal evidence (Bergh and Slaboda, 2010). Whilst the current study suggests that music can influence specific individuals towards political participation, quantitative research methods with large sample sizes could potentially try to measure the proportion of the population that are influenced by the factors identified in this study. Measuring the reach and extent of music’s influence on a range of individuals from different demographics could improve our understanding of the realistic impact that music has on social and political issues. Further qualitative research may also uncover themes that were not identified during this study’s thematic analysis.

**Word Count: 16,072**

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(Appendix A - Interview Schedule / Artist Questions)

**Interviews**

**Questions for Musical Participants**

**Background Questions**

* How long have you been playing music?
* How long have you been in your current band?
* How would you define the music that you create?

**Musical Preferences**

* Do you frequently listen to music that is considered political?
* Would you say that you had a preference for music that is considered political?
* Have any specific artists or songs - that are considered political - had a significant influence on you? If so, how has this music influenced you?

**Politics**

* Are you actively involved with political and/or social issues in any other ways, besides music?

**Politics in their music**

* Do political and/or social issues influence your process of making music?
* How does your music engage with political and/or social issues?
* Which specific political and/or social issues does your music engage with?
* Why do you choose to engage political and/or social issues through your music?
* How do you envision listeners to be affected by the representation of political and/or social issues through your music?
* Do you believe that music can have a significant influence on political and/or social issues? If so, how?

(Appendix B - Interview Schedule / Political Questions)

**Interviews**

**Questions for Political Participants**

**Background Questions**

* How long have you been actively engaged with politics?
* What are the aims of the organisation that you represent?
* How does the organisation engage with political and/or social issues?
* What does your role within this organisation entail?
* Are you actively engaged in politics in any other ways?

**Musical Preferences**

* Do you frequently listen to music that is considered political?
* Would you say that you had a preference for music that is considered political?
* Have any specific artists or songs that are considered political had a significant influence on you? If so, how has this music influenced you?

**Music in Politics**

* Can you recall an example of music being used for political purposes?
* Have you or your organisation ever used music for political purposes?
* Do you believe that music can have a significant influence on political and/or social issues? If so, how?

(Appendix C - Political Participant Information Sheet)

**Political Participant Information Sheet**

**An exploratory study of political agendas in artists’ musical works**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you choose to participate it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Music is often cited throughout modern history as being a motivating factor towards socio-political change. The aim of this research project is to confirm whether music has the ability to influence political and social movements, and if so, explore how and why this occurs. The research will take place from April 2017 to September 2017.

You have been asked to participate in the research, as it is believed that you have valuable insights into the relationship between politics and music. In order to participate you will be required to take part in an interview. The interview will last approximately an hour and you will be asked questions about your musical preferences, your experiences of political and social movements, and the influence of music in political and social movements. Approximately 10 - 15 participants will be interviewed throughout the research process.

The interview will be audio recorded. The audio recordings made during this research will be used only for analysis purposes. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. Please be aware that political and social issues are likely to be discussed during the interview. If there are any issues that you are uncomfortable discussing then you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. Names of organisations will be excluded from the data as the research is focused on individual experiences and insights, rather than requiring participants to represent organisational views. You will have the option to be named in the write-up of the results as the research project can provide an opportunity for you to make your voice heard. You may, however, remain anonymous if you wish.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may discontinue your participation or withdraw from the study at any time up to August 1st, 2017. Withdrawal from the study will not require explanation. The data collected will be stored and may be used in relevant future research. The storage and use of research data (including research participants' personal data) will comply with the Data Protection Act (1998), the Human Rights Act, and the University's Code of Practice on Data Protection. To participate in this study you must first read this information sheet and then sign the required consent form, a copy of both of these documents will be available for you to keep.

Should you have further questions, contact details for the researcher are listed below:

Name: Harry Tidswell
Email: mc16hgt@leeds.ac.uk
Telephone: 07818067215

(Appendix D - Musical Participant Information Sheet)

**Musical Participant Information Sheet**

**An exploratory study of political agendas in artists’ musical works**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you choose to participate it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Music is often cited throughout modern history as being a motivating factor towards socio-political change. The aim of this research project is to confirm whether music has the ability to influence political and social movements, and if so, explore how and why this occurs. The research will take from April 2017 to September 2017.

You have been asked to participate in the research, as it is believed that you have valuable insights into the relationship between music and politics. In order to participate you will be required to take part in an interview. The interview will last approximately an hour and you will be asked questions about your musical preferences, your experiences of political and social movements, and the influence of political ideas in the creation of your music. Approximately 10 - 15 participants will be interviewed throughout the research process.

The interview will be audio recorded. The audio recordings made during this research will be used only for analysis purposes. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. Please be aware that political and social issues are likely to be discussed during the interview. If there are any issues that you are uncomfortable discussing then you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. If you are in a musical group then name of the band will be excluded from the data as the research is focused on individual experiences and insights, rather than requiring participants to represent organisational views. You will have the option to be named in the write-up of the results as the research project can provide an opportunity for you to make your voice heard. You may, however, remain anonymous if you wish.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may discontinue your participation or withdraw from the study at any time up to August 1st, 2017. Withdrawal from the study will not require explanation. The data collected will be stored and may be used in relevant future research. The storage and use of research data (including research participants' personal data) will comply with the Data Protection Act (1998), the Human Rights Act, and the University's Code of Practice on Data Protection. To participate in this study you must first read this information sheet and then sign the required consent form, a copy of both of these documents will be available for you to keep.

Should you have further questions, contact details for the researcher are listed below:

Name: Harry Tidswell
Email: mc16hgt@leeds.ac.uk
Telephone: 07818067215

(Appendix E - Example Consent Form)

### Consent to take part in ‘An exploratory study of political agendas in artists’ musical works’

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Add your initials next to the statements you agree with  |
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. |  |
| I understand that I can withdraw my data without giving a reason at any time up until 1st August 2017. |  |
| I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. |  |
| I (DO / DO NOT) wish to remain anonymous in the write-up of the results. (*NB: please cross out as appropriate*). |  |
| I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records. |  |
| I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymous form. |  |
| I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of participant |  |
| Participant’s signature |  |
| Date |  |
| Name of lead researcher  | Harry Gordon Tidswell |
| Signature |  |
| Date\* |  |

\*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project’s main documents, which must be kept in a secure location.