

**MUSIC IN YOUNG MALTESE WOMEN'S LIVES**

by

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## Abstract

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This study explores how young Maltese women give meaning to the music they listen to and how this music is incorporated in everyday discourses and identities within the differing local contexts of their lives. This area of research has not attracted the attention of researchers and this study starts to fill this gap.

The research was carried out in Malta, a post-colonial island with a population of approximately 400,000 people. Through purposive sampling and snowballing, 20 in-depth interviews were carried out with young Maltese women aged 16-34, from different social backgrounds. By looking at young Maltese women's identities through their engagements with music, this study shows how girls experience the tensions between the opposing forces of Maltese traditional music and more modern globalised musical forms. Music was found to be a means of conspicuous leisure as well as a means of maintaining social difference and distinction. Musical taste and the social practices associated with that particular music was found to be a primary indicator of social class for Maltese girls.

The significance of this study lies in the exploration of a topic that has not yet been properly researched. It combines the Maltese context and the gendered nature of identity formation in Malta's music scene. The framework of categorisation of respondents is also significant since rather than categorising respondents according to the music they listen to, it categorises respondents through the ways in which they engage with their music. By developing Willis's (1978) analytical framework, participants were placed into four categories of *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters*. For each category, the most prominent characteristics of participants' music identities are analysed. These include their understandings of social and cultural capital, structure and agency, negotiations of social boundaries and identity formation. The idea of distinct music subcultures is questioned as, in their everyday lives, young women in Malta rarely conform with distinct cultural groups but form parts of multiple groups within the contexts of their lives. Moreover, processes of *hybridization* seem to have erased what might have been understood as a subculture's distinguishing characteristics. These have often become adopted and eventually absorbed by mainstream culture making distinct subcultures problematic. The findings of the research imply tensions between traditional and modern lifestyles that are, in turn, associated with different strata of social class.

**KEY WORDS:** processes of identity formation, hybrid identities, cultural capital, social capital, subculture, global and local, private and public.

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**Statement of Authentication**

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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## INTRODUCTION

My research area probably has its roots in my involvement in Malta's music scene as a professional classical music performer and teacher since 1987. My musical career has given me valuable insight into the human dynamics within Malta's music industry as well as Malta's culture. Working within this industry and living the Maltese culture has made it possible for me to observe closely how young Maltese men and women differ in their behaviour within music subcultures and how young women and young men value different kinds of capitals within their preferred music scenes. My observations throughout the years have undoubtedly contributed to the shaping of my opinions and biases. Having been a young woman myself within the local music scene, has also inevitably had its influence on the way I view gender differences in this field. My experience of girl groups throughout my early teenage years, was that of a classical musician who was mostly considered by female peers as a nerd. This was because the classical music which I studied and played was not as cool as pop or rock and because of the long hours I had to practice rather than hang around with my female peers. In my late teens, I then experienced the joy of starting my professional career as an orchestral player meaning that my newly found work colleagues now had similar musical tastes and had the same background of long hours of practice as I had. Colleagues were now both male and female and the label of nerd ebbed away to be replaced with a sense of pride gained through the admiration received from both male and female peers.

My 25-year involvement in Malta's music scene therefore contributed to my interest in researching the field. This, together with the lack of literature in this area specifically within the Maltese context, further sparked my interest in developing knowledge in this area. Researching this area has also presented a number of questions which, if researched, could yield valuable information with regards to policy making, youth and community work, creating healthy leisure for young people and creating awareness of the social and cultural capital, which, belonging to a mainstream culture or subculture involves. Moreover, such questions throw light on whether what is referred to as subcultures in the Maltese context, can in actual fact be considered as such.

This research aims to explore how young women in contemporary Maltese society make meanings out of the music they listen to in their everyday life and how they

incorporate these meanings into their everyday discourses and identities. It therefore explores four areas:

- how young women in Malta consume global and local musical cultural forms as leisure and how these forms assume everyday meanings in the differing local contexts of their lives
- how these cultural forms are incorporated or resisted by young women in the formation of identities.
- how the resulting social and cultural capital are produced and processed in the social and cultural power struggle to form cultural hierarchies within the local context
- the relevance of the term ‘subculture’ in the Maltese context as experienced by young women

The scope of this research is to generate knowledge in the above areas through collecting, analysing and interpreting primary qualitative data from a sample of 20 young Maltese women. Its aim is not to look at specific music preferences but rather, to look at the impact that music, whatever kind it might be, has on young women. The focus is purposely on young women in the Maltese context because the area of social identities linked to music is under researched in Malta. Moreover, there is a lacuna in research in the field of the gendered nature, especially the feminine nature, of identity formation processes. The study looks at the Maltese context as a particular one which has, to varying degrees, shaped the way young women engage in music as leisure. Historical events, past foreign rulers, political tensions, class distinctions, religious beliefs and traditions combined with modern day practices and lifestyles, have all to some extent had an impact on the way young women give meaning to the music they listen to and the way they process their social identities. Moreover, more recent advances in technology and new media have also changed how young women use music and how they engage with it and the meaning they give it.

Part I of this work focuses on the theoretical framework in which the study is set and gives an overview of the context in which the study was carried out. Part I thus consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 delves into existing literature of core themes, namely leisure, culture and subculture in conjunction with capital, identity formation, gender in the music industry, technology and media in relation to music. This study is framed within Veblen’s (1899) concept of leisure and therefore, it looks at the emergence of leisure and

class through Veblen's work. Leisure is often considered as time outside work and it emerges as a concept within the context of the division of labour. The history of work takes us back to Veblen's theoretical concepts of work throughout history and Marx's (1867) concept of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Veblen's concepts of 'conspicuous leisure' and 'conspicuous consumption', which refer to the leisure and consumption that is made manifest for others, are looked into, as part of the emergence of class. Veblen's suggestion that leisure usually does not result in material production but results in artistic or scholarly accomplishments sets the foundations for Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital, particularly cultural capital. More recent literature, such as Thornton's (1995) work builds on Bourdieu's concept to suggest that subcultural capital is valuable within a particular subculture. Moreover the concept of 'subculture' and more recent arguments and debates about whether the term is still appropriate are considered through the work of Longhurst (2007), Bennet (1999), Muggleton (2000), Hodkinson (2002) and Jenks (2005).

In this study, identity is considered as a social construct since, as Durkheim (1984) pointed out, it is not possible to view identity outside society. A sociological approach to identity formation is adopted since the individual emerges and shapes itself, not in a vacuum, but within a society (Stryker, 1980). Music and social practices associated with the music are very significant in the process of identity formation. Social practices that are identified are taste, style, language and embodiment. The choice of music, the style of clothing, the language one uses and the way one moves, for instance are all indicators of the type of person an individual is in the eyes of the social other. Such practices are a means of social distinction (Kant, 1914; Bourdieu, 1984). It is through the 'habitus' (the internalised form of class condition, Bourdieu, 1984) that dispositions are internalised and one's taste is developed so that individuals present themselves to the world in a particular way.

This study focuses on young women and the feminine nature of the understanding of work and leisure is explored through the work of Langhamer (2000) who pointed out that definitions of work and leisure had always been drawn from male perspectives. Feminist sociologists have argued that women very often defined work differently from men since, for them, work involved domestic duties and they often experienced work and leisure simultaneously. McRobbie and Garber (1977) pointed out how feminist perspectives had been overlooked even in subculture studies. More recent literature focuses on women's cultural production and consumption. Richards and Milestone (2000)



suggested that women are underrepresented in the music industry. McRobbie (1994) looks at subcultures as employment opportunities for cultural industries. However, women are likely to encounter barriers because of male domination in fields such as the multi-media sector. Although women are more involved in the music industry than the multi-media sector, their activities in music are interpreted in different ways to those of men. Men's involvement tends to be interpreted as *serious* activity while women's involvement is often perceived as frivolous. In the Maltese context particularly, music is shaped by underlying gender relations. Traditionally, the woman's role centres on the domestic sphere while the man's role revolves around the public sphere. However, the younger generation is adopting what are understood as more 'modern' and more European lifestyles. The contrast between the traditional and modern is also evident in technological advancements and the change this has brought to everyday life.

Technology has made it possible for young women to engage in music consumption in their own private space and to share music from across the globe instantaneously, making geographical boundaries almost irrelevant. Owning modern devices such as lap tops, MP3 players, I Pods and so on is a social status indicator and a manifestation of conspicuous consumption which enables one to be socially positioned or to position oneself. Mass media advances and cultural changes have moved towards a globalised world and these developments have created a cultural hybridity (Carrington & Wilson, 2001). Music producers have access to and are exposed to music from all over the world and can therefore integrate ideas from this in their music.

Chapter 2 gives the reader a background of the music scene in Malta, tracing historical events and political tensions which are considered as important in leading to an understanding of contemporary Maltese society. Throughout history, several rulers have left their mark on Malta. What might be referred to as Maltese collective identity is therefore shaped by influences from several cultures such as Arab cultures and the British culture. Moreover, years of being under foreign rulers has made striving for self-governance an integral part of being Maltese. Political and religious influences, together with polarised thinking regarding accession to the European Union, has developed into ambivalence, which might arguably be what constitutes part of the collective identity.

One's identity is closely linked to one's position in the social structure. This positioning involves complexes of factors which interact in creating one's positioning in the social strata of Maltese society. In this research, broad terms such as the lower class,

the working class, the middle class and the upper class will be used, as mapped by Crompton (1993) to refer to groups which have different levels of material and symbolic advantage as a result of different access to property, opportunities, education and so on.

There are at least three main types of music which are popular with different strata of the Maltese population: folk, classical and modern. The folk tradition of music, together with traditions such as the village feast, enhances what is understood as a *traditional* collective identity which is being reshaped by the influence of modern music from all over the world. The contrasts between sociological implications of the traditional folk idiom and modern music create a tension in individuals' lives. Moreover, the increasing European influences are considered by some as a threat to the values and lifestyles that for many are what constitutes being Maltese.

Part II of the thesis explains the methodology and research design of this study. Chapter 3 focuses on how the research was designed and how sampling and interview schedules were constructed while Chapter 4 looks at the new concepts which this study attempts to generate namely the way in which the participants were categorised into *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters*, developing Willis's (1978) analytical framework and Matza's (1964) drift theory. The categorisation here differs from that usually undertaken in this field. Rather than categorizing respondents by the type of music they listened to, they were categorised through musical practices. The term 'subculture' is discussed, and the debate regarding whether this term is still relevant is discussed.

Twenty in-depth interviews were carried out with young Maltese women coming from different social backgrounds and different walks of life to explore the meaning they give to the music they listen to in their everyday lives and how, if at all, this music contributes to their identity formation. Respondents were categorised according to the way in which they engage with music. Thus a framework of categorisation was developed, with four categories, namely the *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters*. This was developed drawing mainly on Willis's (1978) analytical framework which although dating back to 1978, lent itself very well to this particular research. Willis explored how boys and young men relate to cultural items and used an analytical framework of *indexical*, *homological* and *integral analysis*, discussed in detail in section 4.1. Although this framework provided a sound basis for my own analysis, it needed to be further developed since Willis, like many other researchers, explored pre-determined

subcultures. I wanted to explore and include people who are not part of particular pre-defined subcultures. Moreover, Willis's analytical framework focused on a two-way interaction between the cultural item, the music, and the social group. Although outside influences are acknowledged, his framework does not analyse the influence and interaction of outsiders on the social group. Thus I developed the four categories based on two main ideas, the first being that within a subculture, there is some sort of homogeneity, something that is identifiable, be it music, image, and so on. Subcultural style is therefore a means of entry or exclusion from a subculture and thus is a boundary device. The second idea is that members of a subculture engage in music in different ways and although there is homogeneity in diversity (Mooney, 2006), there are still individuals within subcultures, who engage in music or in social practices with different levels of intensity. The framework I developed also enabled me to explore how young women who do not stick to one type of musical taste, but 'drift' from one preferred type of music to another, give meaning to this. The term 'drifters' was drawn from Matza's 'Drift Theory' (1964). Matza argued that young people drift in and out of delinquent and non-delinquent behaviour. In a similar way, some young women were found to drift to and fro, liking one particular type of music, then another and back to the former and so on.

Part III of the thesis focuses on the analysis and interpretations of data. Chapter 5 highlights the feminine nature of giving meaning to music and engaging in music as part of leisure. Chapters 6 and 7 each focus on the *Committed* categories and the *Drifter* categories respectively, highlighting the most prominent themes that resulted from the data analysis for each category as well as themes which were found across or overlapping the categories. Since these categories are not meant to be interpreted as fixed entities, but rather, as heuristic tools, to enable us to understand the fluidity of young women's social identities, the permeability of these categories is emphasized.

Chapter 5 focuses on the findings which suggest a feminine nature to the meaning that young Maltese women give to the music they listen to. Music was found to be consumed by young Maltese women in several ways and thus, they also made meaning out of the music they listen to in different ways. For example, some young women used music as a break, for leisure, as background to chores, to kill waiting time, to fill their private space or to project their character and who they are. Virtual spaces were also used to share music with others and thus to intensify their music interactions with others.

Findings suggest that young Maltese women link the music people listen to, to the style, image and language and these are considered as indicators of a person's identity and positioning in the social strata. Young women are very careful about the image they project and the clothes they wear since this clearly indicates their social identity and whether they would be perceived, for example, as 'vulgar' or as 'educated' and 'well mannered'. When judging other young women through these indicators, they were usually more severe in their judgements than when judging young men. Young Maltese women interpreted young women and young men taking care of their appearance in quite different ways. For instance, young women taking care of their image meant that they were trendy and up to date, while for young men taking care of their image was interpreted as vanity and verged on pejoratively labelling the young man as 'gay'. Young women and young men using the same language also meant different things, revealing the gendered perceptions of such social practices. Another important indicator was the embodiment of music, the way one danced or moved to the music in an accepted way meant that the individual was up to date with the style of dancing to that particular music. Maintaining one's reputation was considered as extremely important and young women's choice of style was usually made with this in mind. They worked continuously at this since appearance was considered an effective tool in maintaining or improving one's social position. Findings suggest that young Maltese women prized individuality, although this was manifested within limits since if taken too far, they risked being considered as outsiders to the social group.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on particular themes which emerged from analysis of data from each of the four categories of *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters*.

The *Fully Committed* considered conspicuous consumption as a strong manifestation of identity. Thus listening to their preferred music in public spaces and adopting social practices and lifestyle were synonymous with their preferred music, a way of telling others who they were, and judging their status and social positioning. The *Fully Committed* were often not only considered as insiders of the subculture and social group, but also the 'veterans' of the group, the ones who really knew the music in depth. These veterans were the ones insiders and outsiders referred to when looking for the 'authentic' lifestyle and social practices associated with the group, since they were considered to have in-depth knowledge of the music, its ideology, the bands and their life revolved around the music. They were very conscious of their position in the social hierarchies of such groups,

and strove to maintain their position since this usually meant respectability within the group. They also had the power to be agents of change, to shift the boundaries of a social group, or to intensify social practices such as style.

The *Committed* considered their engagement in music as the accumulation of cultural capital and therefore an enhancement to their identity. Reputation and respectability in social networks were revealed as being very important for them and thus learning music or engaging in musical activities was important for their social standing. For them, maintaining their reputation within their social groups and thus accumulation of social capital was important. Often, the *Committed* liked more than one type of music and this, they believed, reflected more holistic knowledge. This meant that the *Committed*, very often, nurtured hybrid identities where they liked very different types of music and therefore also formed part of very different social groups. Although they believed that liking different types of music increased their capital, they felt that these preferences also caused tensions within their hybrid identities. This is because reputation was a priority and liking different types of music could damage one's reputation within a particular music environment. For instance if they liked both techno, which is considered as modern, and the village feast music which is traditional (and considered as 'backward' by many), their techno peers might perceive them as not being insiders. The *Committed* negotiated such tensions within their hybrid identities on a daily basis.

The *Active Drifters* visited several types of music environments and social groups, and purposely drifted from one type of music to the other, or had various music preferences at the same time. Their choices depended on the music as well as the social practices associated with the music and how the group was socially perceived. They were open about their changing preferences and consciously resisted being positioned in any particular subculture or style. They therefore adopted styles which were individually 'bricolaged' from several subcultures. *Active Drifters* negotiate subcultural boundaries continuously and imitate cultural 'veterans', discarding elements they are not comfortable with. Findings suggest that the *Active Drifters* were agents of change within subcultures since they brought outside elements with them while 'visiting' (drifting into) a subculture. For *Active Drifters*, keeping abreast of what was happening in the music scene and being up to date was extremely important since they considered their experience of various types of music as a source of cultural and social capital accumulation.

The *Passive Drifters* listen to whatever music is around them. Although for them, the music one listens to is linked to taste, and therefore to identity and social status, they do not consider the music as an integral part of identity or character. To them, music is not an absolute indicator of one's identity or social class. For *Passive Drifters*, music as a currency for social networks, as a topic to use to keep a conversation going and being up to date with music helped in their social life. The *Passive Drifters* as the term suggests, are passive towards music and form part of an inactive group through their non-membership of subcultures. They are however, still very familiar with indicators of social class, and recognised collective identities, especially those collective identities that were different to their own, and where music could be understood as a commonality.

Part IV of the thesis discusses the findings of the study and is divided into two chapters. Chapter 8 focuses on the discussion of findings when viewed in the light of relevant existing literature. The term 'synculture', rather than 'subculture', is developed, emphasizing the idea of structure and agency being interrelated. It also suggests that both different cultural groups affect each other thus highlighting the interrelation between social groups. Chapter 9 identifies the thesis's contribution to knowledge and highlights the significance and implications of this research, the limitations of this single work and some recommendations for further research.

Chapter 8 discusses the key findings in relation to four main aspects of the research question.

- i. The first is how young Maltese women consume global and local cultural forms of music as leisure and how these forms assume everyday meanings in their lives. Findings reveal that there are continuous tensions between Malta's traditional and modern-Europeanised lifestyles that young women negotiate on a daily basis, including through the music they listen to and their associated social practices. Since music preferences often influence young women's image, language and so on, their music preferences spread into a number of other everyday activities in which they engage. Findings show that the public and the private spaces where young women consume music are increasingly overlapping. This is because music has become accessible in various digital formats and can be listened to through several devices. Thus the music they experience in the public domain, for instance in Malta's favourite night spot, Paceville, is accessible in the privacy of

their bedrooms, through the lap top or their MP3 players. The fluidity of the public and the private has made it possible for them to continuously negotiate their identities in different leisure spaces be it the modern nightspot area where they are not under adult surveillance, or the traditional villages and towns where they live and where leisure spaces are monitored by more conservative adults.

Some Maltese music is developing in such a way that song-writers are combining particular traditional elements with foreign elements to make the music more modern and attractive (for example in order to attract more votes, Eurovision song contest entries often fuse Maltese folk with European styles of music). Thus there are fusions of music that incorporate Maltese elements with themes from other European sources. Some young women interviewed, criticised this as copying from others. They also criticised the Maltese 'servile mentality' (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2008) and the idea that the foreigner is invariably better than the Maltese. However, their criticism of Maltese bands and their choice of preferred foreign music in itself contradicted their own criticism. Although music from all over the world is easily accessible, and although Arab culture has influenced Maltese society, most of the young Maltese women interviewed do not seem to listen to African music. The findings suggest that young women prefer a European lifestyle and the music they listen to enhances their Europeanised social practices.

- ii. The second area concerns the formation of identities through cultural forms. My findings show that identity is not fixed but is a process that is ongoing for all participants in all four categories. For the *Fully Committed*, music had a strong impact on their identity and they felt that it was the *Fully Committed* 'veterans' who shaped the authentic social practices associated with the music subculture. The *Committed* revealed identities that were hybridised and which they believed enhanced their cultural capital. The *Active Drifters* processed an identity where they resisted being associated with any particular type of music while, for the *Passive Drifters*, music did not have any apparent impact on character or identity. One's choice of music, clothes, hairstyle and so on is not made in a vacuum. Free choice is

conditional (Rojek, 2010) and depends on factors such as economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1987). Moreover, findings show that young Maltese women choose which practices to adopt and which to discard, even though they might be committed to a particular subculture, as Muggleton had suggested (2000). Findings also highlight tensions between old and new, tradition and modern, post-colonial mentality of the older generation and the more European outlook of the younger generation. This is a reality which young Maltese women live on a daily basis and through which they negotiate their own identities.

- iii. The third area concerns how the resulting social and cultural capital are produced and processed in social and cultural power struggles within social groups associated with music. These capitals form cultural hierarchies within the local context. Music was found to be very prominent in young Maltese women's leisure and was a means of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899) as well as a means of accumulating cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The findings reflect Veblen's idea that women had to uphold their reputation through the leisure they engaged in since this reflected on the entire household. In this study, young Maltese women also revealed that their behaviour affected not only their reputation and respectability but also that of their families. The way they engaged in social practices, through conspicuous consumption of music thus affected the reputation and the social positioning of the whole family. Music was also considered as a source of capital accumulation. For all four categories of *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters*, being up to date in music was important since music was a means of accumulating social capital. However, cultural capital acquired through music was interpreted quite differently by participants in the different categories, with the *Fully Committed* and *Committed* considering music as a very strong source of cultural capital and the *Passive Drifters* who do not perceive music as a source of cultural capital. Members of the different social groups are actors creating scripts for what is significant and what is not in the social practices of the group. Thornton's (1996) idea that subcultural capital fuels rebellion against authority and that young people have a utopian



classless fantasy is questioned, since the findings show that young Maltese women were very aware of these boundaries but were reluctant to breach them.

- iv. This leads us to the fourth area which is the relevance of the term 'subculture' in the Maltese context as experienced by young Maltese women. The findings suggest that some young Maltese women have developed individualistic identities which shows a movement towards what Muggleton (2000) described as a culture which celebrated individualism whilst being simultaneously shaped by class. The *Fully Committed* did not celebrate what they perceived as lack of authenticity and not being exclusively committed to only one type of music. However, the *Committed* and the *Active Drifters* celebrate their hybridity and wide spectrum of preferred music. Their individual baggage of musical experience show how these young women prefer not solely being part of a pre-determined subculture. Longhurst (2007) highlighted three perspectives regarding the term 'subculture'. The first is the idea that the term 'subculture' is redundant, the second is that the term keeps some aspects of the traditional concepts of subculture but also considers how these have become post-modernised (Muggleton, 2000) and the third is that the term can be used for groups that have preserved identity, commitment, distinctiveness and autonomy (Hodkinson, 2002). The findings of this study suggest that young Maltese women do not follow a pattern of identity formation which is fixed or rigid. Thornton (1995) had pointed out that internal diversity within a subculture was evident but commonalities remain. The four categories of *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters* in themselves cannot be viewed in isolation to one other. The dividing line is permeable and the findings show that commitment to subcultures has become very fluid in that subcultures in themselves are not always rigid, being continuously shaped and reshaped by the actors themselves. Muggleton (2000) had suggested that subculturalists preserved some form of individuality through music while manifesting some other form of commitment to a social group. However, these findings suggest that young women become part of a social group because they like the music, not

because they believe or even know the original ideology and reason why that particular subculture had been formed in the first place. The findings also show that in many subcultures there are people who apparently share the characteristics of *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters* and thus many subcultures include people with different levels of commitment and intensity of engagement with that music. It follows therefore that the factors which Hodkinson (2002) suggests as essential for the term 'subculture' to be relevant, including commitment, autonomy and distinctiveness are problematic. Moreover, the 'subculture' reacts to what is happening around it and intensifies or modifies its practices to keep it distinct. All these social groups are part of one 'social' and they come together, depart and transact in many ways. I am not suggesting that subculture is somehow 'beyond the social' but I am suggesting that the interactions between social groups are ongoing on various levels and social practices are not fixed to particular groups but can be very fluid. Therefore, autonomy can only be relative. I therefore suggest the term 'synculture' which implies these interactions and the effects social and cultural groups have on each other.

In Chapter 9 the significance of the research and contribution to knowledge is highlighted in both the empirical and theoretical areas. This study is particularly significant in that it explores new ground. Unlike previous studies, this research does not focus on a particular location or a particular subculture but on the way meaning is made out of the music that is listened to, whatever the music is. Moreover, the research is a study of young women and therefore it takes up young women's feminised perspectives on music rather than the male, and therefore deals with an under-researched area. Although there are gendered cultural studies, such as McRobbie's, Thornton's and DeNora's, there is no study which focuses on and combines the female nature of identity formation in the Maltese context. Moreover, drawing on Willis's (1978) and Matza's (1964) work, this study developed a new framework of categorisation of respondents as a means to better analyse and interpret data, a framework which can be used in any location, and one that includes individuals who are engaged at different levels in music. This study also questions the validity of the term 'subculture' which has in recent years been loosely used to refer to any social group. The

term 'synculture' is suggested to reflect a movement towards fluidity and hybrid identities and the interaction of social and cultural groups.

The chapter moves on to discuss the implications of the findings and the limitations of the research. This study is only one small part of a much bigger picture and only focuses on participants who positioned themselves as working or middle class. Thus recommendations include conducting a similar study that embraces other strata of society. It is also recommended that research which explores gendered identity formation through music is carried out in order to have a full spectrum of young people's identity formation processes through the music they listen to. Moreover, the tensions between 'traditional' older generations and 'modern' younger generations have been revealed as prominent in young Maltese women's lives and research in this area could build on this present study to explore how young people negotiate and manage these tensions.

## **PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **Introduction**

Part I, consists of two chapters. The first entitled ‘Reviewing Existing Literature’, reviews existing literature which is relevant to this study including topics such as leisure, cultures and subcultures, identity, technology and media.

The second chapter is entitled ‘The Music Scene in Malta’ and aims to give the reader a background of the context where the research is carried out. It gives an overview of the music scene on the island, as well as other themes which are closely connected to the music scene such as social class in Malta.

## **Chapter 1: Reviewing Existing Literature**

When I embarked on this project, my research interest revolved around music as leisure consumption in Malta. I had not as yet finalized my research question and therefore, I sought to clarify my own ideas through the literature which I was reading, developing my research question as I went through the process of familiarizing myself with the literature focusing on and surrounding the topic of leisure.

Since leisure was the core theme which I had set out with, I started by going through Veblen's works since he had developed the theory of the leisure class back in 1899. Veblen's extensive writing about leisure widened my vision of the subject and led me to go through other literature related to the topic. In this chapter I will be focusing on literature which shaped my research question and is linked to areas of this study.

First I will focus on the theme of leisure including the emergence of leisure and class, conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption. Then I will discuss the term 'subculture' and its relevance. I will look into the themes of cultural capital, subcultural capital and social capital and move on to the ideas of music 'scapes' and 'flows', within which processes of identity occur. In the following sections I will conclude by focusing on the nature of feminine music consumption and the effects of technology and media.

## **1.1 Leisure**

### **1.1.1 The emergence of leisure and class**

For an in-depth understanding of what leisure, conspicuous leisure and leisure consumption mean and for gendered representations of these, it is necessary to outline the development of leisure and class through modernity. This understanding has enabled me to create the platform for my study within the Maltese context.

Leisure is given different interpretations but generally it is loosely considered to be time outside work. It emerges in the context of the division of labour and developed further in capitalism through development of the concept of class. In order to better understand leisure, we will look into the history of work from two perspectives, which will take us as far back as Marx and Veblen's theoretical concepts regarding leisure and work in society.

According to Veblen (1899), a leisure class was absent in the savage groups in so-called primitive populations. Although the lower stages of barbarism had no developed form of leisure class, it shows usages, motives and circumstances out of which the leisure

class developed. For instance, in Nomadic hunting tribes such as those in North America there was no defined leisure class, but there was still a distinction between classes on the basis of difference of function. One such differentiation was between the gendered occupations of men and women. Women through custom were responsible for the domestic domain and were held to those employments out of which industrial occupation developed at the next advance. The men were exempt from these occupations and were reserved for the public domain undertaking war, hunting, sports (which was not synonymous with leisure) and religious observances. In such communities the man did not view himself as a labourer and was not to be classed with the women's labour or industry. In such communities there was a profound sense of disparity between men's and women's work. The man's work maintained the group through excellence and efficacy and could not be compared with the uneventful diligence of the woman's work. Veblen (1899) argued that the sexes differed not only in stature and muscular force but also in temperament and this had given rise to a corresponding division of labour. Veblen suggested that men are stouter, more massive and better capable of sudden violent strain, are more inclined to self-assertion, active emulation and aggression. Especially in predatory groups of hunters, in habitats which called for sturdier virtues, for instance the pursuit of large game requiring massiveness, agility and ferocity, would be done by the able-bodied males and the women together with members who were unfit for the men's jobs did what other work there was to do. The differentiation of functions between sexes is thus hastened and widened as early as the ages of barbarism. At this stage in history, therefore, the distinction between industrial and non-industrial employment is already evident. This distinction is the early foundation of class shaped through type of employment, even though at the time, it was as yet unpaid employment.

According to Veblen (pp.2-3), the leisure class developed mostly in the higher barbarian culture and reached full development in feudal Europe and Japan. The most striking economic difference between classes was the distinction between the type of employment people had, according to their class. In the barbarian culture, the upper classes did not have what Veblen (p.1) called 'industrial' occupations but had employment in areas where honour was attached to the job such as warfare, priestly services and other less labour-intensive work, making them the elementary leisure class. The exclusion of upper classes from industrial jobs and practical economic production expressed their economically superior rank. Subsidiary employments to the upper leisure class jobs were



reserved for the lower grades of the leisure class. Such 'occupations' as Veblen (p.1) called them, included the manufacture and care of arms and war canoes, preparation of sacred apparatus and so on. Although they performed useful work and contributed to the well-being of the tribe, their work was less productive and reliable than were farming and animal domestication which were occupations done by the lower class. The nature of their occupation signified the emergence of the leisure class. The type of occupation reflected their class. Those occupations that were not productive and that the tribe did not rely on for everyday subsistence were considered as higher in class.

Marx's philosophy of history differs from that of Veblen. Marx (1967) assumed that the story of humankind represents a threefold process: an ascent in which man gains more and more control over nature and its resources through science and technological development; a descent in which man grows more and more alienated from himself and his fellow man; and a synthesis in which man and history participate in an upward movement of consciousness evolving towards a predetermined end. Where Marx saw meaning and purpose in history, Veblen saw movement and process. In Marx the present is a prelude to the future while in Veblen the present is burdened by the past (Diggins, 1999, pp.59-76).

According to Marx (1967), the stages in history start with the primitive, the communal, the slave modes of production and then feudalism, out of which develops capitalism. The end of feudalism is linked to mercantile activity and free labour which was no longer tied to the land. This was the period between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries where the start of capitalism can be identified and with it increasing alienation of the small producer from the control of his products, and the new status of the semi-independent peasant who increasingly depends on the market for the sale of his labour. An important element in the development from feudalism to capitalism was the development of primary accumulation of capitalist investment. According to Marx's labour theory of value, this could only occur when the owners of money and means of production meet masses of workers who, because they were dispossessed of their instruments of production, were forced to sell their labour power in exchange of wages. Marx (1967, p.642) looked at the case of England at the end of the 15th century as the 'classic form' where the nobility, impoverished by the feudal wars, disband their castle retainers and uproot the peasants in order to turn arable land into grazing pastures which can be managed by only a few herdsmen. Thus large numbers of independent peasants were in ruin and thrown into the labour market as the first 'mass of free proletarians'. The Reformation contributed to this

process through distribution of land to royal favourites. This process freed people from serfdom only to enslave them in a wage system at which stage the seed of capitalism was planted.

At this point a new class which was ready to exploit labour was formed through manufacturers' accumulated capital facilitated by overseas discoveries. According to Diggins (1999) organised production spread to rural areas after the 16<sup>th</sup> century where weavers and spinners were introduced to collective labour with little training. The capitalist era is therefore introduced through manufacture, meaning hand labour as Marx (1967) believed, not through technical inventions as Veblen (1899) believed. This era lasted more than 200 years from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this period a division of labour emerges as the emergence of a class which controlled more and more the means of production, a class which Marx (1967) in 'The Communist Manifesto', called the bourgeoisie. This class represents the movement of capital away from trade itself. The Industrial Revolution in England brought into power appropriators of surplus value, the bourgeois capitalists promoting free trade extending their domain of modern agriculture on large farm systems.

Marx (1967) believed that the upper class and the bourgeoisie, were at logger heads with one another and that the lower class, the proletariat, would inevitably overthrow the upper class. On the other hand, Veblen (1899) believed that rather than the lower classes overthrowing the upper class, they would strive to climb up to the upper class setting the example of trying to have a better lifestyle and gave the working class purpose.

### **1.1.2 Conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption**

Social mobility, striving to climb up the ladder to the upper classes, drew on, amongst other things, 'conspicuous leisure' and 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen, 1899 pp.35-67). 'Conspicuous leisure' referred to leisure that could be seen by others while 'conspicuous consumption' referred to consumption that could be made manifest through a social act. It is not enough to possess wealth and power but one has to put it in evidence. Apart from this, Veblen argued that a person is held in respect, not only according to the leisure he or she partook but also according to whether the person has decent surroundings and by exemption from menial work. Veblen believed that the archaic distinction between 'base' (associated with menial work) and 'honourable' (associated with high thinking), has preserved itself till at least the end of the nineteenth century when Veblen recorded these

observations. He pointed out that the so-called better class, the bourgeoisie, generally feel repugnance towards vulgar forms of labour, or occupations which are associated with menial service. Thus vulgar surroundings, inexpensive habitations, because they are associated with contamination of the spirit, are also avoided by the upper class. Their refined tastes are associated with a high level of thinking, and since the times of Greek philosophers, exemption from contact with such vulgar things as industrial processes, together with a degree of leisure are vital for a worthy and beautiful life. Since the predatory way of life, where hunting and gathering was the norm, conspicuous abstention from labour has been a mark of pecuniary achievement and is an index of reputability. On the contrary, doing productive labour is a mark of poverty and subjection and the more labour one does, the stronger is the mark. However, one must also take into consideration that these were not two simple classes but were rather more complex. Within them, each class was stratified into strata that denoted different levels and types of occupation.

Veblen's (pp.68-101) understanding of the term 'leisure' is the non-productive consumption of time. The reasons for this view are twofold: from a sense of unworthiness of productive work and as evidence of pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness. Veblen points out that just as individuals in productive labour have the material product as evidence of their work, individuals in the leisure class also make it a point to have tangible and visible evidence of leisure time which is spent in private, out of the spectators' eyes. Usually this evidence is some article of consumption, such as music. However, leisure does not usually leave any material product according to Veblen. Therefore evidence of past leisure usually takes the form of goods such as scholarly or artistic accomplishments and knowledge of processes which do not conduce directly to the furtherance of human life. Examples are knowledge of dead languages, occult sciences, syntax and prosody, various forms of domestic music and art, latest trends of dress, furniture, games, sports and fancy-bred animals. The initial motive for the acquisition of these examples might not have been to show evidence of the leisure time but since they have survived as conventional accomplishments of a leisure class they have hence become markers of leisure class.

Beyond the above branches of learning, which would later be termed as 'cultural capital' by Bourdieu (1986, p.114), there is also the other aspect of social learning which involves physical ability and dexterity, and which would later be termed as 'embodiment' by Shilling (2008, pp.211-234). Such are manners, breeding, politeness, decorum, formal

and ceremonial observances. These are continuously presented for observation and are therefore considered as very important evidence of a reputable degree of leisure.

Veblen argued that one's manners are an expression of and reflect one's status. The economic ground is to be sought in that leisure, without which good manners cannot be acquired. Refined tastes and manners are evidence of gentility because good breeding requires time, application and expense and cannot therefore be undertaken by those engaged in productive labour. Thus good manners are, in a way, evidence that part of the person's time which is not spent under the observation of others, has been worthily spent in acquiring admirable accomplishments. Bourdieu (1986, pp.114-115) later develops these concepts into what he called 'cultural capital, 'social capital' and 'economic capital'. Conspicuous leisure grows into a labouring drill of deportment and education in taste and the knowledge of what articles of consumption are considered decorous and the ways in which one should consume them. It is possible to produce idiosyncrasies of person and manner by mimicry, and this accounts for the deliberate production of a cultured class. According to Veblen (p.22), through the process of 'snobbery', a 'syncopated evolution of gentle birth and breeding' is achieved in many families. This means that through imitation of practices of the upper class, people can evolve and behave in such a way as to seem of the same class as those who were born in the upper class. This 'syncopated gentle birth' (p.22) gives the same results as the leisure class factor in the population. People with 'syncopated childbirth', who imitate the upper class, are not inferior to them even though the upper class may have had longer but less intensive training in pecuniary properties.

The tastes of a person are constantly under the surveillance of the law of conspicuous leisure, where people position others in the social strata according to the type of leisure they consume. People's tastes are constantly changing in an effort to reach maximum conformity with the requirements of the law of conspicuous leisure. The concept of taste was later developed as an indicator of class by several writers such as Skeggs, Hebdige, Hodkinson among others, which will be discussed later on.

Conspicuous leisure, as argued by Veblen (pp.35-67), is a struggle for power. However, power was also demonstrated through ownership. Ownership probably started with the ownership of persons, primarily women. Women and slaves were highly valued as evidence of wealth and as a means of accumulating wealth. Personal service and attendance to the master becomes the specific duty of a portion of the servants while the other portion, is employed in industrial occupations. The servants whose duty is personal

service become exempt from productive industry as is the chief wife and other wives if the master can afford this and polygamy accepted. The master would also have specialised servants attending his person if his pecuniary position permits it. The utility of such servants is as much for show than for the service actually performed. However, the exemption from productive labour of these servants and wives, are evidence of their master's status and their utility consists mostly in their conspicuous exemption from productive labour and the evidence of this exemption affords their master wealth and power.

Later, men started being preferred to women as servants since men were considered to be more expensive. The leisure of the lady and the leisure of the lackey, later known as the footman, are different in that the leisure of the lackey is limited since it still has to revolve around serving the master and is only considered leisure in the sense that no productive labour is done.

In what Veblen (pp.35-67) considered 'modern life' at the end of the nineteenth century, many of the utilities required for a comfortable life were of a ceremonial character and should have been considered as performance of leisure. This is still true today in that utilities are not a requirement for survival but symbolise leisure or make leisure possible. Such utilities may be imperative for a decent existence or even requisite for personal comfort but they are still ceremonial in character and although we have been taught to require them, their absence does not cause physical pain. Owning a car, a television or a mobile phone is requisite for a comfortable lifestyle yet without them, we would not be suffering any physical pain. Apart from being elements of conspicuous leisure, such commodities signify status in the social strata. According to Veblen (pp.35-67), labour spent in services such as waiting on the master, is to be classed as leisure and when these services are performed by others who are not economically free, such as servants, then it is what he called 'vicarious leisure'. Occupations, such as the butler, which made part of vicarious leisure were useful on a social level, as methods of imputing pecuniary reputability to the master or the household on the ground that time and effort are conspicuously wasted in that behalf. Therefore, leisure for the leisure class was different than that of the servant class which engaged in vicarious leisure. For the master within the leisure class, leisure meant indulging in avoidance of labour, while for the servant class, leisure meant having an occupation which exempted them from productive labour. That means that leisure for the servant class meant making leisure for the leisure class. Thus,

the leisure of the servant class was not directed towards the self but was guised as specialised service directed towards the master's fullness of life, as is the case of the butler, for instance, whose service is directed toward the master rather than himself. In the household the male was the master and the wife was still a servant. Servants were obliged to show an attitude of conspicuous subservience. Vicarious leisure was to be carried out in the appropriate manner thus showing special training which costs time and money and therefore showed the master's conspicuous dominance over those whose lives were subservient to his own.

As the expected standards of wealth advanced, possession and exploitation of servants underwent refinement. The more the servants, the more it was evident that the master consumed unproductively a large amount of service. Therefore one group of servants produced goods for the master and the other group, usually headed by the wife, consumed for him in conspicuous leisure, demonstrating his ability to sustain large pecuniary damage without impairing his superior opulence. This was true to the peaceable stage which followed the predatory stage, within what is termed as barbarism.

The modern culture of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century owed a lot to the lifestyle of the upper leisure class in conservation of traditions, usages, habits of thought regarding acceptance and most effective development, according to Veblen (1899). Although personal service was still of great economic importance as regards distribution and consumption of goods, its relative importance was less than it had been before. He emphasised that in modern industrial communities, the machines available for convenience and comfort were already so developed that servants were scarcely employed if not for reputability. The only servants employed were the few required to run the machines and the ones specialised in taking care of the so-called 'feeble-minded' and these really fall under the profession of trained nurses and in a way still represented physical comfort of the household.

At the turn of the century, the largest manifestation of vicarious leisure was made up of domestic duties which started becoming services not so much for the head of the household but more for the general reputability of the household as a unit. The household, at this stage included the housewife who gradually started to be a member on a footing of ostensible equality with the master. As long as the household subsisted, even with a divided head, this class of non-productive labour which performed for the sake of the

household reputability was classed as vicarious leisure. However it was now leisure performed for the corporate household rather than for the head of the household.

Through the cultural evolution, the emergence of the leisure class inevitably coincides with the beginning of ownership since these two institutions result from the same set of economic forces. The earliest form of ownership, as seen earlier, was ownership of women by the men of the community. Ownership was extended to ownership of products of their industry giving rise to the ownership of things as well as persons. The struggle for wealth was not merely for subsistence but for wealth which would increase the comforts of life. Acquisition and accumulation of these goods reach their end in consumption of these goods, be it by the owner or vicariously by the members of the household. Possession of wealth meant that one was regarded by fellow men with esteem. A person should possess the same amount of goods as others within the class he associates himself with. Possessing over and above that is considered extremely gratifying. As soon as a person makes new acquisitions he becomes used to the resulting standard of living and so aims to acquire a new standard thus the tendency is to constantly make the present pecuniary standard the point of departure for a fresh increase in wealth.

*If, as is sometimes assumed, the incentive to accumulation were the want of subsistence or of physical comfort, then the aggregate economic wants of a community might conceivably be satisfied at some point in the advance of industrial efficiency; but since the struggle is substantially a race for reputability on the basis of an invidious comparison, no approach to a definitive attainment is possible (Veblen, 1899, p.14)*

The desire for added comfort is the motive at every stage of the process of accumulation in a modern industrial community although the standard of sufficiency, in turn, is greatly affected by the habit of pecuniary emulation. Veblen (1899) believed that this emulation, to a great extent, shapes the methods and selects the objects of expenditure for personal comfort and decent livelihood. The most visible proof of achievement is by acquisition and accumulation of goods which tends to be in the shape of straining to excel others in pecuniary achievement. Success becomes the end of the action, thus favourable comparison with other men becomes the accepted end of the effort. Purposeful effort is that which aims at achieving pecuniary success and accumulating wealth.

Therefore, as time passed, the leisurely characteristics of the dominant class became merely symbols of social dominance. The landed rich maintained not just

themselves but also large numbers of dependants in an idle state as a demonstration of their social pre-eminence. Veblen argues that those of a lesser social class such as lesser gentry and urban bourgeoisie, who aspired to climb the ladder of social classes, tried to copy this lifestyle, emulating the idleness of their betters in the hope of being viewed like them. It is therefore through the social-positional characteristics rather than the intrinsic characteristics of activities that leisure becomes desirable and 'trickles down' through the social orders.

Leisure was therefore engaged in by all classes of society, including the working class. Historians suggest that in England, by the end of the nineteenth century, working class people had somewhat clearly defined and regular leisure. This is because after the 1850s, living standards generally improved in England. However, Parrat (2001, pp.81-103) distinguishes between leisure enjoyed by men to that enjoyed by women whose standard of living still left much to be desired. She points out that women's working hours were much longer than those of men. This meant that they had less free time for leisure. Moreover, women's wages were much lower than those of men, even for the same occupation though this was not very common, since women usually did jobs that were not done by men, such as sewing in factories, working in laundries and in service industries. Having lower wages usually meant that women had to work excessively long hours to make ends meet with the consequence that men had free time for leisure while women's leisure time was very limited. This was especially true for married women who worked and returned home to do the house chores at night. The working class was stratified in that there were those who were better off than others. The working class unmarried women who were better off, worked out of choice and did not need to contribute economically to the running of the household. They worked to get pocket money to spend on recreation, fashionable clothes and so on. On the other hand, unmarried female wage earners in the lower working class contributed to the household by giving their earnings to the running of the household and helped out in the chores (*ibid.*).

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, working class women therefore, have sought to weave leisure into their daily routines and responsibilities and enjoyed leisure in an inconspicuous way, determined by the material and ideological factors which stemmed out from the social and gender order in which they lived. Parrat (2001) noted that in England at the end of the nineteenth century, the lowest strata of the working class young women lived on a 'rollercoaster' (p.105) at times being on the verge of starvation



and at other times sharing a 'blow-out' (p.105). Saturday half day holiday was very important for women and reserved for leisure. During the week, however, they engaged in leisure within their daily routines, for instance while walking home from work, they met friends, chatted, they met young men with whom they flirted, they window shopped and so on. They used to dress up on Sundays and occasions such as ceremonies or parades. Women spent time and energy maintaining a presentable appearance which was a conspicuous way of positioning oneself in the social strata. Those who could not afford to buy clothes learnt to make their own and those who bought clothes from second-hand shops were very careful not to be seen in such shops lest their reputation be marred (ibid).

In the 1900s, in England, some women started frequenting the public houses, pubs and music halls, which had been reserved for men in the nineteenth century. The standard of living had improved and young women could afford to buy their own drinks. Working class young men and women engaged in conspicuous leisure by sitting around in these locales, talking, drinking and dancing to the music, wearing fashionable outfits and hairstyles. Such conspicuous consumption continued to be practised throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One form of conspicuous consumption which is of particular interest to us in this study is the phenomenon of collecting, which according to Longhurst (2007) can be viewed from two perspectives. One can look at collecting as an infantile, even 'nerdy' activity which children and adolescents should grow out of, while the other looks at collecting as a worthwhile cultural pursuit if it is connected with valued cultural forms such as paintings, sculptures and so on. Straw (1997, pp.3-16) suggested that record collecting is usually seen as a male or masculine activity and proposed three modes of masculinity that come into play: 'the dandy', 'the nerd' and 'the brute'. The dandy transforms cultivated knowledge into a continuous public performance and is criticised for being frivolous and depthless in his knowledge. The nerd, on the other hand, has in-depth knowledge which is almost useless in the social sphere because his self-presentation is inadequate. The brute is characterised by a male uncultivated instinct and encapsulates the idea of being hip, that is being informed about the latest ideas, styles and so on, which in itself is a form of subcultural capital. Straw (1997) argued that hipness very often does require cultivated knowledge acquired from books, but the brute has to be careful not to manifest that the knowledge is acquired from any academic source and the stance he pulls must seem easy and not contrived. Physical record collecting for young people, has

nowadays almost been replaced by collecting downloadable music files on a hard disc in a computer or other digital devices. Since this process is cheaper than purchasing CDs and is readily available over the internet, what we understand by record collecting has taken on quite a different meaning. One can share music files instantaneously over the internet, and one can create one's own collection of playlists. Some young people simply use YouTube since it is like an enormous online music library. However, music collections have preserved both the public and the private dimension (ibid) that the record collecting used to have. Owning music is a public display of power and/or knowledge as well as a private refuge from the social world and its demands. Collecting is thus a form of cultural consumption (Longhurst & Savage, 1996, pp.274-301).

Concepts of conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption are still very relevant in contemporary societies. They are, many times, associated with leisure activities and the people's choice of leisure. In recent leisure studies, Rojek (2010, pp.1-8) argued that it is in leisure that people are culturally represented to exist in a state of voluntarism, which implies free choice, or what people choose to do in the time when they believe themselves to be free. The meaning of freedom is conditional and depends on being acknowledged as competent actors and credible citizens. For over two centuries, Rojek (2010) says that leisure and freedom have been linked together. In modernity, leisure can be viewed as many things; the reward for work, an asset for the community, a crime deterrent, an important part of the work-life balance and so on. People who wish to be acknowledged as competent, consider leisure as a means of accumulating emotional intelligence (the management of emotions and the building blocks of people skills) and using emotional labour (since learned behaviour requires time and effort) to teach themselves and others how to achieve successful ways of living. It is the social spaces in which people familiarise themselves with what is socially 'respected and cool'. However, Rojek (2010) argues that emotional labour can occur anywhere and at any time, in everything we do and this presents us with the question of whether the conventional meaning of leisure still holds since if we are engaging in emotional labour, even if it is unpaid and pleasurable, we are doing something that is contrary to the traditional meaning of leisure.

People's capacity to dispose of their non-work time is culturally coded and depends on one's economic status. It reflects class distinctions, gender, education, health and so on.

In Bourdieu's (1987) terms, it also depends on the overall capital one possesses and acquires.

## **1.2 Culture and subculture: capital and consumption**

Cultures and subcultures offer spaces where leisure consumption and accumulation of capital takes place. Subcultures have been theorised in different ways over time but in broad terms subcultures are variants of the dominant culture, sometimes counter to it, and sometimes as extensions of the parent culture. The parent culture or the dominant culture is practiced by the dominant class and is 'the realisation or objectification of group life in meaningful forms' (Bradford, 2012, p.115) such as art, literature and so on.

Bradford (2012) outlines at least five ways that subcultures have been theorised since the concept emerged in the 1950s within the Chicago School. At the time, urban development and inflow of migrants disrupted the equilibrium of American society and gave rise to gangs which engaged in delinquency or subcultures which were then passed on to other generations. Cohen (1955) suggested that such gangs or subcultures offered an opportunity for low-achievers in education and working-class male youth, to create an identity and increase their self-esteem.

The first perspective of subculture thus looks at a subculture as a source of social bonding that is expressed in ways that are not in harmony with the mainstream culture. Counter-cultures are expressed in ways that are counter to the mainstream, while subcultures are more linked to leisure, pleasure and resistance to authority.

The second perspective is the modernist view of subculture which is seen as offering youth psychological support through their transition from childhood to adulthood within a hostile social world. Eisenstadt (1956) developed the functionalist approach and argued that youth culture based on leisure was important in the process of preparation of young people for the world beyond their family, since leisure, as a space, both material and symbolic, empowered them to create values, attitudes and behaviour which otherwise they would not be able to develop within their marginal position in society due to their socio-economic and cultural position.

The third view, developed by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies (CCCS) and drawing on Cohen's (1972) work, looks at subculture as an expression of working-class values in resistance to dominant bourgeois culture and institutions such as

school and the labour market (Hall & Jefferson, 1976). Marxist theorists and structural theorists redefined the concept of subculture as social space where young people could engage in creative agency (Blackman, 1995). Therefore, in this perspective, subculture offers a space where young people can satisfy their need to express autonomy while maintaining identifications to the dominant culture within which the subculture develops.

The fourth perspective is that subculture expresses class experience and through it autonomy is sought in the context of multicultural society. Particularly in youth subculture, class is expressed through style, such as fashion, image, language and behaviour (Hebdige, 1979, pp.100-117). Within subculture, style has various functions. It is not a fixed possession that a person or group has but can be understood as a practice, performance or achievement. Style is a tool through which one visibly expresses boundaries and belonging.

The fifth perspective looks at subculture as a space where new identities which are based on individualism can be formed and developed (McRobbie, 1994), with particular focus on the experiences of young women, who had been marginalised in earlier studies of subcultures, and who experience leisure spaces that are distinctly different from those of young men.

### **1.2.1 Bourdieu's concept of culture**

Within cultures and subcultures, the accumulation and consumption of capital, of goods and knowledge, as discussed earlier, are a very important part of the social class stratification. The concept of accumulation of goods, which Veblen (1899) clearly associated with social class, was further developed by Bourdieu (1987, pp.99-244). In order to understand the potential applicability of Bourdieu's theories in this study, it is necessary to first understand the constructs underlying the theories. Key terms in Bourdieu's sociological thought are 'social field', 'habitus' and 'capital', which I will outline in some detail. Then I will move on to more recent literature which built on Bourdieu's concepts, and which give different views of subculture, such as Thornton, Muggleton and Hodkinson.

Bourdieu's (1987) model of society and social relations has its roots in Marxist theories of class and conflict. Bourdieu (1987) characterizes social relations in the context of what he calls the 'field', defined as a competitive system of social relations functioning according to its own specific logic or rules. All human actions take place within social

fields, which are arenas for the struggle for resources. Individuals, institutions, and other agents try to distinguish themselves from others, and acquire capital which is useful or valuable on the arena. The field is the site of struggle for power between the dominant and subordinate classes. It is within the field that legitimacy--a key aspect defining the dominant class--is conferred or withdrawn. That legitimacy is conferred in the form of 'symbolic capital', discussed below. Moi (1991) quotes Bourdieu as defining the field in this way: 'A space in which a game takes place, a field of objective relations between individuals or institutions who are competing for the same stake' (p.1021). That stake is the amassing of capital, in order to ensure the reproduction of the individual's or institution's class.

Rather than using his concept of field as a substitute for the traditional concept of culture, Bourdieu (1987) sees everyday life as consisting of not one but a conglomeration of fields, including leisure, family patterns, consumption, work, artistic practices and others. The dominant class in each of these fields may vary in its composition, but the process of struggle for capital, and through the amassing capital for dominance, is consistent in each.

Another key concept in Bourdieu's theories is the concept of 'habitus' which was inspired by Mauss's (1937) work. Mauss (1937) defined habitus as those aspects of culture that are anchored in the body or in the daily practices of individuals which reflect the norms of groups. He described 'techniques of the body' as highly developed body actions that embody aspects of a given culture. Techniques may also be divided by gender and class in such ways which include eating, washing, sitting, swimming, running, climbing, swimming, child-rearing, and so on. The techniques are adapted to situations, such as aboriginal squatting where no seats are available. Techniques are thus a 'craft' (Latin: *habilis*) that is learned. The teaching of these methods is what embeds the methods and the teaching is embedded within cultures and schools of teaching. A pupil who becomes a teacher will likely teach what they are taught.

Elias (1978; 1982) and Bourdieu (1987) developed the idea of habitus further. Elias (1978; 1982) in 'The Civilising Process', describes 'habitus' as the habits and structures created by social structures, in particular how European etiquette around eating, sexual behaviour, and so on developed outwards from royal courts, policed through a system of shaming. Habitus is in the non-discursive aspects of culture that bind people into groups, in habituality, including unspoken habits and patterns of behaviour as well as styles and skill

in body techniques (ibid). This study explores how cultural and social capital are produced and processed and therefore the idea of habitus needs to be delved into since the accumulation of capital does not happen in a vacuum but it relies on opportunities possible within one's habitus.

Bourdieu (1987, pp.169-174) defined habitus as the 'system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action' (Bourdieu, 1987; 1990). Bourdieu extended Elias' habitus to include beliefs and preferences, identifying how objective social structures are incorporated into subjective mental experiences of agents. In this way, objective and subjective are combined, thus resolving the dilemma of a person being either or both an object and a subject. Habitus is adopted through upbringing and education. Bourdieu argues that the struggle for social distinction is a fundamental dimension of all social life. Bourdieu's view of conspicuous consumption come near Veblen's but Bourdieu argued that distinction has another meaning. It refers to social space and is bound up with the system of dispositions (habitus). Social space has a very concrete meaning when Bourdieu presents graphically the space of social positions and the space of lifestyles. His diagram in 'Distinction' (1986, pp.128-129) shows, that spatial distances are equivalent to social distances. The very title 'Distinction' in itself highlights that a certain quality of bearing and manners, which is usually considered as innate and referred to as distinction, is nothing other than difference, a distinctive feature, a relational property existing only in and through its relation with other properties.

The habitus is an individually operationalized set of expectations and understandings based on the collection of experiences an individual encounters that shape his or her sense of the rules of the game. It is what regulates interactions within a field in an observable, 'objective' manner, affecting not only the individual but all those who interact with that individual. In his discussions of both field and habitus, Bourdieu rejects the sociological concept of functionalism, arguing that social forms are *not* generally determined by needs for survival or integration. The field and the habitus can (and do) vary substantially over time and geographic boundaries; while the processes of class struggle and symbolic action may remain consistent, the forms that these activities take varies not on functional determinants, but on seemingly arbitrary social constructions.

While the field and habitus describe, respectively, the environment and rules within which class struggles take place, the concept of symbolic capital defines the tools used by individuals and institutions within a field to gain dominance and thus to reproduce themselves over time. It is in this area that Bourdieu (1987) both draws most strongly from Marxist ideas of class and conflict, and also breaks most clearly from the classical Marxist constructions. Rather than defining capital purely in Marx's economic terms, Bourdieu defines two primary types of capital: 'economic capital' and 'cultural capital'. Both describe endowments that individuals bring with them into the field and attempt to augment. Economic capital is equivalent to the capital familiar to students of Marxist theories including both monetary and property assets. Thus position and power are determined by money and property and the capital one commands. Cultural capital or symbolic capital, however, is a concept unique to Bourdieu's (1987) theoretical model. This is where Bourdieu's (1987) use of the narrower definition of culture comes into play. Culture is also a source of domination, in which intellectuals are in the key role as specialists of cultural production and creators of symbolic power. Cultural capital can also be described as cultural competence. Like economic capital, it conveys legitimacy, and a legitimacy regulated by institutions within the society. In the case of cultural capital, that legitimacy is regulated not by the government but by educational and artistic institutions (Lawley, 1994). Choices are formed consciously or subconsciously through our baggage of experience with the aim of achieving and sustaining social and cultural capital. In 'Distinction' (1986), based on empirical material gathered in the 1960s, Bourdieu argued that taste, an acquired 'cultural competence', is used to legitimise social differences. The habitus of the dominant class can be discerned in the notion that 'taste' is a gift from nature. Taste functions to make social 'distinctions'.

Cultural capital can be converted into economic capital, just as economic capital can be converted into cultural capital. However, these conversions happen at different rates of exchange. Economic capital is more liquid, and more easily transferable from generation to generation, making it particularly useful in continuing the process of reproducing class legitimacy and domination over time. Cultural capital, however, also functions as a major factor in class definition. In order to maintain the legitimacy of cultural capital, and to ensure both its convertibility and its ability to reproduce itself, the educational system creates a market in cultural capital with certificates substituting currency (Garnham & Williams, 1990, pp.70-88).

Bourdieu's (1987) theoretical framework includes a third category of capital: social capital which involves *who* you know and not *what* you know. This implies that who knows you is important as well. Thus friends, relatives and acquaintances bestow a status on us. Social groups such as aristocracy and privileged social groups have always given considerable weight to social capital.

The real significance of capital in Bourdieu's theoretical model is the role that it plays in the continuing struggle between the dominating and the dominated classes. This study explores how young Maltese women give meaning to the music they listen to and how this music is instrumental in the shaping of their identity. The music people listen to many times is associated with particular subcultures or the mainstream culture. Forming part of the dominating classes or the dominated classes as well as the accumulation of capital through the music people engage in are important factors which will be looked at in this study. It is through the acquisition of capital, and the use of symbolic capital to perpetrate symbolic violence, that classes ensure their own legitimacy and reproduction. Like Marx, Bourdieu believes that the more this process of symbolic violence is hidden from sight and left unchallenged, the more powerful it is in reproducing class dominance.

### **1.2.2 Thornton's development of the concept of subcultural capital**

In her research of youth cultures based on raves and dance clubs from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, Thornton (1996) draws on the work of Bourdieu and coins the term 'subcultural capital' as an alternative to cultural capital, to make sense of distinctions made by 'cool' youth, noting particularly their disparagement of the 'mainstream' against which they measure their alternative cultural worth. Bourdieu (1977) argued that the most privileged groups in society are distinguished by their possession not only of economic capital but also social and cultural capital, and that the class system is perpetuated by these various forms of capital (not just wealth) being passed from one generation to the next. Cultural capital might include possession of a particular accent, or having attended certain schools. From this Thornton (1996) explored the idea that a subculture may also have forms of cultural capital (such as knowledge of the latest music) that give status within the subculture. Just as cultural capital is personified in good manners and urbane conversation, subcultural capital is embodied in the know-how, using current accent and slang, and dancing the styles particular to defined groups, seemingly without any effort whatsoever. Moreover, Thornton (1996, p.12) argues that 'subcultural capital fuels rebellion' against



parents and authorities and gives the opportunity to people to live in the fantasy world of classlessness. Wolfe (1968) took a more critical view, suggesting that these youngsters seemed to be classless because they had dropped out of the conventional job system: 'It is the style of life that makes them unique, not money, power, position, talent, intelligence... The clothes have come to symbolize their independence from the idea of a life based on a success of jobs' (p.55).

Thornton points out that irrespective of class, young people often refuse the responsibilities and identities of work and focus more on leisure, spending their time and money on it. According to Parsons (1964) youth look for alternative prestige symbols: since they cannot compete with adults for occupational status, they focus less on rewards from work and turn to rewards and self-esteem which they derive from leisure, which is a sphere more conducive to fantasy.

Thornton (1996) points out that club cultures are fundamentally about fantasy, where play and work do not intersect. In such cultures, fantasies of identity are a key pleasure. Thornton found that admissions to clubs and other dance events are higher in number than those to sporting events, cinemas and 'live arts' combined. Clubs are relatively unnoticed by researchers and authorities because they concern only one particular age group and the activity is mainly after the rest of the population is sleeping.

Thornton points out that there are few, if any, boundaries of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality in dancing, but relatively firm lower- and upper-age boundaries. This happens because young teenagers are excluded by parental rules about being out late and by lack of money, while older clubbers lose interest as they leave home and enter cohabiting or marriage relationships. Clubbing is an integral part of growing up, providing a space where the young can experiment and act like adults in some ways and can achieve a distinct identity (Parsons, 1964). An interesting point which Thornton points out is that clubs are particularly empowering for young women since dancing is the only out-of-home leisure activity that involves more females than males. However, in clubs, there is dance as well as music and overall, music is an essential aspect of youth cultures since research has shown that young people buy and listen to more music than any other age group (ibid).

According to Longhurst (2007) the Birmingham approach had been more concerned with reading subcultures as texts rather than investigating the views of the participants themselves and criticised Thornton (1996) of relatively neglecting these views as well. Muggleton (2000) develops Thornton's idea that media are critical of subcultures

in that they were very important to the circulation of subcultural capital, for instance specialised magazines and so on. She had pointed out that club culture worked around possession and deployment of subcultural capital, meaning that being aware and being up to date was prestigious within a subculture but may be valueless outside it. This subcultural capital was thus enhanced through the different types of media which have become increasingly important in today's world (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, pp.3-4). Longhurst (2007) argues that because of media, today, forms of subculture have become more and more mediated.

Muggleton (2000) explored how subcultural adherents were affected by the developments of forms culture. They demonstrated fragmented and individualistic stylistic identification which expresses freedom from structure and control and showed movement towards fluidity. However he points out that they did not manifest excessive postmodern claims for instance, they 'did not rapidly discard a whole series of discrete styles' (p.158). Neither did they celebrate 'their own lack of authenticity and the superficiality of an image saturated culture' (p.158). Subculturalists were found to retain aspects of their individuality which to them were important, through music for example, while still expressing some form of commitment to the cultural group.

The question of whether the term subculture is still appropriate will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. But here, it suffices to summarise Hodkinson's (2002) key concept which he highlights in his study of Goth subculture in Britain. He argued that the idea of a subculture was still valid and could be applied to groups that exhibit relative coherence of features such as those combined in the Goth subculture. Therefore although there are individual characteristics within the group, such as in modes of dress, there are also commonalities within the group. Hodkinson (2002) considers four criteria: identity, commitment, distinctiveness and autonomy, each of which according to him should be considered as a feature that contributes, together with the other features to the appropriateness of the term subculture.

Cultural groups, as well as subcultural groups very often use music and social practices associated with the music, as a means to accumulate different forms of capital, which in that group are valuable. This process in itself is part of the on-going process of forming one's identity.

### 1.2.3 The term ‘subculture’

Technology has made geographical boundaries relatively insignificant and has enabled people to interrelate, making different cultures and different identities meet and intertwine within the practices of everyday life. However for many, the influence of other cultures is very superficial. For quite a number of people in the world, who have no access to such technology, this is not even possible and thus, the level of significance of geographical boundaries varies widely. I therefore explore whether subcultures have become stronger or whether the term subcultures has become inappropriate when hybrid identities navigate through several scapes and flows simultaneously, as discussed earlier.

Bennett (1999, p.603) argued that the concept of subculture is ‘deeply problematic’ because of the rigid lines of division which it employs. Several writers, such as Chaney (2004) have argued that the concept of subculture should no longer be used. The reasons vary but mainly, they point out that the social and cultural life has fragmented, so that it is no longer possible to find clear isolated forms of subcultures and processes which youth subcultures deploy. They have become much more generalised making it difficult to identify clear subcultural groups (Willis, 1990).

Longhurst (2007) points out three positions in this debate:

1. The point of view that subculture is redundant and should be replaced. Key ideas suggested include tribe, lifestyle and scene which all recognise the significance of social changes in consumerism, fluidity of commitment and fragmentation of society. Tribe emphasises that groupings are related to consumerist practices (Maffesoli, 1996) and groupings are related to consumerist practices. Thus, groups may be fluid in that their commitment may shift depending on their consumer choices. This is linked to lifestyle which depicts the way in which choices become crystallised into a form of life that can be related to some social basis.
2. The point of view that would like to retain some aspects of the traditional concept of subculture but to take into consideration how these have developed. Muggleton’s research in 2000 is an example of this. He found that subculturists wished to retain key aspects of their individuality partly through music, while expressing some aspects of commitment to belonging to a recognisable group. Another finding was that even those committed to a subculture tended to express preference for a range of different forms of music. He argued that subculturists were expected to display particular characteristics, what he called ‘ideal-typical traits’ (Muggleton, 2000, p.52).

3. The third point of view suggests that the term 'subculture' can be used only with groups that have preserved some key features of subcultures which writers associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies have examined. Hodkinson's (2002) research on Goths is an example of this where he reworks the idea of subculture and shows that it can be retained to capture the substantive, clearly bounded forms taken by certain cultural groupings. The idea of subculture is used but its use is restricted to particular subcultures that actually do use the forms of coherence that are close to those discussed in the Birmingham literature. Hodkinson (2002) suggests four contributory features of subculture, namely, identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness and autonomy.

In 'Subculture: The Fragmentation of the Social', Jenks (2005) pointed out that the concept of subculture did not start with Hebdige or the Birmingham group but has a considerable history.

Jenks (2005) quotes some definitions of subculture. Gordon (1947, p.40) defines subculture as 'a subdivision of a national culture, composed of combination of factorable social situations such as class status, ethnic background, regional and rural or urban residence and religious affiliation, but forming in their combination a functional unity which has integrated impact on the participating individual'.

For Komarovsky and Sargent (1949, p.143), the term subculture refers to 'cultural variants displayed by certain segments of the population'. 'Subcultures are distinguished not by one or two isolated traits but they constitute relatively cohesive social systems. They are worlds within the larger world of our national culture'.

Mercer (1958, p.34) states that 'a society contains numerous subgroups, each with its own characteristic ways of thinking and acting. These cultures within cultures are called subcultures'.

Yinger in 1960, points out that the term subculture has been used to focus attention on the diversity of norms within a society as well as on the normative aspects of deviant behaviour. The term has basically been used too freely whenever one wanted to emphasise the normative behaviour of a group which was different to that of the general standard. Jenks (2005) argues that if the behaviour is antagonistic to that of the wider society, we might use the term 'contraculture' and goes on to argue that subcultures do not only consist of inconsistencies of a specific group's behaviour to that of the mainstream, but they must also have systematic strategies which are employed to guarantee reproduction of such

inconsistencies. Thus subcultures exercise agency and their differences are a conscious and meaningful action.

Studies of subcultures are attempts to map the social world and there is no correct and incorrect answer as to what is subculture. It is more of an ongoing debate. According to Gelder & Thornton, (1997) perception of subculture is more a matter of how scholars view groups of people. However, one must argue that it is particular groups that have attracted the label of subcultures. From a sociological perspective, the notion of subcultures revolves around categorisation and boundary, around insiders and outsiders. Thornton compares community to subculture and concludes that communities tend to be more permanent than subcultures and unlike subcultures they tend to be geographically assigned to particular areas with families of individuals being involved. Tonnies (1887) had already made a distinction between the community which he referred to as 'Gemeinschaft' and the society or association, which he referred to as 'Gesellschaft', distinctions in the types of human relations (intimate or dispersed), in the types of proximity (rural or urban) and in the types of society (traditional or modern).

Downes (1966, pp.4-5) throws a different light on what constitutes a culture: he poses the question of whether a culture is made up of all its subcultures, the uniformities alone or the dominant culture alone. The boundary is quite elusive and Downes says that subcultures can be classified into two main categories. Firstly, those subcultures which already exist outside the dominant culture, for instance, the culture of immigrant groups, becomes a subculture when they enter the hosting culture. Secondly, subcultures may also be those originating within a dominant culture and these could be again divided into those emerging in positive or negative response to the demands of cultural and social structures. Examples of the former could be occupational or age-group subcultures and examples of the latter could be delinquent subcultures and political-extremist subcultures.

Jenks' (2005, pp.133-152) argument is that the idea of subculture can be used to valorise the underdog, to give voice to the inarticulate. However it equally marginalises and contains the deviant or non-mainstream. The prefix 'sub' refers to a sub-category of culture, a part of a whole. It does not necessarily mean derogation unless members of the dominant culture view members of subculture as undesirable. Having been used too freely, the term 'subculture' has created some ambiguity in its meaning. Jenks criticises Parsons (1964) in placing deviance and crime as if they formed subcultures, as if they are the roots of subcultures, and argues that both the Chicago school and the Birmingham group

enhance the marginalisation in the idea of subculture. The Chicago school describes everyday subcultural practices in a way that makes it difficult to conceive whether it is the will or the device that would reintegrate such groups from their state of marginalisation. The Birmingham school 'normalised' youth reaction and protest in post-war Britain by fashioning it into specific subcultures. Jenks questions whether subcultural theory has evolved into nothing more but a desire to espouse pluralism and demonstrate appreciation of popular culture. He argues that throughout history, the idea of subculture has always marked the limits of sociological reason. He says that subculture is one of the ways in which social theorists either fail to or simply avoid explaining the social in terms of the social. These limits as they are revealed when we employ concepts such as subculture, may stand as symptoms of an enfeebling of modernity's project, as expressed through sociology (Jenks, 2005). The theorist may use the term 'subculture' to give up the commonality and integration in order to focus on difference and diffusion.

Jenks (2005) believes that there has been a general trend in areas of sociology from the 1970s onwards, to go from general to particular (macro to micro). Subcultural theory in the hands of the Chicago School and Parsons can be seen as exercising one of modernity's strategies to develop a changing consciousness about space. Just as the modern thinker became an explorer, so did subcultural studies show us ways of life that were strange and sometimes shocking. New peoples and new lifestyles have an impact on future utopian societies.

### **1.3 Identity formation**

This study explores the mechanisms and in what ways young Maltese women achieve identity through the music they consume. Although identity is a common term, it proves quite complex to define and explain.

In this research, identity is considered as being socially produced and thus, as a social entity. Contrary to the Western notion that identity rests outside the social world and something that belongs to the individual, since Durkheim (1984) it has been argued that it is not possible to view the individual as standing outside of society. Elias (1994) argued that the binding factor of human beings is the interdependency between them (p.75). This interdependency is complex but both Elias (1994) and Lawler (2008, pp.1-9) argued that identity is produced by people through interactions between them and within social relations. A sociological approach assumes that the relationship between the self and

society is reciprocal (Stryker, 1980). Since the self emerges in society and is interdependent with society, one must take into consideration the social context in which the self is acting and in which other selves exist (ibid.).

There are multiple views of identity within sociology. One approach is a cultural or collective view of identity that focuses on group-level processes and represents ideas, beliefs and practices of a group. This concept refers to the component of one's identity which is in common with the larger group but this approach does not consider individual variables in behaviour and motivation (eg. Nagel, 1995, pp.947-965). The second approach, developed through the work of Tajfel (1981), looks at identity as embedded in social groups. Thus the groups to which people belong provide a definition of how they should behave and who they are within the social context in which they are embedded (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995, pp.255-269). However, according to Stets & Burke (2003, p.9) this view does not consider the role relationships among individuals within a group. The third approach, according to Stryker (1980) was developed from the symbolic interactionist tradition and considers role relationships and identity variability and motivation. This has developed into two branches which focus on different things. One focuses on how social structures influence people's individual identities and behaviours (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, pp.199-218), while the other focuses on the internal dynamics within the self that influence behaviour (Burke & Cast, 1999, pp.277-290). The latter reflects the affect control theory which Heise (1979) developed. This theory proposes that individuals maintain affective meanings through their actions and interpretations of events and draws heavily on shared cultural meanings of identities as opposed to individual or group meanings.

The word identity is derived from the Latin 'idem' which means 'same' and thus as human beings, people share common identities with others in different contexts for example as women or men, as Maltese citizens and so on. According to Lawler (2008), the meaning of identity combines notions not only of sameness but also of difference. She suggests that an aspect of identity is the uniqueness of people as different from others. It can be argued that uniqueness stems from the fact that human beings all have different lives and go through different experiences, even siblings and identical twins experience different aspects of the same family life. A common view is that uniqueness is something that we might call our 'inside', belongs to the individual and is not made by the social world, although the social world does have an impact on it and therefore produces part of

who people are. The differences between groups are not simply and naturally there but are created by groups themselves to distinguish themselves from others. According to Freud (1918), people magnify the differences to make them into distinguishing characteristics. He calls this process 'the narcissism of small differences'. People therefore play down shared characteristics and play up the differences in an effort to see themselves as unique and to be seen by others as unique.

Moreover, according to Stryker (1980), people do not have one identity, but have an identity for each position or role that the person holds in society. People identify with a number of groups in everyday life and these identities are the meanings one has of being a group member, as a person holding a role and so on. People's multiple identities continuously interact (Lawler, 2008) and sometimes may even be in tension with each other. At times identities are categorised in ways which rely on rejection of identification with an opposite category, in other words identifications are categorised through what they are not, rather than through what they are. This is what Hall (1996) termed the 'constitutive outside' to identity. Since people occupy different roles and positions in groups, interaction is not between whole persons but between aspects of persons acting within a particular role (Stets & Burke, 2003). The implications therefore are that identities are related to corresponding counter-identities (Burke, 1980, pp.18-29). For instance, a 'husband identity' is enacted in relation to a 'wife identity' (Stets & Burke, 2003, pp.9-10) and a 'rocker identity' is enacted in relation to a 'rapper's identity', as being distinctly different or even opposite. People move from one identity to another with ease and often act in two or three identities simultaneously (ibid.) in being for example a colleague, a friend and a manager.

McCall and Simmons (1978, p.65) suggested that role identity has a 'conventional' dimension which relates to role and an 'idiosyncratic' dimension which relates to identity. The conventional dimension involves expectations linked to social positions. On the other hand, the idiosyncratic dimension relates to individual unique interpretations which individuals bring to their roles. McCall and Simmons (1978, p.74) view role identities as organised in hierarchies of prominence which depend on how committed the individual is to the identity, how much an identity is supported by others and how many rewards one achieves from a role identity. On the other hand, Stryker (1980) who also suggested that role identities are organised in hierarchies, viewed these hierarchies as being organised in order of saliency. That is, according to Stryker (1980), hierarchies are formed according to



the identities which are most often played out in different situations. Therefore the prominence hierarchy of McCall and Simmons (1978) focuses on what individuals value, while Stryker focuses on how individuals are most likely to behave in different situations.

The interaction between identities of different persons can be seen in two perspectives: agency and social structure. The social structure is relatively fixed and within it identities are embedded and actors play the role that is expected of them within that structure. Thus people are recruited into pre-existing positions. On the other hand, there is agency, where people, as agents can shape a role by taking behavioural decisions as well as engaging in compromise and conflict (ibid.). The view of hierarchy of identities developed by McCall and Simmons as well as Stryker, highlights the idea that individuals have multiple identities and act within social contexts through which these identities emerge. According to Thoits (2001), the more individuals form and accumulate identities, the greater the psychological well-being and vice versa. That means that the greater the psychological well-being, the more one is likely to engage in different identities.

Whereas Stryker's work focuses on identities within the social structure, Burke (1980) focuses on the internal dynamics that take place within an identity. He suggested that people learn the meaning of a role identity through interaction with others and through the way others act and react towards that role (ibid.). Burke, though, also acknowledged the fact that people do import some of their own meaning and understanding into their role identities and negotiate differences during interaction with others.

Since my research explores identity formation of young Maltese women, through the music they listen to, it is worth looking at more recent perceptions of identity. These include the cybernetic model of identity which was developed from Powers' (1973) work and is quite similar to the affect control theory (Heise, 1979). The affect control theory views identities as containing self-meanings which reflect the sentiments persons hold about themselves in a social role. When situations disturb these self-meanings they will no longer reflect the person's sentiments and therefore the person strives to create new situations to restore self-meanings to match their sentiments (ibid.). The model looks at behaviour as a result of the relation between identity and behaviour (Burke, 1996, pp.141-174). An identity has a set of meanings which serves as a reference for the person. When an identity is activated in a situation, feedback is retrieved in several ways: through self-meanings, through the input of self-relevant meanings from a situation, by comparing the input with the standard and through the meaningful behaviour which is the result of

differences between self-meanings and actual meanings in the standard (Stets & Burke, 2003). Thus the cybernetic model is goal-directed where there is an attempt to change the situation so as to match perceived meanings of a situation with the meanings held in the identity standard in an effort to bring the standard meanings into a situation. Therefore in this model, when situational self-meanings match self-meanings in the identity, meanings of behaviours correspond to these meanings. On the other hand, if self-meanings do not match, behaviour is altered to counteract the situational meanings and restore perceptions (ibid).

This has led to the idea that one is more committed to an identity when one tries hard to keep matching self-meanings and meanings held in the identity standard (Burke & Reitzes, 1991, pp.239-251). Commitment to roles therefore mediates between identity and behaviour making commitment stronger or weaker. This means that those who are highly committed to a particular identity have strong links between identity meanings and behaviour meanings, while those who are less committed to an identity, do not link identity meanings and behaviour meanings so much.

Stets & Burke (2003) argued that people do not only occupy roles in society but are also members of particular groups and not of others. This suggests that people also take on social identities. They also argued that role identity theory and social identity theory overlap due to similarities between them. The process of self-categorization into groups in social identity theory (Turner et al, 1987), for instance, is similar to the process of identification into roles in identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978). In self-categorisation, those who are similar to the self are categorised as in-group and those who are different are categorised as out-group. In identification, people identify themselves as occupying roles and in interaction the individuals see the differences from others rather than the similarities they share with others. Therefore, Stets & Burke (2003) pointed out that in both traditions, people see themselves in terms of the social structure within the society and pre-determined social categories in which they were born. Both identity theorists and social identity theorists perceive the consequences of individuals taking on an identity as important in understanding the self. In social identity theory, when individuals take on group-based identities, there is uniformity of perception and action among group members. In role identity theory, when individuals take on role-based identities, there are different perceptions and action between individuals (ibid.). Stets & Burke (2000) merged these two theories and argued that social identities and role identities can simultaneously

exist with the result being that there are both similarities and differences. This means that at the same time, there are social identities which highlight similarities and role identities which highlight differences.

Personal identity implies that one categorises oneself by seeing the self as different from others where the person is guided by his or her goals rather than the group's goals (Brewer, 1991, pp.475-482). Deaux (1992) linked personal identity to the social identity and she pointed out that while social identities were expressed along normative lines, they could also be expressed along personal, idiosyncratic lines. Like role and group identities, personal identities are compared to one's meaning of the personal identity held in the standard. If these do not match, behaviour, perception or identity standard will be modified for the discrepancy to be resolved. Stets (1995) linked personal identity to role identity and argued that meanings of role identity may overlap with meanings of personal identity. When the meanings of role identities and the meanings of personal identities do not match, people might act according to their role identity to maintain personal identity.

Lawler (2008) suggested different approaches to identity focusing on autobiographies and power. She suggested that identity can be considered in terms of stories that people tell about themselves. Through these narratives which are kind of autobiographies, people interpret their own identities, linking past and present, while drawing on memory to do so. Narratives inevitably include other people's stories and therefore Lawler (2008) emphasises that identities are embedded in the social world rather than being only personal and private, separated from the social world. Moreover, identities are not self-constructed and residing somewhere in the individual, but identities are formed and acted out through relationships with others. It is through the process of performing ourselves that we assume characteristics that we claim to be our own. Moreover, Lawler (2008) pointed out the critical role played by power in the individual's search for autonomy which Western society values highly. The quest for power, she argued, is present in all efforts of self-fulfilment and self-improvement. In her view, power and knowledge are closely connected and power shapes how people can be known and understood. This reflects Veblen's (1899, pp.35-101) argument that conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption shape the way others view us and are strongly linked to the social power and social class positioning that is associated with us. Lawler (2008) argued that identities are not fixed, stable and unproblematic but identity formation is a continuous process which is not free from personal anxiety.

### 1.3.1 Identity and music

Because of its social importance, music has considerable significance in continuous processes of identity formation of the individual. I will therefore be looking at the processes which identities go through by means of the music people listen to.

According to Adorno (1976) music was linked to cognitive habits, modes of consciousness and historical developments. Adorno's (1976) work represents a significant development in the twentieth century of the idea that music is a powerful 'force' in social life which builds on consciousness and social structure but Adorno fails to provide tools for viewing these processes as they are being lived (DeNora, 2000).

In his research on the culture of biker-boys, Willis (1978) noted that the participants connected to the music itself, because of what the music sounded like, not because of the social associations that the music had. The boys preferred songs with a fast pace and a strong beat. Willis argued that the cultural item, that is a piece of clothing such as the leather jacket, a hairstyle, a song, originally must have had meanings of its own, as well as possibilities of other meanings which could be given to it. For example, a leather jacket was primarily for keeping warm, but could also be given meanings such as a symbol of being *mucho*, or a symbol of being a rocker or a biker. Likewise, a song or style of music originally had a meaning of its own, which is why the bike-boys chose it as the cultural item, but then the boys themselves added to these meanings in the course of their everyday consumption of that music, and this is what highlights the idea of music as an active ingredient of social formation. His respondents spoke of how they had to dance to the music or do something to it. They spoke of how the music took them from one state to another, how it maintained or changed their mood. The young men were active interpreters whose values could almost be felt in the qualities of their preferred music. Thus Willis showed that music was active and constituted not only values but also styles of conduct and practices. However, he did not discuss the processes of how people use music and make meaning of the music.

In fact, Magdanz (2001) notes that until DeNora's (2000) book 'Music in Everyday Life', there was almost no discussion as to how people use music as a resource for creating mood, wellbeing and physiological balance. DeNora (2000) uses a series of ethnographic studies with fifty-two British and American women to examine how they use music in their everyday life in activities such as exercise classes, at-home work, shopping and so on. Her study looks at everyday situations and observations. She highlights how bodies

respond to the beat of music without people being conscious of it. She also points out that time seemed to move faster for people when there was music. She points out that background music to waiting time could not only serve its purpose as a filler but could reconstruct the aim of the action, so that the thing the woman had been waiting to do would be redefined and almost seem like an interruption of the pleasing music. DeNora found that respondents worked like disc jockeys to themselves and were aware of how they used music to enhance and even change aspects of themselves within the routine of their everyday lives.

Choosing the type of music, as a cultural item as well as a leisure activity, however is not entirely subject to the beat and the rhythm. From a macro perspective, the freedom of leisure choice is restricted since access to leisure depends on the person's economic status, on the cultural capital and on the social class. The leisure experiences of young people are shaped by social difference, mostly by social class, gender and race, according to Bradford and McNamara (2007). Leisure activities, in an individual's life, are shaped by dispositions and capacities and are inculcated through experience over time. Individuals' upbringing, what they have been exposed to, peer pressure and so on will all play a part in these choices (ibid).

An important dimension in leisure, according to Bradford and McNamara (2007), is that it is where young people acquire leisure capital (Zeijl et al. 2002, p.381 in Bradford and McNamara, 2007), which refers to skills and knowledge which can contribute to future well-being, as well as social and cultural capital. This aspect is important in this study since the music young women listen to is part of their leisure or is a symbol of leisure which accompanies them through their work. Leisure capital, like other forms of capital is not equally but differentially distributed, with some young people acquiring for instance good knowledge of drug and alcohol use and others who do not. Such knowledge can be transformed into resilience needed to cope with contemporary life. Another important dimension in leisure is that, through leisure, young people construct their own identity in an adult-free context. Meeting friends, listening to music, hanging out on the street and shopping malls is an alternative to commercial leisure provision and is an important leisure activity for young people confirming the appeal of not having adult supervision.

From a micro perspective, the choice of the particular music that young people listen too is similarly not entirely free. What their peers listen to, what music they have been exposed to in their upbringing, what music they have easy access to, what is being

projected by the media, all affect to some extent the choice of music. When people in industrialised societies identify themselves according to social class, these identifications have an impact on everything in their life, from politics to leisure choices, to the choice of schools, to the choice of friends, to the choice of music one listens to. The choice of preferred music is a subjective choice which depends on several of the factors described above. It can also be seen as an objective choice in the sense that there are clear and socially shared factions that influence such a choice. Musical preferences in turn indicate a person's taste, and taste is a strong indicator of class and a strong factor which impinges on a person's social identity. Social identity is the internalisation of often stereotypical collective identifications (Turner J.C., 1984) and is very influential on the person's behaviour.

Having a particular musical preference is often not only about the music alone but about other social practices associated with that music such as taste, style, language and embodiment. Being part of a cultural group associated with a particular type of music implies adopting similar practices as the other member of the group so that one becomes part of the group and part of the collectivity. Collectivity is a plurality of individuals who either see themselves as similar or who, to other people, seem similar in behaviour. There are therefore two types of collectivity. The first is when the members recognise the collectivity and the second when the members are not aware of it but observers are aware of it (Jenkins, 1996, p.103-106). The collective is not fixed but is brought about through interaction (Barth, 1969). Identification is produced during interaction and is the production of themes of human similarity and difference (ibid). Identification stresses both similarities within the group and differences of the group from other groups, as well as the differences within the group itself. Thus within the cultural group of heavy metal enthusiasts for instance, there are similarities within the group, such as the way they dress, the hair style, the way they head-bang to the music. In themselves, these are also differences that distinguish them from other groups like for example techno enthusiasts, who within their group share other similarities. Moreover, within the heavy metal group, there might be individual differences, such as someone who prefers not to wear their hair long, or someone who does not wear heavy metal T shirts. These differences within the cultural group exist because these groups are made up of sub-groups as well as individuals. However, questions of boundaries arise and how these boundaries are policed. Complexities arise of how different one can be to be still accepted as part of the cultural

group. Each group gives a certain amount of significance to each cultural item and social practice. These unwritten meanings and understandings within the group, although sometimes are quite fixed, in other groups can be very fluid and it is these meanings and significances which determine whether one is part of the group or not. It is these processes that give boundaries the fluidity to be part of a continuous process, rather than being fixed. Barth (1969) understands identity boundaries as being indefinite, as being ongoing processes and products of interaction between people, especially those of different identities. Within these processes questions arise as to what takes on significance and what does not take significance for the identities in question. It is therefore in interaction at the boundaries that the process of recruitment takes place and the idea of insiders and outsiders is shaped. Identity is therefore 'a matter of boundary processes' (Wallman, 1986) which allow people to move in and out of these collectives.

### **1.3.2 Taste and style**

Identity and boundaries are probably mostly evident to outsiders as well as insiders, from indicators such as taste and style. Taste and style, as mentioned above are two indicators which reveal what type of person the individual is in the eyes of the social other. Through these indicators, people can position others in the social strata of society. This rests on the assumption that the social other is familiar with society's norms and deviances, the unwritten scripts of meanings, as well as the social practices of the different social groups that make up the society. However, even if the social other is not familiar with the individual's practices and placing the individual within social strata is problematic, then the taste and style will still be one of the means revealing that the individual is an outsider to that community or society.

Taste, according to Kant (1914) is an acquired disposition to mark differences through a process of distinction. Kant argued that genuine good taste does not exist and that the validity of judgement is not the general view of the majority or a specific social view. Judgement of taste presumes a consensus of taste, thus it proposes that the community share that experience though not every individual might agree to it. From a Kantian perspective, fashion was a means of social distinction. Bourdieu (1984), on the other hand argued that the legitimate taste of the society was the taste of the ruling class. Simmel (1957) also had proposed this idea and noted that upper classes abandon fashions as they are adopted by the lower class, a pattern which he terms the 'trickle-down effect'.

Fashion for Simmel (1957) is a tool of individuation, social distinction and class distinction.

In 'Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste', Bourdieu (1979, pp.169-174) argued that aesthetic dispositions are learnt and internalised at an early age so that young people are guided by these internal dispositions towards behaviours that are suitable for their status. The way one presents one's social self to the world depicts one's status and distances oneself from other groups. The habitus, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is the internalised form of class condition and of the conditionings through which a member of class knows without thinking, what he or she finds vulgar rather than dignified, gawdy rather than beautiful. Taste in itself classifies and categorises individuals who are distinguished by the distinctions they themselves make.

Style can be seen as a consequence of taste, or rather, style is adopted and shaped within one's parameters of taste, in that according to an individual's acquired taste, one will adopt a style of dress, a style of music, a hairstyle, a lifestyle and so on. On the other hand, taste might be the result of a style adopted and internalised by the individual. For instance it might be that one likes a style of music and as a consequence, one adopts practices associated with that style so that a particular taste is shaped. Style is an arbiter of youth identities in Western industrialised societies and one way in which these styles are delineated is through the categorization of music and musicians (Jenkins, 1996). Hebdige's (1979) classic and pioneering work 'Subculture: The meaning of Style' was probably one of the first to research style within subcultures. Hebdige (1979) focused on the punk subculture and style in Britain and his work was a result of the need to understand a growing number of visible subcultures in Britain. The research focused on working class youth in 1970s England juxtaposed to their parents' generation as well as immigrants from former or soon-to-be independent colonies, in particular Jamaicans. With the influx of South Asian, West Indian and especially Jamaican immigrants from former colonies, post-war England faced a sudden mixture of cultures. When Jamaicans displayed their distinctive music, clothes and gestures on the streets, they took possession of a social space so that white working-class youth were challenged to create an equally dense style of their own. This style would show differences between white and black youth and differences between youth and their parents.

Till then, subcultures were considered as groups with distinct behaviour and beliefs within a larger culture and Hebdige (1979), through this study demonstrated that these



subcultures were actually very similar to the parent or dominant cultures of which they were a part. He defines culture in two ways: culture as equated with refinement and standards of excellence, and culture as a whole way of life. He is more inclined towards this anthropological notion of culture, towards going beyond the library and theatre (Bourdieu's cultural capital) and argued that culture is constituted in everyday life and permeated with ideologies and mediations of power.

Hebdige's (1979) work is associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) also known as the Birmingham School. Apart from being a monumental work in the area of cultural studies, it shows how subcultures form within the larger system of industrial culture. They are partly organised around age and class and expressed through specific styles. On the other hand, although they are part of the dominant cultures, subcultures weave styles out of material culture available to them, 'bricolage', in an effort to construct identities which will procure them relative autonomy within society. Hebdige (1979) considered subcultures as the arena for negotiation of identity and power relations and argued that style is a manifestation of the autonomy that a cultural group within a dominant culture, strives to achieve. It is therefore reactions to the dominant culture and the tensions involved that motivates cultural groups to create and adopt a particular style which in itself is part of the process of social identity formation.

An example of such tensions are evident in Hebdige's (1979, p.18) quotations of Genet's (1967) work on revolt, the idea of style as a form of refusal and the elevation of crime to art. He equates Genet's (1967) crimes (revolts against norms) to punks' crimes of revolt against the socio-economic conditions they lived in. Such breaking of norms was considered by the dominant class as socially deviant, a sort of social crime. This 'crime' of refusal and revolt was committed through style. In the case of punks, style was primarily evident in material and musical style. This style was their 'weapon' thus elevating crime into an art.

In her book 'Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital', Thornton's (1996) contextual research in London clubs, is mainly drawn from the approach to the study of youth subcultures developed in the 1970s by the CCCS, such as Hebdige's work. The CCCS approach was that subcultures were class-based and were rebelling against the dominant ideology of a capitalist state. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s there was a series of 'spectacular' youth subcultures such as mods, rockers, skinheads and punks. Every subculture had its own style: in dress, musical tastes and usually in choice of drugs. In the

1980s, it became more difficult to distinguish youth subcultures since there were a number of short lived subcultures shaped by music and fashion industries. Subcultures do not necessarily originate from rebellion. Thornton (1996) argued that practices within subcultures could not be perceived as expressions of anger of the working class as the CCCS had suggested because youth cultures and subcultures emerged in particular ways both culturally and historically, without their practices necessarily being rebellious. Youth subcultures were a space where young people could shape their own identity and accumulate capital.

While Hebdige considered avant-garde versus bourgeois, sub-ordinate versus dominant, and subculture versus mainstream, Thornton (1996, p.97) argued that there are three main dichotomies in academic literature that constitute the mainstreams versus the alternatives:

- 1) Dominant culture, bourgeois ideology vs. subculture, deviant guard;
- 2) Mass culture & commercial ideology vs. student culture, educated vanguard;
- 3) Dominant culture, bourgeois ideology vs. student culture, educated vanguard.

She argued that these binaries are flawed and do not reveal the nuances of subcultural participation.

Thornton (1996) analysed the ‘hipness’ of British rave culture and using Bourdieu’s concepts responded to earlier works such as Hebdige’s. In contrast to Hebdige’s analysis of British punk subculture—typical of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which argued that youth subcultural aesthetics rise out of calculated stylistic subversion of dominant societal norms—Thornton instead posits that youth subcultures are ‘taste cultures’: cultures based on shared tastes, usually in music, with shared media consumption that compete for distinctions of different kinds. She said:

*Local micro-media like flyers and listings are means by which club organizers bring the crowd together. Niche media like the music press construct subcultures as much as they document them. National mass media, such as tabloids, develop youth movements as much as they distort them. Contrary to youth subcultural ideologies, ‘subcultures’ do not germinate from a seed and grow by force of their own energy into mysterious ‘movements’ only to be belatedly digested by the media. Rather, media and other culture industries are there and effective right from*

*the start. They are central to process of subcultural formation* (Thornton, 1996, p.117)

According to Thornton, groups create themselves not as a resistance to the ruling class but rather they create distinctions between themselves and others on the basis of subcultural capital. They acquire status within their world through possession of subcultural knowledge and creating distinctions between themselves and other groups of young people. This often involves a distinction between their own culture and the mainstream culture.

Hebdige (1979) argued that styles in subcultures are full of significance and should be regarded as ‘maps of meaning’ that need to be read beyond the surface of styles themselves (ibid). However, Hebdige does not analyse the musical aspect of subcultures. Music is not treated as a text itself but is treated as a given with no need for analysis because of its omnipresence in society, a point which DeNora (2000) criticised and explores in her own work. Pitre (2003) also criticised Hebdige (1979) on this point and states, the music text itself is rich in interpretative potential and contains an abundance of cultural information.

Moreover, Hebdige’s (1979) almost complete omission of women, which is typical of the CCCS canon, narrows the potential and usefulness of his analysis. Although his work is considered as a seminal work in the field of cultural studies, it probably can be considered so because it opened a new route of looking at subcultures. However, his omission of gender leads one to think that lived experiences of males and females within subcultures is the same or substantially similar. However, this is not so as demonstrated in later studies such as those of Thornton, DeNora, and McRobbie. Lived experiences differ in various ways, such as in the processes of embodiment and language use.

### **1.3.3 Embodiment and language**

Apart from taste and style, the social construction of the body is a very important part of an individual’s identity. ‘The body is not simply a natural phenomenon but is subject to modes of social and cultural constitution’ (Longhurst, 2007 p.184) and in modern societies is frequently linked, consciously or unconsciously, to the music one listens to and the social practices of one’s group.

Language is also an integral part of an individual’s identity and is a manifestation of one’s social identity and social class. Du Gay et al. (1997, p.13) argued that language is

not simply a reflection of the social relations and institutions of society but it is constitutive of society. We give meanings to things by the way we represent them and language is the principal means of representation in culture (Hall, 1997). Language does not only mean written or spoken words but it refers to any system of representation for instance, photography, drawing, painting, imaging through technology and so on (Du Gay et al., 1997, pp.13-14). Language is thus the use of a set of signs to represent things, status, taste and so on and exchange meaning about them. It could also be a way of inspiring or contesting meaning.

The individual might consciously make an effort to embody particular aspects linked to the music such as posture and a way of walking or dancing. The individual might also adopt a particular way of talking linked to the cultural group associated with the preferred music. Obvious examples of embodiment are body modification, piercings, tattoos and implants while in language, this could be a particular accent, the speed with which one talks, phrases and buzz words that the individual adopts. On the other hand the individual might learn and imitate body posture, gestures, ways of dancing to the music and ways of talking without making the effort or even without being aware that these elements are embodied within one's social identity.

Durkheim's (1912) writings were among the first to focus on embodiment. He suggested that the body is a very important medium in the constitution of society. Its importance lies in three reasons. The first reason is that the body is viewed as a source of symbols which help individuals recognize themselves as belonging to a society. The second reason is that the body is a source of natural properties which provide the basis for social symbols for a group, for instance body hair, hairstyles, fingernails and so on. Moreover, the body is a location for these symbols. Some examples are tattooing, which finger one wears a ring on, whether an earring is worn on the left ear or on the right and so on. The third reason is that the body also provides the means by which individuals are attached to social groups. In other words, the body possesses the potential for the individual to become attached to the symbolic order of society which refers to communication, linguistic or symbolical and relations in the social world. The symbolic order does not only facilitate the individual's realization that one can exercise agency but it also increases one's capacity to affect change. Therefore the body provides a means for the individual to be part of a cultural group and enables one to not only adopt and imitate but also to be the agent of change within that group.

Durkheim (1912) suggested that being part of a group, the act of bodily congregation was a 'powerful stimulant' (p.217) of emotions and bodily gestures had the potential to initiate passionate and contagious emotions in people. He refers to these emotions as forms of 'collective effervescence' and he argued that these emotions induced changes in individuals' internal bodily states which can substitute the world they perceive into a moral world where people interact on the basis of shared understanding and those symbols which are central to people's identity and understanding. In modern society, one can observe such collective effervescence in live concerts, political mass meetings and demonstrations, religious gatherings and so on.

Music is intrinsically associated with body movements. In this study, the way in which young Maltese women engage in music through body movements is explored. Dancing to music, in itself, requires subcultural capital in that one needs to know how to dance to the different types of music. Moreover, the music which people engage in not only influences the style of dress but it also influences the way one carries oneself.

Music involves not only the auditory system but also the somatosensory and motor systems, which involve movement, 'reflecting strong associations with dance, the rhythmic tapping, stepping, clapping and chanting that accompany and indeed produce music' (Freeman, 2000, p.412). Nettle (2000) traced the earliest human music as being associated with ritual. Bellah (2008) pointed out that music has an instrumental role in the creation of social solidarity, constructing a sense of trust in the members of the community. Moreover, he suggests that music and language are strongly linked in the shaping of ritual. Brown (2000) suggested that music and language evolved simultaneously, what he called 'musilanguage' (p.277) and which was enacted with meaningful gesture at the same time. He argued that language, with its sound as referential meaning and music as emotive meaning form a continuum. Moreover, dance can be seen as ritual where the same movements and actions are carried out by people who do not entirely encode them (Rappaport, 1999). The structure of the music itself lends itself to such movements. For instance repetition of themes, riffs and rhythms, the tempo and the beat are all elements which are very predictable in a pop song. We have learnt what to expect and the body moves accordingly, in anticipation of how the music is likely to continue.

Mauss (1934, pp.95-123) explored how social techniques become ingrained into the habits of the body through apprenticeship. He argues that each modern society has its own 'special habits' regarding the body and there is probably no natural way in which

adult human beings manage their body. These techniques, which he terms ‘social habitus’ are passed on through education and imitation and include all aspects of human behaviour such as ways of standing, walking, dancing as well as talking and ways of reacting in particular situations.

Whereas Mauss (1934) focused on the differentiation *between* societies, Bourdieu (1984) focused on how the embodied habitus is differentiated *within* modern societies (Shilling, 2008 pp.225-226). Bourdieu argued that bodily dispositions are structured by the individual’s position in the social class and are manifested through taste and processes of accumulation of social, cultural and economic capital. Thus bodily expression including verbal expression, acts as an indicator and helps people position themselves and others in social class (ibid).

Elias (1939) focused on historical changes and trends of individualization, as well as class and status differences in embodied identities. He argued that advances in the social division of labour, and the struggle for distinction in everyday life have an impact on individual bodily expression. In modernity, restraint and composure have become essential for prosperity in contrast with aggression in medieval times. He argued that the body’s social significance remains an important means through which individuals possess habits, and capacities to enable them to prosper in modern societies.

Shilling (2008, p.226) developed Durkheim’s argument, suggesting that the body may continue to act as a ‘source that is essentially social’ and can be expressed through styles of fashion and dress. However, through interventions made possible by advances in transplant surgery and cybertechnology, and which are done purely for social purposes, the body becomes an expression of the social.

Goffman’s (1983, pp.1-17) analysis of the ‘interaction order’ focused on rituals which surround everyday physical encounters through which individuals acquire individual identities and also the discrimination in relation to this order (Shilling, 2008). Goffman looked at the unwritten rules and rituals of interaction as reflected in the ‘shared vocabularies of body idiom’ (Goffman, 1963, p.33). These include dress, bodily movements, gestures, facial ornamentation, facial expressions as connected to emotional expressions and so on. Moreover, Goffman (1983, p.4) argued that the ‘interaction order’ is the field where individuals gain a ‘moral identity’. Everyday interactions and expectations within these interactions, as linked to the bodily idiom, are important in constructing a morally respectable self within society. These interactions, which include

verbal and bodily interactions, expose people to others with the result that adherence to the unwritten rules allows people to manifest an acceptable self and to feel at ease with others. On the other hand, transgression of the norms of the interaction order result in risking emotional embarrassment, not only reducing the effervescence which Durkheim suggested, but also putting the individual at risk of being stigmatised and being considered an outsider by others.

Social constructs, which are products of human interaction, differentiate between males and females. Goffman (1977) recognised that women in Western societies were constantly required to be looking their best. In modern Western societies, women are pressured to take care of their appearance and they have to struggle continuously even throughout old age, with the bodily idiom, which reflects the male notions of a female essence (Tseelon, 1995). Within the music scene in Western societies, women's understanding of their own social identities and social groups they made part of was partly a result of historical events and the social constructs within these events. In the present study, the focus is on young Maltese women and how they shape their identity through the music they listen to within their local context. Appearance in music subcultures is a prominent aspect of social practices and an indicator of particular subcultures. It is therefore important to look at the social contrasts in this area in the Maltese context, as done in the previous chapter.

## **1.4 Gender**

In her study of women's leisure in Manchester, Langhamer (2000) points out that, historians' definitions of leisure had always been drawn from male experience with the consequence that they viewed leisure as a direct and distinct opposite of paid labour. This point of view is quite problematic since it does not reflect the lived experiences of women. Moreover, studies which focused on particular leisure activities such as golf, swimming and so on ignore the experiences of women (Stanley, 1987 in Langhamer, 2000) since it was mostly men who had the opportunity and the means to take part in such activities.

Feminist sociologists argued that in the case of women, the concept of leisure being distinct from work was quite unhelpful in the study of women's experiences, since one had to understand the context in which women lived their leisure experiences and the meaning that the women themselves gave to their leisure activities. In reality, women defined duty

in terms of domestic work and very often, experienced work and leisure simultaneously. For instance a woman could be doing domestic work such as washing the floor while engaging in a leisure activity such as listening to the radio, making work and leisure quite indistinguishable at times. Moreover, for women who work in the home, there is no specific time which separates work from leisure since work usually revolves around the activities of other members of the family. In the twentieth century, the issue of what women actually did in their leisure time was rarely addressed by historians (ibid).

The invisibility of young women in literature and research within subcultural studies is paralleled by the difficulties women find in the context of the music industry. In the following section I will be discussing these two topics as well as gender identities in Malta.

#### **1.4.1 Obscurity of young women in subculture studies**

In 'Girls and Subcultures' (1977), McRobbie and Garber observe that women, for the most part, are absent in subculture studies as well as pop histories, personal accounts and journalistic surveys (pp.105-112). In 1980, in 'Settling Accounts with Subcultures', McRobbie restates this saying that, in most subculture studies, youth culture is defined in specifically male terms (Harris and Kurti, 1991). This might be due to the fact that until recently most sociological researchers and scholars were themselves men. Deviance and delinquency research has also excluded women from their studies making women the uncelebrated or indeed the invisible social category.

Male sociologists as well as the media concentrated on incidents associated with male subcultures and generally this was associated with violence. This might be because normally violent acts are considered to be newsworthy, thus women have tended to be excluded (McRobbie and Garber, 1977, pp.105-112). Books like Hebdige's (1979) 'Subculture: the meaning of style' can pretend to be general while talking only about young men, when 'questions about girls, sexual relations, and femininity in youth will continue to be diffused or marginalized in the ghetto of Women's Studies' (McRobbie, 1980 p.68). Youth culture and sociology of youth, as well as critiques including Marxist perspectives on them are central in the development of Cultural Studies. McRobbie (1980) points out that research was consistently based on male youth cultural forms such as male youth in class culture, in leisure, school, community and workplace. Football and drinking have been described as male forms of leisure but have increasingly become attractive to



some women. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, drinking has become a leisure activity which women regularly engage in (Parrat, 2001). Women's improved standard of living, as well as women's emancipation, has made leisure associated with men desirable to women and in their perception, engaging in such leisure is a manifestation of their improved lifestyle (ibid.). Women and the question of sexual division have somewhat been avoided or disregarded by researchers and theorists alike.

This lack of research within cultural studies focusing on young women has shaped my study in such a way as to focus on the experiences of young Maltese women. Because of this gap in research, I embarked on the task of going through what I considered as the main literature in subculture studies which focuses on women's experiences.

One of the first attempts at documenting and analysing girl subcultures was McRobbie and Garber in 1977 and McRobbie in 1980 in which McRobbie attempts to read through both Willis's (1977) 'Learning to Labour' and Hebdige's (1979) 'Subculture' to find out about working class male sexuality and the sexual ambiguity of style. McRobbie and Garber (1977) ask why Willis (1977) in his research about motorbike boys, does not take boys' attitude towards the young women and young men's evaluation of the young women seriously. While Willis focuses on the vocabulary used by young men, which distances them from structures of school authority and fixes them in their sphere, Hebdige (1979) focuses on style as being a signifier of subculture. Both Willis (1977) and Hebdige (1979) show how male adolescents take already coded materials from their everyday landscapes and mould them into desirable shapes, practices and postures. Both draw on the notion that control and creativity are results of subordination. Because of this subordination, cultural gestures only appear in partial form and also appear contradictory. The language of adolescent male sexuality can reveal how class and patriarchal relations work together. According to McRobbie (1980), while sociologists of youth and deviance were blooming in the early seventies, a literature of sociology of the family and domestic life is missing.

Hebdige (1979) had claimed that style breaks rules and its refusal of society is made up of existing signs and meanings. Sub-culturists' strength is in their ability to show the frailty of these meanings and the ease to throw them into disorder. Just as these agents are the subjects within patriarchal structures and class structures, so are the meanings which they turn to. In her reading of Hebdige (1979), McRobbie (1980) rightly insists that historical and cultural configurations cannot be free of features oppressive to women. She

mentions how Hebdige (1979) argues that skinheads turn to the style of their fathers and grandfathers, and that punks appropriated the 'illicit iconography of pornography' which is a completely male discourse. Thornton (1995) stresses the point of how highly differentiated mainstream culture and subculture are according to gender style.

McRobbie (1980) quotes Eco's dictum that we speak through our clothes and that we therefore inevitably do so in the realms of our sex. Hebdige (1979, p.62) briefly refers to sexual ambiguity but he does not give it the importance it deserves across the subcultural spectrum. Subcultures offer an escape especially for young women from traditional sex roles and the absence of girl subcultures is evidence of deeper oppression.

Subcultures are characterised by drugs: alcohol for teds, rockers and skins; speed and other pills for mods, punks and rudies; hallucinogenics for hippies; cocaine and heroin for groups closer to rock scenes. Regular drug use is linked primarily to males. McRobbie (1980) does not suggest that women do not take drugs, but drugs seem to offer solutions for young men which they do not offer to young women. One of the reasons might be that young men do not like young women who drink, and do drugs. Other reasons according to McRobbie (pp.111-123) might be that taking alcohol and drugs might mean losing control thus risking sexual danger. Drug taking is also not healthy and not good for the appearance.

Class is a critical variable in defining subcultural options available to middle-class and working-class young men according to McRobbie and Garber (1977). Middle class subcultures seem to offer more full-time careers, while working class subcultures are more focused on the leisure sphere, thus offering no opportunity for employment. Their argument here is that this same reality must also apply to young women. Another important argument is that if young women are marginal to the male cultures of work then they must be central to a subordinate sphere. They are marginal to work but central to the family. The marginality of young women in these spectacular male subcultures might have rendered girl subcultures invisible because the term itself has been loaded with strong masculine overtones.

Since in England, young women's wages tended to be lower than that of young men in the 1950's (ibid.), the expenditure tended to be in different directions. Young women's magazines focused on a particular mode of consumption at the time and young women were more focused on the home and the world of marriage than their male counterparts. Some of the young men formed part of subcultures, such as the teddy-boy

culture. This subculture offered an escape to young men from the claustrophobia of the family. Young women might have adopted a certain way of dressing to compliment the teddy-boys but they were unlikely to have as much time on their hands to spend hanging around in the streets. Loitering in the streets could have been considered as sexual invitation to the young men and this was not advisable at a time when good reputation mattered a great deal.

Young women's subculture was more home based (McRobbie and Garber, 1977, pp.105-112). At the time, leisure industries were expanding both for young men and young women. For young women it was pin-up pictures, records and magazines like the young men (but used in different contexts) as well as clothes, cosmetics and hair products. This was known as the young women's bedroom culture and formed part of what came to be known the teenage consumer culture. Thus teddy girls had a different but complimentary subculture to that of the teddy-boys and their lifestyle might in actual fact been very similar to their non-subcultural counterparts (ibid.).

Similarly, in the emergence of rock and pop music, young men and young women responded differently to these subcultures. The general perception was that young men tended to be more participative and more technically informed while the young women became fans and readers of pop-influenced comics. McRobbie and Garber say that the 1960s saw young women, mostly mod girls being more participative in nightclubs on the streets and at work. The unisex style of the 60s might have encouraged this increased participation. This trend moved towards consumerist mainstream, hippy underground and psychedelia (ibid.).

According to McRobbie and Garber (1977), in rocker or motor-bike culture, a new permissive sexuality symbolised the woman in her leather-clad outfit, expressionless look and thus suggestive of sexual deviance and nearer to the point of consumerism. Young women usually just rode on the back seat and were admitted into the clan depending on whose girlfriend they were. They were not into the technical part of biking or the camaraderie between bikers.

In the mid-1960s there were more job opportunities for young women and salesgirls started to be expected to look glamorous to represent the shop or company. Thus a prototype for the young consumer was further developed. Time needed to be devoted to one's looks and although these jobs provided little opportunity of job advancement, they provided the cash to participate in consumption. According to Wolfe (1968 in McRobbie

and Garber, 1977) the cash made it possible for mod girls to increase their freedom and they started living in bed-sits and flats in London, thus having more opportunity in participating in mod culture. Mod culture is thus known because it was so similar to the mainstream culture that it was not even considered as a subculture. The look was neat and tidy and did not provoke parents' anger. It was only in the fluidity of their movements combined with the right clothes and hairstyle and being in the right clubs that made a girl a mod. Overall however, this was not a long-term thing, since young women's career was still considered to be marriage.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the hippy subculture emerged. Conditions gave the young women more time to experiment. Three or four years of independent living arrangements at the hall of residence, with marriage not being their immediate concern, and being able to wear clothes as they pleased since there were no work restrictions, saw the hippy subculture flourish. The hippy underground, with its revolts and social protests, in a context where class differences played a very prominent part, provided women with an empowering space and the first elements of feminism started (McRobbie and Garber, 1977, pp.105-112).

The role of capital was significant in all these processes. Young people accumulated cultural, subcultural and social capital through being part of these social groups. These groups provided a space where they could explore and develop an identity and negotiate boundaries in a space where their parents were not present. Moreover, the role of marketing was also significant in that their choices were influenced by marketing and production. Often, these subcultures or styles were absorbed by the mainstream culture through marketing, production and consumption patterns.

McRobbie and Garber (1977) argue that the important question is to analyse the complimentary ways in which young women interact among themselves and form a subculture of their own, a subculture that is recognised and catered for by their weekly comics and magazines. One such subculture is the post war teenybopper culture which is based on young male pop stars (ibid). This is very different to any male subculture. It was manufactured from the pop culture itself and relies on magazines, radio and TV to appeal to the audience. The processes which made this subculture popular and accessible are evident: teenybopper styles can be consumed at home or at school, since young women were still not allowed to roam the streets as much as their male counterparts. It is affordable and carries no strict rules making it accessible to all. Membership carries few

personal risks, thus it is popular with young women since sexual experience is something young women would put off for some time. Fantasies constructed around these pop stars play the same role as day dreaming and are a means of distraction from more boring things. Young women in teenybopper subculture are active and are making statements about themselves as music consumers. This is contrary to the passivity many attribute to such a subculture.

The limited literature about young women's engagement in leisure and subcultures suggests that they experienced leisure in a very different way to young men. Career choices within the music industry were and still are, also perceived in very different ways by men and women.

#### **1.4.2 Women in the music industry context**

More recently studies have emerged, which are focused on women's cultural production and consumption. One such study is Richards' and Milestone's (2000) which focuses on women's employment in the popular music sector in Manchester and the women's perception of their own roles. According to Richards and Milestone (2000), women have also been significantly under-represented in the mainstream music industry in occupations such as band management, production, artist and repertoire, sound engineering and disc jockeying (Cohen, 1997; Negus, 1992 in Richards and Milestone, 2000). Even as performers in the music industry, women have often been defined primarily by their sexuality with little control over the creative process (Bayton, 1992, Garrett, 1990, Frith and McRobbie, 1990 in Richards and Milestone, 2000). Gender has a significant impact on the operation of cultural and subcultural capital. According to Skeggs (1997, p.9), gender, class and race are not capitals in themselves, but they provide the relations in which capitals come to be organized and valued. Masculinity and whiteness for instance provide the relations in which cultural capital within the music industry in the Western world are valued and normalized.

McRobbie (1994) described subcultures as 'job creation schemes' for the cultural industries. Involvement in subcultures, such as DJing, buying and selling clothes provide the opportunity for learning, sharing and practicing skills to make money. They also provide pathways for future employment (McRobbie, 1994, p.161). The multi-media sector provides an example of a cultural industry where women are likely to encounter barriers because of the male domination of the adolescent training grounds for multimedia,

namely, computer games and arcades. Haddon (1994, p.90) found that by appropriating space, young men were very visible to the producers of hardware, software and magazines. It was assumed that the modern games and micro worlds that these games offer were a totally male domain and it was a surprise if young women showed interest in this area.

In the sphere of the music industry, young women are much more obviously involved and yet their activities in this area also tend to be interpreted quite differently to those of young men. If one looks at the 'teeny-bopper' audience of pre-pubescent girls, for boy- and girl-bands we find that whereas young men's fandom is frequently characterised as a serious activity – marked by avid record collecting, accumulation of knowledge, and emulation – young women activities in these fields are dismissed as childish obsessions and 'singing into hairbrushes' (Straw, 1997). These processes have repercussions in shaping career choices and individual identities. Women were found to have never having considered working in a field associated with leisure when they were adolescents while men did (ibid.). Even as performers, young women thought of music more as a hobby, as part of their lifestyle, while young men dreamed of having their own bands and making lots of money. On the administrative side, women usually started as secretaries in this field and then worked their way up the ladder to administrative roles while men tend to go directly to these roles as soon as they are out of college. This lack of women's involvement in the music industry emerges from the ways in which cultural consumption is understood and stratified. Thornton (1995) has pointed to the ways in which notions of subcultural 'authenticity' are linked to masculinity. In order to have their cultural consumption legitimised and recognised, women have to attempt to fit into masculine patterns. Therefore women always have to struggle to find a positive model for their own experiences and creativity. Within the music industry, women have to try to fit into roles and careers which are shaped by men for men. Thus working late nights in the music industry is not regarded with the same attitude if done by a woman or a man. Working as a DJ, for instance, working until the early hours of the morning in clubs is looked upon with suspicion if done by a woman, whereas if done by a man, it is considered to be cool. Such attitudes are changing gradually but there is still a gap in the generations. Young people tend to be less judgemental than older generations when it comes to gender equality in employment. This association of youth with masculinity highlights the lack of research on young women's experiences of youth cultural practices.

Richards and Milestone (2000) insist that the gap between production and consumption of music needs to be closed through analysis of the ways in which gendered understandings of popular culture reinforce particular patterns throughout the process of consumption and production. These spheres are inextricably bound together; how cultural products are produced and who sets standards of taste and distinction, has a profound impact on processes of consumption. In this field in particular consumption patterns go on to influence future production.

Richards and Milestone (2000) go on to explore the ways in which female leisure and consumption patterns have been marginalised and how this in turn shapes cultural production and influences career choices. In this study, the blurring of work and leisure and networking appear to be understood and operated in different ways by men and women. They found that, despite the existence of highly contingent and individualised identities, significant gender power relations remain evident, especially in the performative and sexualised aspects of the job. Young women felt their aspirations were subtly undermined, so restricting their access to higher occupational positions.

Women experience much more than just work and leisure. Child rearing, housework and family responsibilities constitute the 'in between' duties which never seem to be finished, day after day. Thus women's relationship to time and leisure is complex and different to men's making gendered identity ambiguous and unstable. Women tend to keep social and work environments separate while men tend to network even during social events. Women are inhibited by issues of safety, domestic responsibilities and the fear of appearing sexually available when networking outside working hours, so they avoid it. At times they also feel excluded from networks since urban spaces are mostly dominated by males. For instance a woman feels uncomfortable in a male dominated drinking space where talk is about masculine subjects.

In settings rich in cultural capital, such as the music industry, the role of the woman is often sexualized. According to Richards and Milestone (2000), women were often found to move out of the sector because consumption is seen as an integral part of work in the cultural industries, which refer to commercial enterprises directly involved in the production of cultural goods and services such as music. For instance, for women who manage nightclubs, the working hours restrict their contact with their families. Working in a leisure space at times changes the perception of long hours though. In this industry, appearance seems to play a very important part: men, as they age, can still move into a

wide range of senior positions while women perceive that their credibility is based upon their beauty. Similarly, female vocalists felt they were trapped as vocalists who had to be aesthetically pleasing in a way that their male counterparts were not (ibid).

However, Richards and Milestone's (2000) research did suggest that a new era in employment practices, was starting, which attempted to close the gap between production and consumption.

### **1.4.3 Gender identities in Malta**

Gender is not only significant in the music industry in Malta but is also very important in the everyday life of young Maltese women. Gender identities in the Mediterranean region have tended to be portrayed as homogenous and very different from northern countries. In the Mediterranean region, for instance, gender studies are dominated by an identification of honour and shame (Gilmore, 1987). Honour defines prestige in the public domain and usually is associated with the men who represent the household, while shame defines the moral obligation to preserve female chastity until marriage and therefore is associated with women and the domestic domain. This view stereotypes and generalizes the Mediterranean region, somehow denying female agency or any form of difference in gender ideologies. The study of gender has moved towards the concept of gender identities being socially constructed rather than intrinsic to men and women (Lacquer, 1990) and that symbols and meaning in people's gendered lives are continuously being reproduced through people's everyday actions (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, this research is important in exploring one instance of this continuous construction of meaning and identities.

In his study of a particular community in Valletta in Malta, Mitchell (2002) suggests that the Maltese family-household unit is based on 'gendered complementarity' (p.67) where the roles of the men revolve around the public domain while the roles of women revolve around the domestic. The father is the head of the household and the mother provides the domestic labour in the form of cooking and cleaning (O'Reilly Mizzi, 1994). This had not changed from Boissevain's study of the community of the village of Kirkop in 1969. This structure is similar to Veblen's (1899) idea of the structure as he viewed it in his concept of conspicuous leisure. However, Mitchell (2002) also suggests that this traditional Maltese family structure is sometimes transgressed and women have started to have a substantive public role even in the country's politics.



Mitchell found that in the Maltese family structure, it was usually the man who was the breadwinner of the household. Women's work outside the household was generally stigmatised, although it was done. This work presented issues on the company women keep at work as well as the effect that their work might have on the reputation of the household. The Maltese men in Mitchell's study were much more comfortable with their wives being confined to domestic labour which included going out for shopping for groceries, going to Church and so on where they could meet other women and gossip about whatever issues were current affairs at the time. Shopping in itself was an excuse for relating with others and was a form of female existence and identity. These exchanges are important according to Dubisch (1991) especially in kin-work, to maintain relationships and family networks as well as creating a social structure within which they were comfortable and confident. Relationships with neighbours were also important as was volunteering in religious work, for many. Thus, through a balance of domestic life and kin-work, together with neighbourhood work and religious work, Maltese women not only produced Maltese society but also produced themselves as gendered persons (Mitchell, 2002). One must however point out that Mitchell's respondents were not young people but were adults who had a family. Moreover, Mitchell's research was done in a particular community within the capital city. Such practices, attitudes and perceptions are likely to be quite different in the younger generation as well as in newer areas. Young people have grown up with a more open-minded and modern mentality and young women engage in work and leisure much more comfortably with men, than the older generation did.

These gender roles and identities were not adapted by all Maltese. Mitchell (2002) suggests that in Malta, the tension between tradition and modernity also has an impact within the context of gender but he found that this was mostly evident in intergenerational conflict. Thus young men and particularly women were adopting more modern, more European lifestyles and their parents and grandparents viewed this as an end of Maltese morality. Young men and women went to Paceville where bars and loud music were found everywhere and where a young man could meet a young woman and vice versa. Paceville was viewed by the older generation as the space where normative gendered boundaries, as known in the village bars, were transgressed. Unlike the bars in the smaller villages, Paceville bars were not gendered and young men and women could 'come together in performance of their gender identities' (p.88). In Paceville, away from scrutinising eyes of

parents, young Maltese men and women could therefore participate in creating new forms of gender identities.

## **1.5 Technology and media**

Technology has made it possible for young people to engage in leisure within their own home but away from the watchful eye of parents. This section will focus on the impact that technology and new media have on contemporary societies since the dynamics of leisure have developed through advancements in technology. First I will discuss how owning technological equipment is represented and then I will discuss the idea of how technology has made geographical boundaries almost redundant, enabling people to make meaning of the global within the local. This is important since this study takes place on the island of Malta where in past centuries, geographical boundaries have made it difficult to travel to other countries to experience other cultures. Technological devices enable people to communicate synchronously with other people in other countries and this has considerably changed the way Maltese engage in cultural consumption. Moreover, having technological devices available in the bedroom has changed bedroom culture or even created bedroom culture for young women in recent years.

### **1.5.1 Owning technological audio devices**

The bedroom is a biographical space where posters, CDs, and magazines tell stories of a young woman's cultural interests and therefore her cultural identity. The bedroom has become the space where young women can gain privacy from parents, siblings, peers and the public world, if they so decide and also the place where they can engage in unmediated activities such as listening to music, sleeping, reading and so on (Lincoln, 2005). According to Lefebvre (1991), there are zones within the bedroom. These are physical arrangements of furniture, as well as technological equipment, beauty products, school books and so on within the bedroom space. Zones can overlap and integrate and can also become a more fluid construction because zones incorporate work space and leisure space which at times overlap. Laptops, mobile phones, internet and so on can be carried around the room, making the use of different areas within the bedroom interchangeable. Thus the bedroom has become 'a fluid and cultural domain' (Lincoln, 2005, p.97). Lincoln argued that in the 1990s, young women have become much more active agents in shaping their

own social and cultural lives than the young women in McRobbie's (1976) study of bedroom culture in the seventies. Bennet (1999, pp.599-617) suggested that the bedroom space is the space where both traditional and the more modern media-enhanced activities take place. This happens because of the fluidity of cultural boundaries both in the private and the public spaces. Since there are so many mobile devices available, young Maltese women have the freedom to choose which combination of activities to engage in on a day to day basis. Hollands (1995) found that for young women, music was a constant mediator of the emotional tone of the bedroom suggesting that music was not only important for young women within their public sphere but also in their private sphere. The choice of music depended on whether they were preparing to go out, whether they were chatting online and so on, making music an interactive part of bedroom culture across zones within that space. The presence of a TV, stereo, or computer in the contemporary bedroom space not only provides the means to create the right atmosphere but it also represents the possibility of a crossover from the private sphere into the public sphere, if the individual so desires, making the private and the public one and the same space. Chatting online from the bedroom, for instance has brought the public into the private space, integrating these spaces into one fluid space where the individual decides when she wants this integration of spaces and when she does not.

Outside the bedroom, through miniaturisation, smaller devices have been invented starting with transistor radios and later the Sony Walkman in 1979. In 1997, Du Gay et al. argued that the Sony Walkman had become inscribed in people's informal social knowledge. The Walkman has now been replaced by devices such as MP3 players, I pods and mobile phones, which are smaller, even more portable and have multi functions, but which, like the Walkman in the 90s, have become everyday cultural objects (p.11). As part of a culture, people share maps of meaning which they use to make sense of the world around them (ibid.), and such devices have become part of these maps of meaning and more importantly ways of making these meanings.

Technological devices through which one listens to music, such as I pods, headphones, tablets or mobile phones have come to carry a high degree of social meaning in society. Owning such devices meant that one was positioned in a particular strata of society, had particular taste, was up-to date or otherwise. This does not mean that these meaningful objects will remain so, since frameworks of meanings are constantly shifting and new devices are constantly being invented. However, these devices are considered as

part of culture because, as Du Gay et al (1997) had argued about the Sony Walkman, they are meaningful objects and make part of distinct social practices which are specific to our way of life. In the initial stages of such devices being launched, they are associated with certain kinds of people, usually young people, 'cool' people and music lovers, with certain places such as the bus, the gymnasium, open air and waiting rooms. Although these are common associations, such devices might be owned by anyone, of any age and of any lifestyle and very often these devices become absorbed by mainstream culture as commodities. These cultural objects have been given a social identity which has been even further boosted by their frequent appearance in visuals which the media projects. The images of these devices are even sleeker than their ancestor, the Walkman, have functional designs and have become distinctive representations of late modernity.

The process of meaning-construction involves making sense of something by drawing on what we already know, comparing with devices we know, extending meanings, replacing them. Each meaning leads to another, so we can add new meaning or shift old meanings. Thus, according to Du Gay et al. (1997), 'we represent the new by mapping it to what we already know' (p.14). As human beings we are always living through a multitude of such meanings, interpreting these meanings which constitute our culture. 'Cultural meanings do not rise in things but are a result of our social discourses and practices which construct the world meaningfully' (ibid). This idea resonates with Willis's (1978) cultural theory but somehow oversimplifies it. Willis argued that there were two possibilities of explaining cultural objects' meanings. The first was that by creating a relation to a cultural item, the social group turns it into a meaning-bearing item and therefore the item has no given significance but it is the social group which determines the significance of the item. The second possibility was that each cultural item is a bearer of its own intrinsic given structure of meaning. That means that the significance of a cultural item is given by the object itself. Willis (1978) found both these two ideas problematic since in the first, the reason why a group chooses a particular item and not another remains unexplained if no meaning exists in advance. The second is also problematic since it does not explain how the meaning of a cultural item changes over time or how the same item can be used by different groups and carry different meanings. Thus Willis (1978) concludes that a combination of the two possibilities could be a valid theoretical possibility. He argues that the signification of cultural items is socio-culturally constructed but with an unavoidable starting point in the objective possibilities necessitated by each item's own internal and

given structure of meaning. This means that it is the already existing meaning and objective possibilities of the object that attracts a social group to that cultural object but once a relationship is established with the item, then, a socio-cultural production of meaning is also set in motion.

Thus the meaning that we give to our technological devices is partly due to the functions of that particular item and partly it is the socially constructed meaning that is quite fluid and changing over time. For instance in the 80's someone who owned the Sony Walkman was considered as 'cool', modern and up to date. However due to new inventions and advances in technology, the social meaning of the Walkman has changed so much that if someone was seen with a Sony Walkman with a cassette inside, he or she would be considered anything but cool since nowadays that cultural item is out of fashion and probably not even in production either. Technology is such a fast moving field that socially constructed meanings of devices and the functions of devices keep shifting quite rapidly.

New technological inventions create frequent changes in the technological market and these are increasing the rate at which society changes the meaning it makes out of such technological devices. Devices that were considered the latest rapidly become outdated on the market and social meanings associated with the device quickly change accordingly. Moreover, the functions of such devices have made it possible to share these meanings with the globalised world and globalised cultures, making it essential for people to negotiate such meanings within virtual spaces as well as in face to face local spaces.

### **1.5.2 Scenes, scapes, flows and cascades**

Cultural changes as well as political and economic changes that have taken place in the past decades, have moved towards a globalised world which is partly due to the advent of mass-media technologies. These have collapsed the globe spatially in that one cannot look at the world as a group of autonomous spaces, be it nations, regions or cultures. In the next chapter, I will discuss the music scene in Malta. 'Local scenes are those based around a particular place' Longhurst (2007, p.252). For Peterson & Bennet, (2004) a local scene is

*a focused social activity that takes place in a delimited space and over a specific span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realise their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from*

*others by using music and other cultural signs often appropriated from other places, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene*  
(p.8)

Using the term ‘local scene’, I refer to what was happening in the field of music on the island at that particular time and how that field developed over the years to be what it is now, taking into consideration historical events which left an impact on this field. Thus it is a general view of music in a particular space, Malta. However, it also includes what Peterson & Bennet (2004) call a ‘translocal scene’ which involves communication between local scenes that revolve around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle. An example of this is the way hip-hop spread around the world but has taken on specific local forms. Within the Maltese music scene, this was evident in the village band music which was inherited from Italian and Sicilian village bands and which spread all over the Maltese islands. Specific and distinct local forms of village band music were shaped within each village making the music distinctively its own, particularly by having marches that were exclusive to each village band club and having one or two particular saint which they celebrated.

Peterson & Bennet (2004) suggest a relatively new formation which is the virtual scene in which ‘people scattered across great physical spaces create the sense of scene via fanzines and, increasingly, through the internet’ (pp.6-7). Thus scenes, including the music scene in Malta, have translocal and virtual dimensions but Longhurst (2007) points out that a scene involves some measure of co-present interaction where the virtual and material spaces are articulated. Those who are enthusiastic about the same music, same mode of dress and so on, will usually engage with others (to varying degrees), who have similar tastes, are involved in that particular music and live locally.

Although cultures are still associated with definite and determinate spaces, Appadurai (1996) argues that thinking of a globalised world requires us to think of culture without space. However, one must keep in mind that globalisation is not a process that happens in the same way. Therefore the world is unlikely to become culturally homogenised. Appadurai suggests five dimensions that describe the dynamics of global cultural transmission, what he terms as ‘five dimensions of cultural flow’ (pp.32-33). He develops a neologism using the suffix ‘-scape’ which when joined to prefixes such as ethno-, media-, techno-, finance-, and ideo- offers a framework for examining the new

global cultural economy with its complexities and overlapping forms. These 'scapes', which he also refers to as 'flows' or 'cascades' offer a different understanding to the present, an understanding of a present that is not fixed like a landscape might be but which are of various sizes, amorphous and flowing. Appadurai suggests that these scapes are building blocks of contemporary imagined worlds. If imagination is associated with the individual and with agency, then these agents navigate these scapes and experience and form part of larger formations, partly from their own sense of what these scapes offer. Ethnoscape, technoscape and financescape are closely related and shift in relation to each other. Ethnoscape refers to the migration of people across cultures and borders, therefore presenting the world as fluid and mobile rather than static. Technoscapes, through technology bring about new types of cultural interactions and exchanges between people which is often instantaneous and this is linked to financescape which is tied to economy and to particular kinds of neo-liberal economics and is constantly influx. The other two scapes, the mediascape and ideoscape deal with national and international dissemination of information and images. Mediascapes include media outlets such as television, radio, magazines and so on, which shape the imagined world that we inhabit where narratives and images are often the only elements through which one forms an opinion about a culture. However there are other ways through which we form opinions about other cultures. Experiencing a culture first hand by living in that culture or by interacting with people from other cultures through virtual spaces also help us form opinions. Ideoscapes centres on political ideas and the ideologies of the government and its opposition and depends on the context of the spectator. Appadurai (1996) suggests that these five dimensions work in ways to prevent the construction of a homogenous culture.

For Appadurai (1996, p.4), the rupture caused by modernity includes the effects of media and migration on the imagination. Both the global movement of media technologies into every aspect of people's lives and mass migration of peoples across the world together define the link between globalisation and the modern. Media and migration produce a high degree of instability in the creation of identities and Appadurai (1996) views this as positive since according to him, the increased access to media images by people in all social strata of societies makes readily available resources for creating new identities. He argues that the media has democratised the imagination. It has transformed the imagination into a form of agency in the shaping of identities and this agency has become a daily

activity and has made it possible for people to dream dreams that were previously not available to ordinary people.

Carrington & Wilson (2001) discussed how globalisation and media have enabled cultural hybridity. They pointed out that club cultures could be attributed in part to the ongoing global processes of cultural borrowing. Chambers (1994), speaking about cultural hybridity and exchange, argued that modern movement and mobility, be it through migration, media or tourism, 'have dramatically transformed both musical production and publics and intensified cultural contact' (p.80). Carrington and Wilson (2001) give the example of how DJs travel to foreign countries, exposing themselves to different music with the result that they integrate ideas gained from these experiences into their own dance music cultures. Touring DJs and imported albums influence local music makers who combine this new material with their own work, creating something new. Similarly this process takes place in most areas of the music scene in Malta. Songwriters, composers, bands pick new ideas from foreign music and integrate them into their own music creating something new again. Travelling overseas is not even essential to expose oneself to different music and new ways of expressing oneself, since technology and new media have made it possible for musicians to do this through easy internet access. The music written can be viewed as an expression of the accumulated baggage of the composer's life experiences, including local music, global music, music experienced first-hand or music experienced through media. Therefore ideas gained from mass and alternative media are incorporated into the local music production, the local fashion, the style and so on, which reflects what Hebdige (1979) referred to as 'bricolage'.

Appadurai (1996) argues that to make sense of contemporary global phenomena, one must rethink the sites where global flows occur and examine not the limited space of a nation, but what he calls 'translocalities' (p.192). Appadurai's description of the complexity of interaction between global and local includes other externalities and considerations such as the role of the nation state and politics. He points out the complexities of multiple interaction within the scapes, even on a political level and turns to Rosenau's (1990) notion of turbulent 'cascades' (macroevents and processes) that link global politics to the micropolitics of the streets and also provide material for the imagination of actors at various levels, for reading meanings into local events. Appadurai's (1996) concept therefore, does not focus solely on pressures of the global on the local but places these pressures at the centre of the complex processes of the language of flows.



In his examination of space Castells (2000, pp.5-24), argued that most dominant functions in Western societies are organised around what he calls 'space of flows'. This refers to the technological and organisational possibility of organising social practices simultaneously without geographical contiguity, where the meaning and function depend on flows processed within networks, as opposed to 'space of places' where meaning, function and locality are closely interrelated. Moreover, he argued that most societies in the world have become network societies which are the social structures characteristic of the Information Age. These social structures are organised around relationships of production and consumption, power and experience, whose configurations make up cultures. Thus these are also arguments about power as well as capital. These social structures, according to Castells (2000), depend highly on networks which had been in existence, like political networks, familial networks and so on, but which are now empowered by new information and communication technologies.

Castells (2000, pp.5-24) argued that within dominant networks, groups choose to develop their own networks with their own particular goals and this is how new subcultures are formed. Moreover, these groups may then choose to interact with the dominant networks, and then must adapt to the goals of these networks becoming part of the dominant mainstream culture. Castells views these networks as having no centres but having nodes, people or groups of people, which are replaced by other nodes if they decline in performance. Within an environment of networks, therefore, one has the autonomous ability to restructure one's personality by joining different networks or subcultures.

This present study seeks to explore how young Maltese women negotiate their membership in these different networks which have been further expanded through technological advancements. The terms used of scapes, flows and cascades, suggest a commonality of fluidity. Subcultures or networks, as fixed structures with rigid rules, when superimposed with ideas of flows and cascades, need to be rethought.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we looked at the emergence of leisure throughout history. We also discussed the terms 'culture' and 'subculture' and how, through concepts of economic capital, cultural capital and social capital as well as subcultural capital, people choose the type of leisure and make other choices such as choices of musical preference, social, practices, style and so on. We also discussed how these choices are influenced by people's

social class and background and how these choices themselves are indicators for others to position people within the social strata. Social identities were discussed as processes that are continuously being shaped through boundary negotiations. Gendered social identities were also discussed as well as the impact of technology and new media on these identity processes.

## **Chapter 2: The Music Scene in Malta**

In this chapter, I will offer a brief demographic and historical background to Malta including information considered relevant for the reader to better understand contemporary Maltese society. An overview of different aspects in the development of the music scene in Malta including pre-war and post-war times until the beginning of 2013 will be given in order to place my research within its setting and to better understand the sociological underpinnings of the Maltese musical context. This chapter is by no means meant to cover all areas of the contemporary music scene. Nor is it meant to give an in-depth account of the development of music on the island. The aim is to give an overview of areas that enable this study to be located in the Maltese context.

These areas include geographical and demographic characteristics which were instrumental in the formation of Maltese history and the structure of contemporary society. Other areas are influences on identity formation through two main strands of music: traditional folk music and modern music in its various genres, as well as global influences on Maltese music and Maltese society.

## **2.1 Malta's demography and geography**

Malta's strategic location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea has long made it a desirable conquest for several empires throughout history, with the result that several foreign rulers took over Malta, the more prominent of which were the Arabs and the British. Although the Knights of St John stayed in Malta between 1530 and 1798, they distanced themselves from the Maltese and it is more of an architectural heritage that they left rather than sociological influence. Inevitably, the Arabs and the British left their mark, to different degrees, on the Maltese society, traditions, culture, language, lifestyle and mentality.

The area of the island of Malta is 316 square km with a coastline of 140 km. Together with its sister islands of Gozo and Comino, it is quite densely populated with the total population in 2009 having been estimated at 412,970 (NSO, 2010). The presence of foreigners is due not only to its position on the globe as a political asset but also due to tourism being a primary industry because of the warm climate, a Mediterranean landscape of beaches, as well as a complex cultural history and numerous world heritage sites (Stone, 2001). Tourism, together with advanced technology and media, making other cultures

accessible with one push of a button, it is inevitable that Maltese society absorbs various facets of foreign cultures into the Maltese culture.

## **2.2 The quest for self-governance**

### **2.2.1 Arab influences**

Maltese society has been influenced throughout history by various cultures and powers which ruled Malta as well as the Roman Catholic Church. According to Frendo (1994, p.2), Malta was both remote and central depending on what role the Mediterranean, Europe or Empire played at the time. He suggested that ‘Malteseness’ was shaped over time by the overlap of these three ‘supra-national’ dimensions but ‘isolation, homogeneity and a common historical experience aided the feeling of being Maltese’ (Frendo, 1979, p.1). Frendo (1999), suggested that ‘the Maltese consciousness was emphatically Catholic by religion, largely Semitic by language, European by history in a continuum since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, survivalist and economically dependent, with strokes and touches of the British Empire set against Mediterranean hues, insular and cosmopolitan; but it was above all Maltese’ (p.19). The Maltese had two very important commonalities: a unity of language (Maltese) and they were Roman Catholic.

Identity is a process that is continuously shaped and reshaped. It is an ongoing negotiation (Giesen, 1991 in Gerber, 2002). This negotiation happens continuously in an individual’s life shaping one’s social identity. The development and shaping of identity also happens over long periods of time to collective identity. However contemporary collective identities are sometimes replaced by ambivalence and hybridity (through processes of modernity like economic migration, or cultural flows based on technological change, for example) and people can be less and less divided into clear-cut groups (Clifford, 1988). According to Gerber (2002), Malta is an attractive case for reflecting on hybrid identities and he points out that although the dominant view of intellectuals suggests purity and coherence as characteristic of the Maltese, it is ambivalence and hybridity which best reflect the Maltese identity.

Maltese authors and researchers ignore the Arab dimension and many Maltese citizens give the impression that they are ashamed of it (Vella Gauci, 2010, pp.23-24), saying they are 100% Europeans, therefore not hybrid and ambivalent. Gerber insists that

the Maltese exist ‘between and betwixt’ various identities (Turner V., 1967) particularly between Europe and the Arab world. Gerber’s (2002) research points towards the connection between Malta and Qadhafi’s Libya, which was established in the 1970s under Dom Mintoff’s socialist administration. Malta turned its back as much as it could, on Great Britain and Europe and became a member of the Non-aligned Movement, re-discovering Arab roots. At the time, Malta Drydocks, Mintoff’s creation, played a very important role especially in the Maltese anti-colonist struggle (Frendo, 1999, p.32). After independence, workers at the Drydocks replaced the old colonial structures in the shipyard and Mintoff, who championed self-management, stressed that this served as a model for Maltese society as a whole. Many Maltese interpret the Drydocks as a symbol of the Maltese’s ability to govern themselves, as opposed to reliance on foreign experts. Malta Drydocks is seen by Gerber as Mintoff’s ‘playground to turn Malta into an Arab society’, ‘an attempt to reconcile the Arab and European influences upon Malta’. Although the Mintoff-Qadhafi connection was downplayed by the Nationalist Party in the 1990s, Maltese-Libyan relations were and remain ambivalent. A tradition of hate and antipathy towards Turks and Muslims has endured to this day (Vella Gauci, 1996; 2010, pp.14-15, 23-24). Past connections between Malta and Libya are thus undeniable and though society in general prefers to focus on European connections, Maltese society’s identity has been thoroughly influenced by the Arabic culture (Vella Gauci, 2010, p.25), the most evident aspect of which is the Maltese language which is fundamentally Semitic.

### **2.2.2 Politics and religious influences**

Maltese politics and religion are both prominent influential factors on society. Politics in Malta play a very important part in people’s lives. General elections are hard-fought affairs with only a few percentage points difference between the two main political parties (Fenech, 2003): the Christian Democratic Nationalist Party (NP) and the Socialist Malta Labour Party (MLP).

Religion has played a very important part in Malta’s history and politics, almost being the third political party in Malta’s struggle for self-governance. To this day, Malta has a constitution that formally protects and favours the Roman Catholic Church. Politics and religion have been the pioneering foundations of the formation of Maltese society throughout history. Both under the Knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in 1530 and under British rule, the Maltese population was left alone under the jurisdiction of the

Church (Mitchell in Behr & Hildebrandt, 2006). A plan for educational reform in 1880 started the conflict over the use of Maltese and English languages in education (Smith, 1953, p.112) and the birth of the first political parties (Frendo, 1979, p.22). In the 1920s, the language conflict resumed and an alliance between the PN and the clergy was well established, with the Church declaring it to be a sin to vote for the Malta Labour Party. The PN brought with it Italianised policies while the MLP called for a distinctively Maltese Malta while also maintaining a pro-British stance. In 1949, a rift grew between Mintoff and the MLP leader Boffa who was pro-British. Mintoff introduced a vision of Malta as integrated within the UK and a concluding agreement was made with the UK to protect the Catholic Church against potential Protestant hegemony. In the meantime, the Church intervened in public opinion by applying spiritual sanctions against parishioners known as Labour supporters.

Thus, the combined influence of colonialism, the two major political parties, MLP and PN, and the Roman Catholic Church, throughout the development of events over the years has greatly influenced the formation of a national identity. Although one might not define it as a 'collective' identity, a hybrid identity, with its complexities, multiple layers, and marked ambivalence has developed and forms an integral part of the Maltese way of life.

### **2.2.3 Malta and the European Union: ambivalence rather than collective identity**

The influence of the Church in politics and public opinion is still very present. Moreover, this history of external influence, mostly in the form of colonising authorities, has polarised thinking on Maltese national identity, creating anxieties and ambivalences towards Europe (Mitchell, 2002).

To those in favour, the EU symbolised economic security. Since the British left Malta, the island had become more and more dependent on the unstable sector of tourism. On the other hand, to those against the EU, Europe was a threat to national identity. Europe's influence was evident in various areas of life and there was a preoccupation with the idea that the Maltese tradition would erode as a consequence of European modernity (Mitchell, 2002). Both tradition and modernity were two sides of the same coin. Tradition was associated with Catholic values, close-knit family and practices such as the village feast but was also viewed by the younger generation as backward. Modernity was associated with education, wealth and progress, symbolising cultural capital, but was also

associated with material excess and the ‘erosion of traditional morality’ (Mitchell, 2002, p.16).

Three key issues which emerged in the lead-up to EU accession were sovereignty, identity and manifest identity. There were major concerns about the Maltese language being threatened, and that both divorce and abortion would be introduced, the latter being campaigned against by the Church. However, through a referendum, EU accession was voted for, showing that the Church had started to lose its stronghold over the people. Celebrations and rallies which both political parties held, were quiet affairs and quite badly attended when compared with previous political party activities. It was evident that past practices during such activities, which included violence, vandalism and intolerance of people with different political ideas, had largely been resolved and that most people were refraining from attending partisan activities (Debono, 2005 in Armstrong & Mitchell, 2008).

#### **2.2.4 Shaping social strata**

In Malta, throughout the years of colonialism, followed by years of self-governance, political unrest and membership with the European Union, a class structure gradually formed and with it developed categories of distinction of social strata. Malta’s size, its geographical location together with its past colonial and present neo-colonial relations, affect the shape of the social stratification system (Baldacchino, 1993; Sultana in Sultana & Baldacchino 1994) and these context-specific characteristics therefore make it difficult to apply ready-made class frameworks to the Maltese context (Sultana, 1990). Class analysis in Malta has remained at an abstract theoretical level, separate from empirical research (Sultana in Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994). Caruana (1996) points out that there are no objective criteria to help Maltese researchers distinguish between different social classes since clear classificatory categories of class are missing. Moreover, Cutajar (in Cutajar & Cassar, 2009) argues that although the effects of social class are still evident, classificatory categories have become even more complex with the rise of new inequalities.

Society is built of different levels, strata or classes of person. Both Marx and Weber consider stratification as a matter of social class. The Marxist analyses of class focuses on the production system while the Weberian analyses focus on consumption. Marx (Marx & Engels, 1967) considered class position as related to people’s relationship to the means of production while Weber (1978) linked class to life opportunities made



possible by that relationship. In Weberian social theory, class, status and party are the main elements which produce strata of society. Class is reserved for situations determined by economic power, status describes the distribution of power by honour and party describes distribution of power by political association. According to Mitchell (2002), this applies to Maltese society too and he highlights the complexity of the inter-relationship between the three. Both Marxist approaches and Weberian approaches have been applied to the Maltese social structure.

The Marxist conception of class focuses on the unequal access and control of material and non-material assets. Both Sultana (1990) and Vella (1989) take the Marxist approach, adopting Miliband's (1983) social class stratification system and both identify two major groups in Maltese society: the dominant classes consisting of the 'power elite' and the 'bourgeoisie'; and the subordinate classes made up the 'working class' and 'underclass' (Cutajar in Cutajar & Cassar, 2009, p.233). The power elite own or control industrial, financial or commercial enterprises and are usually local or foreign capitalists. On the other hand, the working class includes the workers in the primary labour market who enjoy stability, high wages, good working conditions and workers in the secondary labour market with jobs with poorer working conditions and low wages. This sector also includes housewives and female employees (Baldacchino, 1993). The underclass includes the unemployed, some elderly, the chronically sick and so on. In between the dominant and the subordinate classes, Sultana (1990) positions two strata: the 'petty bourgeoisie' which is made up of small-scale production and ownership, independent craftsmen and traders and small-holding farmers and the 'new petty bourgeoisie' consisting of the wage-earning groups, service providers, office workers, small businessmen, semi-professional staff and so on.

The Weberian conception of class differentiates between propertied and propertyless classes but considers the various strata among the propertyless classes. It shows how economic relations give rise to different lifestyles and patterns of consumption. Cutajar (in Cutajar & Cassar, 2009) applies Baldacchino's (1993) Weberian class map of Malta for which he used data from the 1985 census, to identify a similar class map. Cutajar (in Cutajar & Cassar, 2009) notes that in 2005, 64.3 percent of the employed were engaged in non-manual occupations while 35.7 percent of the employed were engaged in manual occupations.

However, Baldacchino (1993) suggested that both the Marxist and Weberian approaches are problematic since in Malta, he believed that influence of kin and friendship networks carry more weight than occupation and education. This is arguable since in recent years, occupation and education have assumed more importance than in the last century. However, it is also true that in Malta, occupation, education, influence of kin and friendship networks are closely related and interact in the processes of achievement. Moreover, political influence depends on social class and the size of one's social network. Partisan and political allegiance is also important in positioning within the social strata (ibid.).

Bourdieu (1986) explains class in terms of movements of different forms of capital in social space. Bourdieu identifies four different types of capital. The first is economic capital which includes income and monetary assets. The second is cultural capital which exists in three forms: long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body, in the form of cultural goods and in educational qualifications. The third is social capital which is based on connections and group memberships and is generated through relationships. The fourth is symbolic capital which is the form that the different types of capital take once they are recognized as legitimate. The combination of all capital determines and positions people in social space. In the case of Maltese society, these four forms of capital are intertwined in a complex way so that all the forms are interrelated in some way. One cannot simply categorise people in clear cut ways, since different levels of different forms of capital can be traced in people. It is the overall combination of capitals together with respectability and reputation playing a very important part, which inform social positioning.

'The social space we occupy has been historically generated', (Skeggs, 1997, p.8) both through the nation's and individual's history. Therefore from birth we acquire different amounts of capital assets, ways of understanding, meanings associated with social positions and positions of knowledge. Capitals exist in the interrelationships of social positions and these positions determine access or limitation on which capitals are available. (ibid.). One such example in the Maltese context is that the large proportion of graduates in 2004, derived from middle and upper class family backgrounds (Debono et al. 2005). This suggests that tertiary education might not be accessible to all. Moreover, Debono et al. (2005) found that the professions such as law, medicine and surgery were followed by students coming from socially privileged backgrounds while courses in Education and Labour Studies were chosen mostly by students from less privileged social backgrounds.

Thus, the education system reinforces hegemony in consolidating the position of the privileged few (ibid.).

Boissevain (1969) in his fieldwork in Malta found that wealth is a factor which can give prestige and that in Malta, a person's social standing is measured not only by how much money they possess but also by how people spend their money. Wealth can thus be used to achieve social prestige, to acquire education and economic power (ibid.). Mitchell's (2002) fieldwork in Malta in the 1990s reveals that class distinction and taste in Maltese society are also characterised by household consumption and the display of expensive possessions, for example, antiques.

In his research, Mitchell (2002) observed that the occupational status of the man of the household, usually the breadwinner, was a main element through which the economic status of the family was determined. The breadwinner's economic capital was intertwined with his cultural capital since the occupation depended on the level of education required for the job. Mitchell (2002) observed that there was a 'fairly rigid gradation of occupational status' (p.104) with long term unemployment being the least reputable and professionals like doctors and lawyers being the most reputable. However, occupation is only one facet of class in Maltese society. Class distinction is not solely informed by economic capital.

According to Skeggs (1997), respectability is another central mechanism through which class emerges. Respectability is still one of the most prominent signifiers of class and informs how people speak, who they speak to, how they classify themselves and others. In Malta, respectability was also found to be an important aspect of class strata through which social hierarchy and social stratification are acknowledged and produced. Respectability embodies moral authority (Strathern, 1992) and knowledge. In Malta moral categories of respectability are processual rather than commodified (Mitchell, 2002) since social positioning is based on practices rather than possessions and thus forms part of social and symbolic capitals. Respectability creates different levels within the same social strata. For instance, there exist several levels of the working class and people often strive to become part of what they understand as the 'respectable' working class (Falzon, 2011).

In Malta individuals are expected to maintain the moral standing of the whole family. When failure in some area of the moral code becomes public, the honour of the individuals and families become blemished and thus prestige was lost (Boissevain, 1969).

This research seeks to explore how social and cultural capitals, accumulated through the music that young women listen to, are produced and processed in the formation of cultural hierarchies. Education or being educated forms part of cultural capital and is used in contexts to elevate or denigrate self or others in a constant play of respectability. Being high or low class incorporates elements of what Bourdieu called 'habitus'. 'High class' can be categorised by different combinations of capital. It could be categorised by wealth alone, or by wealth and distinction of professional class, or by wealth and social capital. In this analysis class is distinctively *embodied*. Mitchell (2002) attributed a high class status with characteristics such as politeness, maintaining an upright posture, wearing fashionable clothes and speaking quietly. He observed the high class to be distinctly different from the lower class, which he associated with relative poverty and to whom he attributed characteristics, such as, being loud-spoken, hunching their backs and showing bad taste in fashion. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, classes cannot be defined in such simplified terms. Being educated implies respectability, having qualifications shows one's level of education. Maintaining respectability and social distinction also means aloofness from being involved in the organisation of activities associated with popular culture such as the village feast (ibid. pp.105-106).

For Bourdieu (1977), consumption of appropriate tasteful and stylish goods is both shaped by habitus and also *produces* habitus in accordance with the person's social standing, hence combining economic status, education and respectability as elements of stratification. Therefore consumption represents and reproduces social stratification. The process of distinction is centred on the accumulation of symbolic capital, which refers to what the different capitals symbolise in that particular arena. Consequently, power depends on the weight a certain type of capital is given in a specific arena.

Mitchell (2002) observes that in Malta, 'this process of consumption in and around the house both contributed to an on-going attempt to preserve the family against erosive processes, but also informed a complex politics of social standing' (p.101). Maltese society of the 1990s distinguished between 'high' and 'low' society. These were the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders' (p.101). The 'insiders' were those well-connected to the centres of power namely government and bureaucracy and therefore the ones who could succeed because of these connections, while the 'outsiders' were less well-connected and less likely to succeed. In Weber's (1978) terms this refers to the distribution of power by political

association. Thus in Malta, the interconnectedness between the three elements of class, status and party is both complex and highly significant.

Studies carried out in the UK show that in the past, women were categorised into social groups through interpretation of their behaviour and classifying them as respectable or non-respectable (Finch, 1993). There was a kind of gender policing and a manifestation of gendered social power. Through the nineteenth century, judgments about respectability were central in visual representations of moral judgements and femininity (Nead, 1988). Judgements of respectability were also central in the organization of women's homes and childcare practices. Not being respectable meant not having much social value. At the time, the Maltese Civil Code regarded married women as legal minors thus propagating the belief that women were inherently inferior to men (Boissevain, 1969). Although recently amendments to the Civil Code have been made to bring equality between husband and wife in marriage, according to Miceli (in Sultana & Baldacchino, 2006) the old practice of patriarchal rule prevails in the general Maltese mentality and women are almost invisible in decision making positions (Borg, 2011). In his research, Miceli (in Sultana & Baldacchino, 2006) found that women's participation in politics was limited because women themselves did not try to participate believing that their power lies within the domestic sphere which they were reluctant to share with their male counterparts (Hardarson, 2007 in Cutajar & Cassar, 2009).

According to Mitchell (2002, p.67), until the early 1990s, the Maltese household was based on the notion of men's roles being public and women's roles being domestic. Broadly speaking, the man was considered the head of the household and a figure of public authority who worked in the public domain and represented the family at a politico-juridical level (related to politics and law) governed by juridical norms (legal rights and obligations) guaranteed by 'external' or 'public' sanctions that might ultimately entail force. On the other hand, the woman was the domestic labourer, constrained by 'private', 'affective' and 'moral' norms (Fortes, 1969, p.250-51) and therefore cooking, cleaning and nurturing. For the middle class, domestic activities in the private arena came second to the needs of the public domain and were socially devalued (Mitchell, 2002). They participated actively in society, through neighbourhood work and religious work and socialised with their female friends. Their everyday social interactions were a significant way in which they could position themselves and others in the social strata. This was very important since otherwise, the domestic arena excluded them from public zones of interaction.

As discussed above, the dynamic complexity of factors which interact to create one's positioning in social class in the Maltese context, makes categorising a very complex process. It is not the purpose of this thesis to set categories of class stratification. In class processes, different kinds of material differences, which classical theorists such as Marx and Weber had identified as major factors, are still found to be major factors in the shaping of capitalist industrial societies (Crompton, 1993). Therefore, we may describe Maltese society as being made up of groups which have different levels of material and symbolic advantage and disadvantage as a result of differential access to property, production, education and opportunities among other things. In this research, I shall thus be using broad terms such as the lower class, working class, middle class and upper class, as mapped by Crompton (1993). By no means do these terms attempt to ignore the complexity of the processes of class distinction and the interrelationship between the different types of capital. However, for the sake of having to use terms to refer to these classes, I will be using terms that refer mostly to the economic statuses as follows: I will be referring to the unskilled labourers as lower class, the skilled workers as working class and the professionals as middle class. The upper class include those who are economically very well off usually due to a family history of wealth. Given the complexity of hybridity, I cannot associate in any deterministic way, what kind of culture these classes consume. It is sometimes argued by researchers that the working class usually engage in so-called 'low culture' which includes several forms of popular culture that appeal to the masses. In contrast, the middle and upper class engage in 'high culture' which refers to a set of cultural products that are held in the highest esteem such as opera and theatre. These associations are very broad and generalised, as well as restrictive since one might argue that people of different social class might engage in the same culture and people of the same social class might engage in very different forms of culture. This is likely to be increasingly so as society moves towards modernity and as capitalism takes advantage of people engaging in different forms of culture. Moreover, it is argued that youth culture very often transcends class especially in cultural consumption making the above associations even more restrictive. Apart from these associations of high culture and low culture with social class, class distinction in Malta is also very closely related to politics.

## 2.3 Folk music traditions and modern music

Broadly speaking, there are three main types of music which are popular with the different strata of Maltese society: traditional folk music, classical music and modern music.

Traditional folk music refers to music originating among the so-called ‘common people’, usually having simple melodies and passed on through oral tradition. There are two main types of traditional music. The first is folk music, in which the most prominent element is singing to guitar accompaniments, which is known as *għana* (Vella, 1994, p.160). This music has been highly influenced by Malta’s geographical location, since it is a combination of the famous Sicilian ballad mixed with Arabic tunes (Malta Cultural Association, 2009). Another genre of folk music which is very popular in some sections of Maltese society is the village band clubs’ marches. The music is very similar to that of Sicilian and southern Italian bands, which similarly play marches in village feast celebrations. The significance which Maltese people give to folk music implies a sense of a national collective identity which such music revives and sustains.

Classical music refers to what is also known as ‘serious music’ and which follows established musical forms. It appeals to particular sections of society and has formed an integral part of the music scene on the island for centuries with documented musical heritage dating back from the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Vella Bondin, 1997). With the formation of the Orchestra of the Commander in Chief of the Royal Navy in the 1970s, it was possible for classical music to become part of the lifestyle of particular strata of Maltese society, specifically the educated elite.

Classical music is created usually to entertain a seated audience and to stimulate listeners emotionally and intellectually. Although modern music stimulates people in similar ways, it is lighter than classical music and is often associated with dancing, which is not the case in classical, apart from ballet. More modern Maltese music, in recent years (especially through the Malta Song for Europe Festival) together with music mostly imported from Italy, UK and USA, has given rise to an enormous national interest in the Eurovision Song Contest. Apart from the pop music scene, local rock bands have also been forming since the mid-1960s.

Traditional folk music, classical music and modern music, though very different, are all forms of entertainment as well as cultural forms, and which over the years have in one way or another shaped social identity. This kind of interaction contributes to the

production of identity but also to the production of the music itself. Music and identity thus shape each other. Folk music is particularly interesting in this regard. It originates within a particular region by the common people and is passed on from one generation to the next mostly through oral tradition. Its roots in the common people of the island, its survival through history and its connection with identity are important to look at in this research.

### **2.3.1 Identity in folk traditions**

Orally-performed poetry in sung form with musical accompaniment on guitars used to be one of the main forms of popular folk entertainment and still survives (Cassar Pullicino, 1996). These compositions varied from long elaborate narratives to extemporised compositions performed usually in venues such as village bars. This form of local folk song was a hybrid of music prevalent in rural society, reflecting the yearning and aspirations of a folk culture (Alamango, 2010) which was synonymous with the working class in rural areas.

In post-war years, after resisting the enemy, and after years of having lived under so many foreign rulers, the traditional *ghana*, which was sung solely in Maltese, characterised an authentic Maltese identity which was kept alive as part of a common cultural heritage. This traditional form of music started to attract attention from intellectuals, acquiring the status of being the soul of Maltese tradition celebrated annually in the Ghana Fest, held during the summer months.

This attempt to keep Maltese traditional music alive, thus enhancing the evolution of a national identity by revisiting and keeping alive intangible heritage such as folk music, has changed with Malta's accession to the EU. According to Abela (2005, pp.10-27), comparing the European Values Study and the Eurobarometer surveys, shows that there is both continuity and change in the Maltese identity in the European Union. A shift has been observed from a strong national local identity driven by attachment to the Church, party politics, local and social solidarity, traditionalism and materialism, towards a more regional, Mediterranean and European sense of belonging. In this new context, a national identity (as a sense of 'Malteseness') is being reshaped, which is influenced by individualised values, importance of leisure and a concern with global solidarity. Compared with their European counterparts, on average, fewer Maltese had an exclusively national identity, a European-national identity or an entirely European identity in 2005. They were found to be more likely to combine a national with a European identity (ibid.).



More recently, in the Eurobarometer survey of 2012, two thirds of Maltese citizens consider themselves as Maltese and Europeans simultaneously and only 37 per cent of Maltese citizens consider themselves to be solely Maltese. There is a marked contrast with the European trend where 44 per cent referred to themselves in terms of their own nationality alone and 49 percent consider themselves in terms of both their national and European identities and only 4 per cent consider themselves as solely Europeans.

The fear of many Maltese was that aspects of what makes a Maltese identity would be lost or would become even more fluid than it already was, after EU accession. They feared that this identity would be replaced by what was understood as a European identity. This fear has brought about such efforts and a newly found appreciation of various aspects of Maltese heritage, both tangible and intangible. Moreover, accession to the EU has made it possible for organisations to access EU funds to realise several projects including cultural projects, such as music festivals of all kinds, encouraging a national identity to be made and promoted by Maltese musicians overseas, thus generating new ideas, and entwining the local Maltese and European contexts.

Throughout the years, a new generation of folk singers and guitarists has modernised folk art and raised the standard of *ghana* performances. Moreover, modern groups such as Etnika, Nafra and Crossbreeds have also fused elements of folk music with elements of jazz, rock rhythms and modern sounds. The fusion of sounds of old traditional instruments, with those of their modern electronic counterparts, has further made folklore more accessible and attractive to younger generations. In so doing, these groups have intentionally developed folk music further, changing it and renewing it, shifting traditions, re-making and reshaping them. Blending traditional instruments with drum-kits, incorporating folk melodies with pop, jazz, rock and fusion rhythms, this blend of music seeks an identity that reconciles different forces, incorporating the old with the new, the local with the global, tradition with modernity, displaying interaction between cultures and signifying a fusion of the Maltese identity with a newly found European identity.

### **2.3.2 Village feasts and bands**

A prominent part of Malta's folklore is the village feast. It forms an integral part of the Maltese music scene and culture and therefore it is an important element in contextualising this research. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the feast was a small event connected to religious ceremonies of the parish of the village (Cassar Pullicino, 1992). It is important to mention

that the Church was and remains a major influence on Maltese society, Maltese law and Maltese politics. A very high percentage of Maltese were practicing Roman Catholics in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is still true with 98% of the population being Catholic, (Mitchell in Behr and Hildebrandt, 2006).

The village feast celebrates the birth of the patron saint of that particular parish. In many towns and villages, two saints are celebrated in two separate feasts, with the locals being affiliated to clubs in charge of either one feast or the other. The significance of the village annual feast has grown, through processes of re-making traditions, merging old and new customs. The need of festivity in the workman's life ensures that feast days and village festivities are preserved. An added bonus is that such feasts offer free activity (Pieper, 1999).

Celebrations such as village feasts and the *xalata* (Cassar Pullicino, in Frendo and Friggieri, 1994, pp.188-189) celebrating the success of the feast, ensures that people of all ages unite through common aims, physical presence, participating in the same rituals and celebrations and a collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912) that included rivalry with neighbouring village feasts. This rivalry strengthens and solidifies relations within the participating groups, creating tight-knit local communities. It creates mutuality and obligation, solidarity and coherence turning individuals into members of groups. Religious music is played and sung live in the Church and secular music is played on the streets. Every parish has a specifically composed hymn for the patron saint which is a very distinctive source of identity for each and every feast. Boissevain (in Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994) found that in villages where there were rival band clubs, composers, and their music, became 'banners of faction' (ibid. p.278) and thus are very distinct symbols of identity. The street decorations become a material representation of this rivalry and an expression of communal conspicuous leisure (Veblen, 1899). Enthusiasts prepare street decorations with a common goal and driven by a sense of competition, which conspicuous leisure implies. Social capital is thus enhanced within that section of society and a kind of hierarchy is created.

During the preparation for the feast, as well as during the festivities themselves, the men and women of the village assume distinct and gendered roles. The male volunteers are mostly involved in the street decorations, the fireworks, the organisation of the band club, reflecting the public domain of the feast. The involvement of the women, on the other hand is usually more in the cleaning of the Church, sewing costumes, organising fund raising

activities for the feast celebrations, preparing refreshments for band members and cooking meals for volunteers, which reflects the domestic domain. The roles of males and females in the village feast community reflect the roles within a typical household, with the male being more public and political and the female being more focused on the domestic caring roles. The younger generations, however, like in other social spheres, are gradually changing this idea, with females becoming more and more involved in committees within band clubs and parishes.

Feasts involve religious and secular rituals, where participants have the opportunity to engage in conspicuous leisure which they act out for the benefit of those around them with the aim of confirming status or moving from one social order to another. Whether these rituals are standardised acts (Schechner, 1977) or whether they are transformative performances (Turner V., 1987) revealing major classifications, categories and contradictions of cultural processes, they are a means of constructing identity in the Maltese village feast context. The collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912), when participating in village feasts, provides the opportunity for participants to go through the process of assessing the meaning of the past rituals and traditions in the light of the present context. Typical of collective rituals, these feasts have scheduled specific times dedicated to both organised and spontaneous activity. Organised activity requires an attentive state of mind (Moore & Myerhoff, 1977), and includes the religious activities within the parish Church and the street procession linking the sacred with the profane, the interior of the Church with the secular exterior (Boissevain in Sultana & Baldacchino, 2006). Spontaneous activity, on the other hand, is held in places which allow for more spontaneous elements of chaos and festivity such as the street celebrations and morning marches. Typical of collective rituals, the village feasts, bring part of community everyday life into an orderly control giving a social message and meaning, uniting members of the community, the religious and the less religious, into one community with one common interest, at least for a time. Such rituals temporarily mediate and even supersede differences between individuals, the common interest being transient.

In Bourdieu's (1977) terms, the set of dispositions which a person acquires through early socialisation, which Bourdieu calls the 'habitus', thus affects taste throughout life. People who have been brought up in families which nurture a liking for their village bands act differently in such activities to people who have been brought up outside that environment. Participation in the feast or aloofness from the feast denotes status, taste and

class and have an impact on one's identity formation, which this study focuses on. The type of participation, also has an impact on one's status, level of respectability and reputation within that particular arena or social group meaning that one's behaviour in the feast can contribute to maintaining, improving or losing one's reputation.

### **2.3.3 Identity in classical and modern music**

Classical or modern music accompanies several events such as sports, celebrations, entertainment and so on. People are expected to behave in different ways in different events and their behaviour symbolises different sociological meanings. This behaviour contributes to one's reputation and positioning in the social strata.

According to Roshanravan (n.d.) classical music, which is also known as 'serious music' (thus being positioned in a certain way), enjoys a very long tradition and is well known and respected throughout the world. Classical music has been globalised for centuries (Letts, 2003) and has been available for all to hear in the international market for a long time. In this field, European influences on Maltese society are evident in that European classical music remains very popular in contemporary society. Canclini (in Beynon & Dunkerley, 2000) observes that nowadays, technologies such as the internet, allow everyone to equip their home with a variety of music which includes high and popular culture. This is true in Maltese society as well. Moreover, numerous composers, including Maltese classical music composers, have been combining different styles within their compositions, synthesizing many sources in the production of their works. An example is Maurice Ravel, who included a Blues movement in his violin sonata and Piazzolla, mixes tango with jazz and classical music. This transculturation, the fusion of cultural forms produces the cultural hybrids (Beynon & Dunkerley, 2000) that are an integral part of classical music or 'the traditional music of Europe' (pp.242-243).

In Europe, classical concerts entail a specific form of behaviour expected from audiences. Concerts where there is a seated audience form part of Maltese 'high culture', which is categorised by a high level of education, distinct taste, speaking quietly and an aloofness from all things popular. Being seen at such concerts reflects a certain status and cultural capital, and contributes to the maintenance or improvement of one's reputation. On the other hand, pop concerts, forming part of the popular culture, and held in informal venues, usually have a more casual behavioural code. People can stand, move around, talk, sit and have a drink, dance etc. Clubbing is very similar in that the audience is interactive

and so free to move around that it ceases to be the audience in the classical meaning of the word. The same people can constitute themselves in different ways in different audiences, thus developing hybrid identities.

In contemporary Maltese youth culture, Paceville is the place to be seen to achieve the characteristics of cool and trendiness. It is the ticket to being accepted, gives one a common topic to talk about and overall creates the opportunities to make contacts with cool people, thus in Bourdieu's (1977) terms, increasing one's capital. Paceville provides the opportunity for young people, through their conspicuous leisure, to establish themselves in their own social networks, gaining social and symbolic capital. Clubs in Paceville reflect the wide variety of international musical styles being heard in the media.

International influences are also evident in the way Malta's club scene has exploded in the last decade (Stevenson, 2010). Frequenting Paceville, clubbing and partying are all leisure activities which young people engage in for enjoyment but underpinning the process is the increase in symbolic and cultural capital which is important in the arena of youth culture. The 'subcultural capital' as Thornton (1995) refers to it, is essential in the different subcultures including cultural groups associated with music. Young people negotiate their identities in this local leisure arena which reflects international and globalised trends. Thus the local arena which is heavily influenced by European and American music practices, provides young people with opportunities to strive towards an increasingly Europeanised identity which is combined to different degrees, with a local identity.

As discussed earlier, this increasingly Europeanised identity is at times considered as a threat to the traditional Maltese identity and moral values, by some Maltese. Making modern music one's profession is therefore considered morally not sound by many people, since it implies erosion of the Roman Catholic Church's values. Moreover, on an economic level, taking up employment in the music industry is risky due to limitations in consumption by a small population and the high competition with the European music industry.

## **2.4 Global influences and local bands**

Contemporary Maltese society, like most European societies, is not a uniform entity but it embodies different cultural groups, which make up the culture of Maltese society, as is typical of late modern societies.

The term ‘subcultures’ will be critically discussed in later chapters but for now it suffices to define subcultures as the meaning and modes of expression shared by groups coming from very distinct social locations. This process is developed during their collective attempts to negotiate the contradictions that arise for them in their societal location (Murdock, in Brake, 1985, p.27).

In Malta, subcultures have been viewed as such for decades. Rock culture, for instance, was synonymous with youth subculture, the quest for freedom from convention, rebellion and social change. Because of this, it became popular throughout the 80s in Malta, as a result of global media trends. According to some analysts, after the first rock ‘n’ roll was heard on the island in the 50s, numerous subcultures with characteristic lifestyles, rituals and values formed (Bell in Sultana & Baldacchino, 1994). Quite a number of young people who were fans of rock changed their role to that of performers, creating a rock band out of a group of friends (Chircop, 2007). The music itself, as well as the behavioural and stylistic lifestyles, is heavily influenced by the island’s Western counterparts, but also mirrors concerns and anxieties which the Maltese population was experiencing which is possibly why Maltese rock subcultures, unlike most other music subcultures in Malta have shown that they transcend the boundaries of social class and social difference (Bell in Sultana and Baldacchino, 1994).

In both the rock scene and the pop scene, in the 50s and 60s, when Malta was still a British colony, styles associated with music in the UK, were eagerly adopted by the Maltese in an effort to achieve a more Europeanised outlook rather than an Arabic one. Although at the time local music was heavily influenced by British, American and Italian music, this marked the beginning of a period when Maltese were looking for their own modernised post-war identity which in itself included influences of an increasingly globalised environment.

### **2.4.1 Media shaping identity through music**

Global forces increasingly influenced Maltese society, as technological advances considerably reduced geographical limitations. The music people listen to, through the

media, is one of these forces and is a substantial influencing factor in the Maltese context. In the context of my own research, this is important because music from all over the world is readily accessible and inexpensive, making it easy for young Maltese women to choose what to listen to at whatever time they want to.

Reflection of imported influence in music through access to the early radio, foreign records and the 'talkies' is evident in musical styles which included tangos, fox-trots and waltzes, that entertained Maltese society as early as the 1930s (Knepper, 2009, pp.205-220). Social class shaped access to such forms of leisure. Despite this, Maltese musicians became increasingly popular locally and early in 1931, the first Maltese recordings were produced and sold by local establishments. At the time play-back machines and gramophones had already been accessible to the local population, who were buying Italian records (Alamango, 2010). Maltese musicians also started recording a wide musical variety in two main styles: the local folk song reflecting the Maltese folk culture and the other modern styles such as operettas, fox-trots and waltzes, showing the influence of imported European and American music. Thus in the music scene, the local and the international already existed in some hybridity and reached the Maltese public in a localised form, being recorded and interpreted by Maltese performers.

Cities have always been the sites of continuous and rapid change, sometimes trickling down through the rest of society (Bauman, 2003). In his fieldwork in Hal Kirkop, in the 60s, Boissevain (1969, p.56), found that the culture of the city had high prestige compared to that of the village and thus conducting oneself like someone from cities and big towns like Valletta and Sliema, one was regarded as more developed and civilised. Moreover, the city has always been the place where a money economy was central. This is because, unlike rural areas, the 'metropolis' with its concentrations of diverse commercial activity has given great importance to the medium of exchange (Simmel, 1903, pp.11-19). Through consumption, Valletta, like other metropolitan cities, thus epitomised modern practices and conspicuous leisure. Simmel (1903, pp.11-19) and Veblen (1899) both pointed out that consumption in modern urban societies was linked to the construction of social identities rather than to satisfying biological needs. An individual in urban society, therefore, consumes in order to transmit messages to others of whom s/he wants them to think s/he is. Veblen argued that the function of consumption was self-differentiation and applied to both groups and individuals. Status groups developed patterns of taste and engaged in conspicuous consumption in order to display who they are. People's presence

in the city for purposes of leisure and entertainment, together with their behaviour, their image and their social networks, provided them with social and symbolic capital and the desired symbolic status in society. These new trends which were taking place in the city attracted young people from all over Malta. People needed to be seen there on Saturday nights to be considered fashionable and up-to-date with the latest forms of entertainment and dance moves. Radio shows, television programs and the easy availability of foreign newspapers and magazines throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contributed to the extension and enhancement of the impact of both the British and Italian culture on Maltese society. In the 1970s and more so in the 1980s, improved technology coupled with improved economic status of the lower classes of Maltese society, enabled most people to own household commodities such as television and radio (Alamango, 2010). The desire to move up the social strata of society towards a higher status was also a determining factor which pushed people into possessing such commodities (Boissevain, 1969 (2006)). Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalisation and increased internet usage has also had a significant effect on Maltese culture. In 2005 about 78 per cent of the Maltese population used internet from any device and at the end of 2006, Malta had the fourth highest rate of Internet usage in the world (International Communications Union, 2006).

Media is a powerful influence in people's lives and a reference point that they look to in order to construct meaning in their everyday lives. According to Hargreaves & Tiggemann (2003), people frequently subconsciously compare themselves and their situations to what they see in the media. In his study of the effect of the media on adolescent girls, Durham (1999, p.193) found that in the United States, girls look to pop culture in the media to help them define their role in the world around them and find rules for interactions and definitions of self. Moreover, 'media consumption gives adolescents a sense of being connected to a larger peer network', (Arnett, 1995, p.524), a sense of belonging and a feeling of being accepted in society. Music videos have been found to have a strong influence especially on adolescent girls (Borzekowski et al, 2000) who emulate many of the actions portrayed in music videos. MTV is very popular in Malta and is one of the ways of keeping up to date with the latest hits. MTV-style music shows help imprint images of self, lifestyle and individuality together with consumption in the minds of young people (Fry & Fry, 1987). In such programmes, youth styles and tastes are key features of the global youth culture. However, young women adopt what they see on MTV but also adapt it to their own life and context (ibid.). Moreover, as consumers, young



women are also agents who develop practices and through their actions, contribute to trends being taken on or being rejected. In his research which examines the influence of media in the formation of young Maltese consumers, Grixti (2006a) found that Maltese young people desire western lifestyles, lifestyles promoted by the western media industries since they are bored with the 'old ways of doing things' (p.110). Downloading music from any country is easy nowadays with geographical borders becoming so permeable and with global processes of promoting the music industry, but the most popular in Malta are still those from the UK, USA and Italy. This might be primarily the consequence of two factors. The first is that English and Italian are still the most accessible languages other than Maltese, also because Italian, British or American radio and TV channels are the easiest to access. The second is that as Grixti (2006b, p.4) points out, young Maltese people tend to associate being modern, enlightened and technologically advanced with being up to date with what comes from overseas through the media, specifically Western Europe, the UK and the USA. On the other hand, they associate being culturally 'backward' with the inability to move beyond the traditional especially with reference to local party politics and religion. In sociological terms, young people have incorporated this frame of mind which influences them in how they see things and what meaning they give to things and therefore have also influenced their tastes in musical choices.

#### **2.4.2 The Eurovision song contest and other musical events**

So-called 'Mega' concerts and large scale music events, such as the Isle of MTV, held in Malta for a number of years, are very popular and highly attended with audiences of over 50,000 (Galea Debono, 2011). The annual highlight of music for the entire Maltese population is the Eurovision Song Contest in which Malta has taken part for a number of years. Like European audiences of participating countries, a high proportion of the Maltese population would be glued to their television sets supporting the Maltese singer if he or she made it to the final night. During the last decade, TV audiences for the Eurovision Song Contest have increased and statistics show that the 2011 contest was the most watched programme in several European countries (Busa, 2011). The contest is an annual event that is highly ritualised and provides a landmark in history and the collective memory (Le Guern, 2000).

Preparation for this festival in Malta includes the Malta Song for Europe which is the festival where the singer representing Malta in the Eurovision Song Contest would be

selected. Qualifying for the Malta Song for Europe is considered the route for guaranteed popularity of the singer. Moreover, the Eurovision Song Contest provides the opportunity to place the nation on the European map through the media. For Malta, there are significant sociological underpinnings of the importance the Maltese give to this festival.

As indicated, Malta has been colonised and ruled by various foreign powers, the most influential being, Italy and Britain. This influence is still ingrained within the Maltese and an obsession with the foreign 'other' underpins Maltese society and attitudes in more than one way. This is observed in attitudes that consider foreign musicians as better than Maltese musicians and the recruitment of foreigners rather than Maltese for high profile positions. Historical evidence suggests that the Maltese adopted what Armstrong and Mitchell (2008) call a 'servile mentality' (p.7), manifested in the submissive view that the 'foreigner is always right' (p.7). This mentality of foreigners being always better than Maltese is still present in Maltese society and is reinforced by results which Maltese teams achieve when competing with other countries in several areas, in sport, culture and so on.

However, the Eurovision Song Contest is a different story. Malta achieved third place in 1998 and second place in 2005 in this festival, and so this might represent a hope that the Maltese can, one day, win the festival and demonstrate that they are as good or even better than foreigners despite the disadvantage of being such a small country with a relatively much smaller population than other competing countries. The Contest provides an opportunity for the Maltese to unite in pride for their identity. It is an opportunity to leave a mark on the international platform as well as to promote tourism in Malta. In recent years, rather than highlighting specific Maltese features, the Maltese entries tended to minimise and combine them with the dominant traits of global culture, so as to attract votes from other countries and portraying the Maltese identity as including a European dimension. These practices are important in this research since they show how global forces influence Maltese music and how Maltese music is moving towards European rather than North African elements.

Participation in local music activities, whether as performers, audience or supporters, promotes community identity and 'differentiate(s) those consumers from others, whilst simultaneously locking them into national trends and events' (Street, 1993, p.54). The contest brings together audiences that are geographically and socially heterogeneous but who engage in the same activity at the same time. Although audiences will never meet, the temporary perceived bond constructs and maintains imagined

communities (Anderson, 1983) so that audiences still feel a common collective identity, linking their singular experience to that of other viewers. The Contest brings together large national audiences (Le Guern, 2000) and therefore enables Maltese viewers to think of themselves as belonging to the larger European community. It also results in a temporary freedom from hierarchical roles and statuses, creating a condition of egalitarian association between individuals and contributing to a sense of Maltese identity (Valentine, 1995).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have given an overview of aspects of Maltese society which provide a context for my research. I have pointed to demographic aspects of Malta, global influences on local circumstances, the dimensions of so-called high and low culture within Maltese society throughout its recent history of colonialism, and the social and cultural capital that is acquired by those in different social positions. I have also looked at foreign influences on local traditions and the development of new traditions which are continuously being developed. I also highlighted the formation of identity through hybridity of *traditional* (and Maltese) folk forms and *modern* (European) genres within the music scene in Malta. Finally, the processes of globalisation on the creation of modern music were discussed especially through the development of Maltese participation in the Eurovision Song Contest.

## **PART II: METHODOLOGY**

## **Introduction**

Part II focuses on the methodology and research design of the study as well as new concepts which this research explores.

Chapter 3 reviews the research methodology and design appropriateness. It looks at the sampling methods and research ethics. It also looks at data collection and instrumentation which refers to the devices used to collect data. Data analyses and issues of epistemology will also be discussed. Chapter 4 discusses new concepts which the process of data analysis shaped and which this thesis is based on. In-depth explanation of how the participants were categorised into four groups and the underlying theorisation of the categorisation process will be given.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design**

In this chapter the research question will be explained and the personal and methodological contexts will be discussed. Since data were collected through a series of interviews with young Maltese women about their music interests and what the music they listened to meant to them, interviewing methods will be considered together with research ethics. Data collection, transcribing, coding, categorising and interpreting data and issues of epistemology will be discussed.

### **3.1 Personal context**

Growing up in a working class family in Malta and being highly involved in the classical music scene, I went through different phases in my relationship to music. As a child, studying classical music as well as being a very diligent student at school, set me apart from my school mates in such a way that I was not considered as one of them by my peers. I was different in that I was not up to date with the latest releases and because of long hours of practicing music I could not hang out with them. Till my early teens, I had a love-hate relationship with classical music. I loved it deep down, yet it was the cause of a lot of pain in that I felt I was not like the others, and was not completely accepted by them. As I grew up, I learnt to disregard what others thought of me and took pride in my musical achievements, aspiring to become an orchestral player and work in an environment where others shared the same passion for classical music. Within this environment I found colleagues who were highly involved in both classical music and rock music, for instance, or classical music and jazz. I myself started exploring several types of music and reflecting on the sociological side of all this.

In my dissertation for MA in Youth and Community Studies 'Life's Soundtracks' (2007), I researched why rock musicians and classical musicians had chosen this particular genre of music as their favourite music and as the music they perform. The study revealed that the most influential factors had been the parents and siblings and what they listened to during the respondents' childhood. Peers also had some influence on them but this started towards adolescence. Moreover, it was highlighted that capital accumulated through music was a very class-based form of capital. Classical music was considered as cultural capital which, combined with social capital, was considered as having a possible role in social mobility. In this dissertation I referred to North's (2006) quantitative research on people's musical preferences reflecting their lifestyle. My critique was that quantitative research on its own was not adequate for this type of study since respondents were limited to

preconceived responses when describing their own characters in relation to their preferred music, what types of drug they used, how often and so on. Quantitative studies like North's do not give the opportunity to the researcher to understand the participants in their own terms but rather tries to understand participants' actions and choices through preconceived ideas formed by the researcher. These ideas might be limited, leaving out areas which might be significant to the participants. They can also be rather rigid, making fluidity in participants' choices problematic to be reflected in the findings.

The focus of the present research developed through a number of stages. Having taken the MA research as a spring board, originally I started with the idea of highlighting gender differences in the way young men and young women consumed leisure and how it affected them. I became engrossed in reading literature about leisure, particularly Veblen's work on conspicuous leisure and its connections with social class and Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital. The limitations of this present study made it impossible to keep leisure general so the focus needed to be on specific leisure. The idea was that respondents would be from four specific genres of music, which might be considered as music subcultures: classical, pop, rock and jazz. These particular subcultures were chosen because of their diverse styles and because of their popularity with different sections of Maltese society. After critically reading literature about subcultures and their characteristics, I conducted some pilot interviews with both young men and young women and through these interviews, it became evident that my research question needed re-viewing. Firstly, the notion of subcultures needed re-thinking in Maltese contemporary society, in a similar way as it did in other European countries. Cultural items that signify particular subcultures are continuously being absorbed in mainstream cultures, since the distinct features of subcultures are adopted by mainstream consumers as well. Moreover, members of subcultures are increasingly adopting a stance of preserving individuality as well as committing themselves to a subculture. Therefore, respondents could not be placed into clean cut categories of such specific subcultures or types of music they listened to, since they very often liked more than one type of music simultaneously and very often these were very different types of music. People also changed their music preferences over time, at times going back to liking music they used to like, or liking completely different music to what they used to like. Thus, Maltese society was characterized by fluidity and hybridity of tastes since young people seemed to like more than one type of music and their identity was a combination of several influences and lifestyles. Therefore, a different



way of categorisation needed to be deployed: that which considered the way young people make meanings of the music they listen to, rather than the type of music they listen to. Secondly, I found that research in this area was most commonly based on male participants. Since there were no other studies to my knowledge which researched the identity of young Maltese women, the focus of this study developed into researching the way young women in the Maltese context, incorporate the music they listen to, into their everyday discourses and identities.

In this study, the term ‘young women’ refers to adolescent and young adult females and reflects the age group that will be researched. ‘Young women’ was preferred to ‘girls’ since the term ‘girls’ usually refers to children and adolescents and as feminists and others have argued, it is important to be respectful of young people (Batsleer, 2008, pp.85-86; Batsleer, 2013). The term ‘girls’ can be considered as slightly demeaning by some. Although both terms are culturally loaded with meaning, ‘young women’ will be consistently used in this study simply to refer to the section of society that are female and young adults.

### **3.2 Research question**

Thus this research is designed to explore how young women, in contemporary Maltese society, make meaning out of the music they listen to in their everyday life and how they incorporate this meaning into everyday discourses and identities.

The research seeks to throw light on the following areas:

- how young women in the Maltese musical scene consume global and local cultural forms of music as leisure and how these forms assume everyday meanings in the differing local contexts of their lives
- how these cultural forms are incorporated or resisted in the formation of identities
- how the resulting social and cultural capital are produced and processed in the social and cultural power struggle to form cultural hierarchies within the local context
- the relevance of the term ‘subculture’ in the Maltese context as experienced by young women

Modern technology has permeated and apparently, overcome Malta’s geographical isolation making it possible for young women to become part of several music subcultures. This offers an opportunity to explore the sociological implications of how, why and to

what extent young Maltese women commit to the lifestyle associated with particular music subcultures, as well as the sociological perspective of individuality and the sociological implications of attempts to preserve one's individuality within subcultures. The Maltese context also offers an opportunity to explore how subcultures have developed in a globalised context where inevitably, distinct tastes co-exist with fluidity and cultural hybridity. Cultural hybridity refers to 'the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practice' (Pieterse, 2004 in Iyall Smith & Leavy, 2008).

The idea of distinct subcultures is questioned since in their everyday lives, young women in Malta rarely fit into distinct cultural groups but form part of several groups within the contexts of their lives. Identities for individuals and collective selves are becoming more and more complex. Hybridity is common in Malta since hybrid identities allow for the reflexive perpetuation of the local in the context of the global. This is a 'twofold process involving the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism' (Robertson, 1992 in Iyall Smith & Leavy, 2008). Moreover, hybridization, which exists in all subcultures, seems to have erased any traces of homogeneity of subcultures or what might have been understood as a subculture's distinguishing characteristics. Such subcultures have very often become adopted and eventually absorbed by mainstream culture making distinct subcultures problematic. This implies that in the Maltese context, it might be more adequate to research this area not through specific subcultures but through the processes that take place in people's engagement with the music they listen to or are involved in.

Overall, this study looks at music as being a possible strong identity statement for young Maltese women, a means of conspicuous leisure to maintain difference and distinction as well as a contributing factor to social and cultural capital within the local context. This would reflect how the Maltese society engages in music and it would highlight gendered meanings that leisure and accumulation of capital have come to have in contemporary society.

### **3.3 Methodological context: a qualitative methodology**

What determines whether qualitative or quantitative research is most appropriate in a study concerns what the research is trying to find out. In this case, a qualitative approach was considered as best suiting the needs of the study at hand since the nature of the topic

implies delving into personal and individual ways of life, reasons, motives and understandings. This methodology was chosen because it is essential as a vehicle for understanding the nuances and complexities of contemporary identities from a sociological approach. In this study, identity is referred to as being socially produced. As Lawler (2008) suggests, identity refers to both sameness and difference, to a relation between sameness and difference. We share common identities as humans, and within categories such as women, men, Maltese etc. but at the same time, identity also refers to the individual's uniqueness and their difference from others.

Unlike many of North's studies regarding music, particularly his 2008 study which researches links between music tastes and personality and behaviour, this study does not restrict participants' responses regarding behaviours into pre-determined categories, but allows participants to express their own narratives to describe patterns and identities in their own terms.

Qualitative research enables the participants to document their past in a way which makes sense to them: highlighting certain features and downplaying others, giving the researcher a window through which one can view their history in their own terms. Silverman (1993) argues that the advantage of qualitative research is that it recognises the inherently subjective nature of social relationships. In interviews for instance, participants' responses reflect other people's behaviour through their own subjective lens of perception (Olsen & Morgan, 2004). Researching young Maltese women's identity formation, through the music they listen to, required the participants to be able to speak about their conduct and lifestyles through their own perspective and to speak about other young women's behaviour through their own lens, so that their understanding of identities and social practices within the local context was possible. Qualitative analysis results in different type of knowledge than quantitative research. Qualitative research focuses on the philosophical nature of each paradigm enjoying detailed interviewing while quantitative research focuses on the compatibility of both qualitative and quantitative methods, 'enjoying the rewards of both numbers and words' (Glenn & Peshkin, 1992, p.8). Qualitative research uses a 'naturalistic' approach and seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Patton, 2001). Thus, considering the nature of the research question, it was thought more appropriate for this research to use a qualitative methodology since it enabled intensive and in-depth examination of Maltese women's experiences as related in their own terms. On the other hand, a quantitative methodology often, uses logical positivism and employs

experimental methods to test hypothetical generalizations (Hoepfl, 1997, pp.47-63). A quantitative approach would have more likely been extensive in examining a wide range of data (Sayer, 1992) but would be rather impersonal, not offering the possibility to critically challenge the respondents' individual knowledge. Although qualitative research tends to work with a relatively small number of cases, it enables the researcher to go into depth in matters of people's understandings and interactions. Questions of reliability and validity are raised and will be dealt with in detail later in this chapter. Although very often, validity and reliability are synonymous with quantitative research, including qualitative research should also be valid and reliable according to Silverman (2005, pp.210-222).

Questions of epistemology emerge through this argument. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality and it asks questions which stress how social experience is created and given meaning. Qualitative research, according to Silverman (2005) can follow the emotionalist or constructionist models. The emotionalist model focuses on meaning and emotion. It takes the reality of the topic for granted and locates the real in the emotional life of the researcher and respondents. The aim of the emotionalist model is to achieve authentic insights or deeper truths about the self. On the other hand, the constructionist model focuses on the conduct of the respondents and its aim is to study how phenomena are constructed and processed. This study tends to refer to both the constructionist and emotionalist models since the research questions are focused on behaviour and choice of music as part of leisure as well as the meaning behind the choice with regards to social capital and social power. These two models do have their limitations as well, the most prominent being that participants might not be sincere or might choose to abstain from mentioning events or things that are significant for them. Moreover, in these models, the researcher needs to interpret the data and although the researcher tries to be reflexive, a completely objective interpretation is impossible to achieve, since researchers are human beings themselves and have gone through their own life experiences as well.

### **3.4 Method: researching through interviews**

The qualitative research tool chosen in this study was the interview because it tries to understand the world from the participants' point of view, in their own terms in order to uncover the meaning of their experiences (Kvale & Brickmann, 2009). Interviewing was chosen as the method of research for this study because 'interviews yield rich insights into

people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings' (May, 2001, p.120). Other forms of data collection such as focus groups were not considered to be as effective in this study because the aim of the researcher was to understand young Maltese women's choices and processes in everyday life from their own individual point of view. Thus it was also considered important to interview participants on their own, so that they would feel more comfortable and free to speak in their own terms without thinking of what others in the group might be thinking of them.

There are several aspects to qualitative research interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp.28). The topic of the study and therefore the interview is the everyday lived experience of the interviewee and her relation to it. The interview seeks descriptions and explanations of the subject's world and seeks to interpret the meaning of themes in the subject's life. The interview focuses on particular themes and usually explores specific situations rather than general opinions. Knowledge is obtained through interaction between the interviewer and interviewee after which, the interviewer interprets what is said and how it is said, although the interviewer must try to be reflexive in interpreting data. Another aspect of research interviews is that the interviewer is open to unexpected phenomena rather than being limited to predetermined categories. Likewise the interviewee might change opinions in the course of the interview itself because of new awareness and insights. Thus the interview experience might be a positive enriching experience to both the interviewer and the participant.

Understanding the young women's experiences from their point of view, through their own eyes, was a vital element in this study. The interview evidently uses conversation as the tool for research. The interview is not only used in social research but is a central feature of modern societies (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997, pp.324-345). Through the media we are surrounded by talk shows and celebrity interviews, for example, and in life we undergo interviews in the labour market and other settings. It seems that interviews are central to making sense of our lives and therefore the interviewing tool offered a cultural familiarity, since it was something that respondents would feel quite comfortable with, due to its similarity to everyday conversations.

The research interview is based on conversations of daily life in that the participant and interviewer converse about everyday life but at the same time it is also a professional conversation in that the researcher is seeking to document and interpret social practices. An interview is literally an inter-view where knowledge is obtained through inter-action

between interviewer and interviewee and where there is an inter-change of views between two persons.

The act of interviewing is a meeting of two subjectivities (Silverman, 1993). The interviewee and I, as the interviewer are both embedded in the local Maltese social scene and neither are independent of the nuances of the Maltese society. I as a researcher am not independent of the respondent's responses (Harre, 1998, pp.37-49). Although being completely objective is impossible, since we do not live in a vacuum, the fact that I, as a researcher, am myself part of the Maltese context is beneficial in that I myself and the interviewees, broadly speaking, share the same global influences, the same experiences and meanings in our everyday lives, therefore placing us in relatively similar positions to start with. Moreover, although there inevitably were social differences, different backgrounds and different biographies between me and the respondents, we still, broadly speaking, shared the same social class, that of the working class. This offered me, as the interviewer, the possibility of critically challenging the knowledge of the interviewee, clarifying areas which during the interview might not have been sufficiently clear.

#### **3.4.1 Forms of interviews and reflexivity in interviews**

Broadly speaking, there are four types of interviews in social research: the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured or focused interview and the group or focus interview (May, 2001). Through the extremes of structured to unstructured interviews, the researcher shifts from controlling the interview through predetermined questions, to an unstructured situation which allows the respondent the freedom to answer without feeling constrained by predetermined questions and a limited range of answers.

The method adopted here was somewhere in between these two extremes. The reason for this being that in this study, there were specific areas which I wanted to explore and it was essential to let people answer in their own terms and this can only result from semi-structured or unstructured interviews.

Structured interviews rely on a uniform structure and permit comparability between responses and thus are considered by many as yielding results that are strong in reliability. This is due to the fact that the same set of questions (in the form of a questionnaire) is asked of participants and differing answers are considered as being real. However, in this study, using this method would have not allowed the participants to speak in their own terms and interpret their everyday life through their own eyes. The standardisation of the

uniform structure of a questionnaire allows comparability between responses but in this study, the aim was to go as in-depth as much as the respondents allowed, so as to get to know the meaning respondents give to their music consumption patterns and discourses.

The semi-structured interview allows the respondent to answer without feeling constrained by pre-formulated questions with a limited range of answers and it also allows the interviewer to depart from the standard approach and to probe beyond the given answers (May, 2001).

The unstructured interview, at the other extreme, is characterised by its open-ended form. The interviewer has an aim in mind but interviewees are able to answer questions within their own frame of reference, drawing on ideas and meanings which they are familiar with. Through flexibility therefore focused interviews provide a greater understanding of the interviewee's point of view. Some researchers, like Segert & Zierke, (2000) believe that this method is useful when researching ongoing processes of social change (*ibid.*) because the participants themselves are the agents of change and since change is an ongoing process, the tools used must be flexible to delve into dynamic processes which have no fixed parameters. Unstructured interviews are usually used when the researcher's preconception is likely to be challenged because the interviewee is not limited to a set of questions but is free to talk about what is significant. These significant areas might be a challenge to the researcher in that the researcher might not even have considered these areas as being important.

Group or focus interviews have been used in a variety of contexts but are valuable mostly as investigative tools, allowing the researcher to explore group dynamics around the issues they want to research. Having a focus group of about 8 to 10 young Maltese women was not considered as valuable in this study, not even as an investigative tool, because although the mediator would encourage different viewpoints on the topic in focus, participants might still be influenced by the presence of others and might not answer questions in terms of their own experiences. One-to-one interviews were thus preferred so that interviewees would not feel limited to the topics others would be discussing. Moreover, they would not be overshadowed by participants who might be very vociferous. There are several forms of one-to-one interviews such as computer-assisted interviews, factual interviews, conceptual interviews and so on (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp.147-158). In this study, one-to-one face-to-face interviews were the preferred tool for gathering data. In computer-assisted interviews such as e-mail interviews, which are asynchronous in

time and chat interviews, which are more synchronous in time and approach the conversational format of face-to-face interactions (ibid.), the body language is lost completely. Video interviews, on the other hand, such as using Skype, do capture the body language, and although different to face-to-face interviews are quite similar. Face-to-face interviews also eliminate any problems with writing and reading skills on both side of the participants and the interviewer. Although in one-to-one interviews, the participants might still feel that they should answer in a certain way because of my involvement in the music scene, as a classical musician and violin and piano teacher, the risk of participants being influenced by peers would be eliminated.

Since I myself as the researcher, in this study, was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, reflexivity on my part, which I will discuss later in this chapter, was essential. The importance of being reflexive is acknowledged within social science research and there is widespread recognition that the interpretation of data is a reflexive exercise through which meanings are made rather than found (Mauthner et al.,1998). Sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers have been concerned with ‘the problem of reflexivity’ and how ‘our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others’ (Denzin, 1997, p.27) for a long time. The ‘problem’ arises through recognition that as social researchers we are an integral part of the social world which we study. Thus representation is inevitably always ‘self-presentation’ and ‘the Other’s presence is directly connected to the writer’s self-presence in the text’ (Denzin, 1994, p.503 in Denzin & Lincoln).

As the researcher, I used my local knowledge and contacts in Malta’s music scene and selected the first interview subjects for this study. Since I myself had been a professional classical music performer and teacher for more than twenty years, I was familiar with the majority of classical musicians on the island, as well as quite a number of jazz, pop and rock musicians. Thus I was considered as an insider of the local music scene. For those who are affiliated to music other than classical genres, I was neither a true insider nor a complete outsider. In a way I was considered as an insider because I had a theoretical background of music and a history of performing. Yet, since my performing was limited mostly to the classical scene, that did not make me a true insider in other scenes. This insider-outsider relation together with my strong musical background and my performing reputation, resulted mostly in interviewees apparently being in awe of me, an attitude which I tried to change in the very beginning of each interview, since I did not want interviewees to tell me what they thought I would want to hear. I therefore tried to



make it clear that I was at par with them and was interested in their way of seeing things and giving meaning to music.

Both insider and outsider researchers impact on data. As Costley, Elliott and Gibbs (2010) pointed out, an inside researcher has many advantages but also has responsibilities. As an insider in the music scene, I was in a unique position to undertake the study at hand in depth, since I had the insider knowledge and easy access to people and information that could enhance that knowledge. However the subjective nature of researching as an insider where there may be lack of impartiality and an interest in achieving certain results raises problems concerning an objective view of data (ibid.) As an inside researcher, I was conscious that my own positionality in the context could have a particular impact on the data collected. Reflexivity, according to Mason (1996, p.5) requires thinking critically about the reasons why the researcher does what he or she does, challenging own assumptions and recognising the extent to which the researcher's own thoughts, actions and decisions shape the methods of research and what the researcher sees in the research. This qualitative research involved active reflexivity and critical self-scrutiny on my part. I was aware that no researcher could be completely neutral, objective or detached from the knowledge being generated especially since I was highly involved in one specific music subculture, the classical scene. I was aware of my own ideas and pre-judgements as a researcher. Being aware of the pit-falls of pre-figuring the field was very important in choosing the first respondents, and undertaking the interviewing and data analysis processes.

Russell & Kelly (2002) contend that through reflection, researchers may become aware of what allows them to see, as well as what may inhibit their seeing. This required careful consideration of the project under study, as well as the ways in which my own assumptions and behaviour may be impacting the inquiry. Thus, being immersed for many years in the classical music scene, made me a known figure in that scene. However I had also been involved to a lesser extent, in jazz, rock and pop music through colleagues and performers, having taken part in a number of performances myself and having taken courses in jazz and improvisation. This made me very familiar with these music scenes. Through colleagues who made part of both the classical music scene and the more traditional music scenes such as the village bands and the 'ghana', I was also familiar with how things work within this setting and the dynamics of these clubs.

During the process of the study I tried to be reflexive on at least three levels as suggested by Gilgun, (2010). The first level was that I made it a point to be reflexive on the topic I wished to investigate, meaning that I had to account for the personal and professional meaning the topic had for me. The second level was that I had to be reflexive in the perspectives and experiences of the young women I wished to research. The third level was being reflexive with regard to the audience at whom my research findings would be directed. This meant that I had to keep in mind to write in such a way and present ideas in such a way that could be understood by all. Apart from these three levels, since class and gender are two significant elements in this study, I needed to be reflexive about my own position in the social class strata of Maltese society as well as my own personal gendered ideas on the topic at hand.

I was very much aware that the complex processes of representing the voices of the respondents could not be simplified and represented as if the voices spoke on their own (Reinharz, 1992). On the other hand, I was aware that these voices would be represented through my choices of how to interpret them and which transcript extracts to use as evidence. I recognised the importance of being reflexive in my role in the analytic process, in interpreting data and in the pre-conceived ideas and assumptions I might have brought to the analysis (Devine & Heath, 1999). I therefore reflected on and recorded my interpretations, in a research diary, after each interview, going through my logs and revisiting them after each new interview was done. This enabled me to be reflexive about previous assumptions and experiences which might have hindered the way I analysed the data. This does not mean that the process is without reflexive limitations since there would still be influences which shape this research, such as my social position in the working class stratum. I have never had a different lifestyle, neither as part of the middle class nor as part of the lower class. This means that my perception is limited through a working class background.

### **3.5 Ethical Issues of Social Research with particular focus on the method of Interviewing**

Ethical considerations arise when doing interview research particularly because of the complexities of researching people's private lives and placing the accounts in the public arena (Birch et al. 2002 in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Such ethical issues are to be

considered throughout the whole interview enquiry, from the start of the investigation to the final report.

Throughout the study, ethical issues as listed in the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association (2002) were adhered to. An application for ethics approval was prepared for the School of Sport and Education Research Ethics Committee: Brunel University, and was approved.

It was essential to prepare this ethical protocol not only to satisfy the requirements of the University but also to gain a foreknowledge of the ethical issues that might have arisen during the interviewing process.

### **3.5.1 Ethics throughout the inquiry**

Ethical issues were taken into consideration throughout the whole investigative process as suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, pp.62-66). However, since ethics should be a situation-dependant process, they were not considered as questions that could be settled once and for all but rather as fields of uncertainty which were to be continually addressed and reflected on throughout the interview process.

In the thematising stage, this study aimed not only to achieve scientific knowledge but also to throw light on processes taking place in contemporary Maltese society, particularly processes of identity formation of young Maltese women and what that says about Maltese society. In the design process of this research, the participants' informed consent to participate in the study was obtained, since this was important for ensuring ethical research and confidentiality was secured. In this way, the interviewees knew they were not obliged to participate, could withdraw from the interview at any time and that their identities would be kept in confidence. In the interview, potential consequences of the interview itself on the participant were taken into consideration, such as changes in self-understanding or thinking about issues which the participant had never considered before. Throughout the transcribing process, confidentiality was maintained and the transcribed text was as loyal as possible to the interviewee's oral statements. Ethical issues in the analysis involved the interpretation of participants' statements. This was done by being reflexive and trying to be as objective and unbiased as possible though there are obvious limitations, since I myself am part of the Maltese society and am involved in particular musical genres. In writing up the analysis I also made sure that confidentiality was maintained in that I did not quote parts of the transcripts which would have revealed the

identity of the interviewee to insiders of that particular music scene. When it was considered beneficial for the research to illustrate what interviewees said about how they linked their music to the way they dress, their image and the message they want to convey through their image, I asked some of the participants for consent to include photographs which they themselves provided, of their clothes or of them wearing specific clothing that further clarified their statements about their image. This was not done during the interview but at a later stage when interpretation of results was taking place and the elements of image and power relations revealed themselves to be important. I therefore contacted the relevant respondents and asked if they would consent to their pictures, which they would choose, to be printed in the research. If they consented, I explained which parts of their narrative the pictures should highlight and they sent me the pictures which in their opinion emphasised this.

### **3.5.2 Interviewing: Consent, Confidentiality and Consequences**

#### **3.5.2.1 Informed Consent**

The research participants were informed about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design as well as any risks and benefits they would encounter if they participated in the study. They were therefore told that the outcome of this study was primarily a Ph.D. thesis which might in the future be transformed into a published report and that the study was exploring the way young Maltese women incorporate the music they listened to in their everyday life. Detail was avoided since I wanted the respondents to respond to questions spontaneously and wanted to avoid leading them to specific responses. Although the research was also investigating other themes, such as how social and cultural capital are produced and processed in the social and cultural power struggle to form hierarchies within the local structure, these sub-themes were deliberately not elaborated in an effort not to influence interviewees' responses. Mentioning other sub-themes like the public and private, the global and the local, the relevance of the term subculture was also avoided so that the stereotypical characteristics of specific groups would not be foremost in the mind of the respondents and they would answer the questions in their own terms, not giving weight to points which they felt I, as the researcher wanted to explore. On the other hand, they were left free to express and emphasise any points which, through their perspective, were important.

Participants were informed that the study would involve several in-depth interviews with young Maltese women about the music they listened to. They were asked if they were willing to participate and were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point they decided to. Information about confidentiality was given and participants were told that anonymity was guaranteed and that names would be changed to protect the identity of the participants. Participants were made aware that throughout the interview they might realise certain aspects of their own lifestyle and that some things they are asked to reflect upon might reveal aspects of themselves that they were not aware of and this might change their perspectives on some issues. Participants were also asked for consent to have their interview or parts of it published as part of this study, should it be published in the form of a book or report. A written agreement was signed by both the researcher and participant with the informed consent of the interviewee to participate in the study also allowing future use of the material.

In the process of analysing data, I found that visual illustrations would be beneficial, were they to accompany some of the interview quotations about the respondents' perception of the image they projected through the clothes and style they wore in different contexts. Thus, some of the participants were further asked if they would give their consent to having some photographs they would provide, to accompany their quotes, to better illustrate the analytic process. In such cases, respondents were told that photographs could either include their face, which would then not make them anonymous, though their names would still be changed, or could have their face blurred, or could give me photographs of the clothes they wore, so as not to breach anonymity. Care was taken to be very clear when asking for consent since gaining informed consent could be problematic if it is not clear what the participant is consenting to (Miller and Bell in Mauthner, Birch, Jessop & Miller, 2002). Moreover, although the participants had filled in a consent form at the beginning of the research, consent was renegotiated when participants were asked if they consented to their photographs to be printed and to provide these photographs themselves.

### **3.5.2.2 Confidentiality**

Since this research was designed to explore how music is incorporated by young women in a very particular setting, the Maltese context with a relatively small population of about 400,000, confidentiality and anonymity were both very important. The sample of

participants consisted of young Maltese women aged 16+ and included some prominent people in the Maltese music scene. In such cases, I informed the participants that should I wish to publish their interview or parts of it which contained private data that was potentially recognisable to others, I would ask the participant concerned for permission and a written agreement would be signed. Alcohol abuse, drug use or abuse, sex, pornography, vandalism and other such illicit forms of leisure might have featured in some interviews, so confidentiality and anonymity was of extreme importance.

Under Maltese law and the Data Protection Act, Chapter 440, a researcher is not obliged to report illegal acts which interviewees disclose. Therefore confidentiality is guaranteed. However another consideration is that if this study yields consistent information of illegal consumption within a specific music subculture, authorities might in future reinforce their vigilance in specific public events such as public concerts etc. Although this is not the aim of this research, and it is not the researcher's goal, this cannot be excluded and consequently, great care must be taken in the way material is presented in the public domain.

### **3.5.2.3 Consequences**

The researcher was aware that the interview itself might change the participant's perspective, might give them insight and might make them aware of their own lifestyles. It might also have raised questions about reasons for their music preferences and ways in which the music had an impact on them. Moreover, they might never have thought that their leisure consumption might indirectly be a statement of their social status.

In my role as the researcher, I was also aware that the openness and intimacy of much qualitative research could lead participants to disclose information they might later regret having shared. I was aware that the personal intimacy of the research relationship might put strong demands on the researcher about how far to go with the inquiries. At a later stage, showing the written transcription of such interviews to the participants involved might also reveal itself as an issue, since there are significant differences between oral and written accounts. The integrity of the researcher (my knowledge, experience, honesty and fairness) is a decisive factor when making choices that weigh ethical concerns versus scientific concerns in a study.

During the interviews, I was aware that since this was an exploratory study, the conversations with participants could extend or alter my understanding of the phenomena

studied. The new dimensions would enable me to progressively develop my interview guide with specific questions to the new dimensions in the remaining interviews. Thus, a continuous process of visiting and revisiting and rethinking my understanding of the phenomena, which were being explored, took place throughout the series of interviews.

## **3.6 Data collection**

### **3.6.1 Information-oriented sampling of participants**

Since the aim of this study was to explore how young Maltese women incorporate the music they listen to into everyday discourses and identities, the study sought to generate local and contextual knowledge. Determining an adequate sample size in qualitative research is not easy and up to the judgement and experience of the researcher. A small sample size might not achieve informational redundancy or theoretical saturation, while a large sample size might not lend itself to in-depth analysis. Although usually, sampling is done in an effort to have a representative subsection of a defined population, so that inferences can be made about the whole population (Arber, 1993 in Silverman, 2005), sampling of participants in this study was done with the aim of generating local and contextual knowledge rather than with the aim of obtaining global generalizability. Although the question of generalizability will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter, generalizability will be discussed to some extent here with regards sampling of participants since the strategic choice of cases may significantly add to the generalizability of the case study (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

The objective in this study was to achieve the greatest possible amount of information about the phenomenon of how young Maltese women incorporate the music they listen to. As Silverman (2005, pp.129-135) points out, in qualitative research, data are derived from a small number of cases which are usually not randomly selected. A random sample selection was not the most appropriate strategy because as Flyvbjerg (2001) states, in his study of organisations, the average case is often not the richest in information. 'Extreme cases' (p.78), as he calls them, often reveal more information than average, typical cases. This is because they activate more actors and basic mechanisms in their particular contexts. Moreover, through 'extreme cases' the researcher can delve more deeply into the question in that such cases enable the researcher to clarify the deeper

causes and consequences behind a problem rather than just describe the symptoms of the problem. Thus, such cases in this study would have included young women who are extremely engaged in the music they listen to, for example, extreme rockers or extreme pop fans. Since the aim of this research was not to delve into particular music subcultures or focus exclusively on young women who were extremely committed to the music of their choice, this method was not used. On the other hand, what Flyvbjerg (2001, p.79) called an 'information-oriented selection' was used in this study so as to maximise the utility of information from a small sample. Cases were selected on the basis of expectations about their information content. These expectations were possible because apart from having the role of the researcher, my real-life situation was that I was thoroughly familiar with the local music scene and therefore I had the necessary knowledge to guide me in the choice of cases. Cases were thus chosen from various types of music scenes and interviewees were chosen because they gave very different kinds of meanings to their music.

Flyvbjerg (2001) points out that for a researcher, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its wealth of details are important for a 'nuanced view of reality' (p.72), including the idea that human behaviour cannot be simply understood as rule-governed acts. Thus my involvement in the context in which this study is contextualized, placed me in a good position to research this area. Although I am classed, I am of a certain age and gender, I am also Maltese and have been part of Maltese society for my entire life, partaking in all that contemporary Maltese society as a whole has gone through, sharing the culture, politics and so on of the Maltese population. As a musician, I am in close contact with the music scene on the island. This made it possible for me to choose what Flyvbjerg (2001) calls the 'paradigmatic cases'. These cases are those that highlight more general characteristics of the society in question. These paradigms cannot be expressed as rules or theories (ibid.). There is no pre-existing standard for paradigmatic cases since a paradigmatic case sets its own standard. In these cases, the researcher needs to 'use their experience and intuition to assess whether they believe a given case is interesting in a paradigmatic context, and whether they can provide collectively acceptable reasons for the choice of case' (ibid. p.81). Therefore, through my experience in Malta's music scene, I chose respondents who, in my view and experience, would be interesting for this research. However, this does not limit the value of any random case because such cases still make part of the Maltese society making them relevant and valuable.



The sampling in this study was thus information-oriented and had two phases. It started with purposive sampling of paradigmatic cases where I, as the researcher chose participants whom I knew and who to my knowledge illustrated features and processes which the research was trying to explore (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As mentioned earlier, extreme cases were included. These cases were extreme in two ways. They included cases who liked extremely different types of music, for instance house, and folk music. They also included cases which had very different levels of involvement in the music they liked, for instance those whose life revolved around their preferred music and those who simply listened to music only if they happened to be in places where music was being played. Thus the music respondents liked from pop to Goth to classical to Indie to Turkish and so on. The level of involvement also ranged over extremes from those respondents who place music as the top priority in their life to those for whom music was not at all important in their life. Interviewee characteristics and sample biographies can be found in Appendix A.

Participants were aged between 16 and 34. This age group was chosen since it was considered that this group would include the time when young women's identities are being consciously processed away from adult supervision and the time when musical taste can be not only an unconscious choice, but also a conscious choice. It also includes the time when the typical lifestyle of the specific music scene they made part of, if any, would have set in.

Purposive sampling has its limitations since the choice of sample is constrained by the researcher's knowledge of the scene, however vast that is, as well as the researcher's social networks and contacts within the scene. The researcher's social class and cultural capital are both factors which shape the sampling process at this stage. In my capacity as coming from a working class background, most of my social networks were likely to be from a working class background as well, excluding the lower and the upper classes of Maltese society. However, my affiliations with high culture through classical music also shaped my social networks and thus some of my social networks came from the high culture scene. Therefore the complexity of my identity of coming from a working class family and having social networks within this social class as well as from the high culture through my involvement in classical music has an impact on the research. The significance of this impact is that my understanding of high culture is something that is not only inherited but something that can be achieved through accumulation of cultural capital.

Thus, my interpretation of meaning is limited to the parameters of my background and my involvement in Malta's music scene.

The second phase of the sampling used the snowballing technique (Silverman, 2005) where respondents were asked to indicate other possible respondents whom they thought would contribute new information to the research. However, through this technique it is very likely for the researcher to have respondents who are similar to each other, liking the same music, being of the same social class and so on. On the other hand, the strengths of this technique include the possibility of recruiting a variety of participants whom the researcher had no contact with. Thus, the researcher's constraints and limitations mentioned above might have been balanced out although the argument that the respondents' social networks would once again consist of other young women of the same social class can still be made. There was no pre-set number of participants since the purpose of this study was to explore how young Maltese women incorporated the music they listened to into everyday discourses and identities. Thus it involved interviewing as many subjects necessary to find out what the researcher set to find out. Therefore, during the research process the researcher kept on conducting interviews until a point of saturation (ibid) was reached, when further interviews failed to yield any new information.

### **3.6.2 The Interviews**

#### **3.6.2.1 Scripting the Interview**

Since the interviews were semi-structured, I developed an interview guide which was scripted and based on theory and literature with which I had familiarised myself. Before the interview script was finalised, the researcher developed two interview guides: one with the project's thematic research questions and the other with interview questions to be posed, taking both the thematic and dynamic dimensions into account. The interview schedule was piloted and amended until it became appropriate to serve its purpose. It included an outline of the topics to be covered, with suggested questions. Since the aim of the interviews was to explore how young Maltese women incorporated the music they listened to into everyday discourses and identities, funnel shaped interviews made up of indirect questions with the interviewer revealing the purpose only after the interview is over (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), were avoided. The participants were informed of what the research was trying to explore. Questions were scripted in such a way as to have both a

thematic and dynamic dimension. This was done so that questions would contribute to the knowledge production as well as to a good interview interaction.

Since at a later stage, analysis of the interview would be done, including coding of responses and narratives, it was important for me, as the researcher, during the interview, to keep this in mind so that I could clarify the meaning of responses with respect to the categories which would later be used.

Questions were scripted in such a way as to ensure a positive interaction with the interviewee, and to keep a flow of conversation going. Questions were easy to understand, short and devoid of academic language.

The interview script was only used as a guideline since during the interview, questions vary with different subjects since same things might have different meanings to different people. Therefore, in order to have questions mean the same thing to different people, questions in the interview script were modified to fit the vocabulary, educational background and comprehension of each participant (Kinsey et al., 1948).

### **3.6.2.2 Setting the stage**

In my role as interviewer, I was aware that the first few minutes of each interview are very important since that is the time when the interviewees will want to have a grasp of the interviewer before they feel free to expose their experiences to a stranger (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I therefore made it a point to be at ease and to be very clear as to what I wanted to know. I tried, in each case, to establish good contact by being attentive, showing interest, understanding and showing respect for what the subject was saying all through the interview.

The interviews started with a briefing. Interviewees were informed about the subject of the research and the purpose of the interview. I explained the use of the voice recorder asking for permission to record the interview explaining that this would enable me to faithfully transcribe the interview and later analyse it. Participants were asked whether they had any questions before the interview started. During the interview, whenever possible, I took note of the social context explicit during the interview, the emotional tone of the interaction, body language and tone of voice. At the end of the interview, there was always a debriefing when respondents were asked if they wanted to add anything. Then, the recorder was switched off.

### **3.6.2.3 Types of questions**

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) there are several types of interview questions, of which various types were used in the interviews in this study. All interviews started with introductory questions such as ‘Can you tell me about...?’; ‘Could you describe in as much detail as possible...?’ Such questions encouraged spontaneous and at times very rich descriptions of the respondents’ experiences and as many aspects of the topic as possible. Follow-up questions and probing questions were used when the respondents’ answers needed to be extended for the researcher to be able to analyse at a later stage. When respondents’ statements were too general, I as the interviewer followed up with specific questions which encouraged the respondent to give more detailed descriptions and accounts of experiences. When, towards the end of the interviews, some key areas were not touched upon, I made direct questions about them. In cases when respondents did not seem very willing to talk about themselves, indirect questions were asked about their opinions about other people’s attitude so that through that, indirect statements about their own attitudes could be obtained. In some interviews where the respondents tended to go at a tangent or to repeat at length the same information, I politely broke off long answers that were irrelevant to the study and introduced another topic using phrases like, ‘I would like to introduce the next topic now...’ Moments of silence were allowed in the interviews, so that the respondents could reflect on the topic at hand and usually the respondents broke the silence themselves with fresh information. Since my role in the research was that of interviewer and analysing data, I also made sure of clarifying whether my interpretation of what was said was correct where necessary.

### **3.6.2.4 Second questions**

The interviewer not only has to be capable of asking questions but the interviewer must listen actively to the interviewee. Everything the interviewee says might change the structure of the interview. The interviewer must have knowledge of the interview topic and must be sensitive to the fact that the interview is a means to an end. Thus at times, as the interviewer I did not limit myself to the interview guide but spontaneously asked questions that would eventually encourage answers which would enrich and be relevant to the research questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.171). Since this research was exploring new ground, during the initial stages of the interviewing process, I did not know what would be relevant and significant to the research. Only as I proceeded and analysed

interviews did I start developing an idea of what would be significant. This enabled me to focus on those areas in the later interviews.

### **3.6.3 Transcribing and translating**

As Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, pp.178) emphasise, a transcript is a translation from one narrative mode, oral discourse, to another narrative mode, written discourse. In a face-to-face interview, the tone of voice and the bodily expressions are all immediately available to the participants but are not accessible to the reader of the transcript. The recording of interviews which is the first abstraction from live conversation, already loses the body language such as gestures and posture. The transcription to written narrative is a second abstraction where tone of voice, intonations and breathing are lost. Therefore, in this study, the interviewer not only audio recorded the interviews but kept notes about the non-verbal aspects of the interviewees. Such notes were made within one hour of the end of the interview so that authenticity was ensured as much as possible. This means that the interview situation was documented so that when the transcripts and data analysis are done, the interview situation would be reconstructed as close to the real interview situation as possible. I transcribed my own interviews. This meant that to some extent, I had the social and emotional aspects of the interview situation present or reawakened during transcription, enabling me to produce transcriptions which reflected the nuances of the interviews. Moreover, mental analysis of the meaning of what was being said, which had started while interviewing, went on even while transcribing, making analysis a constant process.

Since this study was carried out in Malta, the interviewees were free to speak whichever language they chose, Maltese or English or a mixture of both as is very common on this island. This was done so that the participants were made to feel as comfortable as possible thus removing any language barriers. While interviewing, I followed the lead of the participants, in my choice of language. English speaking participants and bi-lingualism are not without implications. While transcribing, I referred to both the recording and the notes, as well as to my background knowledge of what certain Maltese expressions mean. However, as is very common in Maltese society, some participants used literal translations from the Maltese language to English. Such expressions, although made in English, would not make sense to a non-Maltese speaking person. In such cases, while doing the transcripts, such expressions were written as the

participants said them. If at a later stage I used them in my interview quotes, I explained what that expression would mean. Statements were transcribed verbatim, with all the repetitions and hesitations noted. As mentioned earlier, I interviewed all participants myself and transcribed all the interviews myself to secure as many details relevant to the study as possible. Transcriptions, that include translation from one language to another, present a challenge, in that there are cultural considerations especially when an interviewer is a translator for the researcher and the transcribers (Riessman, 2007). However, in this research since I took the role of interviewer, transcriber and translator, and since I live in Maltese society which is quite bilingual, I was familiar with the nuances and meaning of expressions and buzz words which were expressed in Maltese and needed to be translated in English for the sake of the reader. Samples of interview transcripts can be seen in Appendix A.

### **3.7 Reliability and Validity**

Within the research process, epistemology questions with focus on reliability and validity are important. According to Crotty (1998), there are four basic elements in a research process: the methods we propose, the methodology that governs our choice and use of methods, the theoretical perspective which lies behind the methodology and the epistemology that informs the theoretical perspective. Crotty (1998) defines epistemology as ‘the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology’. It is ‘a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know’ (p.3)

The epistemology in this study is constructionism and thus, following Crotty’s (1998) argument, symbolic interactionism, ethnography and constructionism need to be related to one another. This link is important for this study since the aim of this research is to explore a cultural phenomenon through qualitative research, looking at how young Maltese women construct meaning out of the music they listen to through communication, interpretation and adjustment between individuals. In constructionism, there is no objective truth but ‘truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world’ (p.8). Meaning is constructed so different people construct different meanings around the same thing, although people often share the same meaning as well. This approach is the core of this research because the aim of the study is actually to

understand how young Maltese women incorporate the music they listen to in everyday discourse and identities. It thus focuses on the meaning that these young women give to their music. Young women have often shared meanings or collective meanings but within these collective meanings are other meanings and significance that each young woman constructs in a slightly different way.

The epistemology raises questions about objectivity of knowledge, reliability and validity as well as the nature of the interview research.

Objectivity in the knowledge produced from interviews is sometimes questioned (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp.242-243). In my role as researcher, I was aware that reflexive objectivity, in the sense of being reflexive about my contributions to the production of knowledge, was of utmost importance. I therefore, strove to be sensitive about my prejudices and my subjectivity and acknowledged them in my writing where necessary.

Reliability, consistency and trustworthiness of the research findings, although associated with positivistic research are still important and were tackled by checking consistency of interviewees' answers, checking whether they gave different replies when questions were re-worded and asked later on in the interview. The interviewer's reliability was ensured by being aware that wording of questions and tone of voice may influence the answers. Consistency between interviewers, transcribers and coders was ensured since all these roles were carried out by myself as the researcher.

Moreover, as Silverman (2005) suggests, when quoting from transcripts, detailed presentations of verbatim accounts of what respondents said were used rather than summaries of data, to provide the reader with the context in which the respondent said what she did. In this way, the reader is not reliant on the researcher's depiction of what was going on in the interview.

Validity refers to results which can be accurately, truthfully and confidently interpreted and has to do with the process and organisation of the data collection. Validity in a research study has two aspects: internal and external validity. Internal validity addresses the 'true' causes of the outcomes observed in a research study. This means that results are a function of the conditions observed, measured or manipulated in the study and not due to other factors which were not addressed in the study. External validity refers to using the results of a research study to make claims not just about the participants but also

about a larger population of which the participants are a sample (Bracht & Glass, 1968, pp.437-474).

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, pp.244-247), validating of a research project consists of three main strategies done during the different stages of the research, namely checking, questioning and theorising. In the interviewing stage, internal validity was ensured by keeping the research questions as the focal points. Although at times questions were not direct, they were asked with the aim of gaining information which the researcher set out to obtain, so that the interviews yielded data about what the study set out to find. When interpreting, validation is then choosing among the competing interpretations and providing arguments to support the choice. When necessary, I, as the researcher arbitrated my own findings and interpretations. Care was taken to conduct careful questioning to the meaning of what was said during the interview and continual checking of the information obtained. Internal and external validity were also ensured while transcribing and translating from the oral to the written language, as well as from the Maltese language to the English language, through the choice of linguistic style of the transcript and the choice of words that would convey the message that was closest to the original as possible, in translation. While reporting, I tried to give a true valid account of the main findings of the study and supported these by theorising them with reference to the theories which were discussed in the Literature Review chapter.

### **3.8 Generalizability**

A common question posed to research, particularly interview research is whether results are generalizable. In everyday life we generalise spontaneously most of the time. We draw on our experience to create expectations of what will happen in similar situations or with similar people. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, pp.260-266) argue that although the social sciences have been consistently challenged to produce generalizable knowledge, the constructionist approach, which I am adopting in this research, conceives knowledge as socially and historically contextualised modes of understanding and acting in the social world.

The choice of method, which in this study was the interview, depended on the problem under study and its circumstances, namely how young Maltese women incorporate the music they listen to into everyday discourses and identities. Thus the context was a very particular one, that of young Maltese women who are part of Maltese



society and who live on the island of Malta. The research question, in itself, restricted the study not only to the parameters of Maltese society but also to the young women interviewed in their individual way of giving meaning to the music they listen to. It was not the aim of this research to claim universal generalizability from the interview findings. Comparative methods were also taken in consideration. Since there are no other studies to my knowledge that focus on the incorporation of music as part of identity formation in Malta, generalizability through co-ordinating other ethnographic studies was not possible in this case. Comparing results with other findings in other countries was also considered. However, since this research seeks to generate local and contextual knowledge, rather than superimposing the unique Maltese context and Maltese society with any other context and society, such comparisons were not considered to be relevant in this particular study. Generalizability in this study might be seen as referring to whether the knowledge produced in specific interview situations might be transferred to other relevant situations within the local context.

A common concern in generalizability of interview findings is that there are too few interviews to generalise findings. Perakyla (1995, in Silverman, 2005) takes a linguistically inspired approach: since the basic structures of the social order are found anywhere, it does not really matter where the research is started. The possibility that something exists is enough. He argues that social practices that are possible are central objects of conversation in particular settings. Sacks (1984, p.22, in Silverman, 2005) supports this view: 'tap into whomsoever, wherever, and we get much the same things'. Sacks (1992) used the strategy of working with any data he came across since he believed that 'it really wouldn't matter very much what it is you look at – if you look at it carefully enough' (p.485). He drew on examples which suggest a pervasiveness of structures: the ability of a child to learn a culture from very limited contacts and the ability of a sociolinguist to build a grammar from talking to just one person who spoke the language (ibid). This approach suggests that since the basic structures of the social order are to be found anywhere, wherever the researcher starts, he or she will find the same order.

According to Flyvbjerg (2001), generalisation is just one of the practical skills which a researcher should possess in carrying out social scientific research. Moreover, Flyvbjerg emphasises the limitations when formal generalization is considered as the only legitimate method of scientific inquiry. He insists that generalisation is merely one of the many ways through which people create and accumulate knowledge and if that knowledge

cannot be formally generalised it ‘does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society’ (p.76). He goes as far to say that formal generalization is overrated as the main source of scientific progress, whether it is on the basis of large samples or single cases. Thus although my research cannot be formally generalised, it is still part of the collective process of knowledge accumulation in Maltese society and has value in this process of accumulating knowledge. Moreover, had this research been done in any other part of the world, there is nothing that indicates that similar findings could have been found.

### **3.9 Analysing Data**

The analysis sought to explore how young women, in contemporary Maltese society, incorporate the music they listen to into everyday discourses and identities. I refer to the term ‘incorporate’ as the unity of something with something or someone that already exists. Thus in this case, I refer to the unity of music, social practices and norms, with the individual and her practices, style, taste and so on. In order to explore how young women in Malta incorporate the music they listen to, a meaning-oriented approach was taken which seeks to generate contextual knowledge. Interview analysis involves coding, condensation (which means abridging meanings expressed by interviewees into shorter formulations), and interpretation of meanings, according to Kvale and Brinckmann (2009, pp.202-205). Coding and condensation, provide structure and give overviews to interview texts which are usually extensive, while interpretation of meanings may focus on small segments of interaction which are interpreted to better understand the meanings of the original text.

#### **3.9.1 Coding and categorizing**

The analysis was initiated with the process of identifying key themes, which in turn depended on the process of meaning condensation and coding data. Meaning condensation entails abridgement of meanings expressed by interviewees into shorter versions. This was used to analyse extensive interview texts by looking for their main themes (Kval and Brinckmann, 2009). These themes were later subjected to further interpretations and analysis. Coding encompasses various approaches to ways of organizing qualitative data but overall, attaching codes to data is a means of generating concepts from and with the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). In this study, open coding was used to link different

segments of data to create categories of data which were defined as having some common elements and were thus related to a particular theme, topic or concept. Open coding, according to Strauss & Corbin, (1990), refers to the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data. Coding and categorising have been used for a long time in the analysis of texts in social sciences. Although coding is a key aspect of grounded theory, content analysis and computer-assisted analyses of interview texts (*ibid.*), it was still used in this study in conjunction with categorising.

Coding can be viewed in terms of data reduction or data complication (*ibid.*). Data reduction refers to coding as a process of indexing the data texts. This approach has the goal of facilitating retrieval of data segments categorised under the same codes. On the other hand data complication (*ibid.*) opens up data in order to question them further with the goal of identifying and generating new ideas and theories. In the present study, coding was used in both ways. It was used to segment data into simpler, manageable categories but was also used to expand the data in order to formulate new levels of interpretation.

Pilot interview transcripts were physically marked with code words and a framework for coding and categorizing was developed. After this was done, categories were assigned colours and codes were assigned symbols. For example, the category of 'Identity' was assigned a red colour and the codes within the category of 'Identity' were assigned symbols in the red colour. Interview transcripts were then manually marked using different colours for all categories and symbols for codes. Thus, a code within a category would be labelled with the code word and symbol in the colour of its category. So for example, the code 'Influence of music on character/music reflects character' would be written in red in the margin near the data segment together with its symbol (a dotted line). The goal of coding is the development of categories that capture the fullness of experiences and actions studied (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Thus, codes and categories were not limited to the ones developed through the pilot interviews but were updated and increased after each of the interviews if these yielded new ideas and concepts. Data were constantly compared for similarities and differences and this led to sampling of new data and writing theoretical memoranda. The detailed framework for coding and categorizing can be seen in Appendix B.

In this study coding and categorizing were concept driven as well as data driven, combining induction and deduction. It was concept driven where codes had already been formed by the researcher through existing literature, in which case the author is listed next

to the category or code word and it was data driven when there were areas in which the researcher did not have codes in advance and these were developed through the readings of the material. Coding was not used merely as an indexing tool but was taken further to generate new ideas and concepts. Codes were not always words used by the interviewees but at times I used other words to capture the underlying motivation or the commitment to music of the interviewee. Other codes reflect more directly my conceptual interests. Thus such decisions reflect my own interest, as the researcher, in expanding the knowledge of this study. At times codes overlapped and the same codes were part of more than one category. This was expected since data are gathered in the way interviewees give it, or in co-construction, not in neat sections (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Once the interviews were done, more focused coding was then undertaken and the analysis gradually developed from descriptive to theoretical levels, and led to the saturation of the material by the coding process, when no new insights and interpretations seemed to emerge from further codings. Code words were grouped into final categories which were then grouped into concepts within a flow chart (Appendix B: Codes, Categories and Concepts). The concepts developed were identity formation, trends of music consumption, social capital, cultural capital, memories and global/local. These concepts were then reviewed and interpreted within the framework of the categories which were developed and which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

### **3.9.2 Meaning interpretation**

Analysis began as soon as I was in the field and went on throughout the interviewing process. Analysis and interpretation were done gradually after each interview so the coding and categorizing process is reflected in the choices of categories made. The interpretation of the meaning of interview texts however, went beyond a structuring of the manifest meanings of what was said to deeper and more critical interpretations of the text (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp.207-208). In the role of researcher, I interpreted and went beyond what was said directly so that structures and meaning which were not directly evident in the text were worked out and statements were contextualised in broader frames of reference.

Reflexivity in interpreting data is a very important part of ensuring validity. I was aware that different readings of an interview could result in different interpretations. My aim was to develop, through interviewees' descriptions, the broader interpretation of

meaning of how they, as young women living in the Maltese context, incorporated the music they listened to. Thus I steered away from ‘biased subjectivity’ which would involve noticing only evidence that supported my own opinion, choosing to interpret only statements that justify my own conclusions, leaving out deviant statements. On the other hand, I moved towards a ‘perspectival subjectivity’ by adopting different perspectives, posing different questions to the same text to come up with different interpretations of meanings of text (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp.213). I therefore made it a point to notice not only evidence which supported my opinion but posed questions which enabled different interpretations to emerge. This was done in three ways. First, interpretation was done within the context of the subject’s self-understanding, what the subjects themselves understand to be the meaning of their own statements. The second step was that of critical common sense understanding where the interpretation includes a wider frame of understanding than that of the subjects themselves. The third step involved theoretical frames used for interpreting the meaning of a statement, thus going beyond the subject’s self-understanding and the common sense understanding.

### **3.10 Advantages and limitations of research strategy**

The interview was chosen as the most appropriate method of data collection because of its various advantages of allowing the researcher to hear respondents’ answers in their own terms. This is important since the goal is to develop a comprehensive picture of the participants’ background, attitudes and actions in their own terms (Schutt, 1999). The interview allows the content and order of the questions to vary from one interviewee to another (Rubin & Rubin in Schutt, 1999) and also allows a positive rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee which facilitates getting data about things which are not easily observed.

The research strategy has limitations in that the sample of respondents all came from what respondents themselves considered as middle and working class. This evidently relied on respondents’ own particular view of class. Therefore the lower and upper classes were not included. This was not done purposely, since as mentioned earlier, purposive sampling has its limitations in that I, as the researcher had contacts only in the social networks of my same social class. Snowballing, which was also used, had the same limitation in that the interviewees’ contacts were very likely to be of the similar social classes. Although initially, the study was not meant to be oriented towards a particular

class, the advantage of the outcome is that the study is focused on the middle and working class, which as discussed in Chapter 2, constitutes the larger part of the population.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This research project would probably be the first in Malta to explore identity formation through music as part of leisure consumption amongst young Maltese women. The unique context of the music scene in Malta provides a rich background to this research. The dissolution of geographical boundaries through technology and new media, have in recent years provided a dynamic interaction of global forces and local traditions. Thus the links between lifestyle, music subcultures, consumption patterns and gender should be an extremely interesting endeavour and would provide a sound basis for further research in this area to be undertaken. Further research could include comparing this to other European countries or other small nations or islands.

## **Chapter 4: Generating New Concepts**

In this chapter, I explain the process through which I analysed my data, as well as the processes through which the interpretation of data was formed. Willis's (1978) theory of cultural form and more recent critiques and developments in cultural studies of Muggleton (2000) and Hodkinson (2007) will be referred to as points of departure upon which I built new concepts to shape my analysis and interpretation. Together with these, I will also be referring to Matza's (1964) drift theory since I drew on this theory when shaping the categories of respondents.

#### **4.1 The shaping of four categories**

Throughout the analysis, it became evident that the interviewees' varying levels of involvement with the music they listen to, was a major factor which shaped how far the music was incorporated into their lifestyles and thus, their identity.

I familiarized myself with the ethnographic studies of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), also known as the British Birmingham school, especially those of Willis (1977, 1978), since as early as the 70s, Willis explored how young men relate to particular cultural items and subcultures and he developed a seminal theoretical framework whose development lent itself particularly well to my research. From his work I adopted a semiotic framework with the key terms being meaning and identity. I was especially interested in Willis's use of the concepts of *homological* and *integral* analysis, since an effective way to understand and view the life of a cultural group was to study the relationships between the meanings of different aspects of everyday life (Alasuutari, 1996) and how far the group and these meanings influenced each other. Through this form of analysis, I thought I could then begin to explain the relationships between the young Maltese women and their music. Through their leisure activities they could highlight and create a life-orientation to which they could anchor their identity.

My analytical framework drew on Willis's (1978) work, which used indexical, homological and integral analysis. However, it was soon evident that although Willis's analytical framework provided a sound basis for my analysis, it needed to be developed further for reasons which I will explain shortly. Willis's (1978, pp.190-191) indexical analysis from his analytical framework in 'Profane Culture' was used in the process of categorising the interviewees, initially by levels of involvement in the music. Indexical analysis which is usually more indicative of statistics, such as for how long did



respondents listen to music, was initially considered to shape the four categories of respondents, which I name the *Fully Committed*, *Committed*, *Active Drifters* and *Passive Drifters*. However, homological and integral analysis, being more interpretative, were also used in the shaping of these four categories and also used to some extent to form an initial idea of how to analyse data and interpret it within the frameworks of this study.

In Willis's (1978, pp.198-201) work on cultural forms and socio-symbolic homologies, he argues that if an item's meaning is socio-culturally constructed, then the significance of the cultural item becomes historically temporary and understanding why objects preserve meaning over long periods of time is problematic. Moreover, if an item is devoid of meaning, originally, and it gains meaning from the relationship that is developed with the social group, attempting to find reasons for choosing such an item and not another is equally problematic. On the other hand, considering each cultural item as having its own intrinsic structure of meaning is also problematic for Willis (1978), since questions like who determines the meaning of such an item arise. It is also problematic to explain how meanings of cultural items change over time and how the same item is used by different groups bearing different meanings.

Thus Willis (1978, p.198) believes that it is an interaction or a relation of both the above theoretical possibilities. He believes there are 'objective' possibilities for meaning-making. The significance of cultural items is socio-culturally constructed but there is an unavoidable starting point in the objective possibilities necessitated by each item's own internal, given, meaning structure. This means that the item already carries objective possibilities of meaning and these are what attract the social group in the first place. Once the relationship between the item and the social group is established, the item already has meaning but once chosen, a sociocultural production of meaning is also set into motion. Although this theory dates back to 1978, Trondman, Lund & Lund (2011) broaden the content and scope of this theory. They argue that cultural items not only attract social groups when they have essentially defined possibilities, but they also attract because they have been already occupied by socio-culturally constructed systems of meaning. It would however be a mistake to assume that all members of a social group share the same meaning of a cultural item.

#### **4.1.1 Broadening Willis's analytical framework through works of Thornton, Muggleton and Hodkinson**

There has been a tendency for subcultural analysis to homogenise members of subcultures or to see subcultures as monolithic. Membership has been often pictured as indicating all that is common between the members. However, in this present study, the concept of being different, being an individual within a group was highlighted by participants. Therefore, my analytical framework needed to be broadened to encompass this concept. Alasuutari (1996) critiques researches of contemporary subcultures or post-subcultures. He argues that in their studies, Paul Willis, and more recently David Muggleton and Paul Hodkinson, methodology and the failure to undertake empirical and ethnographic analysis is problematic. Muggleton (2000) notes that CCCS scholars, particularly Phil Cohen and John Clarke did 'aim to provide an understanding of subcultures at the level of individual consciousness of the participants' but this goal was not fulfilled. Moreover, Thornton (1995), Muggleton (2000) and Hodkinson (2007) all heavily criticize Hebdige's (1979) methods and his Marxist reading of subculture, in which he highlights his belief that there is a natural connection between youth subcultures and class-consciousness. This is because they believe that youth subcultures have little or nothing to do with class struggle or poor economic prospects, as he suggests. Thornton (1995), who herself researched ravers and dance clubs, argues that reading subcultures the way Hebdige (1979) and other scholars from the Birmingham Centre for Subcultural Studies did, in a structuralist manner of binary oppositions, is not always appropriate since one cannot assume resistance and groups do not always use signs to position themselves against mass or mainstream culture. She insists that such scholars' own positions have lead them to read too much politics and rebellion in their studies. Muggleton (2000) echoes her concerns saying that Hebdige's (1979) reading of the subcultures is elitist seeing youth movements as having mysterious codes that only semioticians can interpret. Hodkinson (2007) criticizes Hebdige's (1979) work as being based on theoretical and historically informed textual interpretation of subcultural studies, excluding the subjective perspectives and experiences of the participants who were in fact active consumers.

The aim of this present research was to provide an understanding of how individual young women incorporate the music they listen to into their everyday lives and everyday discourses, how they themselves interpret their own affiliation with music scenes and how this forms part of their identity if at all. Class will be considered as a possible influencing

factor for subjective choice. Thus Willis's (1978) model was used as the initial basis but was further developed using Thornton's (1995), Muggleton's (2000) and Hodkinson's (2007) critiques in mind, as well as the research question which the study aimed to answer.

The analytical framework which Willis (1978, pp.189-203) proposed, focuses primarily on a two-way interaction between the cultural item, which is the music, and the social group. Although he acknowledges outside influences such as opportunity, upbringing, age and so on, and discusses 'subjective intentionality', his analytical framework fails to analyse the interaction of outsiders with the social group and the perception which outsiders have of the social group and its practices. This element frequently surfaced in my interviews and was of considerable importance to the participants in my research. Muggleton (2002) takes a neo-Weberian approach to subcultures and calls for scholars to 'take seriously the subjective meanings of subculturalists, for these provide the motivation for their conduct. This makes the subjective dimension a central component in any explanation of social phenomena'. He argues that explanations of subcultures should start with an empirical investigation of the subjective values of individual subculturalists (Muggleton, 2000, p.10). Muggleton stresses the need to examine the subjective motivations for the action of the participants. This builds on Willis's (1978) idea of looking for what it is in a cultural item that attracts individuals to a particular style or subculture. Muggleton insists that subcultures are loose social forms that allow the participants to express a measure of individuality from the mainstream. Muggleton argues that subcultures represented 'collective expressions and celebrations of individualism' (p.79). On the other hand, Hodkinson (2002) in his study of British goths, although acknowledging that stylistic boundaries had become less clear-cut, insisted that a sense of group belonging and collective identity remained important in some young people's lives (p.18).

As Mooney (2006) points out, if heterogeneity and differentiation in group formations and commitment levels for instance, are not grasped, subcultural analysis risks not only homogenising members of subcultures but also of stigmatizing members of subcultures as 'gangsters' and 'delinquents' and so on. Mooney (2006) goes on to point out that there are different levels of belonging to a subculture. These could take 'diffused' and 'distilled' forms and could at times become 'conflated'. This idea was a prominent aspect of the formation of the categories within which I analyse my data. This was because unlike Willis (1974, 1978), Muggleton (2000) and Hodkinson (2007) who analyse pre-determined

social groups like bikers, hippies, pop, goth and so on, my research was not concerned with a given subculture, social group or groups. This is because through this study, I question the validity of the term 'subculture', and challenge the loose use of the term as well as the assumption that subcultures exist. My interest was in exploring how young Maltese women live their music and how the music they listen to forms their identities or otherwise, in spite of the type of music which they liked to listen to. It was the meaning that they themselves gave the music that was of interest to me. The analysis itself shaped the four categories which are constructed only as a tool for better understanding the processes that go on within. It was the affiliation or the lack of affiliation to social groups associated with music which was of interest to me, rather than the social group or subculture itself.

It is with this in mind that I have developed the four categories. Thus these four categories are based on two main ideas.

- The first is that members of a subculture are different and engage in music in different ways, giving different meaning to the music they listen to. One must acknowledge however, that, as Mooney (2006) puts it, there is homogeneity in diversity since although memberships are diverse, subcultures are unified and identifiable through their style, be it music, image, behaviour and so on which make them identifiable to outsiders. The subcultural style is the means of entry into that subculture as well as the means of exclusion to the outsider, thus subcultural style becomes a boundary device.
- The second is that members of music subcultures or social groups are not homogenous. Although they share commonalities, they do not necessarily engage with the practices or with the music with the same level of intensity or with the same sense of belonging.

Moreover, Willis's analytical framework makes analysing individuals who are outside recognised social groups of music subcultures very problematic. In my analysis, since I do not limit myself to particular social groups, individuals who are outside groups, by choice or otherwise, or who drift between social groups are considered as important for this study and have to be taken into consideration.

One last observation which is important to mention in this study is the presence of technology and media which facilitates engagement with music which is also highlighted by Hodkinson's (2003) 'Net.Goth: Internet Communication and (Sub) Cultural Boundaries'. Overall, life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is different to life in the 1970s when Willis

formulated his framework. His indexical analysis, though in the 70s was doubtlessly relevant, seems rather superficial in an age where technology and media has made listening to music highly accessible to most people. How long respondents listen to music, when and where are questions which although still somewhat relevant, since people make choices about when and how much music they listen to, have lost their weight when analysing a society which can listen to music twenty-four hours a day with the least effort when compared with the efforts people had to make to listen to music in the 1970s when there was no internet to download music from, no I pods or mp3 players, no smart phones or mobile phones, no CDs and so on.

Thus it is with this critique in mind that I developed my data analysis and interpretation and it is with the broadening of Willis's framework that the four categories were developed through my analysis. Rather than researching pre-existing subcultures and exploring collective meaning of cultural items, as Willis had done, I researched the way respondents made meaning out of the music they listened to, whatever their preferred music was, and whatever subculture, if any, that made part of. It was through their everyday meanings that I explored how these meanings shaped the identity of people, rather than how the subculture they were part of shaped the identity.

## **4.2 Complexities of the four categories**

I named the four categories the Fully Committed, the Committed, the Active Drifters and the Passive Drifters. The terminology for these categories, which partly draw on Matza's (1964) drift theory, will be explained later on in this chapter. Within each category five criteria were developed, the themes being the level of activity in interviewees' music choices, the importance of being up to date with the latest music, knowledge of music, the effects of music on the individual's processes of negotiating identity and the sense of belonging to the group or non-group. The table 'Participant Categories' in Appendix B illustrates this.

Since in this study, I will be using the terms categories and social groups as having two very distinct meanings, this distinction must be highlighted. A category is defined as 'a class whose nature and composition is decided by the person who defines the category...A category is therefore to be contrasted with a group, defined by the nature of the relations between the members' (Mann in Jenkins (1996) p.104). This is a methodological distinction, which makes the world a manageable object for empirical

enquiry and theoretical analysis (Jenkins, 1996, pp.118-131). Thus group membership is a relation between members themselves, as well as between members and non-members, and refers to, for instance, identifying oneself as a rocker or a rapper. On the other hand, membership of a category is not a relationship between members and is what I as the researcher have defined to be a category, for instance Fully Committed or Committed category and which the participant is not aware of. Categorisation is a generic interactional process of collective external identification (ibid).

Collectivity can thus be said to be of two different types (Jenkins, 1996, pp.103-104). The first type is when members can identify themselves as such, which means that they are aware of belonging to a group. An example is that participants in this study could identify themselves as being enthusiasts of techno or hip-hop and so on. The second type is when members might be ignorant of their own membership or of the collectivity's existence but observers are aware of their membership. In this study participants were evidently not aware of belonging to categories of Fully Committed or Committed and so on, since even at the time of the interviews these categories had not as yet been shaped and named. However, throughout the interviewing process and the ongoing analysis, I, as an observer was aware of distinct elements which respondents had, which might be useful in grouping them into categories. It is this which constitutes a difference between groups and categories. As Nadel and Bourdieu (in Jenkins, 1996) remind us, collectivity is not measurable and is merely a view of the world, thus it is necessarily abstract and simplified and must not be mistaken for reality.

Before explaining each of these categories in some detail, it must be emphasised that by no means are these categories meant to imply that such categories are fixed. Participants do not actually fit neatly into clear cut criteria. On the other hand, categories as collective forms are not fixed but are brought into being or emerge out of interaction. The complexities of identity, the changing processes through which identity is formed, are not as clear as one might think. Identity is a continuous process and thus fluidity and hybridity are an integral part of identities. Categories are being used merely to help understand the complexities of these processes rather than to make such processes seem simplistic. Moreover, one must emphasise that these categories do not exist on their own, but exist only in relation to each other.

#### **4.2.1 Characteristics of the Fully Committed**

The Fully Committed participants emphasise the similarities between members of their social group and the symbolic construction of community (Cohen, 1985) within their social groups. Symbols, such as a song, a cultural item, generate a sense of shared belonging. They are aware that they are part of a group. A song can excite the allegiance of a group and thus unites the group members in their eyes as well as in the eyes of outsiders. They share a similar sense of things or they believe that they do. This means that they do not necessarily understand things in the same way but their shared symbols allow them to believe that they do.

The Fully Committed are thoroughly connected to the cultural form or cultural item, 'the object', as Willis calls it. In this study, this object is the music that they listen to. They are also thoroughly connected to the practices of others who are as committed as themselves to that particular music. Their engagement in music and their involvement in the social practices of their social groups influence their own identities. There is a conscious relationship with the music, as well as a conscious intention in their practices.

In order to categorise respondents, Willis's (1978, p.190) framework of analysis was broadened to include aspects which Willis's framework alone would not have made possible.

Indexical analysis, which is usually associated with quantitative methods, was only a preliminary part of the analysis used to start shaping the four categories and to loosely place respondents into these categories, since the aim of this study was not to quantify behaviour or practices, but rather, to observe and explore behaviour and how the respondents understood and engaged in that behaviour. Time and involvement in the music scene were the main themes which were focused on for indexical analysis.

Usually the Fully Committed listened to their preferred music for long periods of time both in private and in public, taking every opportunity to listen to their preferred music and were unlikely to listen to any other type of music for considerable amounts of time. Their leisure time was usually taken up completely by their involvement in their music scene, either by playing it or learning an instrument, or having collections of music or even being involved in the promotion or production of the music in some way or another.

Homological analysis, in Willis's (1978, p.191) terms, attempts to analyse the interaction between the social group or groups they belonged to and the cultural item.

Therefore this analysis focused on the interactions between the Fully Committed and the music they listen to, thus highlighting what the music represents for this category, its meaning for them, as well as the attitudes which members of this category have towards their music.

The Fully Committed are socially, strongly engaged within their social group. They continuously participate in the social practices and rituals of their groups, therefore being part of the processes of creating the group's social identity as well as their own identity as individuals within that group. They are the insiders, the ones who know the 'real ideal' and who can be looked upon as role models of the social group. They are considered as an authority, as the ones to whom members of the social group look to for reference regarding everyday social practices such as image, ideology, language and overall lifestyle. They are also the ones to whom outsiders as well as insiders, look to as reference points, as typical and authentic examples of their social group. They are highly positioned in the socially constructed hierarchies of their social groups and are the ones who enjoy the admiration of the members. Thus they form the elite within the social group, a group within a group. As the elite within the group, the Fully Committed still had to continuously prove themselves through their lifestyle, their in-depth knowledge, their social practices, their image and so on, not only to be considered as insiders but also as the veterans of the group. It is the practices, rituals and common meanings of cultural forms and practices which constitute the access points of outsiders. Outsiders gained access to the circle of the insiders by adopting and internalising the social group's practices, ideologies, image and manifesting them is an entry point to becoming an insider within the social group. Becoming one of the veterans involved internalising the social practices and showing full commitment to the music.

For the Fully Committed, being up to date in their preferred music was considered a priority. This included knowing about the latest releases, newly formed bands, performances, news about performers' personal lives and so on.

In-depth knowledge of the music, in whatever particular type of music they are engaged in, having knowledge which requires research about the various bands, the songs, the dates of releases and so on, was considered as prestigious. This does not mean that all members of the social group have in-depth knowledge but it means that the members perceive the Fully Committed within their social groups who have in-depth knowledge about the music they listened to, as people to look up to, as authority in that field.



According to Willis (1978), a high intensity of social engagement activates and brings about particular meanings which the cultural item, in this case the music, becomes loaded with. The Fully Committed are very active in their cultural fields. They are the ones who give on-going meaning to the music which they engage in. It is they who set the accepted code of practices, it is towards them that outsiders look to, to find the 'real' meaning of that particular music and the practices that are associated with it.

Integral analysis is concerned with the way the music and the social group influence each other and modify each other. It looks at the lifestyle and activities of the group and the music either as a whole or as elements that condition each other as part of a unitary system (Willis, 1978, p.201). The effects of the music on the Fully Committed is that they seek to go deeper into the music and all that it brings with it, the practices, lifestyle, image and so on, and internalising such practices as a form of capital, and making them part of their identity. Very often, the Fully Committed seek to involve themselves at a higher level in two ways, which are both a means of accumulating cultural capital. The first is by learning an instrument associated with the music they are committed to, either in a self-taught way or by taking formal training. The second is by adopting practices which are typical of that social group and making them part of their everyday life. These practices include adopting the image associated with the music they listen to and incorporates clothing, accessories, hairstyle, makeup, posture, manner of movement and the general attitude towards life which other members of the social group adopt. For instance a Fully Committed rocker, or rock chick, as the female rockers call themselves, would wear the typical rock band T shirt, or lace black top, for any occasion, regardless of whether it was adequate for work, for leisure and so on. To them wearing those clothes was part of being a rock chick.

The Fully Committed strongly consider the music they listen to as a label of identity declaring that the music influenced their character and made them who they are. They are aware of the meaning they themselves give to the music and therefore the way they influence that meaning for themselves and others around them.

#### 4.2.2 Characteristics of the Committed

Like the Fully Committed, the Committed are also very connected to the music and practices of others but the level of connection is slightly less than that of the Fully Committed. In both social groups, there is a conscious relationship with the music, as well as a conscious intention in their practices. These relationships are not as intense for the Committed as they are for the Fully Committed. The Committed do not have music as a priority over all else although it ranks high in their priorities.

Once again, Willis's (1978) framework of analysis was used and broadened to be suitable for the research undertaken.

Through indexical analysis, the Committed were categorised as those who listened to their preferred music for a substantial amount of time and were involved in their preferred music scene. However this involvement was not an absolute priority and it did not take over all their leisure time leaving space for other practices. Although they did listen to their preferred music, they were open and willing to listen to other types of music considering it as beneficial to learn about a wider spectrum of music. Thus their holistic identity did not revolve exclusively around the music they preferred to listen to and the music scene they frequented. On the other hand, the process of identity consciously included other cultural forms as well as other elements such as education, peers, upbringing and so on.

Homological analysis focuses on the interaction between the social group and the cultural item (Willis, 1978). This analysis focused on the interactions between the Committed and their preferred music, be it classical, traditional, rave and so on. It therefore looked at what the music represents for the social group, and the attitudes of its members towards it.

Although the Committed are slightly less involved in their music scenes than the Fully Committed, they are still quite deeply engaged within their social group. For the Committed, their affiliations to music scenes were not the topmost priority in their life and were not the sole sources of identity formation which they themselves acknowledged. The Committed are still quite highly positioned in the social hierarchy of their social groups since they have the knowledge and closely follow social practices and rituals. They are recognised as insiders both by their social group as well as by outsiders.

Members of the Committed category, considered being up to date in their music scene as very important. It was part of the knowledge one had to possess to be considered

worthy of being an insider. Apart from in-depth knowledge, wide-ranging knowledge was also considered as prestigious. The Committed perceived the Fully Committed as a source of knowledge from which they could learn rather than a source of awe within the social hierarchy of their music scene. This was especially true for those Committed who aspired to achieve a Fully Committed status.

Since the Committed are very active in their cultural fields, they also contribute to the processes of giving on-going meaning to the music which they engage in. Although it is the Fully Committed who are generally given credit for setting the accepted code of practices, the Committed contribute substantially to these practices, sometimes in maintaining them and sometimes in altering them.

Integral analysis looks at the reciprocal influence that music and the social group have. Like the Fully Committed, the music the Committed listen to motivates them to go deeper into the music and the associated practices. They too usually try to learn an instrument to try and make their own music within their preferred musical style. However a very important distinction between them and the Fully Committed is that the image that members of the Committed category project, does not necessarily reflect the music they like. They do not necessarily adopt all practices which the social group adopt or they do not adopt such practices all the time. Whereas a Fully Committed Goth would wear the typical black clothing, makeup and hairstyle for any occasion, regardless of inadequacy, a Committed Goth would not. If a Fully Committed girl is forced to wear 'normal' clothes for a job interview, she would feel very much unlike her real self. On the other hand, a Committed girl would be comfortable to wear 'normal' clothes for an interview and is likely to choose her clothes taking into consideration the appropriateness and adequateness of her image for particular occasions. The Committed tend to value individuality and therefore pick and choose what practices to adopt and what to discard. Thus the Committed negotiate between their music scenes and social norms.

The Committed are those who believe that their preferred music had a substantial influence on their identity but they also believe that other factors were instrumental in forming their identity as well. They are aware of the meaning they give to the music and feel they can control how much the music influences them and how much meaning they give to the music and associated practices.

### 4.2.3 Characteristics of the Active Drifters

The category of the Active Drifters emphasises the differences between individual members and their social groups. The features that were taken into account to form these categories are not the sum of objective similarities or differences but only those which the actors themselves regarded as significant (Barth, 1969). Some features were used by participants as signals of similarities or difference and other features were ignored, played down and denied. It is this fluidity of identities that allows individuals to move in and out of them and this is especially evident in the categories of Active Drifters and Passive Drifters.

Identity boundaries are indefinite and are ongoing emergent products of social interaction, particularly between people having different identities (Barth in Jenkins, 1996). The analytical emphasis of the Active Drifters falls on the social construction of identities at boundaries and across boundaries that they share with other identities and in processes of being accepted within those boundaries.

Using Willis's (1978, p.190) analytical framework, the Active Drifters are considered as being connected to the cultural form or cultural item which is the music they listen to at a particular point in time. This means that they are connected to the cultural objects as well as the practices of others of the particular social group. There is a conscious choice of the kind of music and the kind of social group they engage with. There is also a conscious relationship and intention on the part of the Active Drifters in the way they engage with the music and the social group. Evaluation of the cultural form, the music and the practices, is done by the Active Drifters and they consciously engage in that cultural form, with a conscious choice of the level of intensity with which they engage in it. Their initial engagement in that cultural form might be accidental at times, but then, evaluation is done and engagement is a conscious choice though objectivity of the choice is evidently questionable, since individuals' choices are formed by several factors such as opportunity, age, environment and so on.

The initial indexical analysis which was instrumental in shaping the categories in this study revealed that some young women did not have one particular preferred type of music. On the other hand they made a conscious effort to explore different types of music and their associated social groups and practices. Moreover, the level of involvement in the associated social groups of particular types of music was a conscious choice. Thus, this was an informed choice and was not done only by analysing the music itself but by looking

at the social implications of associating oneself with that music. They took into consideration society's perception of that social group, what the social practices of that social group were and so on. Such participants were grouped into the category of Active Drifters since they were agents and active in their own drifting.

The Active Drifters moved from liking one type of music to another, from sharing social practices of particular social groups to sharing practices of other social groups. This was at times done in consecutive periods of their life, but was also done concurrently. That means that for instance, an Active Drifter could like pop for six months and move on to liking rock for the next six months and so on. It could also be that the Active Drifter, at a point in time, liked types of music which in Maltese society were considered as extremes or even opposites. For instance an Active Drifter might involve herself in both rave music and traditional folk music at the same period in her life.

In homological analysis, the meanings that are developed through interaction between the Active Drifters and music are quite complex, since the Active Drifters move in and out of several social groups quite frequently. It is this frequent visiting of different types of music and their associated social groups that makes this category a very particular one. The interaction of the Active Drifters with the different groups, brings about the perception that they are merely visitors and thus what the music represents for them, its meanings and their attitudes is distinctly different from that of the Fully Committed and the Committed.

Active Drifters, in response to external situations, select from available possibilities identifications with which to identify themselves. Being active in their choice, they do this intentionally, though they might have been influenced by external forces in their choice. For instance, they choose music from what is available to them. In so doing they contribute to the production and reproduction of the collectivities with which they are identifying (Turner, 1984). They thus evoke and construct intra-group similarities and inter-group differences.

The unity of identities is like a mask behind which the diversity and contradictions of the individually embodied point of view over time and across situations can co-exist. This is usually done backstage without having continually to be in the limelight (Jenkins, 1996).

The Active Drifters still consider being up to date in the music they are involved in at that point in time, as important but in-depth knowledge is not a priority for them. Their

involvement in one particular type of music is on a more superficial level than that of the Fully Committed and the Committed whose involvement in their preferred type of music would be much more in-depth. However, due to their fluid tastes, the Active Drifters usually have knowledge about a wider range of music than the Fully Committed and the Committed. Keeping themselves up to date is not done through intensive research but through what is readily available for instance in magazines, internet and MTV.

Integral analysis focuses on the way the social group and the music influence each other (Willis, 1978, p.201). The effect of The Active Drifters' trend of moving in and out of social groups and changing musical preferences quite frequently or liking different types of music at the same time, affects them in the way they project their image. They make it a point to project an image which reflects a mixture of tastes, combining several characteristics of different images associated with different cultural groups to create their own personalised image. This is a manifestation of their resistance to being stereotyped for instance as rockers or rappers and so on. They control how far the music influences their character and their image. They purposely try not to be identified as part of a particular social group. They prefer not to fit in with most social groups because they want their individuality to dominate. By doing this, they are paradoxically members of a non-group. Through their efforts not to be associated with a particular social group, they still have a shared commonality and they are creating a kind of non-group membership.

#### **4.2.4 Characteristics of the Passive Drifters**

The connection of the social group of the Passive Drifters to the cultural form, in Willis's (1978) terms, the music and the practices of others, is very superficial. The Passive Drifters are very passive in the musical choices, letting their surroundings take the upper hand in the music they listen to. Thus their engagement with the cultural item is usually likely to be taken over by the media, or other people whose musical choices are imposed on others in public places. There is absolutely no apparent conscious relationship with the cultural form or other members of the social group and there is also no intention on the part of the Passive Drifters.

In the initial stages, the indexical analysis which was instrumental in shaping this social group, which I call the Passive Drifters, shows that this group had no strong feelings about any particular type of music. The importance of having music in their life varied but the type of music was not important. This is not because they went into any depth in

understanding the music, neither was it because they appreciated all types of music or because they believed that all music was good. On the other hand, they were quite detached from the music and listened to whatever was being played around them. Thus the choice of music they listened to was highly dependent on the environment and society, the media, the charts, other people's choice of music and what was most readily available on the radio, YouTube and MTV. Society, or rather people around them determined what the Passive Drifters listened to, in that whatever was being played in the surroundings, through other people's choices was the music consumed by the Passive Drifters. Thus they never made conscious choices of becoming involved in any practices related to the social group. They did not have distinct tastes in music and just drifted along with the flow.

Homological analysis highlights that although the Passive Drifters make a conscious effort to try to be up to date with the music of the time, this is not as important to them as it is for the Active Drifters. For Passive Drifters, the importance of being up to date in music equates merely to being able to get by on a social level, when music is the topic of conversation. A distinct characteristic of what I call the Passive Drifters, is that there is no conscious effort or intention in the interaction between the Passive Drifters and the music which they listen to. Because of their passivity, they do not necessarily form part of a social group where members are all Passive Drifters. On the other hand, they often tag along with people who are Active Drifters, Committed or even Fully Committed. Their attitude of passivity in the music they listen to, leads to a lack of meaning and lack of representation of music. Their passivity inevitably implies that in-depth knowledge of the music they listen to is not important at all. A characteristic of Passive Drifters is that these young women do not have any in-depth knowledge and are not interested in making a conscious effort to gain it.

Integral analysis, which as Willis (1978) suggests, focuses on influences that the music and the social group have on each other, was instrumental in shaping the category of the Passive Drifters. The music did not appear to influence these young women's image which was not consciously connected to any sort of music at all. Moreover, the music they listened to was considered as completely external to their character and did not in any way indicate their identity. The Passive Drifters identified no link at all between the music and their character and identity. For them there was no influence of music on them and they did not influence the music either.

#### 4.2.5 The term ‘drifters’

The latter two categories use the term ‘drifters’ which was adopted from Matza’s Drift Theory (1964) where young people ‘drift’ from good to bad behaviour and back to good behaviour, drifting to and fro within the frames of legal and illegal activity. Matza (ibid) argued that since delinquents often opt out of delinquent behaviour when they grow older, a basic code of morality must have been in place earlier. Moreover, he argues that young people are able to deviate from this code by using neutralization techniques such as denial of responsibility and denial of injury. They used these techniques to drift in and out of conventional behaviour, taking breaks from socially approved moral restraints. Similarly, some young women were found to drift to and fro from liking one type of music to another, and back to the former or simply moving on to other types of music. Within the music scene, to some who are fully committed to the music they like, this is considered a ‘crime’ especially if the subcultures or counter-cultures are rivals and are constantly in conflict regarding ideologies, images and so on. As Hirschi (1969) suggested, the reasons why adolescents engage in delinquency are similar to the reasons Veblen’s (1899) gentlemen of leisure and elite upper class engage in conspicuous consumption. As discussed in Chapter 1, conspicuous consumption implies the manifestation of consuming goods to gain respectability and status in society. Since this study seeks to throw light on young women’s music consumption as part of their leisure consumption, and since Veblen’s (1899) volume of work on leisure is seminal to this work, the two concepts are amalgamated to give these categories a sound grounding.

Moreover, Hirschi (1969) points out that Matza and Sykes (1961, pp.712-719) suggest that delinquents have values of the leisure class, the same values which Veblen (1899) ascribed to the leisure class. According to Matza and Sykes (1961), young people engage in delinquent behaviour because it gives them a feel-good feeling, just like upper class men’s conspicuous leisure involving adventure activities makes them feel good. Young people who engaged in delinquent behaviour viewed normal occupations as not worth the work since they could get more money engaging in illegal activity. Similarly, Veblen’s (1899) gentlemen of leisure had negative views of what they saw as menial labour, thus legal ‘normal’ jobs were considered as not worth doing and were therefore looked down upon. Delinquent behaviour in young people was a route taken up to gain rank and prestige within that network. Similarly conspicuous leisure in the elite upper classes provided status within the social hierarchy. Moreover, one of the purposes of



delinquent behaviour was that of showing and proving masculinity and toughness while gentlemen of leisure had a parallel respect for masculinity.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has therefore focused on how Willis's theory of cultural forms and analytical framework have been developed, drawing on more recent work of Muggleton, Hodkinson and Thornton, among others. It also focused on how the four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters emerged during the process of analysis and how vital they were in contributing to shaping my interpretation of meanings.

## **PART III: DATA ANALYSIS**

## **Introduction**

Part III focuses on the analysis and interpretation of data. Chapter 5 explores themes which are linked to the feminine nature of incorporation of music. It analyses how young women distinguish between work and leisure in the spheres of house chores and making music. It also looks at how important music is for young Maltese women when going out for leisure. Young women's perception of how style, image, language and embodiment of music are linked to identities is analysed as well as the feminine nature of judging others through these indicators and through the music people listen to. The last part of the chapter looks at the bedroom culture of young Maltese women and how their musical preferences are shaped by others, mainly their boyfriends, partners and friends. Nineteen of the 20 respondents were heterosexual and one respondent was bi-sexual. Some of these respondents were in a relationship while others were single and hung out regularly with friends.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the particular four categories, which developed through the analysis of the data, namely the Fully Committed and the Committed, and the Active Drifters and the Passive Drifters, respectively. This was done initially by referring to Willis's (1978) analytic framework of cultural forms and further developed through the perspectives of Thornton, Muggleton and Hodkinson. Willis's (1978) analytical framework uses indexical analysis, homological analysis and integral analysis. The indexical analysis is rather statistical and looks at how long respondents listen to music and how involved they are in the music. The homological and integral analysis are more interpretative: the homological analysis looks at the interaction between the social group and the cultural item which is the music and the integral analysis focuses on the influences that the social group and the music have on each other. These three methods of analysis were instrumental in shaping the four categories mentioned above. Categorisation of participants is used merely to enable the researcher and the reader to understand better the varying levels of intensity with which young Maltese women engage with their music. These categories must not be interpreted as implying that participants could simply be sectioned into clear cut groups because that would defeat the purpose of these categorisations. On the other hand, it must be emphasised that boundaries dividing these categories are highly permeable and that practices within these categories are extremely fluid. Categories are at times similar and at times different to each other. The categories themselves should be seen as tools to

understand the complexity of the relations and processes that occur between them as well as within them.

## **Chapter 5: Young Maltese Women Living Their Music**

Through analysis and interpretation of data gathered in the interviews done with young Maltese women, this chapter gives a general introduction to the data from which the discussion of the four categories will be set, taking us from the general to the particular. This chapter focuses on the distinctively feminine nature of incorporation of music, which refers to how young women internalise social practices including physical movement and language, linked to the particular type of music. Thus this section of the analysis will look into particular themes which are strongly related to young women's consumption of music in Maltese society. Themes which will be analysed are how young women use music and the links between the music they listen to and the image they project, (that is the external elements which include style, posture and so on), the language they use and the embodiment of such music. The judgemental characteristic of young Maltese women will be analysed and finally the idea of young women negotiating boundaries with their partners, especially male partners, will be considered.

## **5.1 The Maltese feminine nature and music**

Interviews carried out in this study revealed features which are particular to the feminine nature of the participants. These included how music was used as background to work as understood by young Maltese women and how these young women used music as a time killer.

### **5.1.1 Young women's distinction between leisure and work**

The term leisure is understood in different ways by different individuals and young Maltese women are no exception. The meaning that young Maltese women give to their practices as leisure, work or a combination of the two reflects wider discourses and past perceptions highlighted in feminist studies and leisure studies.

At the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, feminists criticised definitions of leisure which assume an oppositional relationship to paid labour. They argued that if leisure is defined as being separate from work, this automatically indicates that unpaid domestic labour at home is not work. Consequently, the woman's traditional role of housewife takes on the image of not being work but consisting merely of free time with her chores being closer to leisure than work (Langhamer, 2000). Feminists emphasised the individuality of meaning that women themselves gave to their own practices which differ both between individuals and in the context they are carried out (ibid.). In this research, the interviewees did not define

leisure as an activity although many did contrast it to what they considered to be work. For some, leisure merely meant a break from work, a time to relax doing whatever it is that is relaxing, which in Gershuny & Fischer's (1999) terms is the residual definition of leisure, highlighting the time left after work and duties are done.

*(Leisure is when) you have a break, you have the time to do something relaxing. It could be listening to music, a hobby, you chatted to a friend, something you do when you have nothing on your mind, to pass time. (Elaine, student)*

*...leisure is where you can just sit back, relax and literally put your worries aside and literally, this is me time...from now on, taking it easy... Most of the time it involves music in my case...any music...but it is a time when you shut the doors and have some time for yourself or relaxing time with people of whom you appreciate their company. (Helen, student)*

The definition of work itself turned out to be quite fluid as well. The traditional understanding of work, as being a paid job or employment, still featured but together with it, especially in student life, young women considered other duties such as studying and doing assignments as work or duty. Moreover, many households still retained a traditional Maltese patriarchal family where the males' roles and responsibilities and the females' roles and responsibilities were very clearly distinct. Thus the young women's positions within the division of labour meant that particular household obligations such as cleaning, cooking, washing, housekeeping and the general running of the household were the females' responsibilities. For the interviewees, doing these obligatory chores was not considered as fun for the individual, and thus, they were considered as work. This reflected sociologists' view, as early as the 1930s, that paid employment and unpaid work such as house chores were both part of 'work' (Lynd & Lynd, 1937).

For young women, music signified or rather indicated leisure, in that respondents reported that they often had a break from what they conceived as work, which was not necessarily employment, by stopping to listen to some music for a few minutes.

*I take a 5 minute break from studying and I listen to a song quickly. It is something different to study. (Elaine, student)*

The music therefore, takes on a symbolic function here, or what we might call a ritual function in that the music symbolises leisure, free time, time away from any sort of work.

### 5.1.2 Music as background to house chores

Young women did not only listen to music in leisure time, as a break from study time or work, but for all the young women who participated in this study, it also accompanied duties related to what is often Maltese society's understanding of the traditional female roles such as house chores. Some respondents felt that music was essential if they were doing house work. Helen (student) said that she listens to music as background to chores and duties

*...when I am driving, when I am cooking or in the kitchen, when I clean the car, when I clean the house in general...(Helen, student)*

In the absence of any audio equipment, respondents still found a way of having music as an accompaniment. Kirsty said:

*If I am cleaning, the stereo is full on. Otherwise I fall into lethargy...When I have nothing available, no computer, no stereo etc. I sing myself...Sometimes while cooking I realise that the stereo is not on but then I realise that I would be singing inside my brain (Kirsty, lecturer)*

Thus the recall of songs and tunes from the past makes it possible for a person to have music accompanying them through the activity. Respondents reported that they used music as background to activities which they considered as work or duty, to make work seem less like work, making it more tolerable and closer to fun. As Mary said,

*When you are cleaning, etc. I think you have to have some music on...time passes quicker, it is not so boring...(Something boring like work you can) change into something less boring with music (Mary, student)*

It is therefore active agency where these young women take charge and make an effort towards blending work and fun together making the division between work and leisure very permeable and therefore even more problematic to analyse.



Although listening to the music of their choice made tasks seem less boring, there were some young women who found music distracting when doing tasks that needed a lot of concentration while other young women, on the other hand found that music helped them increase their level of concentration. Those young women who found music distracting said that when they needed to concentrate very hard on what they were doing, such as academic work, they needed complete silence since music would be a distraction, especially if it was music they really liked. They would find themselves singing to the music and possibly even dancing to it rather than focusing on the task itself.

*...the only time I cannot take music is when I have a serious problem with Maths where I need a lot of concentration otherwise I end up listening to the music especially if it is a song I like. It is easy for music to make me lose concentration. If I am programming and it is giving me trouble, I need perfect silence, not even birds singing (Kirsty, lecturer)*

On the other hand, the young women who felt that music increased their level of concentration used music as a tool to help them concentrate, shutting the world outside, letting the music push them into deeper concentration on the task.

*Most days at work, I put on the headphones nice and loud to stop the sound of people talking around me which I find really distracting when studying or marking assignments. With the music I can then concentrate really well and get on with understanding what I am reading much faster (Theresa, lecturer)*

In Theresa's case, the noise made by people talking and the noise made by music was distinctly different, suggesting that the idea of noise is culturally shaped. Music to her was something she could either give all her attention to or switch to the background, depending on the context and the tasks she was doing. This fluidity of the use of music by young women, the variety of ways in which individuals themselves used music and the different ways different young women used music implies that in itself, music was a means through which similarities and differences became more visible and therefore music becomes quite an important part of the process of identity of social groups and individuals.

### 5.1.3 Music in young women's private worlds

A number of respondents used music in a particular way. For them, being alone in the house was a time to look forward to, since it would be an opportunity to turn the volume of the stereo or computer up quite loud and transform the house into a public space, filling the house with music, or rather, expanding the private space to the whole house. The feeling of being engulfed by the music as well as the feeling that they were pushing out this music to those in the proximity gave them elation, an exhilarating feeling.

Happiness and the feeling of wanting to make a statement through their music, announcing to everyone that this was who they are, obliging those around them to listen to the music they were listening to, contrasts with times when they were in a mood where they just wanted to go to their bedroom, put on their headphones and just listen to the music, shutting out the rest of the world, and keeping their music to themselves. Feelings which triggered this mood were usually anger, frustration and stress. When young women felt that society was putting them under pressure to achieve goals, was stressing them out, making them feel like they cannot cope, they resorted to listening to their music in their own very private space. The private space of the bedroom was made even more private with the use of headphones, by shutting out any external sounds which signify the world around them, and helps them create a kind of safe cocoon where there was only space for themselves and the music.

*When I want to be alone, just me and myself, when I want to bury myself in my pillow to shut out everything else, I use headphones with very loud music so it is just me and myself. It is like the music goes straight to your brain, you can hear all the details, it is electrifying, you are in the midst of it and there is no space for anything or anyone else (Theresa, Committed, lecturer)*

Listening to music through headphones enabled young women to isolate themselves in their own private space. The private space of intimacy with the music and with the self, helped young women not only to shut out the world, but also to escape from it, from the stress of everyday life, from whatever it is they feel they want to get away from.

*Sometimes when I have a fight with my mum or my sister, I just go to my room, put on the headphones and listen to music, alone, like going into a private world of my own (Anna, Fully Committed, student)*

Escaping to this private world meant a different world of dreams, an imaginary world, as discussed earlier, a world where the individual is happy, or is living an ideal reality, a fairy tale such as meeting the man of their dreams and getting married and living happily ever after. Anna's dreams, for instance, were about her having special powers in a world of Vampires and monsters, while Theresa dreamt of a life lived happily ever after.

The link of music to memories was a very strong element that respondents spoke about. This reflects one way in which respondents made meaning out of the music they listened to, recalling events or happenings which took place when they had listened to that music. A song either carried memories, or it did not. The ones that carried memories become the ones that were meaningful to the person and technology has made it possible to reach these memories whenever we want to. Reliving the emotions of what happened when we heard a song, makes music more powerful than a smell or a painting since it draws us into a sequence of re-lived experience (Sloboda, 2001). Respondents reported that memories such as, where they were when they listened to the song, with whom they were, what they did, were all brought back when they listened to the particular song. Songs could evoke happy or sad memories, feelings and moods, nostalgia of a happy gathering or even sad memories with the probable consequence of respondents avoiding listening to the song.

*Many songs have memories attached to them, otherwise it would not be part of you, that is what music is after all. So many of them would mean nothing, you just listen to them and that is it, but many others there are the songs which remind you of something, like this song I had danced to with my first boyfriend, or Jesus Christ Superstar...Gethsemane, I do not listen to it if possible because it reminds me of my dad because the night before he died I dreamt of that song and so did my mum, so hey, that is out of the question (Kirsty, Committed, lecturer)*

Although some music draws on a collective memory, other memories are very personal and individual, like Kirsty's. According to Smart (2007), memory is selective and the means of selection are acquired either interactively or socially. This means that the

development of a person's memory becomes laden with meaning which guides that person's selection. As Misztal in Smart (2007) points out, that selection is closely related to emotions and/or meaningful contexts. The more intense our emotions are, the more we remember. Thus we remember music that is linked to very happy or very sad moments. Kirsty linked the sad feelings experienced when her father passed away, to the song 'Gethsemane'. The father's death is not only linked to emotions but is also linked to a very meaningful context to Kirsty, that of family, the paternal figure, childhood and so on. This specific song, Gethsemane, for Kirsty is an 'anchor' which brings back memories of her father's death. The same songs might act as 'anchors' (Jordan, 2002) for different people, bringing back memories of happenings or feelings from their respective pasts.

Moreover, memory can produce an understanding of the past which is re-processed through the present, giving new meaning (Smart, 2007). Respondents were aware of this and were reluctant to voluntarily listen to music linked to happy memories when they were sad because the songs would not remind them of happy feelings any more, but become laden with a different meaning.

*I do not think so (listen to music when I am angry) because when I am in a really bad mood I do not want to put on my favourite songs because then I will ruin them...they will make part of the bad memories (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant)*

Music is not merely sound, but like material objects, such as photographs, some music, for an individual, is laden with meaning and memory and thus, a documentation of who the individual was, who s/he is and who s/he is aiming to be in the future. New technologies have contributed to increased access to music and therefore this documentation in the form of music has become easily accessible to young women.

#### **5.1.4 The virtual aspect of Maltese young women's worlds**

Exposure to Internet has become an integral part of young Maltese women's lives in most strata of Maltese society and as Tania put it

*Internet changed people's lives basically. I do not know what this generation would do without internet...people would just fizzle out and die! (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant)*

In this study, it was evident that young Maltese women, like young women in late modern societies, have been swept into a virtual environment where they rely on the internet to access music. With internet becoming available on affordable devices which have several downloading features, the possibility of saving large amounts of music on portable devices in the form of personal playlists, music has become closely associated with virtual spaces which are shared worldwide. Attractive and affordable internet packages together with free WiFi hotspots are now becoming available to make these virtual spaces increasingly accessible to young people. In 2012, 77.5 per cent of households in Malta and Gozo had access to internet with 41 per cent of persons who accessed the internet doing so from a mobile handheld device (NSO, 2013).

Respondents found the fact that they were able to share music files instantaneously over the internet with their friends, no matter how physically far they were located, as very useful, since they could listen to the same music concurrently while chatting online about the music in a virtual space that eliminates geographical boundaries. You Tube was very popular with respondents as a source of accessing music from across the world as well as local music. You Tube facilitates an increase in young women's cultural or subcultural capital, since as Anna said, when one types in the name of a band, their various songs are displayed and other similar bands are displayed too. On Facebook, when one 'likes' a band, the other people's names who 'liked' that band are displayed making networking with people who have similar musical tastes from across the world very accessible, while also increasing their social capital. The internet, as Castells (2000) points out, has become instrumental in building and maintaining on-line communities. It is a kind of accelerated inclusion which of course implies that those who do not have access to these virtual spaces or are not as proficient on computers might be excluded from these on-line communities. Moreover, on-line social networks have made joining groups very easy. Anna said that she would join groups with the same musical preferences on Facebook

*On Facebook there are groups of Iron Maiden and you join...people from all over the world. Sometimes I write a comment on the wall and we start a conversation (Anna, Fully Committed, student)*

The virtual element of such scenes is by no means the only element which interviewees enjoyed. Young Maltese women, in their different everyday contexts, did not use virtual

space as the exclusive means of realisation of the music they liked. On the other hand they used virtual space to complement and intensify their musical interactions with people on the local scene. This follows Longhurst's (2007) argument that although scenes have virtual dimensions, it is probable that people sharing the same tastes will interact at varying levels, with others who live locally. Therefore respondents have developed an interaction between the virtual scene and the local scene, in that at times face to face interactions follow virtual interactions and at other times it was the face to face interactions which took place before the virtual interactions. Of course, young Maltese women often live through a combination of interactions on both scenes. For instance, let us take the rave subculture in Malta. Enthusiasts of this subculture sometimes meet through the internet and chat on Facebook but then have face to face interaction too in parties themselves. As Crowe and Bradford (2006) suggest, virtual worlds offer spaces where norms and practices very often mirror those of the material world. As Joanne relates

*Sometimes, even on Facebook, people look me up to ask if I have tickets for a particular party and from there I get to know them, we become friends .... Sometimes I go to a party...I still remember a particular person who stopped me and said, 'You like that particular DJ, don't you? Because I always see your promotion on Facebook...and I have no idea who this person is when in fact she knew all about me (Joanne, Fully Committed, administrative officer)*

Thus, the virtual dimensions of the music scene and the material dimension, interpenetrate, so that interaction becomes a multi-layered process within the same music scene and this is how many young Maltese women live their music and the associated social networks. One meaning that young Maltese women give to music is that it is the instrument that can lead to interaction with others and thus a means of access to social networks and social groups. However, some respondents were reluctant to interact on social networks with people they did not know face to face. Lisa said that the social networks she used were Facebook and MSN but she only chatted with people she knew.

*The social network... I use Facebook and MSN. It is with people I already know. I do not like ...even if someone adds me and I do not know who it is, I do not like it...I prefer my privacy, I do not usually accept. Then again you do see friends of friends and they post their type of music and you*

*just listen to it to see what type of person it is (Lisa, Passive Drifter, service manager)*

However she would listen to music posted by ‘friends of friends’ to see what type of person they were. The friends of friends, although they are not people she knows, are not considered by Lisa, as complete outsiders and the boundaries of her privacy are negotiated to enable her to listen to the music they posted to try to make out the types of persons that they are. Although, as she mentions in other parts of the interview, she does not believe that one can judge a person, or can make out the person’s identity only by the music they listen to, yet in the virtual space, the music becomes a tool which Lisa uses to try to make out what type of person that is, the tastes that the person has. This is all done in the privacy of virtual spaces. Although these spaces enable *social* networking, there is a strong element of privacy. People can check other people’s Facebook profile without them ever knowing. People can see other people’s photographs, which the owner makes accessible, without them ever knowing. Likewise, people can listen to the music other people posted, without them ever knowing that anyone was interested enough in them to try to get to know them through their music posts. The music is thus one of the ‘tests of identity’ which young women use to get to know about the person in private without anyone ever knowing and this is made possible through these virtual scapes.

This attitude shows the strength that music has in the virtual social networking processes. Although most young women would not chat with people they do not know, they would listen to the music posted by ‘friends of friends’ to check out what type of people they were, pointing out that the music is an identifying element of character as discussed earlier. Thus music sharing in such cases is used as a kind of tester before chatting. Depending on their reaction to that music, they might decide to chat to them, including them in their virtual social network or they might decide not to. It is not just the music alone which determines this decision, but it is a complexity of indicators and cultural forms, and the significance of each for that person.

Apart from the virtual aspect of music consumption, making music was also an integral part of the process of identity formation. However, different respondents had different perspectives of whether making music was actually part of leisure or part of work.

### 5.1.5 Making music as work or leisure?

An interesting point is, that those respondents who learnt music and practised playing an instrument at some point in their lives, invariably felt that practicing, often felt like work. This was especially true when the stress of music exams was coming up. Studying pieces that the music teacher had assigned to them was obligatory and therefore was considered as work, but playing other pieces which were of their own choice, that they liked and were not obliged to play for the teacher to criticise, were more enjoyable and more like leisure. Choice, being able to choose what they play, was a very important factor here.

*Practicing the piano...the Studies are uffff but something I chose and downloaded, that is ok. (Bertha, student)*

Bertha here outlines the boundary between her study pieces and her ‘fun’ pieces. The study pieces formed part of an insider’s structured musical education and were prescribed by her teacher and a set curriculum or programme of study while her ‘fun’ pieces were her choice, possibly of different styles to what the teacher assigned, making them part of the outsider’s repertoire. There were no deadlines, no assessments and there was no need to prove performing capabilities through these pieces, so they were considered as part of leisure by young women. Thus, the same activity of learning a piece of music could be seen as leisure or work depending on what the piece represents. Studying music formally, attending lessons privately or in a music school, reminds us of formal education structures which children aged 4-16 are obliged by Maltese law to attend. Thus what might have started off as an interest or hobby, becomes something else. Through the process of music lessons, homework, assessments and examinations, a hobby becomes so similar to the formal educational setting, that somewhere along the way, the enjoyment of learning an instrument is overshadowed by the drive to attain good results.

*Learning music for me was never leisure or fun. It was always another source of stress. I had to do really well in my exams, not just a pass or a merit but a distinction, because that is what was expected of me. I used to be terrified I would not do well. The only time I used to enjoy playing music was when I secretly used to pick a piece of music and try it out just for fun, or I used to download a pop song and try to play it...anything not classical because that is what you learn in music lessons. Secretly, because*



*according to my parents that was a waste of time. It was better to spend that time practicing technique! (Theresa, lecturer).*

What Theresa highlights here is essentially a social implication of doing well in exams for a Maltese girl. Academic achievements as well as artistic achievements are very important in many Maltese families, across most social strata, since they are instrumental in building an individual's reputation and consequently the family's reputation. Since traditionally young men are considered as future bread winners, academic achievements are considered as essential with the family prioritising academic education for males. Artistic talents in males are also considered as assets but academic achievements are considered to take priority since in Malta the mentality prevails that the arts do not render a good income, as discussed in Chapter 2. On the other hand, for young women, academic achievements are considered as important but artistic achievements, in social classes, are considered as equally important. This is because traditionally, artistic skills have for a long time formed part of conspicuous leisure which positions the girl and her family in a particular social class (Veblen, 1899).

For young women, the same action of practicing an instrument seems to have adopted a very fluid role and frequently changed from being considered as work, to being considered as leisure, according to the individual's perception of that action at that particular point in time, in that particular context. Achieving good academic results seems to be a priority in most strata of Maltese society because of the competitive spirit in the education setting and the rivalry between students and their families. The pressure of doing well in exams is considered as work, while using the same techniques that were studied for exams, to play a piece of music simply for enjoyment, is considered as leisure. The division between the two is extremely flimsy because it implies that one cannot enjoy playing a song on an instrument without having practiced the technique for hours before that, to be able to play the song. Moreover, it is futile to practice for hours if one cannot enjoy playing the songs one likes. Both sides of the dividing line penetrate the opposite, making the dividing line quite transparent. Official certificates and qualifications add to cultural capital while being able to give a live performance of a song your friends like, enhances social capital as well as cultural or subcultural capital.

### 5.1.6 Priority of music in leisure

Music also accompanied leisure activities especially when engaging in these activities in the company of others. For young women, going out with a boyfriend or going out with a group of friends often involved going to places where there is music going on. When people interact, they generally focus on each other but music frequently plays a considerable part in these interactions since it is part of rituals which structure interaction, creating an invisible boundary to outsiders. Interaction rituals form when individuals are engaged in common actions such as listening to the same music or enjoying the same performance.

Viewing ritual as a busy interaction leads to viewing culture as a complex process. Goffman (1971) suggests that rituals serve to both separate and join persons. Rituals have meaning only within the context of social relationships where persons find and confirm their identities and in these relationships then join their actions to the process of the social life of their group. Thus outsiders can find it difficult to be part of that group. Rituals become avenues for bridging the gap between persons and social order and provide a bond for connecting persons to one another (Craighead & Nemeroff, 1996).

Young women perceive music as leisure, in at least two ways. The first is music acting as a background to rituals of interaction while at the same time shaping and maintaining these same rituals, as discussed above. The second is as a source of entertainment rather than as a ritual. It was when the music demanded a considerable amount of their attention, making them decrease the level of interaction with others, that young women referred to the music as a source of entertainment. This happened in activities such as frequenting clubs, discos and rave parties, where the volume at which the music is played, is so loud that it is difficult to communicate verbally with those around. The music takes over that leisure time and becomes the primary source of entertainment. Sociologically, entertainment is an activity that intentionally provides enjoyment to the audience (Stebbins, 2006), be it self, individual or public. Moreover, entertainment needs skill, knowledge and experience and does not include incidental entertainment coming from other sources other than an entertainer. Leisure and entertainment are closely related in that leisure is the use of free time for one's enjoyment, although Rojek (2009) argued that leisure in itself is a form of labour. Entertainment differs from leisure in that it is the action of providing enjoyment for self or others and is associated with predesigned events and performances purposely designed to entertain others. Thus people choose specific

types of entertainment for their leisure time. Interviewees associated entertainment with live performances. In clubs and parties, when the music played was recorded, the DJ was considered as the entertainer, giving a live performance, giving life and spontaneity to pre-recorded music.

Very often respondents reported that they opted for such entertainment for leisure, when they were in a group whom they met often and where therefore the need to talk would not be so much of a priority. In such cases, the places frequented were usually a conscious choice. When the music was the primary source of entertainment, taking priority even over verbal communication with others, it was usually a liking for a particular kind of music which motivated the choice of the places to frequent depending on the type of music offered by the club or disco. Knowing that a particular club played a particular kind of music was one of the main reasons which made young women choose leisure places.

*When I was 16 I used to choose places where they played loud music but now no...Empire for example. Always there because of the music...ehmm what is his name...of Summer of 69...forgot his name...Grease for example they used to play there. They did not play today's music...all that noise where I cannot understand anything, but they used to play 80s music which I liked so I used to go there. When I used to go somewhere else I used to get bored. (Mary, student)*

On the other hand examples of music being in the background include restaurants, wine bars, pubs, coffee shops and the like. In most cases, music is not produced by a live band or by entertainers performing in real time but is reproduced through technological equipment. Music in such cases is also not the primary source of enjoyment but is only in the background and thus, it does not take priority over verbal communication. When going out, young women emphasised that it was not only the music that was important but many other things. Interacting with others, talking to friends or boyfriends was a priority, making social interaction their main aim of going out. The music played, according to the young women interviewed, has no effect on whether to frequent that place or not. Even when music is being played live in such venues, it is not the focus of the leisure activity. The attention is spread over a complex combination of other factors such as food, drink and dialogue. In this case, music is there to enhance the atmosphere and respondents felt that they could then choose either to listen to it or simply ignore it, or switch between the two

as often as they liked. While one girl could be focusing on the music, the other girl could be ignoring it completely and focusing on the dialogue that was going on. This meant that within the same group, this was an individual choice. It suggests that young women like to frequent places where they are individually able to control their levels of attention to interaction and music. The relation and choice between leisure and entertainment is therefore made by the young women themselves. Kirsty highlights this:

*I want quiet...I got tired of all the loud noise...I try to choose places where the music is soothing like some soft jazz...there was a wine bar in Paceville which was really nice... in wine bars the music is normally not loud, it is not the point to have loud music...By quiet I do not mean silence. Quiet is somewhere relaxed where I can talk without screaming. Now if we are quiet and there is a sax and we stopped to listen to it, you know there is still quiet.  
(Kirsty, lecturer)*

Like most participants in this study, Kirsty highlights the difference in her perspective between silence and quiet, implying that silence to her is a total lack of sound and quiet being not making excessive noise. It reflects contemporary Maltese society's and probably most European societies' trend of leading a lifestyle which is incessantly accompanied by sounds, be it music, engines, horns, media and so on. One could arguably escape to the countryside for absolute silence in most countries though the sounds of nature are usually still present. However, Malta being so densely populated and not having too many green areas, this is not always possible. The countryside is very often in close proximity of roads and traffic. Silence can be reached in a closed space, at home, in a studio and so on. However, more prominent is the idea that young women actually avoid this silence.

*Sometimes I prefer staying in peace and quiet listening to music ...Even if I go to the library at University, I make sure that I have headphones. Downstairs it is very silent and silence bothers me but upstairs it would be noisy so I prefer to listen to music than a lot of mumbling...For example I spent the day cutting out Maltese poems, I got fed up, how long can you be cutting Maltese poems? So something I have to listen to. Do I need to listen to ...silence? If you drop a needle you can hear it? No! So I want something going on (Tamara, student)*

My data revealed that most young Maltese women are uneasy in a silent environment and it is they themselves who choose an alternative quiet atmosphere, usually with music played at a low volume in the background to create a quiet but not a silent environment. Possibly, today's society has become so used to life being incessantly accompanied by sounds of some sort that the absence of sound makes us uncomfortable.

## **5.2 How young women link music to style, image and language as indicators of identity**

The interviews in this study suggested that young Maltese women link the music to which people listen, to other symbols of identity such as image, which includes all that is visibly manifested, and language. Not all young women labelled people simply through the music they listen to since not all young women gave musical taste the same significance as a contributing factor to a person's social identity. However, overall, respondents linked music to image and embodiment. Tastes in music and image were also reflected in the language used and the social class that the young women came from.

### **5.2.1 Young women's attention to image**

Most young Maltese women pay a lot of attention to the image they project and consequently to the clothes they wear. They are conscious that image makes the first impression on people. The interviews carried out revealed that their choice of clothes was a statement of taste and a statement of what type of people they were. The image they projected was a clear indicator of their social identity. It was the young Maltese women's perception that in general young Maltese men did not bother as much as they did as to what they wear. They acknowledged that some young men may take hours thinking of what to wear but in general, the common idea was that whatever a man wore was 'ok' unless he looked like a complete nerd which then moved him out of the social boundaries of 'cool'. On the other hand, young women felt they had to be very careful in their dress choice, lest people get the wrong impression. The line of divide between being considered 'cool' or a 'ħamalla' (vulgar) was quite fine, and the young women who did not want to be considered as 'ħamalli' took great care in making sure their appearance did not verge on the vulgar. When going out, young women had to think of fashion, the music they would be dancing to, the comfort of the clothes they wore which would allow them to dance, as Dina says

*Sometimes when I am going out and I know we would be going to a disco, I wear things in which I can dance, in which I feel comfortable. More towards pop, I wear a skirt, a top...comfortable to dance in (Dina, student)*

On the other hand, young men could just simply wear T shirt and jeans and that would be fine. The nonchalance with which young men chose what to wear in itself was an indicator of being 'cool'.

*Well it is very different. We girls spend hours deciding what to wear while boys, they just grab the first T shirt they find and that's it. (Theresa, lecturer)*

Young women considered young men who took care of their appearance as vain. There are different ways in which young men take care of appearance and they all mean different things to young women. For instance vanity could be in the sense of building up muscles at the gym, building up on the macho image of a man. Vanity could also mean an obsession about an impeccable hairstyle which was still a manly thing in young women's perceptions. Waxing, till a few years ago was considered as associated with gay men, but nowadays, the trend of macho body builders waxing or shaving has started to be absorbed by mainstream society and many young men wax their chest, arms and legs, since it has started to become the norm and viewed as signifying being modern. On the other hand, waxing around the eyebrows is something that could imply being gay for a man. Men wearing makeup, such as foundation and eyeliner was a definite indicator of a gay sexual orientation for young Maltese women.

*Muscled men are always in fashion if you know what I mean. Actually it is funny, now come to think of it, till six years ago, a man who shaved was considered to be gay...now macho men shave...I mean footballers shave, cool men shave...it is the trend. I mean you would not see an Armani advert with a handsome men covered in hair! So I think that made a difference. Nowadays, trimming eyebrows and makeup means gay for men... well it depends on how the eyebrows are done as well. (Theresa, lecturer)*

The line of divide therefore of how far young men's vanity and the image projected rested in the boundaries of straight and macho or ventured into the boundaries of gay, in young women's eyes, is very permeable and has shifted in the last few years. As Theresa suggested, even the style of the eyebrow shaping, was indicative of masculinity, being straight or gay. There is therefore a continuous process of how norms of what is considered cool in a man's image, what is considered as an indicator of sexual orientation, in the different strata of society, shift from time to time.

### **5.2.2 Meanings young women give to image**

As discussed above, image and style are very important to young Maltese women in identifying types of people. As Hebdige (1979) argues, style symbolises cultural groups and is an indicator of social class. Particularly in the Maltese context in the 1990s, according to Mitchell (2002), class, status and command were complexly interrelated and Maltese social actors rarely regarded them in isolation from each other. Young Maltese women, in this study, seem to have preserved these standards of class, status and command of which image and style are indicators.

A young woman's taste, especially in clothes, accessories, shoes and hairstyle, signified much more than a young man's taste in clothes and so on. Moreover, young women were very quick to position others in social strata through the style they wore. All the young women who were interviewed were very proficient in interpreting the current meanings of cultural items, which surrounded style but they did not all give different items of style the same significance. For instance, to some, a very short mini skirt was what would cross the boundary to 'ħamallu' (vulgar) while to others, tasteless cheap accessories were 'ħamalli' and to others the style of make-up and hair could be what makes a girl 'ħamalla' and to others, simply the tightness of the clothes which in their eyes the figure could not carry well was what makes the girl 'ħamalla'. Of course, very often, it was a combination of several of these factors which ultimately attributed the label of 'ħamalla' to a young woman. These combined factors reflected the capital inherited from the family and also the level of respectability of the young woman, which, according to Skeggs (1997), signifies class. Most of these style factors were gender specific since for young men, piercings, tattoos, accessories and hairstyle were the items which were more likely to constitute a 'ħamallu'.

The social meanings surrounding different types of music seemed to be well known to young Maltese women. Therefore, in their perspective, the music one listened to meant that the person would frequent certain clubs which played that music and not other types of music. This also meant that they would probably adopt the style which was the norm in that social group. Music, style and venue were interconnected enabling the young women to identify others through these three variables. Some interviewees, as will be discussed in the next few chapters, did not like labelling others simply from the music they listened to, in isolation. However, the combination of the music, style, image and venue together, were usually good indicators which they could then use to make out his or her social identity.

When the young women were not familiar with the social practices and styles linked to a particular type of music, then the style, image and venue were amongst the main factors which they looked to, to get an idea of the person and his or her tastes.

### **5.2.3 Language: an indicator of class**

Apart from style (the type of fashion one adopts) and image (the character that is projected to the public through style), language is also strongly linked to a person's social identity. The interviews conducted in this study revealed that for young Maltese women, language was a very significant indicator of people's position in the social strata. As Dina points out, language, music, style and social practices are very often interrelated.

*Because if you like that style, without wanting to, you start wearing that style and behave in that style because you would like it. If someone likes rap a lot, even the way he talks...they talk in a certain way. I remember a friend of mine was obsessed about Rap...about MnM and even when he speaks to you he says 'yo'...you know. Even the way he dresses...big tops, big trousers....that type (Dina, student)*

Apart from the language directly related to the music, such as 'yo' is linked to rap, 'brother' is linked to metal and so on, Malta's bi-lingualism is particularly significant here. As discussed in Chapter 2, Malta's history shows that the Maltese as a people, went through political turmoil on whether Maltese, English or Italian was to become the official language. At present Maltese and English are the official languages meaning that even in the education structure, English and Maltese are used. On a social level, English is associated with a good education and economic status. Maltese is considered as the



language of the people, including those who are positioned low in the social strata but also including those high in the social strata, who are more in favour of preserving Maltese tradition and culture.

In Maltese contemporary society, therefore, people speak either Maltese or English, or a mixture of both. Speaking English is interpreted as ‘tal-pepe’ (snobbish) by the lower classes, but it also signified being educated (Mitchell, 2002) and genteel. Speaking Maltese on the other hand could have a complexity of meanings. It is interpreted as either patriotic, preserving Maltese culture or down to earth since logically a Maltese person is expected to speak in Maltese, or simply as a negation of the snobbish strata meaning that although the person might enjoy a high status, he or she chooses to speak in Maltese, snubbing those who speak English because they want to ‘impress’. Speaking a mixture of both languages is considered as superficial by both Maltese speaking and English speaking nationals, and is linked to people who are trying to seem ‘tal-pepe’ and high class but are not really and truly part of that social stratum. Young Maltese women are therefore very sensitive about the language others speak, not only English or Maltese, but also the choice of words, the open vowels, the accents and so on. Language is a strong indicator of habitus in which is located a person’s lifestyle (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus combines differences in style, taste, language and posture. Style and taste have been discussed earlier and posture will be discussed later on in this chapter.

As discussed earlier, what signifies ‘ħamallu’ in young women’s and young men’s style was usually quite different and gender specific especially in style and appearance. Yet language was a common factor for both males and females in that the same criteria were used in both males and females. Only when it comes to swearing and blasphemy, is there language differentiation between males and females. There are different levels of swearing but if a girl swears mildly, she is considered as low class and ‘ħamalla’ while if a man says the same swear word, this contributes to his manly nature or to his temper, rather than to class. Heavier and more elaborate swear words are, for both males and females, considered as indicating low status.

Another difference which however, is the same for both males and females is that swear words or offensive language in English are considered as ‘cool’ but swearing in Maltese or offensive language in Maltese is considered as ‘ħamallu’ (vulgar). One example is that for young Maltese women, saying ‘shit!’ is accepted and is actually ‘cool’ while saying the same thing translated to Maltese ‘il-ħara!’ is considered as low class. The idea

possibly emerges from English being spoken by the educated people who are not low class and therefore, usually such words are spoken by people positioned in the higher strata of society and are socially associated with the educated, upper classes of society. On the other hand, Maltese is spoken mostly by the lower classes and therefore, such words are associated with these classes. The complexity of social constructs linked to language use in Malta reflects the negotiation of social boundaries and positioning, as well as the fluidity of meanings of words, depending on the context in which they are used.

Social practices linked to cultural groups include language. For respondents, the combination of taste, image and language indicates the person's social class. As Theresa said,

*I mean, I cannot imagine a real Maltese metal head speaking to his 'brothers' in English...that would be hilarious! As if...or goths getting drunk in English in Malta! No way! I mean if I go to a disco or party and look at the crowd, I can tell what they are, if I hear them talking outside or in the bathrooms, I can tell what types they are, either really 'hamalli' or snobs etc... Then without wanting to, you associate that language with that music because at that time, those types of people would be liking that music and frequenting those places. Things might change but that is why you need to be up to date with what is happening in the Maltese music scene. (Theresa, lecturer)*

Theresa points out that some types of music are therefore associated with a certain class of people who speak a certain language or in a certain way. She also explains how the links between taste and language are formed in her view. Later on in the interview she mentions that it is also a question of majority in that, the taste and style of the majority of enthusiasts of a type of music, is linked to the music normally. In every music scene, you do find those who are different, but they are few and usually drop out since they do not feel at ease.

For young Maltese women therefore, it is not just the type of language and the choice of words which people speak, through which are formed taste, style and social class, but it is also the actual language that people speak, be it English or Maltese, in combination with the music they like, which indicates taste, style and social class. The different standards and criteria which are applicable to males and females are quite complex as is the relationship between social class and English or Maltese language.

### 5.3 Young women's embodiment of music

Embodiment is another strong indicator of an individual's class. As discussed earlier, the interrelationship of embodiment, together with style, taste and language shape social identity.

The effects that music has on the individual, is often manifested through the body of the individual. The power that music has over the body seems like an uncontrollable force that acts on the body. This is not a contemporary phenomenon. In 1912, Durkheim's research on the evolution of ritual suggested that when individuals were gathered together, an emotion arose which was expressed collectively. For such collective expression to take place in some kind of order, gestures and sounds tended to fall into a regular rhythm and thus songs and dances were created. Freeman (2000) argued that music and dance originated through biological evolution of brain chemistry interacting with the evolution of behaviour, making changes in habits, beliefs and personality possible. The state of trance or 'meltdown' is important for the formation of social groups which are formed by bonding.

#### 5.3.1 Moving to the music

The function that the music has on the bonding of social groups was highlighted by young Maltese women in the present study. They expressed the awareness that music has the power to make a person move to the music especially in contexts such as discos and clubs when they feel it is inevitable to dance, joining with the others, imitating the moves and feeling the general excitement, taking part in the ritualised social practices of the cultural group. Frequently, such respondents maintained this practice even when alone at home. Creating an atmosphere as similar as possible to the disco and drawing on memories of their nights at the disco or club, they reported that very often they danced to the music alone in their room, replaying the social and drawing on the social practices and rituals in which they participated in, when they dance to the music collectively. Those respondents who did not frequent discos still felt the urge to move to the music at home while they listen to a favourite song to which they dance and sing their heads off to the mirror.

*When you listen to music...well you feel it inside you... My Turkish friends for example we go to the park and we listen to this music and we clap to the music...when you listen to the music it is like you are saying something...how can I*

*explain, you dance to say you are enjoying it, that is why there is slow dancing, rap, break dancing, ballroom dancing, belly dancing...all sorts of dancing...so the music affects you (Amanda, student)*

Amanda's example here brings to the fore the collective action which music induces, and suggests that the whole being of the individual is focusing on the music and releasing a message which manifests the feelings that are going on inside the individual. This parallels Radcliffe-Brown's (1964) work on the Andaman dance where he points out that the dance is a complete activity of the whole community and the dancer's whole personality is involved. The dance needs mental concentration as well as the involvement of all the muscles of the body. Dance is a ritual, a symbolic action (ibid). It is the symbol of belonging to a group at least for that time, a representation of feelings at the time and a statement of taste suggesting class. According to Hebdige (1979), dance, like music and dress, is a subcultural sign. By time many of these signs are converted through commodification and assimilation into the larger mainstream culture.

### **5.3.2 The sacred status of individuality in modernity**

Shilling (in Alexander & Smith, 2008) derives from Durkheim's (1912) work a theory in which the body is considered as a crucial multidimensional medium for the constitution of society. There are three reasons for this. Bodies are a major source of symbols through which individuals recognise themselves as belonging to a society. They also constitute a major location for these symbols which are incorporated in the habitus and shape gestures and habits. Bodies also possess social potentialities which provide the means by which individuals transcend their egoistic selves and become attached to the symbolic order of society. Although the individual body is bound to the acquisition of a common moral sensitivity, it is also instinctively egoistic in its needs. The increase and variety of styles of fashion, dress, deportment and body modifications in modern society illustrates that modern society has developed to allow the possibility of individualism (Shilling in Alexander and Smith, 2005). Such variety is interpreted by Durkheim as the glorification of individualism (Bellah, 1973). In this research, the sense of individualism was most evident in some young women who specifically resisted being seen as part of a particular music subculture. They made a conscious effort to project an image which would not be particular to any subculture.

*People cannot pin me down because I would have skaters' shoes, skinny jeans and a leather jacket. Because it looks alright I wear it and people go...what is happening? They cannot pin me down (Tania, counter assistant)*

On the other hand there were other young women who embody the music they listen to and therefore seek to project an image which states that they belong to a particular music subculture, still suggesting that people within groups have individual characters. Anna who embodies the Goth style, said,

*They think we are bad because we wear black...they(people) judge a person, they judge a book by its cover, they do not bother to see what is inside us, they judge us by our appearance. Like if you see someone full of piercings and wearing different (clothes to normal people) you immediately think he is bad, when in fact you do not know the person so you cannot tell. It does not mean that just because of his appearance he is like that inside. For all you know he might be the most wonderful person in the world (Anna, student)*

Thus, in contemporary Maltese society, preserving individual tastes within a subculture, not incorporating all social practices associated with their preferred music, seems to be not only accepted but also celebrated. In many cases, interviewees reported that a glorified individualism was achieved after going through a period of wanting to hide any traits of individualism in an effort to be accepted by a particular group. Thus initially, they felt it was important to listen to the same music that the group listened to, to dress the way they do and to have a lifestyle like they did. The young women in this study reported that they felt this importance to incorporate all aspects of the music in their early teens but they gave it less prominence in the later teens. Tania, aged 21 says that she had gone through such a phase

*At the age of 15, like, it was important to like what the others liked to be accepted in the group. Now I do not care...if I like music that you do not like, that is opinion. I do not have to like this song for you to like me (Tania, counter assistant)*

### 5.3.3 Embodiment through dancing and collective effervescence

Apart from the way they dressed, young Maltese women's individualism was evident in the enjoyment they found in listening to their own music and dancing to it in their own way at home for instance. They did this although in public places they made sure that their movements comply with the social norms. Thus, in public they made sure they danced in a way which was socially accepted by others who liked that same music or by the members of a particular subculture, if the music was part of a subculture. Young women were very conscious of the way they danced and the way their friends danced. Joanne who is into clubbing and parties where they play trance, said that when she joins her husband in parties where they play his type of music which is minimal and techno she does not feel comfortable because she says,

*I do not like that type of music that much and I do not feel I know how to dance to that music (Joanne, administrative officer)*

The importance given to the accepted social practices within a cultural group include accepted and expected ways of the embodiment of music. When a person is not confident or comfortable moving in a particular way to the music, because it might not be congruent with the expected norms of the cultural group, it creates a certain amount of discomfort. Moreover, young Maltese women in this study often commented that they would not dream of going out with a young man who did not know how to dance, or who dances in a different way to the expected norms as that would be an embarrassment to them and would hinder their social status within their cultural groups. Moreover, if a young woman decides not to dance, the lack of socially expected movements to that particular music creates unease as well. Joanne goes on to say that

*In a party you start moving without knowing, you start moving your head to the music...the amount of sound sort of gets inside you and if you do not move you feel like a fish out of the water. Even those you are with would comment and say 'move a bit, come on'... so you end up doing like all the others (Joanne, administrative officer)*

This contagion can be explained in Durkheim's (1912) terms of collective effervescence which is associated with group interaction and is characterised by an embodied rather than just intellectual attachment, suggesting that there is an emotional characteristic. This effervescent attachment is contagious (Shilling, in Alexander and Smith, 2005) and stimulates further effervescent action (ibid.). This effervescence can launch people into a state of exaltation and allows incorporation into the collective moral life of the group. It has the potential to substitute the world with another moral world in which 'people can interact on the basis of shared understandings' (Durkheim, in Shilling, 2005). In contemporary Maltese society, dancing in discos and parties is a case in point. Respondents said that they automatically move just like their friends move. People imitate each other in movements and Amanda stresses this point in the context of movements associated with music.

*You would be in a club and when there are your friends it is obvious you are going to dance because they would be dancing and you either do like your friends or they are going to do what you are doing (Amanda, student)*

Thus similar movements are expected when listening to the same music. These movements must be initiated and learnt until they become part of that group's habits.

Mauss (1934) explores how social techniques become ingrained through apprenticeship into the habits of the body. He emphasises that every society has its own norms pertaining to the body, including all aspects of human behaviour like standing, walking, squatting and therefore also dancing. These techniques make up the social habitus and are passed on through initiation, education and acquired through imitation. As Amanda said, people imitate each other even in dance movements at the disco or club. Once these techniques are acquired, disorderly movements incongruent with the accepted norms associated with that particular interaction, are considered as undesirable and can lead to intense emotional embarrassment and a risk of discrediting the social self, according to Goffman (1956). This is also true in the movements associated with particular types of music. For example, head banging to a pop song is considered inappropriate and an embarrassment because a completely different type of movement has become the accepted norm to accompany pop songs. Durkheim's (1897) study of suicide suggests, for example, that the acquired habits of the body are not only a means of desired attachment with social

life and an enhancement to human nature, but one's embodied relation to the social is a necessity since rupture from social life can prove fatal.

Collective actions, movements and habits bring about energy. The body is thus the medium through which energies brought about by group life construct and express the symbolic order of society. Thus, collective gatherings maintain and revitalise the energy symbols which individual bodies are unable to maintain on their own. In this research, young women maintained their sense of belonging to the social by listening to the music they preferred, attending parties and frequenting clubs regularly. These activities served to maintain this energy, this sense of belonging to a social group and the social.

### 5.3.4 Posture

The sense of belonging and the commitment to the group was reflected not only in the way that people dance but also in their everyday posture. According to Bourdieu (1984), posture and bodily dispositions are structured through the habitus and thus not only indicate but also *embody* a social class. This idea was very evident to some of the respondents in this study. As Lisa said,

*When you go to these clubs, these parties, even the way people dress...I was there last Saturday... there was a minimal party that we had to go to and everywhere you look it is girls who cannot breathe in their dresses and the average length of the skirts was like 3 cm and you know what I mean, these people look different to the way I carry myself around...so I think it does make a difference... the music you listen to does influence the way you carry yourself and the way you go along. I call them 'hamalli' (vulgar) not because I am a 'pulita' (elite) but you know, you go 'Oh dear, how 'hamallu' he looks. So you associate this type of music to these kinds of people...so you would say it is a 'hamallu' type of music (Lisa, service manager)*

This reflects Bourdieu's (1984) argument that within the same society, an individual's bodily dispositions are structured through the individual's social class location and young Maltese women in this study seem very adept at reading class from bodies and are likewise conscious that their own bodies will be 'read' by others around them. It is no different in the Maltese contemporary society where the expression of the body is an indicator which enables people to categorise others in social positions, just as Lisa did, further assisting in



the reproduction of relationships of domination and subordination (Bourdieu, 1986). Mitchell (2002) limits his analysis of posture in Maltese society to people either adopting an upright posture and being considered as ‘puliti’ (polite) or to those who hunch their backs and being considered as ‘ħamalli’ (vulgar). In the interviews conducted in this study, young women pin point some other postures or mannerisms that are indicators of a person’s social class in Maltese society. Tapping a person’s arm to attract his or her attention while speaking to him, gesticulating elaborately with the arms, keeping hands on hips, walking with feet twisted outward and shuffling their feet, sitting in a slouched way and sliding down into the seat in a very relaxed way, are clear indicators of ‘ħamalli’ and are usually complimented by other elements of language, style and image which contribute to this term being assigned to them. On the other hand, respecting a person’s space, standing and sitting in upright positions, walking without shuffling the feet and giving the overall impression that one is in control of the way one’s limbs are moving implies a higher positioning in the social strata.

### **5.3.5 Embodiment through sounds, tempos and beats**

The type of music one likes does not only indicate class but it also generally indicates what movements should be used for dancing. One element which categorises music into different types is the meaning that the music incurs. There are specific elements in music which make sound become meaningful. Rappaport (1999) stresses that meaningless sound sequences were transformed into meaningful sound events through ‘musical redundancy’ which helps humans to find symbolic meaning. Musical redundancy (Richman in Wallin, Merker and Brown, 2000) is communicated through repetition such as refrains, formulaic structures which consist of pre-existing formulas, riffs, motifs and rhythms, and expectancy, that is, knowing exactly what is going to come next. The most important element in expectancy is tempo (Bellah in Alexander and Smith, 2005) and rhythm created by drumming, clapping or stamping of feet. Wallin, Merker and Brown (2000) point out that the ability to keep time to an external timekeeper is an ability exclusive to humans and that this ability might have evolved in synchronisation with the development of culture.

In this study, young Maltese women felt that the tempo and beat of the music were fundamental aspects which they incorporated in their everyday lives. The music affected them when they were in places where specific types of music were played, like for instance particular kind of relaxing classical music at the dentist to make clients relax, slow

instrumental music during a facial, energetic music during a workout to instil energy and reduce the focus on muscle pains, a fast beat while washing the dishes to help speed up the movements and so on.

*In Aerobics, I go to Aerobics, there is music and it gives you more energy and like an extra push to go on (Ella, student)*

This highlights the idea that for young Maltese women, music has other uses rather than just when being with others. All the respondents felt that the music affected them not only mentally but also physically. Some respondents use music to calm down or hype up psychologically, others incorporated music physically while exercising, others while doing house chores.

*Do not laugh at me but if I am sweeping and there is a tempo I do movements with the broom to the tempo! (Amanda, student)*

*...when I am on the tread mill I put on the music with headphones to hear it louder and sometimes I start getting tired and a song starts which I like and has a beat and I start walking to the beat...it sort of gives you energy...it makes you forget the pain. It gives you a push and you start walking again (Dina, teacher)*

*While ironing, I am weird with that... I would be ironing and to speed it up like, I say by the end of the song I have to iron 3 T shirts...so I use it as a timer! When I used to walk I had a walking playlist....stuff like David Guetta...stuff to make me lose more weight...I cannot not walk to the beat of the music so if I get off the bus and walk to my nanna. I am walking to the beat of the music and then it might switch to a different beat and I change my pace (Tania, student)*

The functions of music are thus various and young women use music in different ways, according to the context of their lives.

## 5.4 Judgmental young women

Young Maltese women use style, taste, language and embodiment as the main indicators of social class. Similar to how the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) interpret subculture as a response to class oppression, these young women interpret and decode style, taste, language and embodiment into positioning in social strata. According to Bourdieu (1984) tastes are socially conditioned and not a result of individualistic choices. He argued that taste becomes a social weapon that distinguishes between classes of society and that judgements of taste are related to social position and are in themselves, acts of social positioning. Thus the way that young Maltese women judge others' taste relate to their own social position and the positioning of others. As discussed earlier, image reflects taste and is associated with music, character, lifestyle and so on.

### 5.4.1 Judging young women and young men

Overall, in this study, young Maltese women were found to judge other young women from their image much quicker than they judge young men. They are somehow more lenient with young men's image and leave a space for doubt, reporting that a young man's character might be nice even though his appearance implies otherwise. Their judgement suggests a sense of competition, of positioning themselves and others within social groups and social strata in an effort to achieve a higher position than others around. Often this is not an individual effort but a group effort to position the social group they are part of in a better position than other groups.

This might be because since they are young women themselves, the criteria with which they judge a person are very clear and well known to them, so there is no space for doubt. On the other hand, they might not be sure of the young men's world since it is not their world and so they are not as sure as to how absolute those criteria are. Another argument could be that young women's differences between same gender are very significant while differences in the opposite gender are more acceptable since the gender itself is different in itself and the level or nature of sexual competition might be lower or of a different nature to that of young women.

*I have a friend who does not listen to the charts...she likes people like Muse...quite guitar and dark lyrics...and she has got bright red hair, she really is outrageous and I am not like that so we have grown apart ...she is too lively for*

*me. I am laid back and I listen to laid back happy music....she is different...and she listens to different music than I do (Tania, counter assistant)*

Tania is quick to judge her friend as ‘outrageous’ because of the red hair and the music she listens to. She supports this by implying that these reflect her lively character which is different to hers. In the same interview, Tania talks about her boyfriend

*He likes metal and Ska music and he used to dress quite skatery...moshery...big black T shirts, baggy dark jeans with chains, generally long hair (Tania, counter assistant)*

She probably did not consider her boyfriend as ‘outrageous’ at first sight, or even if she did, she gave herself time to get to know him and then once they started listening to each other’s music, he changed his style to Topman clothes. In an earlier quote, which I explored for elements of individuality, Anna, talks of how she dislikes judging a young man through appearance since to her, social meanings of appearance in men are not absolute.

*Like if you see someone full of piercings and wearing different you immediately think he is bad, when in fact you do not know the person so you cannot tell... it does not mean that just because of his appearance he is like that inside. For all you know he might be the most wonderful person in the world (Anna, student)*

Appearance therefore, seems to be a very strong indicator for young Maltese women when judging other young women, but they are not so significant when judging young men.

#### **5.4.2 Maintaining reputation**

Young women are very conscious that others judge them through appearance and their choice of dress is mostly made with this in mind. Appearance is an important tool in sustaining social position. In the Maltese context where everyone knows everyone else and where one is likely to meet people they know wherever they go, reputation is prominent in young Maltese women’s minds. Reputation has been a very significant part of Maltese society, as Boissevain found in 1969 and more recently, Mitchell found in 2002. Tamara talks of how she dresses up to maintain her reputation within her field.

*As if I am going in jeans and slipper...nothing wrong but if for example people got to know you, if you feel you have taken a certain status, you know...being a girl...at least for me, the way I dress also affects the way I feel and think, so for example if I have one lecture and that's it, it is ok if I wear slippers and jeans but if I have a full day...and I have to go straight to a rehearsal, then I have to wear something which will make me feel good and keep up a good mood.  
(Tamara, student)*

Tamara relates that a girl needs to build up a 'serious' reputation and once she achieves it, she needs to maintain it, through her appearance and her attitude and the way she speaks. Building a reputation and maintaining it through music which is leisure to her, is therefore a form of work within leisure, reflecting Rojek's (2009) idea of the labour of leisure. She argues that men are much less judged than women in Malta. They are less judged in their appearance, in their attitude, in the way they speak.

*If they say, she is a serious girl, in a good sense, you do not want to ruin that. A girl has to keep her dignity and not say 'Hey man', you know, like men do...you know? But the way a girl dresses up, even when you enter a room, people are going to get an impression of you if they do not know you. I am not saying that if there are people you know, you do not say 'Hi' but not in a happy go lucky way. In a nice way... You know why because if someone sees you they get the impression that you could not care less...but if your image gives the impression of a barrier I think it is better.  
(Tamara, student)*

For young Maltese women, what others think of them is very important. Their social identity is what makes them themselves in the eyes of society and it is what will instigate people's attitudes towards them. This is different from young Maltese men whose social identity does not worry them as much, according to female respondents in this study. This difference probably arises from the respectability of families being primarily tied to the young women's respectability both publicly and within the household. In Maltese society, which as discussed in Chapter 2 has a strong history of Roman Catholicism, young women's reputation was to be preserved at all costs. Until recently, becoming pregnant out of marriage brought shame on the girl and all the family. Pregnancy was a result of 'unreligious' behaviour but the result was evident only in young women since the female

bears the child, not the male. This meant that the male could get away without his reputation being marred since there was no evidence of the sexual act on him, while the female's reputation was ruined for life as was that of her family, since she carried the evidence of what was understood as promiscuity. Pregnancy outside marriage has become more common in recent years, and the stigma to which it is linked still prevails but has become more accepted in various social strata. However, the 'barrier' which Tamara talks of implies that a Maltese girl's behaviour should be such that her reputation is that of a serious girl. The way she dresses, the way she talks and so on should reflect seriousness and not a 'happy go lucky' and easy to get attitude. This preoccupation with reputation seems to be very gender specific and is something that many young Maltese women (like young women elsewhere) have to navigate throughout their lives.

#### **5.4.3 Judgements in the public and private domains**

The locations where most of the judgements about other young women's appearance and attitudes are made are in places where social groups meet, such as in clubs and discos but then, these judgements are taken to the bedroom where young women discuss their individual judgements.

Technology has made boundaries porous and ambiguous. It has made it possible for young women to make their bedroom culture quite a public domain. Even if physically alone in one's bedroom, a girl can chat with her friends over the internet, share music while chatting, gossip about others, update others on the latest happenings and so on. Thus the bedroom culture of young Maltese women nowadays is one of the main domains where social practices are discussed, maintained or changed and where social boundaries are negotiated, shifted or maintained. The internet has thus made young women's groups tighter since they can be chatting virtually twenty-four hours a day. Moreover, they can 'click' on to the global at any time and discuss it within their local context at the same time. Music, fashion, magazines are all one click away as are their friends. The tightness of girl groups has been enhanced by technology. Sometimes, rivalry between the girl groups arises and the bedroom is one of the places where this antagonism is hyped up. Rival groups could be based on various differences in social practices for instance different types of music that they like, different social classes which is mostly reflected in the language they speak, English or Maltese, and very often it is the different village band clubs that they associate themselves with.

*Well I know friends of mine who are into these village bands. They gossip and gossip and bitch about the girls of the other band club within the same village. They cannot stand each other and find any excuse to shout offences at each other in the street. If they meet in Paceville they go to different places or stay there on purpose to get on the other groups' nerves, like saying, 'we are not afraid of you'. They fill each other up on what she was wearing, what she said, what the other was doing etc when they meet or on Facebook... and sometimes they put up a status that instigates a verbal fight with the other group (Theresa, lecturer)*

Differences in social identities are at the root of such rivalry. Through such processes they position themselves and others in particular social strata and particular social groups. Within the bedroom cultures of young Maltese women, these differences at times escalate to rivalry, confrontation and at times even physical fighting.

#### **5.4.4 Judging Maltese performers**

Another facet of judgement which young Maltese women practice does not rely only on indicators such as image, style and language, and they do not only judge other young women. Maltese musicians and performers are also judged by young Maltese women. A very common feeling of interviewees, was that as a culture, although Maltese people, especially enthusiasts of Maltese feasts nurture love and pride for the traditional Maltese village band music, it is very different when it comes to modern music. Village band music is something that belongs to the community, a kind of in-house thing which is enjoyed within the village by the village people and anyone who would like to join in. Many Maltese people are much more appreciative of anything that is foreign than things Maltese when it comes to modern cultural items, including music. This colonial mentality of inferiority is typical of post-colonial societies. Although the foundations of colonialism are seen by many as being primarily economic in being the means by which the wealth of the colonised is transferred to the coloniser (Woods, 2003), it is also seen as oppression and violence in thought and action (Sartre, 1964). In the case of Malta, after years of being a British colony, many Maltese people's way of thinking became one that accepts the culture and doctrines of the coloniser as being superior. This mentality stretches over various cultural forms, one of which is music. Foreign performers and their music are

much more appreciated than Maltese performers and their music. This, according to respondents was also reflected by the job opportunities in the music industry in Malta when compared with that of other countries. The lack of government investment in this industry limited performers' opportunities and as a consequence, some respondents felt that Maltese musicians' creativity and authenticity was restricted, with many musicians and bands limiting themselves to imitating foreign music.

*I think that we Maltese always feel that foreigners are better and this happens not only in music...even if a foreign manager comes, we say wow, a German manager came eh, he is good...We argue even about a fruit because the Maltese one is wrinkly etc. but how much better the Maltese one is! I think it is a mentality (Kirsty, lecturer)*

This does not mean that Maltese people do not listen to Maltese music. They do listen to it and like it, and even support it, as is evident in the nation's support of Maltese entries in the Eurovision Song Contest or enthusiasts who follow particular rock bands, heavy metal or doom metal bands. However, most Maltese people do not regard Maltese music to be as good as foreign music. They are somehow much more critical of it than they would be of foreign music. Theresa feels strongly about this, saying that the Maltese do not appreciate Maltese talent before that talent is successful abroad.

*How many Maltese who were not fans of classical music would have applauded and appreciated Joseph Calleja 10 years ago when he was already a very good tenor in Malta? Nobody! But then, because the media publicised his success at the Metropolitan, La Scala, Covent Garden, Vienna Opera House and all the big opera houses in the world and he was acclaimed by foreigners as the next Pavarotti, now people from across all the strata of Maltese society know the name of Calleja, know the face, and have heard him sing, and are proud of him, even though a few years back they did not care about him or what they call 'boring opera' (Theresa, lecturer)*

The Maltese attitude of being unappreciative or overcritical of Maltese music might be because global norms, which are in existence, are easily adopted and followed. That is, if a song is in the Top 10, then many Maltese have pre-constructed guidelines which are that since these songs are in the top 10 then they must be considered to be good songs in other



countries. It follows that the modern countries are going to be listening to those songs and therefore the cultural meaning of those songs has already been scripted and young Maltese women just follow the already formed social constructs. This reflects the colonial mentality which many Maltese still have and which the younger generation have inherited. On the other hand, when it is Maltese music, there is no pre-scripted meaning and it is up to the Maltese society to give meanings to these songs. There is no given by foreigners that the Maltese can simply follow. When, on the other hand, a Maltese band or singer like Kevin Borg who became Norwegian Idol a few years back or a Maltese tenor like Joseph Calleja makes a name abroad, then the Maltese follow suit. Being successful abroad is a kind of requisite that Maltese society requires for it to fully support and be proud of that local talent. Once the performer or band breaks through the geographical boundaries and is appreciated abroad in western cultures, then the Maltese also acknowledge that performer or band and proudly declare it as their own.

### **5.5 Negotiating boundaries with male partners**

Tastes, style and music preferences are not fixed but are part of a process of social identity which is ongoing. Music preferences for some young Maltese women were not something that was negotiable and their boyfriends had to shift their own preferences. Other respondents often found a compromise and listened to some of their music alternately with listening to some of their boyfriends' music.

Tania who used to listen to the charts met her boyfriend who used to listen to Ska music and they started listening to each other's music.

*But then we sort of met each other and I started listening to skater kind of music and then he started listening more to the charts and people who are up today and he started to dress differently. He buys clothes from Topman and stuff like that. So he has changed... I have always been the same. (Tania, counter assistant)*

Their differences were negotiated so that they both listened to their own music and the music of their partner. Moreover, in their case, the boundaries between the charts and Ska music were negotiated and shifted, to the extent that her boyfriend even changed his style of clothes.

Joanne and her husband like different types of music and they have both negotiated that by going to parties where they play music which their partner liked as well.

*He likes minimal and techno while I like trance and progressive which are two completely different styles. Mine are more pleasant on the ear and his are not so catchy and they are more noisy...Usually I go to his and he comes to mine...most times he comes to mine because there are more trance parties than techno but we give in to each other. However he manages to enjoy himself in my style of parties and I do not manage that much in his styles of parties (Joanne, administrative officer)*

Joanne highlights the fact that going to his type of parties is an effort and remains so. She still refers to 'his music' and 'my music' in the course of the interview which reveals that their social identities and tastes have not been changed completely. The boundaries have been shifted to include another type of music, but they still prefer their own types of music.

From these interviews, young Maltese women were found to reach a compromise with the boyfriends or husbands, yet deep down, their music preferences remain what they were before. Thus their social identity which is linked to the music they like and the social practices of that cultural group are essentially preserved. This does not mean that the music their partner has exposed them to does not affect them. The process of negotiating their partner's music, yet preserving their own individuality, tastes and music preferences is a complex process which navigates fluid boundaries of music subcultures.

The question of territory and possession also comes into play here, in that, if the equipment on which the music is being played belongs to the girl, it gives her the right to choose the type of music to be played, even if there are others who do not like her music. This could be the car stereo, the lap top, the stereo and so on. Young women in this study reported that they would not dream of getting into someone else's car and changing their CD to something which they like. However, like Helen, they did feel they could change the music in their boyfriends' car.

*Yes, when I get into his car, I get the CD out of whatever he is listening to because more often than not, I do not like it, and I put another CD and he goes like...OK she is in the car... No, no, it has to be, when I am driving it has to be*

*music that I like or else that does not bother me (Helen, student)*

Possibly the boyfriend is not perceived as an outsider and the familiarity and relationship which the couple share makes the girl feel that she can take over that territory and make her own choices within that field without asking for permission or consent.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to explore the distinct feminine nature of making meaning out of the music young Maltese women listen to. The different ways in which young Maltese women consume music and use music were discussed; music as background to work, music as leisure, music as a tool for relaxation were among the ways in which young Maltese women used music. The meanings that young Maltese women give to taste, image, language and embodiment of music were also analysed in some detail. It was seen that young Maltese women strongly linked musical taste to appearance, spoken language and embodiment. They considered these as indicators of social class. Judgemental characteristics of young Maltese women, especially with other young women, were looked into. Young women were found to be very judgemental towards other young women but not as much towards young men. Judgements were done by young women in an effort to position themselves or the social groups they were part of, and to create distinct boundaries and negotiate these boundaries. Overall, this chapter gave an introduction to the data into which the discussion of the four categories will be set in the next two chapters.

## **Chapter 6: Categories of Commitment: The Fully Committed and The Committed**

This chapter analyses the two categories which highlight commitment to the music young women listen to. Willis's (1978) analytical framework, although incorporating commitment to music, assumes that everyone forms part of a subculture and this framework seeks to analyse particular subcultures and the homogeneity, as well as the levels of individuality within them. However, my research develops Willis's framework in that it seeks to analyse young Maltese women and their practices in association with music rather than analysing pre-determined subcultures. It develops four categories of participants: the Fully Committed, the Committed, The Active Drifters and the Passive Drifters.

The first part will focus on the Fully Committed and the second part will focus on the Committed category. Both categories share similarities, primarily in the high level of commitment that participants have towards the music they listen to and the social group they are part of. However these categories differ in that the Fully Committed participants are considered by members of the social group they make part of, as the veterans, who possess in-depth knowledge about the music they listen to and whose lifestyle revolves around their particular music. On the other hand, the Committed are more open to other forms of music and not committed exclusively to one or two types of music, considering a wide knowledge of different styles of music as being a form of cultural capital.

### **6.1 The Fully Committed: analysis of main themes**

Willis's (1978) indexical analysis was used as a preliminary part of the analysis to shape the categories. The leisure time of respondents categorised as Fully Committed, was usually taken up completely by engaging in their music. They listened to their preferred music for a long time, or even played their type of music in a band or orchestra and were usually reluctant to listen to any other type of music.

Since my research question aimed at exploring how young Maltese women incorporated the music they listened to into everyday discourses and identities, it is the meaning that they give to these processes and how they negotiate these processes that I will focus on. This reflects Willis's (1978) homological analysis which attempted to analyse interactions between the cultural item and the social group.

The themes which through my analysis and interpretation of data revealed themselves as most prominent for the Fully Committed were how music as conspicuous consumption contributes to identity, the tensions between the traditional and the modern,

processes of hierarchy and power struggle within a social group, and structure and agency, that is, the reciprocal influence of the music and the social group. The latter draws on Willis's (1978) integral analysis which focused on the way the music and the social group influence and even modify each other.

### **6.1.1 Conspicuous consumption as a manifestation of identity**

According to Veblen (1899), leisure, throughout the ages, meant something very distinct. It reflected the type of lifestyle of an entire household, it reflected the economic status, and the place of the individual in the social hierarchy. However, leisure activities had to be seen by other members of society for the process to be possible. Thus it is a relational process where only if leisure activities were seen by other members of society could they be interpreted accordingly and subsequently position that person in the social hierarchy. Conspicuous leisure, where possessions and activities are being made public, forms a considerable part of social perceptions and evaluations of others. Possessions such as houses, cars, appliances, technological gadgets and so on, all reflect a certain status although the value of the possessions is not absolute. The process of social positioning is complex and also involves elements such as being the 'right' kind of person, using the 'right' kind of language, having the appropriate sense of dress, adopting the 'right' posture and so on. The type of leisure being consumed also reflects status. Leisure activities such as yachting, playing golf, horse-riding are different to playing football in the field next door or having a barbecue or going to the beach for a swim in summer. The means needed for such forms of leisure differ tremendously and therefore are a reflection of the economic capital of the household. In Malta, having someone in the family who takes music lessons is also an indicator of social class. This is reminiscent of Victorian drawing rooms where young women in the household were taught the arts of drawing, singing, playing an instrument and so on and was probably inherited from the British colonialists in past years.

Music preferences and choices are also indicators of status and class. For the Fully Committed category, conspicuous consumption of their preferred music was an absolute prerogative and they equated it with a statement of identity. The idea of listening to their preferred music was not enough for them. They felt it was important to show the world that this is the music they liked. Thus the conspicuous consumption of music, which includes not only the actual act of listening to music in public, but also adopting social practices and lifestyles associated with that music, was very important to the Fully Committed. The

music people listen to makes part of their everyday lives. The music they choose to listen to leaves some sort of impact on them even if it is very subtle, as does everything else in their environment. The music they do not actually choose to listen to but still are compelled to listen to because of circumstances, such as background music in public places, or public transport, also leaves an impact on people, if anything, in confirming that they do not like that music. The Fully Committed feel that the music which they listen to, what they call ‘my music’ is a statement, telling people who they are and what they like. For instance, Anna, who likes death metal, heavy metal and Gothic rock, said

*What I listen to means a lot because when I say I like that music it is like I am saying what my character is like, what I like wearing, what I like doing, what I am like, my character (Anna, Fully Committed, student)*

Therefore for the Fully Committed, identity is not merely about one particular set of tastes which is independent from other sets of taste, such as tastes in fashion or tastes in leisure. Neither is it independent of who the person feels she is. On the other hand, like Anna, Fully Committed participants described ‘their music’ as something which was part of them and a statement of who they are, what their character is like. This evidently assumes that those around are in tune and familiar with social constructs and social practices associated with that particular music and with how they are interpreted culturally. Otherwise the statement which the Fully Committed are making through their music would be valueless.

For the Fully Committed, music ranked high in their priorities and lifestyle. These participants were aware and actually acknowledged music as being an intrinsic part of their being. Anna, for instance, was very aware of how the music she listened to influenced her.

*The music is building my character, the music helps me in the way I think and it helps me mature too... (Without that music) I would be weaker because the music sort of strengthened me inside, it built my character...strength...I do not show emotions and I do not succumb to weakness but I am stronger and more assertive (Anna, Fully Committed, student)*

In Anna’s case, she was fully committed to metal which might make people feel strong. However, what type of music the individual is fully committed to matters as well. If a girl

is fully committed to Bach, the effect on her character might not be of feeling stronger but something else.

The Fully Committed, like Anna, strongly felt that the musicscapes they navigated had not only played a very important part in their identity formation but had actually formed their identity. They believed that others who would like that same music would have a similar or compatible character. We therefore move towards a discourse of similarities and commonalities. It is through commonalities that collectivity and socially constructed collective identities are possible, where collectivity means having something in common, real or imagined, important or not (Jenkins, 1996). The music preference here is the commonality which for the Fully Committed is a very important and determining factor of the collective identity they share with others in their social groups. Amanda, a Fully Committed participant, insisted she would not consider hanging out with people who liked different types of music, since they would not be compatible.

*I do not hang out with people who do not like the music I like...eg if I go out with my sister who is a rocker, we would fight because at Paceville there are rockers' places and she would want to go to rockers' clubs and I do not like them. Even the way they dress I do not like, you know? I do not feel it. Even the way they dance, moving just their heads, just head banging. To me, that is not a dance, to them it is! ...Characters who like different types of music clash. For instance, me and my sister clash not only because of music because there is the character and what surrounds it...Music forms a substantial part of the character (Amanda, Fully Committed, student)*

This perception was common in the Fully Committed. This category can be therefore understood in relation to how members of this category deal with issues of boundaries. To them, there exist communal boundaries and although they are not rigid boundaries and each and every member negotiates transactions at these boundaries shifting them and redefining them, it seems that the Fully Committed give a lot of significance to these boundaries and shifts in them are minimal.

The Fully Committed view taste in music as a clear indicator of character. Insiders within the boundaries have compatible characters while outsiders do not. This is probably because they themselves view their own character as a product of the music they listen to and since they give music priority in their lives, they feel that music plays a very big part



of forming people's identity in general. Choosing the club where one would spend the Saturday night was also an issue since they would not enjoy a venue where they played music which they did not like and be surrounded by people who have different tastes and therefore different 'incompatible' characters. Underlying this was the preoccupation of losing one's reputation within their group. They would not want to be absent from their usual club too frequently, lest insiders start doubting their commitment to the music's lifestyle and they would definitely not want to be seen at other clubs which were frequented by people liking other types of music, since this would undoubtedly mar their reputation within their group.

Another factor which constitutes conspicuous leisure is the image that the young women in the Fully Committed category projected through their style. Style, according to Hebdige (1979), is the arena for negotiation of identity and power relations. Although not all social groups have the same density of style, the Fully Committed are the ones who adopt style fully, however dense it is and use style as intentional communication. For the Fully Committed, the image they projected had a meaning, and they were conscious of this meaning. In many cases, it was the same style that their favourite singers or their favourite band members wore. Ella, whose preferred music is rock, explains

*Black is always common to rockers whether male or female...it is very probable to have black. The girl might have a long black skirt and a lace top and the man might have a leather jacket, black jeans...but that something common is still there. So if you look at a Goth girl, you realise what music she listens to and if you look at a man it is the same although there are differences in the image (Ella, Fully Committed, student).*

Another example is Anna who likes Gothic. She said she usually adopts the style of 'Cradle of Filth' which is an English extreme metal band combining gothic metal and black metal. She always wears black, sometimes adding a bit of colour, corsets which she says are typical Goth and for evening, lace, fish net, skirts, nice boots with an elegant top and only mascara and heavy eyeliner with elaborate designs as make up. In the morning she would wear a T-shirt sometimes with a rock band on it and comfortable trousers and comfortable slippers. Although at times she wears clothes that are not rock but rock clothes are 'really me' she says.



Figure 1

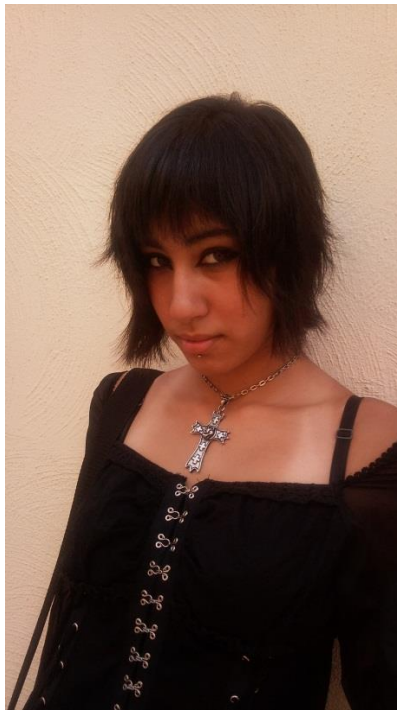


Figure 2

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show Anna's Gothic style for evenings out.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrate Anna's style for casual mornings out shopping with friends

Similarly, in the case of those who were Fully Committed to clubbing, where music was provided by a DJ, it was a trend, a fashion style which fans had created and followed. The dress code in itself was a statement, a kind of label which is a statement for those around, saying that is the music they listen to and of what crowd they are part. This was not only relevant for what they wore at the time of listening to music, clubbing etc but it was relevant 24 hours a day, while they were going about their daily lives, at work, during leisure time and so on. One example of a clubber was Joanne who emphasises the importance of wearing certain brands in club wear like Exit, Energy and Miss Sixty. Jeans are staple clothing for clubbers. This style is not exclusive to party goers and is very similar to what Paceville goers wear but even Joanne makes it a point even in her morning wear, to project a type of image which indicates that she is a party type of person.

For some members of the Fully Committed category, sometimes the density of style was not strong enough to satisfy their need to manifest who they are. When the density of style was high, it included various aspects such as clothing, make-up, hairstyle, posture, language, behaviour, consumption of particular products such as particular types

of alcohol and generally the whole lifestyle. When density of style was low or loose or even not very distinct from mainstream culture, some members did not feel that it was sufficient to manifest who they were, to project a particular identity. It could also be that the style itself would not confer any meaning to those around since it is a foreign style which very few if any Maltese would recognise. Such is the case of Amanda who loves Turkish music. Turkish music is not usually the music that young Maltese women would listen to. It is considered as part of the Arab world, which, because of historical and political events in Maltese history discussed in Chapter 2, is regarded by most Maltese with ambivalence. Amanda's liking of this music developed particularly because her father is Turkish and because of her many visits to Turkey. In Malta exposure to Turkish music is very limited in that it is not played on local radio or television. However it is readily available for those who look for it. In fact Amanda specifically looks for the Turkish radio stations and downloads Turkish music through the internet. For most young Maltese women, Turkish music is equated with the one song which Turkey competes with once a year in the Eurovision Song Contest. Otherwise, young Maltese women lack exposure to Turkish music, just like they lack exposure to all other forms of music from Africa. Consequently, most Maltese people are not familiar with social practices and style which indicate affiliation to this type of music. Thus, just like all cultural capital is valueless outside its own setting, Amanda's cultural capital or subcultural capital is valueless outside that subculture as Thornton (1995) points out. Her affiliation to Turkish music cannot be manifested through means which are meaningless to those around. Adopting the style her Turkish friends project is meaningless in Malta. Therefore, although for her, the cultural items linked to Turkish music do have meaning, reflecting Willis's (1978) argument that people give their own meaning to items such as music and clothes, in this case, Amanda cannot project that meaning to others in Malta. What Willis (1978) fails to consider in 'Profane Culture' is the effect of outsiders on the cultural group. It was necessary therefore to develop Willis's framework in this research, to include such considerations which his framework did not allow. The effect of the people surrounding Amanda, who were outsiders to her preferred music, resulted in Amanda wearing what she calls normal clothes when in Malta, as seen in Figures 5 and 6 as opposed to a modern Turkish style in Figure 7 which she wears in Turkey. She explains that young women in Turkey do not wear the traditional long tunic on trousers in conventional colours like older women wear. She

therefore follows the style of the younger generation with an overall patterned cat suit and observing religious traditions of covering her legs and wearing trousers as seen in Figure 7.



Figure 5



Figure 6

Figure 5 illustrates Amanda's style in Malta for an evening out and Figure 6 illustrates casual wear for Amanda when in Malta.



Figure 7 Amanda's Turkish style of clothing which she wears in Turkey

Since Amanda cannot project her identity through her image in Malta, she feels a strong need to project a statement of who she is through the music she listens to. Thus she uses the music itself as intentional communication. She says

*I like putting on the music very loud especially if there is no one in the house...and I open the window too so that everyone has to listen to the music. They are obliged to listen to what I am listening to. When you listen through headphones only you can hear...on the other hand on lap top full on...I do not do it to bother people but I want to show...it is my way of telling them that this is my music and I want to push it out of my room, out of the world, out of Malta for everyone to hear. I am pushing it out, I want to show this, I do not know why but that is how it is. It is like saying this is me...I just want this music to surpass the boundaries of the house. I have to open the window, even the door, I have to (Amanda, Fully Committed, student)*

Pushing out this music to those in the proximity is in itself a form of conspicuous consumption. Announcing to everyone that this was who they are, obliging those around them to listen to the music they were listening to brings us to questions of relations between private and public and how they overlap. This is quite easily done in Malta which is densely populated and where most buildings, houses and apartments are touching each other. What is a private preference of music is being pushed into the public space as a statement of identity. In the Maltese context, due to densely populated areas, one could even talk of the private preference of music being pushed into other people's private space, thus infringing spatial and acoustic boundaries. The Fully Committed use their music as a means of control of acoustic space which unlike visual space, has no boundaries, no horizon (McLuhan, 1989) and as a public statement of who they are.

### **6.1.2 Social hierarchies and power to shift boundaries**

Using Muggleton's (2002) work to develop Willis's analytical framework, I looked at the motives for actions of participants within the group. Such motives included achieving a high social position within their groups.

For the Fully Committed category, being up to date with what was happening in their music scapes was very important since this was very significant to the social standing they had in their social groups and the higher they were positioned in the social hierarchy of their social group. The Fully Committed are highly involved in their preferred music. They do not necessarily play an instrument but they might be involved in the music they like in other ways. The more knowledge one has of the music and the bands, the more up-to date one is, the longer one has been on the scene, the more active one is in that scene, the higher the capital and the higher the standing in the social hierarchy. The higher the status within the hierarchy of the group, the more social power one enjoys within the group. This means that others look up to the person, admire and hold the person as a role model. Anna, who is Fully Committed to Gothic music, highlights this when talking about her group who all share a musical preference for Gothic music. She says

*I arrived last in the group so I am definitely not a leader. Everyone expresses ideas etc, there is no one who commands. There is the person who started the group and he feels responsible ...We look up to him...he earned being the leader (Anna, Fully Committed, student).*

Social hierarchies within the social groups which the Fully Committed young women form part of, are very strong. They are manifested in various ways such as behaviour and language in everyday interactions. In-depth knowledge as well as manifested incorporation of the subculture is considered as desirable. Thornton's (1995) concept of subcultural capital is highlighted here where the value of being an insider, having in-depth knowledge of that particular music scene is considered as desirable and enviable. According to Thornton (1995) these are the 'means by which young people negotiate and accumulate status within their own social worlds' (p.163). This knowledge within a subculture might be completely useless outside that group and in the mainstream dominant culture. Longhurst, (2007) argues that within specific fields of music such as dance music, the field involved a shared habitus by the participants and it is very likely that some seek to be seen as leaders in the field, deploying their 'hipness', their knowledge as subcultural capital. The processes of cultural hierarchies seemed to be mostly important to the Fully Committed.

The Fully Committed viewed themselves as the ones who really knew the music in depth and who understood the social practices associated with that music. They felt that they were the ones who set the rules and the boundaries. Since they were looked up to by members of the social group, they were the ones who had the power to negotiate style, language and practices. This was especially so for the ones who were considered as veterans in the scene and enjoyed a high position in the hierarchy. All Fully Committed were more or less positioned quite high in their social groups since they were seen as the ones having most knowledge. From their point of view, the Fully Committed considered many others in the social group as not being insiders or truly committed, since they did not engage with the music in depth and therefore did not really and truly belong to the social group but were just consumers. Janet who works as a DJ says,

*Many people many times go out to socialise to find a new boyfriend, a new girlfriend etc and the music is in the background...I do not think I would divide them 50-50 those who go out purely for the music...I think the ones who go specifically for the music are less. I am amazed...I mean foreign DJs come, famous ones, you would know what they are playing, tickets are expensive...at the party they grumble...I mean if Madonna is coming do you expect her to play classical? You know? These people just go out to go*



*out, maybe they do not even like the music...they like it but do not go in depth (Janet, Fully Committed, DJ).*

Thus, Janet highlights the fact that music gatherings attract people because of the socialising factor rather than the music itself. For the Fully Committed this is not the case. They go to such events primarily for the music because it is the music itself which they are interested in. Socialising is also important, since it is a means of maintaining one's position in the social hierarchy but is not the sole reason for being there, unlike others who are not Fully Committed. The main reason for being there is the music according to them. This distinction is very significant to members of the Fully Committed category. However they admit that intertwined with this is the fact that socialising in such events, being seen in such events is important too since one's absence might raise questions about one's 'character', one's commitment to the music and one's position in the social hierarchy.

Moreover, Janet's words reveal a strong sense of group identity for this category. The Fully Committed usually identify themselves strongly with the group they are part of. Thus the group identity which is the product of collective internal definition (Jenkins, 1996) is highly significant to the individual's identity but it is important to remember that it is generated by the group itself, by practices undertaken by individuals within the group (ibid.). Although group identity is very strong in the Fully Committed category, the group is made up of individuals and thus, individual tastes also play a part in the complex process of identities. Identity boundaries are indefinite, since interaction between people takes place on an everyday basis. Identity boundaries become even more indefinite when these interactions take place between people who have different identities. Individuality and individual identities still exist within the Fully Committed. There are elements of style, social practices and so on which are adopted and others which are resisted. Anna, who is quite new to the social group she is fully committed to, says,

*I do have my own personality. Everyone in the group has his or her identity...the way he reacts to things, how he understands things, the way he speaks. In that group I used to hang out with, they used to smoke and because they smoked, you feel you should do the same...and I had already started doing the same...but then I talked it over with my mum and realised that you do not need to be exactly like them. It is much better to be different because if everyone is the same....ok the group likes the same music*

*but if you think in exactly the same way and people are exactly the same it is boring. It is much better for people to have their own personality (Anna, Fully Committed, student).*

Thus, Anna chose not to smoke although that was the practice within that group. Her interaction with her mum encouraged her to shift that boundary, choosing to resist that social practice.

For the Fully Committed, a high status in the hierarchy is prestigious and is not achieved overnight. Thus it needs to be nurtured since the reputation as veterans, of participants in the Fully Committed category, could easily be damaged. Moreover, the social status which the veterans earned gives them the responsibility to set the example for others within the same social group and also the responsibility to project a statement through their practices to other social groups. This responsibility and power gives them the possibility of shifting practices and boundaries, thus aspects of structure and agency emerge.

### **6.1.3 Structure and agency**

As Willis (1978) points out, one must look at the influence and impact that the cultural form, which in this case is the music, has on the individuals as well as the influence the individual has on the music and the associated social practices.

Quotations above reveal how the Fully Committed strongly felt that music influenced and built the character. The music, the underlying ideology, the social practices, the social group, all have an impact on character. Moreover, in their view, the Fully Committed, who enjoy a high position in the social hierarchy of their social group, were the ones who had the authority to set social practices, to set how much weight certain practices had and also to introduce new practices within the group. They admitted that they did not always do this intentionally. Usually it is their individuality which motivates them to do something different but since they are looked up to in that social group, they are then imitated. They are aware that if the same thing was done by someone new who is Fully Committed but who is not considered a veteran, the impact would not be the same. The practice would probably not be adopted by others but it was more likely that the individual would be looked at with suspicion, as to whether she was truly committed to the music or not.

The social structure in itself is complex because it incorporates the enduring features of Maltese society as well as the global and European features which are being incorporated. Moreover, this complex background is continuously changing and it is against this, that young Maltese women live their lives. On the other hand, agency here refers to the ability that the Fully Committed have as individuals to act within this dynamic social structure. Thus within the social structure is embedded the class structure and with it the habitus, which according to Bourdieu (1986) are instrumental in shaping an individual's taste, attitude and character. The complementarity and interrelationship of structure and agency thus highlights how character and music subcultures affect each other and are mutually constitutive. Thus they form and reflect each other continuously with both forces working together at the same time.

The music itself has objective possibilities which according to Willis (1978) might be expected to change structure of feelings and characteristic concerns of the social group involved with it. The agency of the social group however has the power to shift and change these possibilities in the light of their social existence within their social context. The power which the Fully Committed have due to their status within the social groups, enables them to be able to mould meanings, change and set new practices. In the Maltese context this is often done according to possibilities which this particular context gives and which veterans of the social groups 'consent' to by attending or propose while organising. For instance, rave parties in Malta are held open air, due to numbers, the good weather, permits and so on. This means that such parties have adopted a new meaning in the local context. Through these parties, the meaning of the rave scene is understood in terms of open air venues. This is significant because open air venues are less restrictive than closed spaces, making viewing of such parties possible to outsiders. Moreover, open air venues usually have less or no furniture when compared to closed venues, with therefore less possibility of damage being done. Death metal, doom metal and so on are given very little exposure in Malta during cultural events and there are no sponsorships from government for doom festivals for instance, meaning that unlike countries like Germany, the Maltese doom metal scene is essentially an underground one. The Fully Committed to such music scenes have therefore negotiated the local context when organising events so that the original global practices of the social group have been shifted to meet the local context. The rave scene and the metal scene are but two examples of how the Fully Committed in these scenes have introduced new practices that are practised in the local scene.

Music preference informs a person's reputation within that social group and society at large. In Malta reputation is extremely significant in all strata of society as both Mitchell (2002) and Boissevain (1969) found in their researches conducted in Malta. The music young women listened to was a very important indicator of their identification and therefore also their reputation. Young women described the music they listened to as 'my music' thus introducing an element of possession of the music they listen to. Amanda speaks of her playing Turkish music loudly and said

*It is my way of telling them this is my music (Amanda, Fully Committed, student)*

A song or better, a style of music is transformed into an object of possession which young women make their own. The types of possessions people have influence other people's perceptions of them and thus one can say that possessions also affect the reputation of the person.

Music does not only simultaneously build and reflect the character but the choice of music one decides to listen to also reflects or even changes the mood. The Fully Committed category, like the other three categories chose to listen to music according to their mood and according to whether they wanted to stay in that mood or change that mood. Thus, respondents used music as a tool that would make them feel better, worse or the same. DeNora's (2000) analyses of the bikeboys in *Profane Culture* (Willis, 1978) recognises that music takes the young men from one state to another acting as a 'cultural vehicle' transporting one from one emotional place to another. This suggests that musical practices and processes illuminate ways in which music is used and highlights the importance it has in everyday life of individuals and society as a whole (Cohen, 1993). As Lincoln (2004) found in her studies of bedroom culture, music was a tool at times to get teenage girls into the mood for something that was going to take place later on, like sleeping or going out clubbing to a party as Joanne explains

*We listen to this type of music when we are going to a party, during the times when we are getting ready to go, we put it on to get us into the mood and hype us up (Joanne, Fully Committed, administrative officer)*

This tool was a very personal one in that the same song could be used to help get one individual into a better mood, while it could be used by someone else to bring on a sad, nostalgic mood because the meaning we give to the songs can be both personal and collective since some meanings are collectively experienced. As the individual negotiates the musicscape against the background of her life within Maltese society, as she links songs with her lived experiences, she will therefore give meanings to music which are only true to her.

## **6.2 The Committed: analysis of main themes**

Above, I have focused on the analysis of the Fully Committed category and themes which were revealed to be especially significant to them. Such themes revolved around conspicuous consumption of music, social hierarchies and power, and structure and agency. Members of this category were found to use music and the social practices associated with it, to tell society that that is who they are. They perceive themselves as those who had the power to shift practices within their social group and usually enjoyed high positions in the social hierarchy of their group.

The following section explores particular themes which were revealed to be the most significant for participants in the Committed category. Willis's (1978) framework of analysis was used. Through indexical analysis, this category was formed to include those who were involved in their preferred music or listened to it for a substantial part of their time but their leisure time included other things which were not linked to their preferred music. Through homological analysis, the interactions of participants with their music and their attitudes towards it were looked into and the reciprocal influence which the music and the social group had was analysed through integral analysis. However, Willis's model was further developed in that the social groups included various groups which the different respondents were part of, rather than a pre-determined subcultural group. The first themes that will be analysed are the formation of identity through music as a source of cultural and social capital. Then the theme which we will focus on is the hybridity of identities particularly through the tensions created when an individual's musical preferences include both traditional Maltese music and modern music.

### **6.2.1 Cultural capital enhancing identity**

One of the areas which my research question aimed at exploring was how young Maltese women incorporated the music they listened to and how any resulting social and cultural capital are produced and processed in the social and cultural struggle to form cultural hierarchies within the local context. This section will therefore explore these processes within the category of the Committed.

Bourdieu (1986), argued that like any form of capital, cultural capital was a resource which could generate 'profit'. He argued that cultural habits and dispositions are inherited from the family and therefore, possession of cultural capital is closely related to social origins. The 'profit' cultural capital generates, is important for success (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979) in that it identifies the individual with others as a person of the 'right' kind of culture. We inherit capital from our families and different forms of capital determine access or limitations to other capitals (Skeggs, 1997). Inherited cultural capital is acquired at home through exposure to particular cultural practices and is further developed through formal training. Bourdieu (1986) argued that cultural capital exists in three forms: its 'embodied' form, its 'objectified' form and its 'institutionalised' form. Cultural capital in its embodied form indicates invested time in learning or training and is a system of exchange where it can lead to power and prestige. Cultural capital in its objectified form indicates that the objects themselves function as a form of cultural capital if their use presupposes a certain amount of embodied cultural capital. Cultural capital in its institutionalised form exists in systems of formal education which issue credentials and certificates.

As discussed in Chapter 2 'The Music Scene in Malta', reputation and respectability are very important elements in contemporary Maltese society. Gaining or maintaining a good reputation and respectability is one of the motivations of young Maltese women learning music. Thus the effect of what others think, what outsiders of the social group think, is crucial in analysing the local context, an element which is completely lacking in Willis's (1978) analytical framework. Therefore through Muggleton's (2002) work, this was developed in this present research. Muggleton stressed the subjective choices which people have even in the choice of music they preferred or the choice of learning music at all. In the Maltese context, class positioning, reputation and respectability indirectly shape many decisions that people make.

For decades, in Malta, music has been considered as an integral and important part of our culture. Traditional Maltese folk music, which incorporates the Maltese lyrics, combines two of the strongest surviving Maltese forms of culture. Modern forms of music on the other hand signify Maltese culture in modern times as well as in a global context. Thus in Maltese society, knowing how to play an instrument, especially if this was learnt together with theory of music through formal education, was usually considered as a way of improving one's cultural capital and thus enhancing the family's reputation and respectability. The belief that music is important in the education and upbringing of children is quite common in Malta. Sending their offspring for music lessons is considered as desirable by parents across most strata of society. Since in past years it was only the families who were financially well-off who could afford to give their children such lessons, those whose economic capital was not high strived to pay for their children to attend music lessons or sent them to lessons which were offered free of charge in the village band clubs, in an effort to achieve an equal level with their counterparts. Through my experience as a music teacher in Malta, this rivalry between neighbours, showing off their children's achievements is a very common trait and it manifests itself in all strata of society. In Malta, children's attendance and achievements in music, together with ballet and other forms of performing arts are considered as clear indicators of the family's status in society and of the family's cultural capital. Musical knowledge and music performing were a part of conspicuous leisure which reflected the family's economic status and position in the class strata. This reflects the concept that leisure choices are shaped through a combination of mechanisms such as class background, gender, age and occupation (Rojek, 2009) which position us in our choices. Moreover, Rojek (2009) emphasises that our leisure choices and practices may be influenced by several triggers which could be traced to structural divisions, such as unequal resources, racial differences, gender differences and so on or simply related to social and economic factors which we are aware of but cannot control. It is therefore a subjective intentionality which positions us and influences our intentions which we formulate in our leisure behaviour. Musical knowledge is not only an indicator of status but can also be seen as instrumental in facilitating social mobility. When parents send their children to learn music through formal education, they might be striving towards achieving a higher status in society.

In the Committed category, this was very prominent since music had a strong representation and meaning for the young women in this categories. At times it was the

parents who had sent them for lessons at a young age but at other times, it was in their adolescence or later that the young women themselves, on their own initiative started learning an instrument in an effort to understand the music they loved at a deeper level and maybe even make their own music.

The Committed highlighted both inherited and acquired cultural capital. For those coming from a musical family, having been brought up in an environment where they listened to music and had the opportunity to learn music was considered as instrumental in making them who they were. Not all respondents in these categories inherited their cultural capital in the form of music. Although environment and upbringing are crucial in creating the 'self', some respondents, although being part of the Committed, had no one in the family who had studied music, or who supported their wish to gain in-depth musical knowledge. These were young women whose eventual involvement in music was not due to their home environment or upbringing but due to their own self developed hobbies and influence of peers.

The Committed often commented that they started music lessons only because their neighbours, friends or siblings did, or because their parents forced them to go, even choosing the instrument they would study for them, as in Mary's case.

*I had started the guitar...but I told her (my Mum) I do not want the guitar, I want the piano (Mary, Committed, student)*

Respondents reported that being forced or persuaded to take music lessons in their childhood sometimes worked, in the sense that it proved valuable later on, because although it was an opportunity which at that age one would not appreciate, later on in life, they consider it an asset. Moreover, they also realise that this process is not effective with everyone. This is because when the family does not expose children to music at home, going to music lessons often does not enable the individual to internalise the music and it remains as something 'foreign'. Thus the effort the parents make to provide musical education for their children in order to accumulate cultural capital, fails when that cultural capital is not inherited from the family and its cultural habits.

*If it was not for that little push that my mum took me for lessons, maybe I would not have started playing. However,*



*eventually it has to be you...I mean she did the same with my brothers and sisters...she took them to the School of Music and pushed them but they did not want to study...nothing (Mary, Committed, student)*

Although Mary's mother sent all siblings to music lessons, only Mary kept it up. The others did not, possibly because as Mary later says, music was not part of the family's culture. However, although the children did not pursue their musical studies, they still gained the basic knowledge in music which according to Mary is still an asset over and above what other people know about music. At the base of this reasoning, it is evident that many Maltese parents are very aware of the link between learning music, even if it is at a basic level, and the accumulation of cultural capital.

Respondents who have cultural capital in its 'embodied' and 'institutionalised' forms, who studied music, play an instrument even at the very basic of levels consider themselves as being at an advantage when compared to others who have not studied music at all.

*It is a skill that some who might get an A in everything don't know how to play music, it's something above them...not above them but it's something that they really want and they really can't. They can't read music and understand it (Michelle, Committed, student)*

As Michelle says, the advantage is primarily considered to be so because they feel they are capable of understanding a piece of music better. They are aware of the different styles and can tell the difference. Not only in the context of cultural capital, but also on a social level, they can talk about music and appreciate music in a way which others, who did not study music, cannot. As Mary points out, they can distinguish between the different sounds and can tell how much work has been put into that piece of music to be composed, performed and recorded.

*I can understand exactly what music is...you look at it in a professional way. When you listen, you say he used this combination, he used this instrument and not the other one to obtain a special effect. Other people would not bother....they think it was written like that (Mary, Committed, student)*

Moreover, they can play music themselves which they felt was a plus since the action of playing music seemed to relax them. The benefits were not only personal but the fact that they could make music for others to enjoy was also considered as an asset. When thinking of employment, respondents believed that having studied music, in some sectors, would be considered an asset and thus they might enjoy better employment opportunities, extending the link of cultural capital to economic capital.

### **6.2.2 Maintaining reputation and accumulating social capital**

Apart from cultural capital and economic capital, Bourdieu (1986) points out that there are other forms of capital. One such form is social capital which refers to the connections needed to make use of one's cultural and educational capital. Social capital is the sum of resources a person has in the form of social networks. The volume of social capital possessed by an individual depends on the size of the network of connections which that person can effectively mobilise and on the volume of capital each of these connections possess in their own right. This is especially true in Maltese society, as both Mitchell (2002) and Boissevain (1969) found in their researches of Maltese society. This is important since one of the aims of the present study is to throw light on how the music young Maltese women listen to, results in cultural and social capital and how these are processed in the social and cultural power struggle to form cultural hierarchies within the local context.

Acquiring a network of influential people in relevant fields was an element which frequently surfaced in the Committed category, especially for those who played an instrument with a group, but also for others who did not.

Tamara who is a Committed participant, is involved in the music she likes by playing the clarinet in village bands. The activity she carries out therefore as a committed individual to this type of music enables her to meet many people, as she puts it,

*From all walks of life, all sorts of people...so after a summer playing every day in several bands and making loads of new friends you realise...it is like you have taken on a status...people know you (Tamara, Committed, student)*

Tamara explains how at first she used to wonder how come a conductor or musical director from another village band contacted her to play with his band and later she would get to know that he had heard her play somewhere else thus her cultural capital had been beneficial to meeting another conductor who because of his status, was a prestigious contact in her network. At times, it was someone who had recommended her to another village band's conductor so her social capital provided her with the opportunity to manifest and increase her cultural capital. An important point which respondents were very aware of was that although they had acquired social capital and a network of good contacts, they had to be very careful to maintain their status and reputation within these networks because word would spread very fast at the smallest wrong doing, be it a bad musical performance, attitude or behaviour for instance in Tamara's case, of arriving late for rehearsals and so on. Kirsty, who is also involved in village bands, echoes Tamara's experience. She said

*Contacts help you in the sense...in everything. If you need anything you need to know someone, in everything. If someone knows you and trusts you, he can recommend you. That is how it started...From the local village band, my teacher was in the Army and he recommended me and I started going for Lm1 (2.50 Euros) a service for 4 hours but that is not the point. The point is that you build contacts with another conductor (Kirsty, Committed, lecturer)*

It was not always the monetary payment which was important especially in the initial stages of acquiring contacts, but it was the actual contacts themselves and the reputation one had the opportunity to create within that network. Kirsty also emphasised the importance of reputation in the Maltese society, especially in the village band clubs where everyone know everyone else. She expressed her conviction that the reputation and the contacts she worked hard for are precious and she has to be careful to maintain her reputation as a musician.

*Then it depends on how trustworthy you are. Now if once you go and do not play well, the other you go with a broken reed, the other you do not turn up etc...then...you need to be committed (Kirsty, Committed, lecturer)*

It is therefore the cultural capital that needs to be maintained to safeguard the social capital. Although Kirsty says that the band club to her feels like a family because of having

frequented it regularly for long years and people were familiar, yet later, she admits that the atmosphere in the club bar makes her uncomfortable

*I do not feel I fit in...At the club they see you, they know you, they know your family, everything and you would not know them that much. Eg. I am an assistant conductor, so people know me from the monthly leaflet etc. so you need to be careful and behave well, you know what I mean, you need to be careful about what you say because even if you sneeze they say 'She sneezed', you know? (Kirsty, Committed, lecturer)*

Kirsty highlighted that because of her status within the band club, she needed to be very careful to maintain her reputation and that of her family. These clubs, for those who frequented them regularly, constituted their social network within that field. Being there, being acquainted with the members of the committee, having a beer with local councillors who frequented the club and so on made the club a hub of social networking. The more capital one has and the more influential on a political level, the more he or she is considered as a prized contact. Asking for favours from people within one's social network is a very common practice in Malta and this practice relies on social networks, reputation and a socially constructed system of exchange of favours where the saying 'You rub my back and I rub yours' is almost like an unwritten mission statement of people's personal agenda. Participants in the Committed category, like Kirsty, through their commitment to the music, were usually involved in some way in music making, either by playing an instrument or by being involved in the organisation of a group, band or village band. It is thus understandable that social capital was particularly highlighted by participants in this category.

Thus within the cultural traditions of Maltese village bands and village feasts, there exist social hierarchies as in any other social group associated with music. These hierarchies are very well established and depend on cultural and social capital as well as social networks. Maintaining or improving one's position in the social hierarchy is a continuous task which needs to be undertaken and which relies highly on the reputation of the person and the family. Coming from a respected family places one in a positive light. Coming from a family with a history of involvement in the village band club positions one highly in the social hierarchy associated with Maltese village bands. Moreover, these hierarchies also depend on economic capital in that potential sponsors or patrons in a

village band club are held in high esteem. Having them in one's social network is highly desirable, since being seen with such influential connections is part of maintaining or improving one's position in the social hierarchy in this field.

### **6.2.3 Hybrid identities and the tensions between tradition and modernity**

Participants who formed part of the Committed category shared a common perspective that although they had particular music preferences, they still listened to other types of music and felt that this was important for their overall musical knowledge. It was not only music that was related to their particular preferred music but included music of very different styles and genres. This reflected their conscious choice and need of spreading their musical knowledge.

*You cannot just listen to one type...I mean...there are people who tell you they like Paceville music...only Paceville music! I mean this music has originated from somewhere...but I wouldn't say this to anyone. I would not say this to someone who would try to make fun of me. But at the same time why should you listen to other things. If I did not play an instrument I would still listen to other types of music. My friend does not play an instrument but she listens to everything from classical to whoever and the way she talks about music is different from someone who is like a closed box, he is limited to one type of music. I mean you say she has a better background, a better cultural background (Tamara, Committed, student)*

Above, Tamara refers to Paceville, where the music in the clubs is generally the commercial type. Gaining knowledge about all types of music places Committed participants in a better position to be able to talk about music in general and enhance their cultural knowledge. Thus for the Committed, identity was not merely a reflection or partly a reflection of the music they preferred but a reflection of the exposure they gave themselves to different styles of music. It was not a matter of their parents exposing them to music of different styles but it was through their conscious effort and intention that they opened up to different styles of music. It was also their thirst for knowledge which motivated them to accumulate knowledge which would be part of their cultural capital and enhance their status in social networks associated with music.

An interesting point which interviewees in the Committed category outlined was that this quest for wide ranging musical knowledge was somehow misunderstood by many young people in their social groups. On a social level, as Tamara said, many young people who liked specific types of music would not understand their choice of listening to other types of music and would make fun of them. This was mostly evident when the types of music ranged from extremes of traditional music such as the Maltese folk music, the 'ghana', the village band music and even classical music to modern music such as pop, techno, house and so on. Their involvement in both traditional music and modern music creates a tension within their identity. Although they nurture a hybrid identity and are internally proud of it, because of their belief that they are more holistically cultured, they do not reveal this multifaceted identity to those who do not share the same perspective. Traditional music such as the Maltese folklore or the Maltese marches which village bands play in religious processions very often is perceived as indicating 'old times', a more local and limited outlook that is mainly part of the popular culture shared by our ancestors. It has elements of Sicilian and Arabic traditions which Maltese society absorbed under foreign rulers. Modern music, on the other hand is usually perceived by Maltese people, as representing a European dimension, and even a globalised dimension. It is what the media projects as part of modern societies, as part of modern identities. Modern music is 'cool' while traditional music is backward. Of course, it is not quite so binary in that there are people who consider traditional Maltese music as continuously being reshaped by Maltese people and therefore is not so backward, but part of a living culture. On the other hand, there are people who perceive modern music as nonsense or mere noise and prefer older types of music.

Certain types of music are associated with high class or elite society and certain types of music are associated with lower class stratum of society. According to Mitchell (2002), in the Maltese context, high class is categorised by education which implies respectability while low class was associated with the low popular culture which included activities such as the traditional village feasts. People who like classical music are generally considered as high class. Being seen at the opera is considered as high class. Evidently this is not the only requisite to be considered as high class but it is one of the factors which contributes to society's positioning of people in social strata. If you are seen at rave parties it is considered trendy. If you are seen at the village feast, you are associated with the lower culture. Of course, the same people might do all three: they might go to the opera on the Friday night and go to a rave party on the Saturday night, and go to the feast

march on the Sunday morning. Thus it is difficult to position these people in particular social strata considering only the music they listen to and can be seen as not truly belonging to particular social groups. It is others who take the same approach of listening to different types of music, who perceive them as people who are more knowledgeable because of the variety of music they listen to. The Committed take a more holistic approach to music and maybe because many of them look at music through a birds' eye view, they appreciate the value of all types of music even if they do not like all types of music, but they still listen to them and want to know about them. Therese, for instance says

*I would not dream of listening to the Maltese 'għana' or village band music at home, not even during a feast, I would never stop to listen to the band. However as a musician, I do feel it is very important to know the traditions of music of the country and what that type of music is all about, the harmony and form that such music is based on. But many would not understand it so I keep my thoughts to myself (Theresa, Committed, lecturer)*

This identity which incorporates a wide spectrum of music, is somewhat problematic for the Committed in mainstream society as their involvement or even interest in the traditional styles of music make them seem like outsiders in their social groups. When Tamara was asked if she ever spoke about her musical tastes to her closest friends, she goes on to explain that it is only when trust is built that she feels she can talk about her tastes with her most trusted friends.

*I see it as... I have my own life. I do as I please and they (my close friends) do what they like. I used to bother about what they think of me but then you learn, I could not go on like that. If they like that, I like this, so what...and I do not mind talking about my tastes with them...only because I know what they are...I know they would not criticise and make fun, on the other hand they give me courage etc. I would not tell others who are not in my group of friends, no as if, because I am afraid they would make fun of me...you still find those types of people. (Tamara, Committed, student)*

It is only when sufficient layers of their identity are known to their friends that they feel they can talk about their extreme tastes in music. One might think that the reason behind

this acceptance by close friends is because most of the layers of Tamara's identity share commonalities with those of her close friends so that just this one different layer will not impinge on the friendship or their perception of her. This would draw on the assumption that music is not a sufficiently significant indicator of identity. This assumption cannot be considered since interviewees in the Committed category insisted that music preference did have an impact on their character, together with other factors that influenced their character. Moreover, our analysis would be reduced to a statistical attempt at finding out a number of required commonalities for friends to be friends or for insiders to be considered as insiders and a maximum number of differences which friendship could survive, or which insiders could afford to have and still be considered as insiders. A crucial point that one must keep in mind here is that identities are not static or fixed. Individuals cannot be thought of having this or that identity because identity itself is an ongoing process and changes throughout life. It is therefore the complexities of hybrid identities which comes to the fore. Identities which encompass or embrace both the traditional and the modern in Maltese society cause tension within the individual living in Maltese society. The old and the new, are two very different dimensions in contemporary society and although outsiders observe many individuals who have tastes similar to Tamara's, embracing both old and new, being involved in both the traditional and the modern, these individuals still feel uncomfortable talking about their tastes for fear of being made fun of, when in reality it might be that if they did talk about them, they would realise that there are many others who have the same hybrid tastes and tensions.

## **Conclusion**

In the Committed category, therefore, cultural and social capital were deemed to be very important by interviewees, in positioning them in their status within each and every social group they were part of. Moreover, they valued knowledge in the field of music in general and although they still had distinct tastes, the overall mentality is that they should know about all types of music and this knowledge was considered as valuable and prestigious by others who were in the Committed category. However, in social groups, the Committed believed that this perception was not shared by others or they were not ready to risk talking about their own extreme tastes and involvement in traditional Maltese music for fear that their peers would make fun of them and their reputation within that music scene would be marred. The tensions of having extreme tastes and being part of two very different realities and cultures was problematic to members of the Committed category.



## **Chapter 7: Categories of Drifters: The Active Drifters and The Passive Drifters**

In this chapter, the data highlighting an element of ‘drift’ in the processes of young women’s musical taste will be analysed. The first part focuses on the category of the Active Drifters and the second part focuses on the category of Passive Drifters. Both categories draw on Matza’s (1964) drift theory which suggests that young people drift in and out of conventional behaviour. Within both categories in the present study, young Maltese women drift into and out of music subcultures, going through processes of change or multiple musical tastes. These categories differ in that the Active Drifters are agents within their own drift, choosing which music subcultures to make part of, while the Passive Drifters do not seem to have an active part in the music they listen to, listening to whatever music happens to be going on around them.

Willis’s (1978) analytical framework was developed to analyse these two categories since participants in these categories did not actually form part of a pre-determined subculture. The Active Drifters might be seen as forming part of a subculture but their engagement within a particular subculture is very temporary. The Passive Drifters do not form part of any given subculture and therefore Willis’s analytical framework was developed further through Muggleton’s (2002) work and Hodkinsons’s (2007) work, so that the analysis would include those who are not part of given subcultures. Individuality is therefore considered in some detail within the analysis of the Drifters.

### **7.1 The Active Drifters: analysis of main themes**

Willis’s (1978) indexical analysis was still instrumental in the shaping of this category since it is made up of those participants who purposely shift from one subculture to the next taking into consideration many things such as how outsiders look at that particular subculture, reflecting subjective choices which Muggleton (2002) emphasises. Through homological analysis, the Active Drifters’ interactions with the different groups associated with the types of music they engage in reveals itself to be complex, as is the process of combining identities into an individual identity. The analytical framework had to be developed from Willis’s in that his analysis was based on one particular subculture at a time and emphasises a considerable amount of homogeneity between members. The Active Drifters Category, in its own nature has very limited homogeneity and is based more on individual processes of identity formation. Willis’s form of integral analysis focuses on the way the social group and the music influence each other. Thus once again, since these participants engage with and detach themselves from a number of subcultures, this

influence is complex and needs to be analysed in some detail. In this section, themes which inform the category of Active Drifters will be analysed. The themes which this section focuses on include processes of identity construction in which the Active Drifters engage, agency of members of the Active Drifters category and processes of how they acquire, use and trade their cultural and social capital.

### **7.1.1 Active Drifters' processes of identity**

The Active Drifters category is characterized by an intentional choice to experience different types of music and an open mindedness about changing preferences and being open about it. This notion was not explored in Willis's (1978) work and the possibility of people intentionally moving from one subculture to another was overlooked. The Active Drifters category is complex as it incorporates different processes and ways that the Active Drifters live the experience of drifting from one type of music to another. This category includes those who intentionally shift their musical preferences over time without actually being partial to any kind of music. It also includes those who do have particular musical preferences but are still visiting other types of music. These participants are open to changing their area of preference if they find another type of music with linked associated social practices, which they prefer or they feel they can identify more with. Included in this category are also those whose musical preferences include only particular items or songs from various styles of music or who openly nurture different and at times unrelated musical preferences concurrently such as rock and rap, or rock and folk and are comfortable with this and consider it as cultural capital.

Tania and Elaine, drift from one musical style to another, visiting various types of music and do this consciously, since they believe that musical open mindedness is important for them in their social life.

*I listen to a lot of different stuff. I try to get a feel of everything (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant)*

*I was always open to different types of music (Elaine, Active Drifter, student)*

The Active Drifters live out the music they are visiting and give meaning to that music while they are visiting the social group associated with that music. Thus they are taking part in rituals and adopting social practices associated with the music they are engaging in

at that particular time. They are also selecting which practices to make their own and which to resist in the ongoing process of forming their identity.

Participants in the Active Drifters category related how they try to expose themselves to as many different types of music as possible and then they would choose which music with which to affiliate themselves. Choice does not necessarily mean freedom since people do not usually choose the circumstances within which they make decisions. Reflecting Marxist concepts and the theoretic basis of alienation, the circumstances into which people are born and living in a society which is stratified into social classes, many times, does not allow people in the proletariat strata to determine their own actions since most of their actions are indirectly linked to activities dictated by the bourgeoisie. Thus, social classes as well as the music industry and media greatly influence people's accessibility to particular types of music, making their choice one that is not completely determined by the self in that it is influenced by social class and is made and exercised in a social context.

*When I was younger it was pop...boy bands, then at 15 some R&B because you start going to Paceville. Then R & B stopped even on TV so then you change...so I started liking U2 for example (Elaine, Active Drifter, student)*

Elaine's choice of moving on from R & B to U2 was not a choice made in a vacuum, but a choice which was made due to particular circumstances which depended on what was made available by the media at the time. Her detachment from R & B was due to circumstances but her choice of U2, was not random. It was a choice made from available possibilities. Intertwined with this is partly a personal choice of choosing U2 rather than any other band which was being broadcast on the media. The criteria Active Drifters used included not only an evaluation of the music itself but it included an external analysis of how the structure is interpreted by other social groups. The identity of a social group 'would necessarily be shaped to some extent by the categorizing gaze of others' (Jenkins, 1996, p.106) and therefore the categorisation that is given by others essentially becomes part of the reality of that group.

This reflects J.C. Turner's (1984) self-categorisation theory which argues that in response to external situations, individuals choose from available possibilities, collective identities with which they can identify themselves. In the process, they contribute to the

production and reproduction of collectivities with which they are identifying and constructing group similarities and group differences. However, in this study, it was not the Active Drifters' aim to identify themselves with a group, at least not for a prolonged time. They do not plan to stay, but just to visit although their visit could be quite an intense one, and even if they remain partial to that type of music, they are not likely to engage deeply within it for any length of time. Moreover, as Turner (1984) points out, the Active Drifters do bring about change in social groups through interactions. As Tania points out, the Fully Committed and the Committed detect Active Drifters within their social groups through indicators, the most prominent being taste, as well as language and knowledge.

*It is quite stereotypical in Paceville like you have Coconut plays rock, places like Havana plays dance music and Footloose plays charts...so you can change, you can have a bit of everything and so it is a lot better because there is a variety and different people have different clubs...this group of people go to that place and dress like that, the other group of people go to the other place and dress like that. I mean I wear a dress and go to Coconut...I do not feel I have to wear what they are wearing to go to that club. I feel comfortable but I do get people staring like...she's trendy what is she doing in here? But me and friends go in because we like the music...we do not have to dress like that to like that music (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant)*

The Active Drifters relate they are looked at with suspicion by the Fully Committed and how they are initially kept at a distance by the Fully Committed and the Committed. The Fully Committed and Committed detect Active Drifters from the way they dress, the way they talk, the lack of depth of knowledge about the particular type of music, the lack of commitment to the lifestyle associated with the particular type of music and so on. This implies that the Active Drifters are not considered insiders but outsiders, since they are seen as fake, as 'wannabe's' and not authentic. Authenticity implies being genuine in the eyes of those around, no matter whether or not the person sees himself or herself as genuine. Acceptance as insiders involves negotiation of boundaries, which I will be discussing later on in this chapter, and substantial proof that they are becoming committed to that particular type of music and the social practices associated with it.

The Active Drifters' motivations are based primarily on social capital and therefore the way that others look at that particular social group is an important factor when choosing which groups to 'visit'. The value and meaning of the social group are socially given. The Active Drifters look to the Committed and mostly to the Fully Committed, since they are the veterans of the group and are considered as those who truly value that art form and who are the role models of that lifestyle. The Active Drifters then take over what they think are established ways of appreciating that art form, imitating the veterans, that is the Fully Committed within that social group. One of the most obvious ways of imitating the veterans was by imitating their dress style. However, it is not the aim of the Active Drifters to fully imitate the veterans or to be accepted in the social group. On the other hand they pick and choose the social practices that they can identify with and discard others. Their choice depends on what meaning they can give to the cultural item, as well as how society views that cultural item and how they want to be viewed by those around them. As Willis (1978) had pointed out, different groups give different meanings to a cultural item and choose to adopt that particular item because of the meaning it already carries as well as having the possibility of having other different meanings.

The Active Drifters were aware they changed styles or they purposely fused styles from different music subcultures in an effort not to be pinned down to any one particular style. Their hybrid identities and fluid tastes were reflected in conscious choices not to follow any particular fashion trend that was specific to any music subculture. Active Drifters reported hating being stereotyped, being labelled as part of a specific group and through what they dressed, they tried to blend different styles which reflected their fluid tastes in music. They were thus continuously striving to preserve their individuality, both in the concoction of music styles they liked and in the dress style they wore.

*People cannot pin me down because I would have skaters' shoes, skinny jeans and a leather jacket. Because it looks alright I wear it and people go...what is happening? They cannot pin me down. I do it purposely because I think it looks nice...I'd rather not fit in a group (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant)*



Figure 8: Tania's skater shoes, skinny jeans and leather jacket

In Figure 8, Tania's choice of clothes is a conscious effort on her part to have three styles fused in one and constitutes her typical everyday casual wear. Skaters' shoes are associated with the skaters' lifestyle and music they listen to. This can be traced to her boyfriend who is into skater music which she listens to sometimes when they are together. The skinny jeans are part of the mainstream culture and fashion and are associated with the charts which Tania follows closely. On the other hand the leather jacket is associated with rockers and although Tania is not a rocker, she does like listening to soft rock. This 'bricolage', as Levi-Strauss (1962) calls it, is therefore her method of expressing herself and projecting herself through the selection of items from surrounding cultures and subcultures. Levi-Strauss sees the set of possible uses for each item as a limitation for the bricoleur, since each item retains meanings of its original purpose. However, the variety of meanings that each item carries is seen by the Active Drifters as a determining factor, one that provides the reason for them choosing to adopt that item, since these meanings are what attract the Active Drifters to adopt such items. It is precisely because of these meanings that the items carry, that the Active Drifters choose to wear them and combine them with other items that carry a different set of meanings. Without these socially constructed meanings, the items would not project the message that the Active Drifter is trying to put across. Bricolage for Active Drifters served as a means of deviation from established norms as Hebdige (1979) suggested. Bricolage is one method by which Active Drifters can influence the subculture or the music scape in which they are engaging. The idea of agency will be discussed later on in this chapter.

When going out clubbing in Paceville with old school friends, Tania, an Active Drifter (Figure 9) together with Dina, another Active Drifter participant, dress up in some jeans wear and casual tops. Tania and Dina do not only fuse different styles into the same look but they also change styles day by day, and with the styles they change their behaviour and social practices, so that people around them cannot really 'pin them down' to one style or one subculture. This resistance to being labelled into pre-determined subcultures reflects the wish of Active Drifters to be seen as individuals, and the processes they use and how they strive to achieve an individual identity.

*Yes because I have a variety (of music styles I listen to) ...not always the same thing. Generally even the ones who listen to only rock, you realise it from what they wear...they wear black, the hair gelled, they wear these spikes on their arms...even rappers, you see them in baggy clothes...you realise from the style. The fact that I have a variety...I vary also the way I dress, the way I behave with others (Dina, Active Drifter, student)*

In Figure 10, Tania is seen in a trendy figure hugging dress, dancing in a disco in Paceville where she went with her boyfriend. The images projected in Figure 9 and Figure 10 are very different. In Figure 9, the occasion was more casual since it was old school friends she was with. In Figure 10, it was more of a dressed up look because according to her, it was the weekend and they were with other couples.





Figure 9: Tania and Dina dressed up to go to Paceville



Figure 10: Tania at a disco in Paceville

Figure 11 shows Tania dressed up to celebrate her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in the UK, where together with her boyfriend and friends, they started off with a party at some friends' house and then went out to a club. Since she was the centre of attraction and it was her celebration, Tania dressed up for the occasion. Again, her style changed although she was still clubbing. Her black lace transparent top is reminiscent of a rock chick while her silk skirt and peep-toe shoes are typical party wear.



Figure 11: Tania dressed up for her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday which she celebrated at friends in the UK

All these photos, apart from Figure 8, were not taken particularly for the purposes of this research but were taken before the participants were asked to participate in this research. They all show stylised poses which, according to them, from their perspective, represent an attitude which matches the image and the occasion. The poses themselves reveal that they want to convey and preserve in snapshot a particular style and image of themselves.

Passive Drifters therefore made it a point to keep what they consider their individual style, which in their view included a fusion of other styles. This was done through the creative process of bricolage, as opposed to following any one particular style linked to one particular type of music. This reflected Muggleton's (2000) findings that subculturalists wished to retain key aspects of their individuality while also expressing some aspects of commitment to belonging to a recognisable group. For the Active Drifters, the recognisable group could be the one they were partial to at that point in time or it could be the groups recognisable to society, which they included within the image they were projecting.

### 7.1.2 Agency in Active Drifters

As discussed above, Active Drifters are perceived by the Fully Committed and the Committed as visitors and amateurs within their social group. There are two viewpoints which respondents in the Fully Committed and the Committed categories shared, about the agency of the Active Drifters. The first is that they are not perceived as having the potential to influence the cultural group since they are not insiders and are not looked at as role models who should be imitated. They also lack the desired in-depth knowledge of the music and the group and usually do not stay long enough within the cultural group to leave any effect. The second viewpoint is that they are viewed with suspicion by the Fully Committed. The Active Drifters are purposely kept at a distance by the Fully Committed in resistance to potential change which the Active Drifters might bring within the social practices of the group, which might decrease the authenticity of the group.

The Active Drifters' perception is quite different to that of the Fully Committed and the Committed. The Active Drifters believe that they bring about change in these groups. When two elements in a cultural relationship influence one another, they bring with them ideas from other cultural forms and so they have the potential to change the group. The Active Drifters are considered by others as having different interpretations and meanings from the group they are visiting. This does not mean that they consciously try to change the group, or are necessarily aware of it at the time, but looking back and reflecting on it, they realise that the Active Drifters in general, do actually influence the cultural groups they visit. Tania relates how she influenced her friends by making them listen to the music she liked at the time and they were influenced and started listening to that music too.

*My friends were a bit different before they met me to be honest! Then I showed them 'my' music, like, you know. They started listening to the same kind of music, some of my friends, R & B and stuff (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant)*

Thus the interaction between Tania and her friends, who included some Committed members as well, created change in members of other social groups and boundaries were negotiated and shifted. The shift in these boundaries potentially creates a challenge to the purity and authenticity both of the members of the subculture as well as the subculture itself. It reflects that collective forms are not fixed, but are created and shaped through

interaction. The collective in itself is made up of individuals and it is these individuals and processes of individual lives that are the foundation of collective patterns (Barth 1959, 1966 in Jenkins, 1996). Boundaries of identity are also not fixed and are continuously changing through interaction, and this happens particularly when the interaction is between people of different identities. Interaction at the boundaries is controlled and policed in various ways. Because the Active Drifters are visiting different music scapes, they frequently engage in such interactions with people of different identities. As discussed in Chapter 1, in examining the global cultural economy, Appadurai (1996) proposed five factors which he labels ‘-scapes’ that contribute to the global exchange of ideas and information. These ‘-scapes’ are not fixed like typical landscapes but are very fluid and the changing meaning of these ideas, depend on the spectator’s representations of them. People can give their own meanings to symbols. They can say and do the same things without meaning the same things at all (Jenkins, 1996), although these meanings take on a collective meaning within a social group when they are shared. These symbols could be language, dress, music, ritual and other practical forms. Thus wearing skaters’ shoes could represent an individual’s affiliation to Ska music, or as in Tania’s case, could mean that she does like that music, or somebody else’s case could simply mean that the individual likes those types of shoes because they find them comfortable. The scapes, which Appadurai (1996) mentions, are navigated by the agents who experience them and make part of other larger formations. On a similar line of thought, one can compare the individual navigating through what we might call several ‘musicscapes’ as in the case of the Active Drifters. In one way, the Active Drifters can drift between different music subcultures because there is some form of fixed outline to the subculture or group. On the other hand, there is at times also an element of shifting and fluid contexts of music which they experience and in which they interpret ideas and experiences.

As discussed earlier, the four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters are not fixed categories because ‘people participate in multiple, more or less discrepant, universes of discourse; they construct different partial and simultaneous worlds in which they move; their cultural construction of reality springs not from one source and is not of one piece’ (Barth 1989, p.130). This is mostly evident in the Active Drifters but is also true in the other three categories and one must not get the impression that the other categories are simple and fixed. Differences of opinion are inevitable among members of the same group. Whereas the Committed mostly kept their

differences in private, the Active Drifters exposed their differences in public. Whereas the Committed based their meanings of identity on similarities with the social group, the Active Drifters based their meaning of identity on the differences with the social group. Thus the categories reveal different patterns and different positions in the process of identity, agency and structure. These complexities must be understood within the context of boundaries that are at times fluid and identities that are sometimes hybrid in the Maltese music subcultures.

### **7.1.3 Active Drifters' cultural and social capital through music**

The category of Active Drifters includes respondents who drift from liking one type of music to another and respondents who like, at times, very different types of music, at the same time and value their wide ranging musical preferences. Therefore this category includes respondents who sought to increase their musical knowledge by learning an instrument as well as respondents who did not learn music theory or an instrument, but increased their cultural capital through the music they listened to. Through their music, these respondents gained knowledge of various types of music and kept up to date with the music that was being released. This implies that the level of inherited cultural capital and acquired cultural capital varied considerably in this category.

Like the Fully Committed and the Committed, the Active Drifters were aware that inherited cultural capital was an asset. Being socialised in a musical family and having the opportunity to be exposed to music in childhood, were considered assets. Some participants in the Active Drifters category had no one in the family who had studied music or was involved in some way in music, but they had been obliged or encouraged by parents to learn music. In this study, many interviewees felt that their parents were very much aware of the importance of cultural capital in society and although these parents might have been deprived of opportunities to accumulate such capital in their own childhood, they try to give the opportunity to their children. One of the ways in which they tried to do that was by sending their children to music lessons. Elaine was brought up in a musical environment herself and learnt how to play the violin to quite a high level but she comments that

*There are people who did not have the opportunity to be exposed to music at home. I know people who were not exposed to music, yet their parents sent them to lessons to learn an instrument but they did not listen to music at home and it turned out they liked music (Elaine, Active Drifter, student)*

The distinction between inherited cultural capital and acquired cultural capital, in Elaine's observation, highlights the effort made by the parents to provide the opportunity to their children to acquire and accumulate cultural capital even though they themselves at home did not provide musical exposure to children. Elaine goes on to emphasise the importance of exposure to music in the family upbringing

*I remember eating to classical music (in my childhood), 60s and 70s pop...then I had no idea about band marches from the feasts which others knew...for me they were non-existent. However on the whole I was exposed to many types of music, more than the average young person I would say. Probably the fact that I started learning violin probably goes back to this exposure (Elaine, Active Drifter, student)*

It is interesting to note that the type of music one is exposed to affects that person's choices. In Elaine's case, she chose to play the violin when if she had been exposed to band marches, she might have chosen a band instrument such as a woodwind or brass instrument. What music parents expose their children to, reflects the family's social class position and as discussed earlier, taste in music is an indicator and expression of class, just like taste in fashion, art and so on. Elaine's observation that to her, village bands and marches were 'non-existent' indicate a particular taste in the more 'elite' classical music, the globalised modern pop music, rather than the traditional Maltese music which is associated with mass culture.

As mentioned earlier, cultural capital does not only include learning music. Although some Active Drifters loved music, they had never learnt music and often envied those who did or were given the opportunity to. The reason for the lack of opportunity was often the family's economic status. At times it was simply that the parents thought it was a waste of time and money and they wanted their children to engage in some other activity which was more valuable within their position in the social class. Such Active Drifters manifested their cultural capital in its 'objectified' form by keeping as up to date as

possible and by being extremely well versed in the particular styles of music which they liked. Their tastes were wide and often they declared liking all types of music. A particular characteristic of Active Drifters was that they considered themselves as being more versed in the field of music, having knowledge that was widespread over several types of music and therefore they felt this knowledge was more valuable as cultural capital than in-depth knowledge in one area of music. They nurtured the idea that being able to talk about all types of music, being up to date in all styles of music was something to be proud of.

As discussed earlier, cultural capital and social capital are strongly linked. These two types of capital interact in that people draw on their knowledge and cultural capital to socialise with others and in turn, during interactions with others, people learn more and further enhance their capital acquisition. For the Active Drifters, it was being up-to date in the musical field that was of paramount importance for their social life. Within their group of friends, there was a subtle underlying and on-going competition of who was the first to know about the latest releases and the latest gossip about their idols. Having a good knowledge of the music of that particular band or the music of that particular style was also essential in building the cultural capital. This affected the formation of social capital as well, since peers looked up to and admired those who had such up to date knowledge and in depth knowledge. Tania explains what was valued as knowledge.

*I read magazines so I know what is in fashion what is up and coming, actors, who has just made a movie and who is going to hit it big and it is like...this is happening and this colour is in fashion and it is like oh really, oh ok and you are like ha ha I know...I know because I read magazines but really it is not intelligent at all...you just read magazines...if you're singing the lyrics of the song, even when I was that age, you say wow they know the lyrics of the songs and you start learning and memorising the lyrics because you think it is cool (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant)*

Active Drifters deemed being up to date so important that sometimes they said they bluffed their way through, telling peers that they had listened to that new album when in actual fact they would not even be aware that it was released. The fact that someone else in the group got the latest information before them was frustrating for them threatening their status in

the group. Manifesting knowledge was important and Tania, when talking to friends about music, admitted she also resorted to faking knowledge so as to preserve her reputation.

*My friend was like 'Oh Oh Tiesto', and I say, 'Who is Tiesto?' and she goes, 'What? You do not know who Tiesto is?' and I say, 'Hmmm yes, I know who he is' when in fact I had no idea (Tania, Active Drifter, counter assistant).*

Tania's attitude reflects Thornton's (1995) research on club culture where she points out that the club culture worked around the possession of 'subcultural capital' and cultural hierarchies depend on one being on the cutting edge of developments in that particular subculture where knowledge in that subcultural sphere is prized.

Active Drifters were conscious of having changed their tastes, especially in their teenage years, in order to gain access to a particular social group, having a sense of belonging in the group, thus acquiring a social network and a social life.

*When you are a teenager, because of peer pressure...eg. I remember when I was in Form 4 the boom was R&B and Hip Hop...I kept more inclined to Pop and I used to say 'Am I the only one?' So I got myself to like Hip Hop and R&B, not because I really liked it (Helen, Active Drifter, student)*

This process of 'get(ting) myself to liking' implies control over one's tastes with the individual imposing taste on oneself as a reaction to the need or desire of forming part of a group. It is a kind of 'technique of the self' as Foucault (1984) calls it. It is also the result of the influence of the cultural form on the individual due to accepted practices of the social group associated with that cultural form. For Active Drifters, changing their preferences and being up to date also meant that their musical preferences often changed with whatever was considered by other young Maltese women who were positioned in the same or higher strata of society, as 'cool' to be following at the time. This reflects Rojek's (2009) argument that for modern men and women, leisure is a time to accumulate emotional intelligence and using emotional labour to teach themselves how to be 'socially respected and cool'. People knowledge and people skills are pivotal in having a 'good life' with others, and moving through social interactions with relative ease, as well as enjoying a high status.



For Active Drifters, another significant element linked to social capital was telling friends that they had all the albums of a particular band or singer.

*Metallica, I have all the originals except the last album because they sort of are not that good any more...they are my pride and joy (Ilona, Active Drifter, lecturer)*

Not only, but being able to talk about all the songs and having the knowledge of all the songs the singer sang or the band played was even more of a source of pride and a sort of asset in their circle of friends. Possessing the whole discography of a band or singer not only gave them the luxury of having all the songs readily available for them to be able to pick and choose what to listen to at any given time. It also made them feel superior to their friends, in a subtle way, in that they could boast that they had all the songs and it was a sign of expertise in that band's music. The Active Drifters viewed this expertise as a means of positioning themselves in the higher ranks of that subculture's hierarchy. Thus practices of consumption are closely linked to identity and positioning in Maltese society. Music consumption, unlike in Veblen's (1899) time, could be either conspicuous consumption or inconspicuous since nowadays, with the technological equipment available, one could listen to music in public or in private. Although conspicuous consumption is still very important on a social level, even when music consumption is part of inconspicuous leisure, the individual can convert it to a conspicuous form, since the knowledge and the cultural capital gained through reading about favourite bands, listening to the music in private, provides the capital to be able to talk and discuss the topic with friends.

## **7.2 The Passive Drifters: analysis of main themes**

The shaping of this category took into consideration Willis's (1978) analytical framework and through indexical analysis, this category consists of those participants who have no strong feelings about any particular type of music. Homological analysis reveal that because of their passivity, they do not consciously form part of any social group associated with music and to them, the choice of music is not so important. Willis's integral analysis focuses on the influences that music and the social group have on each other, but this is quite redundant within this category since the music did not apparently influence these participants and they considered the music as external to their character and identity. Therefore Willis's model was further developed to analyse how such young women

negotiated their musical space while simultaneously being detached from it, in a certain way.

In this section, the themes that were most prominent during the data collection within the Passive Drifter category will be analysed. These include music as a source of social capital and the function of music in their social networks as well as individual and collective identities and their familiarisation with indicators of social group membership.

### **7.2.1 Social capital and social networks**

The Passive Drifters liked music in general but were not usually particular about the type of music. Respondents however did show dislike for one or two particular styles of music, but their dislike was not strong enough as to make them not listen to it. These respondents did not have preferences for any particular type of music and they seemed to unintentionally drift from one style to another. They usually listened to whatever was on the radio or in the background or, as Lisa relates, to what people around her introduce her to.

*Most of the time I am not adventurous so I would be with a friend and she would say, did you listen to this? I listen to it and I like it so she sends me an album, a CD so most of the time I am introduced to different types of music through people...like I listen to something and I like it... I never took the initiative to look into something different so it is what comes along...listen, you filter it, you like, you do not like. That is the way I go about it (Lisa, Passive Drifter, service manager)*

Some Passive Drifters came from musical families and had learnt to play an instrument in their childhood but had given it up. Music was not a strong source of cultural capital although they might have other sources of cultural capital. Although music featured considerably in their lives, the choice of music did not feature as an important element in their lifestyles and they were not conscious of music influencing them in any way.

Although music was not considered a source of *cultural* capital, the Passive Drifters did consider music as a strong source of *social* capital. Being up to date, knowing the latest releases was a priority, as it was found to be in the other categories. However, for the Passive Drifters being up to date was important exclusively for social capital, because it enabled them to talk about music in their social life. Often, though, they would not make

any extra effort to be up to date. Jessica relates how the media, particularly the radio keeps her sufficiently up to date

*I think since I have started listening to the radio...I have only started listening to the radio recently because I used to listen to You Tube but now they blocked it at work. So, on the radio since they always play the recent songs, I would be quite up to date. (Jessica, Passive Drifter, accounts clerk)*

The processes of social hierarchies linked to music scenes, seemed of much less importance to the Passive Drifters when compared with the Fully Committed, the Committed and the Active Drifters. Yet an element which kept surfacing in the Passive Drifters, similar to the Active Drifters, was that they were actually aware of having consciously changed their musical tastes in their teenage years, to have a social network and a social life. Bertha relates,

*When I was younger, a teenager, I had a phase where I listened to rock like all my friends...then I started listening to bands which are not so popular because that was what my friends did. Then I grew up and whatever was on I listened to... like I could not be bothered to look for music or make the effort just to be in a specific group of friends (Bertha, Passive Drifter, student)*

Passive Drifters viewed music almost as a currency of negotiation within the social world. They adapt and like styles of music in order to be included in a group, to have somewhere to go out at the weekends. Lisa said,

*If you go out on a Saturday and you are going to go to a club, you go because you like that sort of music. So if you do not like that music and you do not go, you are pretty much going to stay at home. So I think there is a bit of, not peer pressure I would say, but you have to fix yourself to their likings sometimes to be part of a group (Lisa, Passive Drifter, service manager)*

Unlike Willis's (1978) argument that the cultural item influences the person and the person influences the cultural item, this analysis reveals that for this category, it is the social

environment and the need to form part of a group which influences these young women's musical choices. It is society and the social groups existing in the society which, for some people, shape their tastes. The interaction between the person and the music does not happen in a vacuum, but within a social environment which has an impact on how and why people engage with certain types of music. Muggleton's (2002) argument that people's choices are subjective also stresses the point that choices are not made in a vacuum but are shaped through life's experiences and opportunities available.

As Lisa puts it, these young women, when still teenagers, learnt how to change their tastes to be similar to the tastes of people who surrounded them, reflecting Rojek's (2009) idea that young people use leisure time to teach themselves how to be respected and 'cool' within their social groups. 'Fix(ing) yourself' is loaded with meaning implying a frame of mind where the individual is fixing something that was wrong, a wrong choice of music preference, and making it right, making it similar to that of others around her. This was an unnatural choice, a form of self-imposition in an effort to gain access to desirable social networks. The above quote shows how important music is in young Maltese women's social groups. Since music accompanies most leisure activities which these young women engage in, the choice of music has to be one which the group as a whole likes or at least does not dislike. It is maybe because music has infiltrated most leisure activities offered to young people in Malta nowadays, that music forms such an important and determining part of which group of friends to belong to and to group life in general. For both the Active and Passive Drifters, such a shift in changing and internalising new tastes for music, might have been instrumental in actually not being partial to any particular type of music, but drifting from one type of music to another.

The Passive Drifters had no intention of changing the social groups or actively trying to bring about change in their social practices. On the other hand they were quite passive in their music consumption although they continuously negotiate boundaries of social groups which they interact with. The Passive Drifters category members were always on the edge of such boundaries, shifting these boundaries just enough to gain access to the social group, not becoming insiders but not remaining complete outsiders either. Those who were less committed to one type of music, namely the Passive Drifters and the Active Drifters, seemed to be aware that people engaged with music in different ways and have different levels of internalising music. They were also aware that boundaries were fluid and could be negotiated. This view inevitably leads to their

perception that character and identity could not be evaluated solely on the individual's music preferences.

*It (identity) is more than music...I know it is something you like but there are a lot of things which build up your identity...music could be a part of it...it actually is a part of it, cooking could be a part of it. I do not think they can label you as that specific person from the music you listen to...If I had to picture someone's identity I would not see what music they listen to before I figure someone's identity (Jessica, Passive Drifter, accounts clerk)*

Passive Drifters believed that they could have friends who liked any type of music and it would affect them only when going out on Saturday night and choosing the clubbing venue. This would not even be an issue if they could reach a compromise and spend some time in one club and then the other. It was the character of companions which they looked for, which therefore was not strongly formed by the music which they listened to. Speaking about her boyfriend, Jessica says that his identity does not depend on the music he listens to, which varies from Marilyn Manson to Beatles.

*I do not think there are people who can tell what the character is like through the music they listen to. I never label people according to the music they listen to (Jessica, Passive Drifter, accounts clerk)*

The Passive Drifters perceive music as only a part of an individual's identity and the music a person listens to cannot and should not be used to label a person's identity. Thus the music, although contributing to the person's character, is viewed by the Passive Drifters as only a part of the character and reflects only some of his or her tastes. Music, for these participants, does not necessarily contribute to the identity formation of the person, the social class and so on. Music preference is almost seen as coincidental, as separate from any other form of social constructs. These social constructs are perceptions of particular groups, such as particular music subcultures or even class, constructed through cultural or social practice, but which for the Passive Drifters are not linked to music preferences, as Mandy says.

*I would not say it is class but I think we stand separated in the sense people who are into these village feasts...I do not have friends involved in these things but when I see them I say....come on, don't you have anything better to do? That is what I think because I was never into it...so I do not think there is really a class (Mandy, Passive Drifter, student).*

For the Passive Drifters, just like music preferences did not necessarily indicate identity, music preferences were also not necessarily always linked with social class. Passive Drifters seem to nurture the idea that class and upbringing do have an impact on choices but not all choices are due to the environment they were brought up in. They also nurture the idea that individuals' music preferences do not necessarily reflect identity especially when the individual's identity is superimposed on the social constructs. It could be possible and even likely that an individual likes a death metal song without partaking in any of the social practices that death metal enthusiasts engage in.

### **7.2.2 Individual and collective identities**

Although Passive Drifters are more likely to consider the individual identity rather than the collective identity, they do recognise collective identities especially those identities which are different to their own. Lisa explains how people who have totally different tastes to her group of friends, she categorises as a different group where music could be a commonality between them.

*I think you realise there is a difference when you are seeing totally different people who have totally different tastes to you. That is when you start associating them and you do see that usually through the type of music you listen to, you form groups of friends and if I look at my friends they all like more or less the same type of music. If there is one person who does not like what we listen to mostly they would probably be annoyed so they just drop out (Lisa, Passive Drifter, service manager)*

The fact that in Malta most leisure activities for young people revolve around music, especially in Paceville and parties, young people are viewed by other young people within these 'public spaces' which music produces. Categorising others into social groups that are linked to music is expected. As in Lisa's earlier quote, which highlighted the importance of

posture, Lisa points out that the image young people project is also a strong indicator of whether those people are her type or not.

*When you go to these clubs, these parties, even the way the people dress...I was there last Saturday...there was this minimal party that we had to go to and everywhere you look, it is girls who cannot breathe in their dresses and the average length of the skirts was like 3 cm and you know what I mean? You know these people look different to the way I carry myself around...so I think it does make a difference...the music you listen to does influence the way you carry yourself and the way you go along...For example, I call them 'hamalli'(vulgar) not because I am a 'pulita' (elite) but you know you go, 'Oh dear how 'hamallu' she looks'. So you associate this type of music to these kind of people...so you would say it is a 'hamallu' type of music (Lisa, Passive Drifter, service manager)*

Through the way other young women dress up for a party, and by comparing them to herself and her social group, Lisa can judge what type of people they are, what social class they come from and thus associates the music they are listening to, to that social class.

In the Passive Drifters' category therefore, identity and social class are linked to music but the link is given quite a different meaning to that understood by the Fully Committed and the Committed. The Passive Drifters acknowledge that at times this link shapes people's tastes but they also strongly believe that individuals' tastes are not an absolute way of identifying their identity or their class. Moreover, individuals' musical taste is only a small part of the person and many other tastes need to be taken into consideration. Having said that, when people are seen as a group and their similarities and commonalities stand out, such as music and image, then the passive drifters are quite comfortable with labelling the group and positioning them within the social strata.

The image that the Passive Drifters themselves projected, on the other hand, was quite a neutral one. They were not aware of dressing up according to the music they listen to. Jessica for instance said

*I pick what I like, what is on the shelf...I think I wear just normal (Jessica, Passive Drifter, accounts clerk)*

For her, 'normal' was what she found in the shops, that is, mainstream fashion. For parties, she would wear a casual dress and heels, quite smart to feel dressed up since it was the weekend. As Marika puts it, though

*I pay attention to what I wear obviously. It is not related to any type of music, but I like to wear fashionable clothes that have some style...I am careful not to look 'hamalla', I do not want people to look at me and think I am low class!*  
(Marika, Passive Drifter, student)

Thus, Marika is careful to choose a style that projects an image of a young woman who is not 'hamalla' or low class. The image seems to be more of an indicator of class to Passive Drifters than music on its own, although they can still associate a certain style of clothing with certain music. Passive Drifters acknowledged the fact that pop-stars influence fashion and thus, if they followed the latest fashion, they were indirectly following the style of the singer. They were aware of the influence the media has on them through fashion and music consumption but were quite passive about it. They did not feel they should resist this and try to have more individual tastes.

However, within 'normal' clothes, within what is in the shops, there is still a choice and though young women's style might not be intentional, the style still projects a significance, as Hebdige (1979) points out. These choices reflect a range of messages which are transmitted through distinctions such as position within social class, status, and self-image. These choices are constrained by economic status, taste, preference and so on. Communication through one's style can be intentional or unintentional as respondents above suggested. When seemingly unintentional, Hebdige (1979) points out that they still express 'normality' as opposed to 'deviance', meaning compliance with the surrounding culture. On the other hand, when they are intentional, they manifest a visible construction and a loaded choice declaring themselves to be different from the dominant culture.

Practices of the Passive Drifters category suggests that there is a sort of common element of resistance to being part of a particular music subculture or rather being inactive towards making part of one for the sake of the music. In their own non-membership of any subculture, the Passive Drifters might be seen as a social group or subculture on their own. It is only their passivity and lack of motivation that limits their commonalities to draw them together to form a kind of social group or 'non-member subculture'! Without their



knowing, they are actually part of an inactive group with common ideas and thoughts about the music that is played around them, the image people project, what makes up people's characters and so on. Membership of this non-membership group would probably defeat their idea of not being part of any musical group altogether!

### **Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the Drifters' categories, namely the Active Drifters and the Passive Drifters. The term 'drifters' reflects Matza's (1964) drift theory and suggests that respondents drift in and out of conventional behaviour. The Active Drifters were found to be active in their choice of music subcultures, choosing which music subculture to engage in, liking several types of music at one point in time or over a period of time. The process of identity and the influences that young women in this category brought to social and cultural groups were analysed as well as their perception of having a wide spread knowledge of different types of music. The Passive Drifters on the other hand seemed not to take an active part in the choice of music they listened to. The analysis focused on how the Passive Drifters give meaning to the music they live and how music is a currency of social capital and access to social groups. It analysed how members of this category, even though passive about the music they listen to, understand the way individual and collective identities are shaped by music and are very well aware of social class practices within the music subcultures.

## **PART IV: DISCUSSION**

## **Introduction**

This section will focus on the discussion of the analysis in relation to the research question as well as on conclusions reached through this research. Chapter 8 will discuss the data in the light of existing literature focusing on four main points. The first point is how young Maltese women make meaning out of global and local cultural forms and the second is how they form identities through music as a cultural form. The third point that is discussed is how accumulation of capital results in cultural hierarchies and the last point is whether the term 'subculture' is valid in the way young Maltese women experience the Maltese context. Moreover it seeks to show how the four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters, and the concept of 'synculture', with its implications of reciprocal influence of mainstream culture and subculture, as applied to the Maltese context, have particular significance and implications in this research. Chapter 9 focuses on the significance and implications of this research, focusing on the Maltese context and the female perspective of this context. The chapter ends with the limitations of the research and the recommendations which were drawn from this study.

## **Chapter 8: Discussion of Analysis**

In this chapter, the analysis of this study will be discussed in the context of the research questions and the existing literature in the field, highlighting how these findings contribute to the understanding of my research question.

The aim of this research was to explore how young women, in Maltese contemporary society, incorporate the music they listen to into everyday discourses and identities. Since in its initial stages, this research focused on Veblen's (1899) early work on leisure and class and since the analysis drew on and developed from Willis's (1978) analytical framework, both Veblen's and Willis's work will be revisited. Areas which will then be discussed are the following:

- 1) how young women in the Maltese musical scene consume global and local cultural forms of music as leisure and how these forms assume everyday meanings in the differing local contexts of their lives
- 2) how these cultural forms are incorporated or resisted in the formation of identities
- 3) how the resulting social and cultural capital are produced and processed in the social and cultural power struggle to form cultural hierarchies within the local context
- 4) the relevance of the term 'subculture' in the Maltese context as experienced by young women.

## **8.1 Veblen and Willis revisited**

This study looked at two theorists in particular who have been somewhat put aside over the years. Although they have been used and referred to by other theorists in developing their work, they have been somehow pushed to obscurity. In this study I draw on both Veblen's work on leisure and social class, as well as Willis's work especially his analytical framework in researching the meanings of cultural items. In both cases, I argue that their work, although written many years ago, is very relevant even in contemporary society, and should be revived by researchers in these areas.

Veblen's work on leisure and the leisure class, although written in 1899, is still very valid and deserves to be reread since his work is very relevant in the contemporary context of leisure and the leisure class. His concepts are particularly important when considering the context of music consumption as a form of leisure and how it is linked to the construction of social identities. Veblen's concept of both the accumulation of goods, and a respectable reputation being associated with the leisure one consumed and with the

person's social class, was further developed by Bourdieu (1987) in his concepts of cultural and social capital.

Veblen's theoretical concept of conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption as being manifestations of one's class brings to the fore the idea of leisure being an indicator of class. Thus music consumption, especially in the public domain, constitutes a form of conspicuous consumption and a manifestation not only of class but also of identity. Both in the public and the private domain, the device through which one consumes music, be it an I pod, a lap top and so on, also reflects a form of conspicuous consumption and in themselves, such devices are indicators of social class. Veblen's idea that conspicuous leisure is a struggle for power is also an important aspect when considering the social hierarchies within contemporary music subcultures. The more one manifested internalization of the lifestyle associated with a particular type of music, the more they were considered to be veterans of that particular subculture, and thus enjoyed admiration and a high status with the group. His argument about social mobility is also very valid in contemporary society. He argued that those who strove for social mobility and tried to climb the ladder of social classes tried to copy the lifestyle of upper social classes and also adopted their tastes. This is also reflected in people adopting musical tastes of the upper social classes in an effort to be associated with those strata of society.

Veblen's work is seminal in research about leisure and social class and deserves to be revitalized within contemporary research. This study in itself shows how Veblen's argument that the way others view us is shaped in part by conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption is still valid. This was highlighted by interviewees who linked the music others listened to as leisure, together with social practices linked to that music, to their position in the social class.

In my analyses, I draw on Willis's work which does not go as far back as Veblen, but dates back to 1978. Willis's development of the cultural theory and his work especially in 'Profane Culture' around the meaning of cultural items, was an important element in this research since I wanted to explore the meaning young women give to the music they listen to. I was therefore interested in exploring the meaning participants gave to, for instance a song, which in itself is a cultural item, or to a type of music which they like, which again can be considered as a cultural item. Moreover, lifestyles and social practices which are associated with music, in themselves constitute cultural items and are closely linked to the identity formations which this research explores.

In 'Profane Culture', Willis (1978) used concepts of indexical, homological and integral analysis to understand a cultural group through the meanings they give to cultural items and to different aspects of their life. He also explored how far the group and the meanings influenced each other. In my study I drew on Willis's analytical framework but developed it further. I used indexical analysis in the initial stages of analysis, to help me shape the characteristics of the four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters. However homological and integral analyses were also used to develop a framework for this study and the four categories. Muggleton (2000) and Hodkinson (2002) developed the idea of the cultural theory further, highlighting elements of individuality within subcultures rather than homogenizing them. However, they all researched pre-determined subcultures.

What I set out to explore in my study was not particular subcultures but the way young Maltese women give meaning to the music they listen to in everyday life, whatever that music might be. Therefore, by broadening Willis's analytical framework I was able to develop a framework whereby I could categorise participants into groups according to the way they engaged in music and what that music meant to them rather than categorise by the type of music they listened to. This framework therefore made it possible to include individuals who did not make part of any particular subculture but still listened to music. This in turn made it possible to look at subcultures as entities which were not so rigid and also how it was possible for people not to make part of any pre-determined subculture at all.

Therefore, both Veblen's and Willis's work were important in this study in different ways. Veblen's work guided and directed me to the focus of my research question and Willis's work provided the foundations of the mode of analysis which I used. They were both fundamental in developing my interpretations of analysis and the discussion of the main points which follow.

## **8.2 Making meaning out of global and local cultural forms**

The tensions between Malta's traditions and modern Europeanised ways of life, are continuously negotiated by young Maltese women. Maltese traditional cultural forms such as traditional music, folk dancing as well as religious rituals and values, nurture a local traditional way of thinking and a view of culture which has been passed on through the

generations. This traditional way of thinking is quite conservative, inflexible in its perspective of values and way of life and very often contrasts with the more modern, globalized lifestyle that many young women in Malta are embracing as part of their lived experience.

The findings in this study reveal that one of the ways young Maltese women negotiate these tensions is through the music they listen to and through the social practices they engage in because of the music they listen to. Music is not just a source of leisure but it is a way of showing others what preferences they have, what type of people they are. Music preferences, often have an impact on the way young women dress up, on the way they talk, the way they walk, the way they dance, which bars, discos and nightclubs they frequent, and the friends they make. Thus young women's tastes in music usually spread onto a number of other dimensions of their everyday life.

The analysis suggests that the private and the public spaces in which young Maltese women consume music have come to overlap one another, with the private being possible in the public and vice versa. The most prominent public places where young Maltese women listen to music are Paceville, the nightclub area in Malta, and open air venues where parties are held. Evidently they also engage in music in the private domain within their own home, usually the bedroom, where they are active agents in creating their own bedroom cultures. These bedroom cultures have become increasingly 'fluid', a term which implies flexibility and negotiations of boundaries as opposed to rigidity and fixed parameters. Bedroom cultures have become fluid through the availability of technologies such as lap tops, TVs and so on reflecting Lincoln's findings (2005) that the bedroom is a cultural domain that is very fluid. However, for young Maltese women, it is primarily in the public domain of Paceville and the like that the scripts, the shared meanings for the different types of music are set, where they make meaning of the different music and where they can identify with groups and enthusiasts of different types of music. In Paceville they can do this in the absence of adult supervision, which is an important element of leisure for young people according to Bradford and McNamara (2007). Thus within their leisure activity of engaging in music, they are negotiating identities on their own terms and they are also negotiating gendered identities, in an environment which is different to that of their home towns or villages where usually negotiating leisure spaces is more conservative and monitored by adults. This does not mean to say that one can separate these processes. Although different, the process of negotiating their identity is a



continuation from the process that takes place in their home villages. However, Paceville is the place where a girl looks for a partner and depending on sexual orientation, it could be boyfriend or girlfriend, so the boundaries of gendered identities are continuously being negotiated on this front in that what is permissible, expected and accepted is continuously changing and these young people are the agents of such change.

Music in Malta has developed in such a way that the traditional local music such as the 'ghana' and the village band music remain intact through, among other things, national efforts to preserve the Maltese national traditions and to encourage the Maltese people to take pride in them. On the other hand, composing music in different spheres of the music scene, has seen composers taking ideas from foreign music, usually the bands they admire and fusing it with their own ideas from the local scene, making the local music a new sort of music, a fusion of local and foreign ideas. This is true for all types of music be it classical music, garage band music, doom or pop. This is also evident in the Eurovision Song Contest where, in a bid to attract votes from other countries, Maltese composers write songs that are highly influenced by the European style of the time. Young Maltese women therefore experience Maltese modern music as a combination of local and global elements. Yet the 'servile mentality' (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2008) which the Maltese people have adopted over history is still evident and for many young Maltese women, foreign music is 'better' than the local music, foreign performers are 'better' than local ones. This mentality of the foreigner always being better, although criticised by the respondents themselves, was still very evident in their own choice of music and in their criticism of modern Maltese music being copied from foreign bands, and their view that Maltese musicians are limited because of lack of opportunities and so on. Global record companies use powerful marketing practices which also influence young women's perspectives since through their marketing, they are shaping what is considered as valuable in terms of global capital. On the other hand, the internet has enabled young people to circumvent these influences. Increased accessibility to foreign music, through the internet, has made each young woman a music critic on a certain level, capable of evaluating the music by comparing it to the foreign music and vice versa.

It is probably not as much Malta's accession to the EU that enabled the processes of interpreting the global within the local but more the increased accessibility of the internet and media. The EU has probably given the Maltese an identity which impacts on their choice of music rather than increased their accessibility to music from other countries.

Since Malta's geographical position lends itself to the possibility of being considered as both part of Europe and part of Africa, being officially a member state of the EU, the Maltese feel they are officially Europeans, and being European rather than African gives them a particular identity. However, the EU has also facilitated mobility and cultural exchanges which enhance this process. Together with increased mobility, internet and media have been and remain instrumental in the ways young women access music. The findings imply that the internet and new media have been a major development that young Maltese women were found to rely on for accessing music from all over the world and for sharing it with their friends. It is such devices as computers, lap-tops, mobile phones that enable them to discuss a shared file instantaneously over the internet and discussing it by chatting online with their peers while listening to it. Moreover, such devices have enabled young Maltese women to transform the private into a public domain at the touch of a button. This also suggests that leisure without being monitored by adults is also being made possible within the family home itself. In the privacy of their bedroom, young women can engage in leisure with anyone in the world.

The findings in this study reflect Longhurst's (2007) argument that the virtual dimension usually involves some form of face to face interaction especially with others who have similar tastes. Respondents in this study were found to interact with their peers especially during leisure activities such as going to Paceville where they engage in music together, creating meaning for the music and social practices associated with the music. Most respondents preferred to interact about music in the virtual space, with the peers whom they spoke to face to face and shared their leisure with in spaces such as Paceville.

Accession to the EU has had an impact on young Maltese women not only on a cultural level but also on a social level. As Gerber (2002) suggested, through history Malta had strong ties with Libya. Moreover, the Maltese language is closely related to the Arabic language and a number of Maltese are still employed in Libya or own businesses there. However, Gerber, through his fieldwork in Malta in the 1990s, got the impression that most of the Maltese did not like being associated with the African countries and were ashamed of the role the Arab heritage played in Malta (*ibid.*). On a social level, the Maltese prefer to be regarded as Europeans because of the higher standard of living, the lifestyle, the more modern way of life, the more liberal way of thinking and the fact that women in Europe are increasingly being regarded as equal to men and so on. Thus, as Rosenau (1990) suggests, the 'cascades' or macroevents that link global politics to

micropolitics provide scripts for reading meanings into local everyday events and politics in the street. That means that political history has influenced the way young women experience and read their everyday experiences. Political links with Libya have influenced the way in which young women in Malta relate to African music. The lack of African music coverage by the Maltese media, which reflects government policies of the time, has made this type of music even more estranged and unfamiliar to the Maltese ear. Thus the combination of past links with Libya, to many undesirable, and the estrangement of African music to the Maltese, have contributed to young Maltese women rejecting this music as a cultural form which forms part of their leisure. This is quite ironic when considering the increasing number of African migrants in Malta and the popularity of world music in the rest of 'modern' Europe.

Advances in technology and new media have made sharing of music easy from all over the world, yet it is Europe, mostly the UK, Italy as well as the USA that young Maltese women look to for music. This is evidently because these countries have always been topmost in the international music scene and because the biggest record companies are based in these countries. However it is also due to the fact that the media in Malta transmits music from these countries rather than African countries. This means that African music is not as readily available and as easily accessible as European and American music. One has to make the effort to take the initiative to look for African music on the internet. Possibly the lack of African music being transmitted on the media is due to two reasons. The first being that media authorities, although aware of the vibrant 'world music' scene, are also aware of the Maltese population's regard towards African identities and therefore know that transmitting African music would not be a popular choice. The second reason is because of the history of Malta. Italian and English were always the two dominant foreign languages that Maltese people could speak because at one time or another they were Malta's official languages. Therefore it is more likely that Maltese people choose to listen to lyrics or commentary that they can understand rather than any other language.

Moreover, while researching the field, one gets the feeling that the influx of thousands of asylum seekers from African countries disembarking in Malta, with Malta having the highest percentage of asylum seekers per capita in the EU according to Eurostat (in Borg, 2013), is a cause for concern for a number of Maltese people who resent the cost that this incurs on the nation. Newspaper articles, local blogs and chat rooms reflect this

feeling which is also reflected in asylum seekers themselves reporting experiencing racism (Schmoll, Said & Spiteri, 2011). Therefore external factor of politics and nation state have an impact on the way young Maltese women perceive cultural items that are associated with the African world. During my research, and living in Malta myself, I got the impression that there are young Maltese women who are ambivalent towards these asylum seekers. On one hand they understand that they need help but on the other, they see limits in the help that Malta's resources can give them. Although African music is therefore coming into the country, it is still quite contained within the confines of these communities. If it is spreading outside these, through observing reactions, one gets the impression that it is not usually regarded as music of the modern world with the result that it is resisted by young Maltese women and the public in general and is of interest only to musicians and composers who are interested in that area of music. Therefore, Appadurai's (1996) concept of ethnoscape as being the migration of people across cultures and therefore making the world more fluid and mobile, is not entirely applicable in the Maltese context. The Maltese context is one that seems to confine or filter music which foreigners bring to Malta. In the case of Malta, it depends from where the foreigner is coming and under what circumstances. African music has not yet penetrated the invisible boundaries of what constitutes music that young Maltese women want to hear or identify with. There are therefore invisible and more visible structures and mechanisms which seem to be able to resist types of music which become part of the mainstream culture in Malta. In Appadurai's terms, the mediascape and the ethnoscape do not overlap in this case. Inevitably the media is a very strong factor in this equation in setting what is valued as international capital in the context of music. However, the tastes of Maltese people are also a very strong factor since both media and commonalities of taste interact and influence each other. As consumers, the Maltese are active agents in this equation and the media in itself as a structure, which produces according to the demand, is influenced by the demand itself. Thus the interaction between the consumers and the producers in the Maltese music scene seems to be such that the tastes of the consumers, although heavily influenced by the media, are also shaped by other factors. These factors, which include historical and political elements, together with the internet which enables people to circumvent media influences, make it possible for the Maltese to be active agents, adopting cultural items and practices and resisting others, thus shaping the structure and the product according to their demand.

Media technologies have entered every aspect of our lives and together with mass migration of peoples across the world, have been instrumental to globalisation being linked to what many consider as modern. This means that media, as well as migration, have contributed substantially to people considering cultural items coming from abroad as being modern. However, there are complex processes of selectivity which take place even within flows of globalisation. Media technologies have permeated geographical boundaries in many cases with the result of a global music industry flowing through a global space. Resistance or acceptance of types of music within a culture is a process of selectivity which is not entirely objective, in that it is shaped by 'global capital'. The Maltese context clearly does not unquestionably incorporate any music from any migrating group, reflecting selectivity of cultural flows. Complexities such as questions of what inferences, what consequences, what meanings are attached to that music and the migrating group are part of the selection process. The politics, which Appadurai (1996) considers an external factor that might have an impact on the interaction of the global and the local, together with the historical events are important factors which have an impact on the music that is adopted and accepted within the Maltese mainstream culture. Technology makes such a complex process possible, in that it enables different groups to accept and adopt different forms of music.

### **8.3 Formation of identities through cultural forms**

Findings in this study highlight that identity is not something fixed which either belongs to a person or does not. The shaping of identity is a continuous process in which young Maltese participate. Different experiences which young women navigate have some kind of impact on the continuous process of their identity formation.

The four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters all had particular ways in which they negotiated identities.

The interviewees in the Fully Committed category reported that the music they listened to was a strong factor which had an impact on their identity. They strongly believed that it was the Fully Committed veterans who created and continuously shaped the social practices that were associated with the music. Such social practices include that activity which is shared with the community of common interest but which also remains the focus in their private lives. The Fully Committed veterans also believed that it was they who had internalised and who kept on shaping the authentic identity which others within

the group and outside the group look to for reference. In Western cultures, the quest for authenticity, for purity and originality, is considered to be very important. The personal quest for an authentic identity, for being oneself is very important. This is because without this quest, an authentic identity would have faded away under the bombardment of media which projects realities that do not truly represent reality (Baudrillard, 1993). The Fully Committed resented those who were not regarded by them as authentic, as 'impostors' in the group. They were happy to apprentice the newer members but looked at 'visitors' who did not truly internalise the music and the social practices with suspicion. Within this group though, some respondents revealed that their commitment to the group was not exclusive as they were also committed to other groups which were enthusiastic about very different types of music. These commitments often arose from the village band music which they had been involved in throughout their life through their family upbringing and the more modern adolescent preferences of other more modern music which their peers listened to. Thus the choices they made were a result of their cultural and social environment, the status of their family as well as the social networks they were involved in.

The Committed were not concerned with authenticity but revealed identities that were openly hybrid. They were comfortable with their preferences, even if these included very different types of music including traditional Maltese music and modern house music or techno for example. They felt that liking more than one type of music was beneficial and was an indicator of widespread knowledge in the field of music. Thus, in their perspective, this knowledge reflected cultural capital. In their view, widespread knowledge had more value than in-depth knowledge restricted to one particular type of music, as was the case in most participants of the Fully Committed category. The exposure that these respondents had was usually quite varied and included several types of music, both modern and traditional, even at times through musical education itself. Thus the choices through which their identities were shaped, were influenced to some extent by the opportunities of being exposed to various types of music or learning about them.

The Active Drifters on the other hand processed an identity where they did not want to be labelled as affiliated to any particular type of music. Like the Committed participants, they felt that their identity was enhanced because of the wide variety of music they liked or had liked over time and through their interactions with several types of music and music enthusiasts. They picked cultural items from several groups, 'bricolage-ing'

their own style of dress and so their identity was a very individual one which was like a patchwork of the different musical experiences they had in life. The meaning they gave to the cultural items was the representation of the social group they had picked it from, which might be quite different to the meaning the social group had given to that particular cultural item as suggested by Willis (1978).

The Passive Drifters' characters seemed to be shaped outside their musicscapes. In other words, the music they listened to did not impact on their character, by which I refer to their nature and combination of qualities. Nor did the music impact on processes of identity formation or their identity, referring to their sense of self as members of a social group. Since music was not considered to leave an impact on the character, their character and identity were a result primarily of other factors. However, they did associate themselves with types of people who listened to certain types of music. They considered a social group as having the characteristics of what the majority of that social group possessed. Therefore if most of the group were dressed in what they considered a vulgar way, then they automatically associated that music the group listened to with vulgarity, with a certain way of dressing, with a certain social class and so on. Then they decided whether those people were actually their type or not and therefore whether that music was their type or not.

One questions how far young women within the above four categories are social actors and how far their choice of music and practices are actually choices that are not influenced by past experiences, their environment and so on. Rojek (2010) argued that although very often leisure is considered as the time when people make free choices, in actual fact, the freedom is conditional. He linked freedom to citizenship and argued that freedom depends on what is acknowledged as being good citizens. He argued that in modern societies, people who strive to be considered as competent are reflexive about their leisure as a means of accumulating emotional intelligence, that is, knowledge of what is acceptable and what is not with regards social practices within a social group. In other words, leisure offers the opportunity for people to accumulate a form of capital that enhances interaction with others. Bourdieu (1987) argued that one's choices depend on the economic capital and cultural capital that one owns. Exposure, in childhood, to particular types of music, for instance classical music, has an impact on whether as an adolescent or adult, that person accepts or resists classical music (Hargreaves, North & Tarrant, 2006). Acceptance or resistance may depend on the way they were exposed to such music. Most

times, those who in childhood were exposed to classical music but not obliged or forced to listen to it, were more likely to like, engage in or even prefer classical music, than someone who was brought up in an environment where they were forced to learn or listen to classical music or those who were brought up in an environment where classical music was criticised as being boring and old fashioned. Therefore, through a deterministic approach, it is one's habitus and field which shape one's tastes according to what we learnt as being appropriate to like or dislike for the status we occupied in society.

The Maltese young women seem to be very much living an experience where they choose what to adopt and resist. As Muggleton (2000) points out, even if they are committed to a certain type of music, they still do not blindly adopt all practices associated to that music but choose those practices that suit them and resist what they do not like. The findings of this study show that young Maltese women do not feel that their choice of adopting and resisting particular practices of a particular social group, threatens their sense of belonging in a group. It seems that it has become an accepted factor that individuality is prized. However there are limits to this. It is the factors that are considered as significant within a group that pose tension in young Maltese women's identity. Quite a number of young women felt that liking modern music as well as the Maltese traditional village band music would not be appreciated by enthusiasts of modern music. The idea that traditional music is associated with being backward, being uneducated, was found to be a very common concern and many respondents felt that this would be a threat to their reputation within the modern music community. The local forms of music especially the traditional ones like 'ghana' and village bands, although followed by big numbers, do not constitute a factor in which young women take pride, at least outside that community. This reflects Thornton's (1995) concept that subcultural capital and power are only valuable within that subculture itself. That is, young women who enjoyed and were involved in village bands enjoyed respect within that subculture, and their subcultural capital within that subculture was considered as prestigious. Yet outside that, in the rave world or the clubbing world, that capital was not valued and meant nothing outside the confinements of the village band field itself.

These tensions of old and new, traditional and modern, change and constancy, are a reality which young Maltese women have to navigate on a daily basis. The constancy of the Maltese heritage, the constancy of the post-colonial mentality of the older generations and the local geographical context are juxtaposed with the changes being brought about by



the global influences, by modern ways of thinking, by new media. Their inheritance of Maltese local cultural forms somehow seems to clash on a social level with the modern imported cultural forms. The religious and secular tensions might be one of the reasons for this. The traditional Maltese cultural forms are strongly grounded in religious values with the village band music being closely tied to religious processions and parish Churches, while the modern global cultural forms are considered by the older generations as depleted of morality. Therefore the traditional music is seen by many as limited, backward, restricted to small villages on a small island while modern music is seen as more liberal, modern, more open minded and most importantly more global. The desire to uphold the local culture as well as to achieve a reputation of being a modern, up-to-date girl, is what creates this tension. Of course, both identities could and do coexist within the same person. People negotiate identities all the time, engaging in identity work throughout their life. One particular identity practice in which they engage in actively is the separation of their own different identities. Some young women actively strive to separate their traditional identity and their modern identity. This separation in itself might be a way of negotiating this hybridity. On the other hand this separation of identities might show that within their social groups, they have not yet been able to fully negotiate their own hybrid identities. They have found that the boundaries are too difficult to navigate or, they think there is too much at risk and prefer not to try to navigate them. On the other hand, one might argue that the coexistence of both identities reflects a totality of identity at a point in time and reflects one's accumulated experiences (Weinrich & Saunderson, (Eds), 2003). Processes of identity formation involve meanings being given to signs and this meaning-giving activity can be termed as 'work' (Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996). There are two kinds of work associated with identity. The communal refers to the creation of identities as widely understood signs with a set of rules, while the individual refers to the way individuals use signs and rules in the creation of identities. Thus it is through communal identity work that young Maltese women make meaning of their own musical tastes within groups whose members like the same type of music. It is then through individual identity work that they use techniques, as Goffman (1959, 1963) pointed out to make identity claims, negotiate their own different tastes and create credible images or repair damaged images of themselves in front of others. Discrepancies in signs can be detrimental to one's reputation. For instance, the reputation of a young woman whose identity in a particular social group is known as being that of an avid enthusiast of techno, may be damaged if there are signs

of her liking traditional village band music, undermining the initial identity claims. Repairing or maintaining these claims are part of identity work which is implicitly demanded by social life. Ultimately, a person's identity is the totality of their roles, experiences and tastes. It is through processes of identity work in negotiating, that possible discrepancies are managed by young Maltese women in everyday life.

Findings show that there are young Maltese women who negotiate boundaries successfully. It is through interaction at the boundaries with others of different identities that hybrid identities may be accepted and acknowledged. The category which was revealed most active in these lines was the category of the Active Drifters who although they do not intentionally try to change practices of already existing social groups through their 'visits' and interactions, they still leave an impact on the group. Moreover, through the practices that they adopt, they contribute to change within the group. This is because the Fully Committed as well as the Committed of a social group look at the Active Drifters as not authentic, as superficial and thus they need to react to their practices being adopted by the Active Drifters and taken into other groups. These practices usually have to be revised, intensified or adapted so that the authenticity of the group remains distinct from others. On the other hand, if these processes of revision are not done, then gradually the distinct features of the group will be absorbed by other groups and even by the mainstream culture with the possible result of the group dissipating and disappearing.

In the Maltese context, from the young women's point of view, taste is a distinct indicator which reveals the identity of others. This reflects Bourdieu's (1986) argument that taste distinguishes people. Taste for most of the respondents was most evident in that which constituted one's image, that is the choice of clothes, accessories, hairstyle and so on. However, image was closely associated with musical preferences. Musical tastes, both on their own and in conjunction with associated style of clothing were strong indicators of identity. These tastes and preferences revealed what type of person they were in a particular environment and it enabled others to position them in the social strata of society.

Music was also a source which revealed taste. However, for some young women music on its own was not enough to label a person. They believed that someone might like a particular type of music but not truly share the social practices associated with that music. Mostly these respondents were Passive Drifters. However, others, like the Fully Committed, who felt much more strongly about their music and for whom music signified more than just leisure, felt that one's music preferences revealed the character of the

person to the extent that people who listened to different types of music, in their opinion were very likely to be incompatible.

Moreover, through living in the same Maltese society, young Maltese women have learnt to read the 'social scripts' of meaning of taste within Maltese society. The term 'script' implies a sequence of events of a familiar activity and lends itself well to our context since taste is an indicator of class and modes of behaviour. Apart from style, young Maltese women learnt how to read scripts of language and embodiment. The language that other young women spoke, be it spoken language or body language, revealed the social class they belonged to. Young Maltese women revealed themselves as very wary of crossing or negotiating class boundaries. They were very sharp in reading these scripts and their priority in keeping up to date included keeping abreast with these dynamic scripts, that were not static, but were continuously shifting and reshaping themselves through social constructs, which are social mechanisms created and developed by society through cultural or social practices. Keeping up to date with these dynamic scripts required an enormous amount of effort and identity work on the part of the young women. It required them to keep in contact with the crowd, to frequent venues where they could observe and interpret image, language and so on. Moreover, they had to do this within a group, otherwise they would not know how the scripts were changing and how they were currently being interpreted. It is therefore mostly communal identity work that took place, in that together with others they interpreted other groups' practices and behaviours and distinguished themselves or assimilated themselves with others. The findings show that many young Maltese women preferred to negotiate boundaries of social groups within the same social strata, rather than cross social class boundaries. Young Maltese women were very reluctant to interact with members of a lower social class than themselves during leisure. Data also revealed that they were reluctant to interact with those whom they believed to be members of a higher social standing during their leisure activities. This might be because they did not feel comfortable and somehow looked at those who thought themselves and projected themselves as elite, with condescension. This might be because in leisure time, people, apart from accumulating capital, also seek to feel at ease and relax, and negotiating different social class required too much effort.

## **8.4 Conspicuous consumption, accumulation of capital and resulting cultural hierarchies**

For young Maltese women, music accompanied them in many moments of the day and night. However, the prominence of music as part of their leisure was highlighted by participants. Leisure time is not only an opportunity for accumulating capital but also an opportunity for conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899). For many young Maltese women, consumption of music in the public domain was an important part of their life and therefore also constituted an important part in the process of their identity formation. Conspicuous consumption of music enabled them to project an identity whereby others could position them in particular social classes in the social strata. As previously discussed, the public and private domains have overlapped through several new media. Instantaneous sharing of music files, listening to music through multiple headphones on the bus, sharing of playlists and so on, have all made the private domain very flexible. Moreover, listening to music in the private domain, through headphones, or at home, was still a form of conspicuous consumption in that, when the young women met their peers, they could then talk about the music that they listened to in private. Thus an overlap of the private and the public domains, in which young women listen to music, has also enhanced the opportunity of accumulating capital, both cultural and social.

The findings highlight how young Maltese women use the music others listen to as an indicator of social class. This reflects Veblen's (1899) argument that the type of leisure that people engaged in reflected their social class. Moreover, young Maltese women's behaviour, their affiliations with particular subcultures and engaging in social groups' practices was found to be a very prominent part of their identity formation. Veblen argued that women's respectability and reputation in the leisure they engaged in, and the groups they were part of, were very important for the reputation of the household. Women, in what he called the 'leisure class', had to be vigilant to uphold this reputation for the benefit of the husband's reputation and that of the whole household. Likewise, participants in this study revealed that young Maltese women's behaviour affected not only their reputation but that of all the family. Therefore, through conspicuous consumption, through the music they chose to listen to or dance to, and the social practices associated with particular music subcultures which they engaged in, they were continuously projecting an identity,

maintaining, damaging or building a reputation which others around them would continuously monitor and judge.

According to Bourdieu, (1987) individuals' actions, in the various social fields of which leisure is one, are a struggle for resources in an effort to accumulate capital. Individuals also struggle to get the categories within the capital right. This capital is considered valuable in that field and therefore distinguishes those who hold capital from others. Bourdieu (1987) argued that apart from economic capital, cultural capital and social capital were also very important in the social structure. Like economic capital, cultural capital conveys legitimacy that is regulated by educational and artistic institutions (Lawley, 1994). Thus leisure choices, whether conscious or unconscious, are formed through the habitus with an aim of achieving social and cultural capital. These forms of capital, together with economic capital, perpetuate the class system, also through the process of being passed on from one generation to the next.

The findings in this study suggest that cultural capital is interpreted in different ways by young Maltese women, or rather, cultural capital acquired through music is not given the same importance by members of the four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters. On the other hand, music affiliations were considered as useful resources in acquiring social capital and building social networks by all the respondents in all four categories. For the Fully Committed, gaining in-depth knowledge of the music they preferred and all that was related to it, constituted valuable and prestigious capital within their social groups. Knowledge about the genre, the bands, the ideologies, the history and origins of the music, being up to date with that particular music scene both locally and globally, were all elements which constitute cultural capital which they strived to achieve. The Committed interpreted cultural capital in a slightly different way. They considered knowledge that spread over a wide spectrum of musical genres and styles as being prestigious, rather than knowledge that was focused on one particular type of music, like the Fully Committed. Thus having sound knowledge that spread over several different types of music which were quite diverse in their structure, such as knowledge of classical music, rock, traditional Maltese music, pop, jazz and so on, was considered as prestigious. The Active Drifters considered being up-to-date with latest releases, social practices, and having an overall general knowledge about different types of music, as prestigious. The knowledge was not required to be in depth but it was required to be sound enough to be able to keep up a conversation. The Active Drifters' priority and

therefore what constitutes the most valued knowledge, was being up to date with what is happening in the music scene. This includes latest releases, the latest gossip about singers, the latest fashion icons in the music world and so on. The Passive Drifters on the other hand did not consider music as being a source of cultural capital. Although they might engage in other cultural forms of leisure through which they acquire cultural capital, music was not considered to be a resource of cultural capital acquisition (Table 1).

Types of capital	Category			
	Fully Committed	Committed	Active Drifters	Passive Drifters
<b>Music as a source of cultural capital</b>	Valuable capital	Prestigious capital	Important	Music not considered as a source of cultural capital
<b>Type of knowledge that is considered as cultural capital</b>	Focus on one type of music; in-depth knowledge	Knowledge spread on several different genres of music	Overall general knowledge by keeping up to date with latest releases and social practices; enough to keep a conversation	Knowledge of music is not considered as cultural capital
<b>Music as a source of social capital and building social networks</b>	Music considered a useful resource	Music considered a useful resource	Music considered a useful resource	Music considered a useful resource

Table 1: Music as a source of cultural capital by category

Therefore, what constitutes cultural capital in the music scene for young Maltese women varies according to the way they engage in the music and the way they give meaning to the music they listen to in their everyday life. Within the different cultural groups, the members themselves are actors in creating scripts for what is considered as significant and prestigious and what is not. These unwritten scripts are continuously interpreted and reinterpreted by the actors themselves.

On the other hand, social capital was considered as important by all respondents and music, together with the social practices associated with it, was considered as a good source of leisure through which one could accumulate social capital. Being part of a group,

having friends with whom one could go out to listen to music was particularly important for young Maltese women. Even the Passive Drifters tried to keep abreast with the charts so that they could talk about them with friends or new acquaintances. Moreover, for respondents who worked in the music industry, making new contacts through their music and building a social network was considered a priority. Reputation within this network, therefore was to be protected, maintained and continuously worked at so that the acquired social capital would not be decreased.

Young women's reputation has historically been a determining factor in the identity of young women (Skeggs, 1997). Young women's behaviour has always been a gauge of their respectability. For instance, Cullen (2010) points out how teenage girls had to monitor their drinking identities to ensure respectability since excessive drinking would damage their reputation of respectability. According to Mitchell (2002), young women's reputation in Malta was likewise a determining factor in their identity. It is an important element that complements one's cultural and social capital and is actually a form of capital in itself. Accumulating capital through one's reputation is necessary for a girl to be positioned high in the cultural hierarchy. In the Maltese society, which is known for nepotism (Baldacchino, 1997; Boissevain 1974, 2001 pp.292-293) especially in the employment sector, the cultural field offers an area which does not solely depend on social networks but it also depends on a young woman's cultural capital and commendable reputation. These are necessary if she is to gain a high position in the cultural hierarchies of cultural groups.

Thornton (1996) developed Bourdieu's (1987) concept of cultural capital and argued that within a subculture, subcultural capital is embodied in the know-how of things, which is manifested in language, interaction, body movements such as posture and dancing. This kind of capital, although prestigious within that subculture, might be completely valueless outside that subculture. She argued that subcultural capital fuels rebellion against the mainstream, against authority, against parents and suggests that youngsters seem to have access to a utopian classless fantasy, a world which they created, which in their eyes is classless. The findings in this study question this argument in that the young Maltese women were very aware of class distinctions and as discussed in the previous section, they were reluctant to negotiate class boundaries. They do not seem to experience their social groups in the way subculturalists do, in that, they do not forget class distinctions and simply create a classless fantasy world within their own subculture.

This leads us to the question of whether the term ‘subculture’ is appropriate in terms of the way young Maltese women make meaning out of contemporary Maltese society. The findings do not support Thornton’s argument that subcultures fuel resistance against any form of authority, at least in the way young Maltese women view their experience of making meaning out of the music they listen to. It seems that young Maltese women have developed fragmented and individualistic identities, which showed a movement towards fluidity as suggested by Muggleton (2000) that subcultural adherents seem to be moving into a culture which celebrated individualism and yet simultaneously was shaped by class. However, in his study, he pointed out that respondents had not been ready to quickly discard a series of styles which were typical of subcultures and they also did not celebrate their lack of authenticity. Subcultures are born from resisting the mainstream. The mainstream is formed through processes of legitimization, of grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984) and cultural prescriptions which regulate the structure of society. It is the perspective from which people see the world that has changed (Bertens, 1995) and this is manifested also by the young Maltese women in this study.

In this present research, the findings show that some young Maltese women are in exactly the position that Muggleton described. The Fully Committed especially, did not celebrate what they viewed as their lack of authenticity in not being uniquely committed to one type of music and found it hard to come to terms with projecting their hybrid identities of liking both traditional and modern music, such as village band music and rave. However, having more than one preferred type of music, and these very often being very different in genre shows that they were moving towards valuing individuality, even though they were fully committed to their music. On the other hand, the Committed and more so, the Active Drifters for instance, do celebrate their own lack of authenticity, their lack of commitment to any particular cultural group, intentionally resisting their identities becoming authentic and shaped by one particular type of music or cultural form. Their efforts in striving to have individual tastes and identities, in creating their own individual baggage of musical experiences and combinations of musical preferences shows how many young Maltese women, rather than being part of a pre-determined subculture, prefer to create their own uniqueness by ‘bricolaging’ their own preferences, styles and tastes. They celebrate their individuality and strive towards this celebration to be manifested continuously through their everyday practices.



### **8.5 Using the term ‘subculture’ in the Maltese context**

The term ‘subculture’ has been defined, discussed and redefined at various times by researchers and theorists alike over time. Longhurst (2007) summarizes three possible perspectives one can take, as to whether contemporarily subcultures exist as such. The first perspective is that the idea of subculture is redundant and should be replaced. The second keeps some aspects of the traditional concept of subculture while also considering how these have become postmodernised, as Muggleton (2000) suggested. The third perspective is that the term ‘subculture’ can be used for groups that have preserved the key features of subcultures which according to Hodkinson (2002) are identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness and autonomy.

In order to discuss the relevance of the term ‘subculture’ for young Maltese women, one must refer to the processes of identity formation which these young women adopt, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Through the four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters, one can trace a pattern of identity formation which cannot be defined as fixed or rigid at all. As Hodkinson (2002) pointed out, one must acknowledge that although there is some stylistic organisation within a subculture, there is also a movement away from fixed, consistent and clear sets of looks and sounds which are suggested by the traditional theory of subcultures. Bennett (1999) argued that musical tastes are a process of individualised selection as well as collective normative systems. Individuals go through and choose particular bands, particular songs which they like within a style of music, for instance punk rock. This results in stylistic boundaries becoming less important than the meaning that the style of music as a whole, in this case, punk rock, assumes for the listener. Similarly, Muggleton (2000), basing his argument on the participants of his research, argued that style and taste were individualised, giving much less importance to the distinct collective styles. Thornton (1995) also implied that in her 1990’s study of club culture, the participants tended to play up the heterogeneity of the collective which they associated themselves with. Therefore internal diversity within a subculture seems evident, yet the overall commonalities remain. It is when individualism crosses the boundaries of these overall commonalities, and transgresses the norms that are considered as most important and non-transgressable by the group that a subculture ceases to be distinct and is absorbed by the mainstream.

The Fully Committed category would probably have been the category where one would have expected to find the most rigid lines of divide and where one might have

thought one could effectively apply the term of 'subculture'. Yet even in this category, findings show that young Maltese women still sought to preserve some form of individuality. They did not adopt all the social practices of the 'subculture' but chose what to adopt and what to reject. Moreover, some Fully Committed respondents were fully committed to two or more very different cultural groups, for instance, the club scene which reflects modernity and the village band scene which depicts tradition. This marks a hybrid social identity which combines the traditional and the modern within oneself. However, being fully committed to both traditional and modern social groups, participants did not feel comfortable to talk about their enthusiasm for the traditional with the modern social groups. They felt like they were transgressing by being part of the more traditional culture. The feeling of transgression though did not stop them from being involved and engaging in the other social group at all. It merely made them live these experiences as separate from each other and unifying them only in the privacy of their own self. At times, this private identity leaked into the public but they then sought to repair the damage done to their reputation. They did this either by striving to prove themselves even more within the particular social group, or if the person who got to know about their diversity of taste was in the same circumstance (for instance, two rockers meet at the village band concert) they talked to the person and shared their 'secret' with them.

These hybrid identities of liking very different types of music such as traditional village band music and techno, or classical music and progressive rock, were also found in the Committed category with the difference that young women in this category negotiated their own hybrid identities and tried to feel comfortable with their own choices. Although they did not usually feel at ease telling everyone about their paradoxical tastes, they did feel comfortable telling their close friends. Other Committed participants whose tastes included a wide variety of music were proud of their wide spread knowledge of music. Thus even in this category, hybridity and fluidity were prominent features which shaped identities.

The Active Drifters on the other hand, made it their mission to visit different social and cultural groups, different 'subcultures' and intentionally tried to belong to several groups concurrently or over different periods in their lives. Through their visits and interactions with people of different identities, they were active agents in bringing about change in the groups. Therefore their own identities were also constantly undergoing change, while they purposely 'bricolaged' their own identity from the groups they were

visiting. Their identities were thus very individual, combining items from several different cultural groups, resisting being stereotyped or labelled as part of a particular group. One might wonder whether they are forming a new group for themselves with the aim of not being part of any existing group but primarily that would be against their original aim and the concept of individuality is so strong in these young women, that any form of grouping would not make sense to them in so far as it prevents them from pursuing their individuality.

The Passive Drifters, in their seemingly indifferent attitude towards music, were still critical of enthusiasts of particular types of music. Through their passive drifting into and out of different types of musicscapes, the processes of forming identities did not intentionally draw on the social practices associated with the music itself, but they did associate or disassociate themselves from other young women, whom they could judge from the style, taste, language and embodiment as being similar to them or different, belonging to the same social class or not. Thus the identities of this category were very fluid and drew upon assimilation with others in the music scene (Table 2).

Categories	Negotiating boundaries and identities	
	Collective	Individual
<b>Fully Committed</b>	Often caught up in rigid boundaries of the particular subculture	Moving towards individuality choosing music and style within the accepted parameters
<b>Committed</b>	Internalised aspects of the subcultures they made part of and practiced collective norms. Usually projected separate identities within the different subcultures	Individuality in musical taste, liking different types of music considered prestigious. However not comfortable talking about their tastes with everyone
<b>Active Drifters</b>	Strove to frequent several subcultures, assessing the social practices of the social group and choosing which subcultures to 'visit'	Bricolaged their own tastes and identity from the subcultures they visited, making each person's identity unique
<b>Passive Drifters</b>	Aware of collective social practices within subcultures and used them as gauges of distinction of social class	Very fluid identities that draw upon assimilation with others

Table 2: The Collective and Individual by category

The categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive, in themselves do not imply that they are fixed or rigid in their boundaries. Neither are they to be viewed in isolation to each other. On the other hand, the line of divide is very permeable and reflects how young Maltese women navigate through scapes and flows at the same time. The findings show that there are several variations and nuances in the extent to which these groups and categories have strong boundaries. For instance, at times identity is rigid and fixed as reflected in the Fully Committed category who seem to be the most caught up in the boundaries, when compared with the fluidity of the Passive Drifters. This also reflects the effects of a globalised cultural economy and it is important to consider the tensions

between the local and the global contexts. One must also consider that movement of ideas through the globalised cultural economy undermines notions of a single trajectory, shaping individual identity and group affiliation.

The findings show that commitment to subcultures has become fluid, in that subcultures are, at times, not rigid and fixed but yield to external pressures and their boundaries are continuously shaped and reshaped in some cases. This fluidity is reflected even in those who are fully committed and committed to the subcultures they are part of. The four categories are by no means subcultures in themselves, but are categories that reveal the processes and ways in which young Maltese women engage in whichever subcultures they prefer. The fluidity in the commitment towards these subcultures brings up the argument of whether subcultures as understood, can still be regarded in the same way.

Muggleton's (2000) suggested that subculturalists preserved some forms of their individuality usually through music, while manifesting some other form of commitment to a recognisable social group. He suggested that this preservation of individuality reflects modernism since modernism, presents the notion of valuing one's unique identity and self-expression which is manifested in the consumption of goods within a capitalist framework to exhibit modes of individual identity. However, Muggleton's (2000) suggestion is questionable because in many cases, the social groups that young Maltese women engage with are merely based on music preference, rather than a larger ideology of which the music is only a part of. For instance, young women who like doom metal might like only the sound of the style of music, rather than the lyrics and what they imply as an outlook towards life. Usually, the original reason for a subculture being created is that of manifesting resistance or difference from the mainstream culture. When these subcultures are newly formed, the message and meaning of being committed to them is still very strong in the area where that is relevant. However, they often become slowly absorbed in the mainstream culture, often because capitalism recognises the scope for profit. This absorption in the mainstream culture is becoming easier through globalisation, technology and new media, where from the other side of the world, a type of music with an associated image is projected and liked and adopted by groups on this side of the world. The original reason might not even be known to those who adopt it and it might not even be relevant on this side of the world. Moreover, the term 'subculture' has been used freely for almost any group within the music scene that is not the mainstream. Many so called 'subcultures' are

offshoots of other musical genres and originated through an expansion of a difference in the musical idiom of the music itself, rather than as a result of an ideology or as a statement towards mainstream culture. Therefore, although Muggleton's (2000) suggestion could be valid for those subcultures which are not solely based on music, for those where music is the main element around which the subculture revolves, his suggestion is problematic.

Hodkinson's (2002) suggestion of using the term 'subculture' for groups which manifest coherence in identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness and autonomy is also problematic because groups give significance to different aspects of their lived experience. From the findings of this study, we find that in probably every group or 'subculture', people engage in different ways. Thus probably in every subculture, there are fully committed young women, committed young women, active drifters and passive drifters. All together they form the cultural group at a given time. Subcultures do not exist as objects but have a dynamic quality. This means that a subcultural group does not usually consist solely of fully committed members where similarities and commonalities might be in the foreground. Moreover, as discussed earlier, even the fully committed young women in this study were found not to be committed to only one type of music or 'subculture', which implies that commitment and consistent distinctiveness are problematic. The element of autonomy is also problematic in the light that subcultures and mainstream cultures continuously influence each other. If subcultures are manifesting differences to the mainstream culture, and the mainstream culture absorbs elements of that subculture, then the subculture needs to reinvent other ways of manifesting difference if it is to survive as such. This implies that a subculture is never autonomous but can be considered as a subculture always in relation to the mainstream culture. As Jenks (2005) in 'Subculture: The fragmentation of the social' argued, subcultures exist to demonstrate differences between mainstream culture and particular group practices.

Maltese young women seem to be moving towards hybrid music identities, liking very different types of music simultaneously, ranging from the traditional folk music, which is associated with the backward and uneducated, and the modern, which is associated with European cultures and the western world. Although, as discussed earlier, Bennet, Muggleton, Thornton and Hodkinson all suggested that being part of subculture did not preclude individuality, however, there were choices that one could make within the accepted boundaries of a subculture. Crossing those boundaries would arouse suspicion

from others within that group and would imply an estrangement from that social group. The boundaries were at times rigid and at others quite flexible, depending on the group. These boundaries are symbolic and refer to the invisible and unwritten rules of distinctions made by the social actors of the group. They distinguish between insiders and outsiders, what is acceptable and what is not within a social group. These boundaries were usually policed by other members of the social group who were considered as the veterans and were usually the Fully Committed of the group. However, these boundaries were shifted at times, depending on what was happening in the mainstream.

Downes (1966) suggested that a culture is made up of all its so-called subcultures but culture is not solely made up of subcultures. There are so many common things which citizens consume and do that are not incorporated in specific cultural forms known as subcultures. Some examples are sharing the same weather and climate, belonging to the same geographical part of the world, walking the same streets and so on and so forth. The term 'subculture' suggests that it is 'outside' of the social and members of subcultures modify practices to be distinct from other social groups. All these groups form part of one 'social' and they interact and transact in various ways. Thus, in their quest to be different or similar to other particular social groups, these groups are actually interacting and influencing each other. If there are practices or cultural forms which are held in common, members of the social group try to further emphasise those things differently. What makes a social group distinct, needs to remain and become more distinct, if the group is not to be absorbed within other social groups. Thus, social groups shape each other continuously. It is for this reason that the term 'subculture' which implies subordination does not seem to reflect contemporary structures and practices. Moreover, the term 'subculture' implies 'outsideness', somewhere beyond the social, whereas social groups and cultural groups are part of one and the same 'social'. However, social groups do not restrict themselves, but drift in and out of different social spaces at different times (Matza, 1964), borrowing and articulating bits and pieces. There is a certain amount of movement and exchange that goes on which the term 'subculture', with its implication of being culturally static, does not incorporate. I therefore suggest dropping the prefix 'sub' which indicates 'at a lower position or rank' and, use the prefix 'syn'. This prefix could be used to coin the term 'synculture' which implies that things happen in union and act together. It therefore suggests something much less fixed, more serendipitous, more contingent, more fleeting, but something that is shaped powerfully by social class and other aspects of social

difference. Thus social groups are being reworked continuously by social actors. Social actors are simultaneously members of many social groups, and thus of the same 'social' in that they share several commonalities. They may live in the same city, they all pay taxes, they get the same public buses, they use the same language, they share the same culinary traditions and so on. At the same time, people prefer different types of music, different lyrics and maybe through the music try to rebel against what they disagree with, in the authorities. Many commit themselves to particular lifestyles but are still part of the society at large. What distinguishes a social group will be shaped through what is happening in other social groups. For instance, if a cultural item that indicated a particular cultural group is absorbed by other cultural or social groups, people will shift their focus to other items that will distinguish that social group from others. As Willis (1978) had argued, social groups choose a cultural item, partly because of the meaning it has already been given by society and partly because of the potential meaning that they can then give that item themselves. It follows then, that the cultural items are picked because of the meaning given to them by society and because of what meaning they can be given by the social group. Syncultures are dynamic and affect each other through their members and the hybrid identities of their members, as well as the meaning that the members make of their life experiences within these syncultures.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the findings of the study were discussed in relation to existing literature in view of the research question which this research set out to explore, thus focusing on the processes of how young women in Maltese society incorporate the music they listen to into everyday discourses and identities.



## **Chapter 9: Conclusions**

In this chapter I will discuss the significance of this research by highlighting the distinctive elements of this study and how it adds to knowledge. I will also discuss the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

## **9.1 Significance of research**

This study was conducted in a very particular context, that of the island of Malta. Not only is Malta particular because of its geographical isolation as an island and its location in the Mediterranean sea between Europe and Africa, but also because of the size of its population which is only about 400,000 and more importantly that of its history. Malta's history of foreign rulers, being a colony and its more recent history of becoming independent and a republic as well as part of the European Union are significant events which left an impact on the Maltese population and the way that Maltese people interpret and act out their lives. Malta's past political links with Libya as well as Europe have also been significant in the way Maltese society understands the traditional and the modern aspects of their social lives.

This study is significant in that it seeks to explore a topic which has not been researched before and opens up new routes for research within this same context. Moreover, it focuses on the feminine perspective in youth rather than a male perspective. This follows in the light of early critiques by McRobbie and Garber (1977) that women were quite absent in subcultural studies until then and youth culture was interpreted in male terms. Moreover, what was being looked at as seminal work in this area of research was all about white males (McRobbie, 1980) with little or no mention of the female perspective of things, such as Willis's work (1977) and Hebdige's (1979) work. McRobbie, Thornton, DeNora and others later did engage in gendered cultural studies but there is no study which focuses on young women's perspectives of cultural identities in the Maltese context. Boissevain (1969), Mitchell (2002) and more recently Bell (2009), did to some extent, engage in cultural studies of Maltese society but none focus on young women. They either focus on a locality in Malta, like Boissevain on Kirkop and Mitchell on Valletta or a particular music subculture like Bell's research on heavy metal fans.

The concept of gendered identities being socially constructed (Lacquer, 1990) is an important element in this research, as is the 'gendered complementarity' that Mitchell (2002) points out in the Maltese family household, the male role revolving around the

public while the female role revolves around the domestic. However, as Mitchell suggests, in the period that he researched Malta, women had started to transgress the domestic boundary and started to acquire a more public role. My research centres on young women, rather than women in general, meaning that it looks at the generation of young women who are more willing than older women to experiment, to be active agents and instruments of social change. Young people want to experiment with new experiences. At a young age, peer pressure can be very influential in this process, since very often, young women experiment and try new things and practices in an effort to be accepted by their peers who regularly engage in such practices. Moreover, the joy of experimenting in itself could also be a characteristic which enables them to gain access to particular social groups. The research was carried out a decade after Malta's accession to the EU, at a time when European influences are having an impact on several fields in Maltese society, when globalisation is being integrated into the local, when young women are negotiating tensions between traditional values and the more modern lifestyles that modernity brings with it. Thus all these factors have great significance on identity formation and the meaning that girls give to their everyday experiences.

Therefore this study combines the Maltese context and the female nature of identity formation within Malta's music scene. It explores new ground and provides a platform for other researchers to build and develop other studies in this specific area of research. It also gives policy makers such as the government, a better understanding of the discourse of the gendered identity which young Maltese women live through music as part of their leisure activities.

The study is also significant in generating new concepts. The first is the development of a framework of categorisation of respondents, as a means to better analyse and interpret data. Although the type of music which respondents listen to is taken into consideration and is a significant variable, it is not the focus in the proposed framework and is not used as a criterion for categorising. On the other hand, the proposed framework focuses on the way respondents engage with the music and the way they navigate through processes of identity formation through the music they listen to. Initially drawing on Willis's (1978) analytical framework as well as Matza's (1964) drift theory, the framework was developed in such a way so that respondents were categorised into four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters. Through these categories, it was possible to include young women who engage with music in different

ways and for whom music has meanings which are quite different. This framework, which in itself is not fixed or rigid, also lends itself to exploring how young Maltese women negotiate subcultural boundaries. At times, they shift and change the meaning they give to both cultural items and social practices (Jenkins, 1996), including music and the practices associated with particular types of music. Through this analytical framework, the fluidity and hybridity in young Maltese women's identity processes, which such shifts enhance, could be interpreted.

The second argument is that this study questions the validity of the term 'subculture', at least in the way young Maltese women engage in the music they listen to in their everyday life experiences. Since it seems that young Maltese women are moving towards nurturing hybrid identities, having preferences for very different types of music, for instance, traditional Maltese music and modern music like techno for example, the concept of 'subculture' is problematic. This is because liking music that is so different is usually not within the accepted boundaries of the group. Moreover, young Maltese women are striving more and more to preserve individual tastes and this reflects the importance of differences rather than commonalities usually associated with subcultures. It is even more problematic when one looks at mainstream culture as one that is not in actual fact homogenous. It is also more complex when one looks at the way the mainstream culture, which in itself encompasses so many differences, and the 'subcultures' are constantly interrelated, interacting with each other in such a way that a term which implies that things happen together would be more adequate. Thus the term 'syncultures' is suggested since the prefix 'syn-' means happening together in union with each other. This would change the concept of 'sub-', which implies subordination to a dominant culture or to mainstream culture.

## **9.2 Implications of findings**

The findings of this study imply that tensions, particularly between the religious and traditional practices of society and the more modern lifestyles associated with globalisation, within the Maltese context, have an impact on young women in their processes of identity formation. Moreover, the understandings of Maltese people of social class have strong implications on whether or not they engage in negotiating boundaries. The findings revealed that some young women were not interested in social mobility, in shifting their position in the social groups and the social strata. The 'ħamalli' (vulgar) were

not interested in becoming 'puliti' (polite) and vice versa. These perceptions seem to have been inherited by the younger generation of young women, although the meanings that cultural forms and cultural items are given might have changed. The complexities of distinction of social classes revolves around economic, cultural and social capital as argued by Bourdieu (1987) and all three types of capital intertwine and overlap making positioning in the social strata a complex task. For many young women, taste is usually a strong and reliable indicator of social class but for some young women, taste does not necessarily indicate class or character since in their view, the individual's preference for a particular cultural item does not necessarily imply that the individual shares all other social practices and ideologies with a particular social group. Durkheim's (1984) position on modernity and celebration of individuality reflects fragmentation in society and moves away from the traditional perception of a subculture being made up of commonalities and similarities, according to Muggleton (2000). Technology and new media, which have provided access to music, information, fashion, anything at any given time, have had significant impact on geographical boundaries. The findings of this research show that across all the four categories, young women strove to preserve their individuality and this implies that if social dynamics remain relatively constant, the idea of preserving individuality is likely to be adopted by more and more young women in Malta.

The findings also imply that in nightspots such as Paceville, where young people gather for leisure, away from adult supervision, young women are negotiating new gendered identities, different to traditional identities which link women to domestic labour. These new meanings which young women are giving to their engagement in leisure are more in line with Western cultures, where women are being increasingly considered to be at par with men, by their male counterparts in Western cultures. Thus, it seems that the traditional gendered identities and roles of males, being associated with the public and the virtue of honour, and females being associated with the domestic and the virtue of respectability (Mitchell, 2002) might start to be shifted by young people. Young women are arguably social actors bringing about change in the way their gendered identities are viewed by others.

### 9.3 Limitations of the research

This research has limitations when considering the larger picture as well as methodological limitations. This study explores in some depth, from a sociological perspective, how young Maltese women incorporate the music they listen to into everyday discourses and identities and into their everyday lives. However, this is only one aspect of the field, which spreads into leisure studies, youth studies, gender studies and cultural studies. This study is only one section of a much bigger picture which ideally would include statistical data of various sections of Maltese society's music preferences, with variable factors being age, gender, social class, locality and so on.

In this study, music is taken as a general cultural form, rather than sectioned into the different types of music, since the aim was that of exploring the identity formation process linked to music rather than the musical genres themselves. Although the idea that the particular types of music might have influenced the particular ways in which young Maltese women engage in their preferred music, was taken into account, it was not the main focus of the study. Researching in depth the implications of the different forms of music on young Maltese women would reveal the social practices of the social groups associated with the different music-scapes.

A limitation of the study is that participants all positioned themselves as part of the same social strata, namely the middle class or working class. This means that, although this forms quite a large section of society, it does not include all sections of society. This was by coincidence rather than by choice. In hindsight, since the sampling process itself limited recruitment to the researcher's and the respondents' social networks, this was very likely to happen since young women usually associate with others of similar taste and similar social standing.

Moreover, through this research, I came to realise that the terms 'working class' and 'middle class', which I originally used in the interviews, are not very clearly defined in people's minds and are subject to interpretation. What one calls working class might be middle class to others and vice versa. The two are highly interpreted as overlapping by many people. The general idea of class in Malta for the lay person, is divided into three: the upper high class known as 'puliti' or 'tal-pepe' or 'elite', the 'normal' ones known as 'in-normali' or 'tan-nofs' and the lower class known as 'hamalli' or 'baxxi'. What constitutes each stratum is generally quite clearly based on economic status, cultural status and social status although it becomes more complex with factors such as respectability and

honour. When it comes to sub-sectioning these three main strata, respondents were not very aware of the meaning or where they positioned themselves, so in this research, I was limited to the middle stratum of Maltese society, which to simplify it, includes both the working class and the middle class.

Methodological restrictions include the fact that I myself as the researcher, am part of the Maltese society and am involved in the music scene. This has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that my familiarity with the scene gave me the insight in defining the research question and I had contacts in various music scapes on the island. The disadvantage is that although I tried to be reflexive and unbiased and take a subjective view in interpreting the data I am aware that there are obviously limitations to doing this.

#### **9.4 Recommendations for further research**

As previously pointed out, the research at hand is but a small portion of the field but it aims at building a platform for other studies to expand on.

From the study it was evident that music and social class are highly connected. It would therefore be interesting to research how young women who position themselves in other strata of society relate to the music they listen to. Moreover concurrent research with male participants could yield interesting comparisons and enable researchers in this field to understand a more gendered dimension of the field.

The presence or absence of women in the music industry in Malta could also be researched and the results could target future policies within this industry. Since in Malta, the music industry is still very limited and access to employment within it is even more limited, research in this area could provide information for policy makers such as the government to build on, so that this industry is expanded. This would be a very appropriate time since there are efforts being made for performing arts to be included in education and thus research in this area would be a foundation on which policy makers can make informed decisions.

This research was carried out in Malta. The Maltese islands consist of three: Malta, Comino and Gozo. Comino is a very small island with very few inhabitants. However, Gozo is much larger than Comino, with a population which is considerably less than that of Malta. The character of the island and that of its inhabitants, although similar to that of the Maltese is distinctly different. Social life is quite different. It is for this reason that this study purposely did not include any Gozitan participants. Thus, conducting this same

research with young Gozitan women, exploring how they experience the music they listen to and how they incorporate it in their everyday discourses and identities would be a very interesting undertaking in this field of study.

In my research, the local nightclub area of Paceville proved to be an extremely important factor in the lives of young Maltese women. It is the area where they seek leisure, where they engage in music with their friends, away from adult supervision and one of the prominent places where they negotiate their social identities and gendered identities, moving away from the traditional lifestyle of their villages and into the more modern world of Paceville. Therefore it would be very valuable to research the dynamics of all this, the tensions between their ties to their local villages, their family and so on, and the more modern way of looking at things in Paceville with their peers as part of the process of identity formation.

Another area which this research revealed as being prominent in young Maltese women's lives is the tensions between traditional and modern, the outlook of the more traditional older generation versus the more modern view of the younger generation. Researching these tensions and how young people negotiate them across the age gap would also be a study which builds on the present one.

## **9.5 Conclusion**

Overall, this study has a number of strong and valid points. The study is to my knowledge the first to explore the role of music in the process of identity formation in the lives of young Maltese women. The Maltese context is a very particular one and is considered not simply as a backdrop to young women's everyday experiences but as a very important factor within the complex processes of forming identities, accumulating capital and negotiating power struggles in this context. The feminine dimension of this study also makes it one of the first of its kind in Malta and attempts to start filling a gap in literature in this field. It also attempts to instil interest in this area for other researchers to pursue research in this field.

The concept of the four categories, namely the Fully Committed, the Committed, the Active Drifters and the Passive Drifters, was developed to facilitate analyses and interpretation of data and to help understand the complexities of processes of identity formation through commonalities, differences and negotiation of boundaries which take



place in young Maltese women's everyday life. Rather than categorising by any other criteria, such as type of music preference or age, these categories were based on the way young women relate to the music they listen to, how they form their identities through the music or otherwise and how they negotiate individual taste within their chosen social groups.

The term 'synculture' was developed suggesting that mainstream culture and what is traditionally known as subculture, shape each other continuously, emphasising the interrelation between the dominant culture and the various groups which make up that culture. The validity of the term subculture, till now unquestioned in the Maltese context, is discussed in some depth giving this study yet another dimension and planting the seed for other researchers to question the concept of subcultures in Malta.

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## **APPENDIX A**

Originally, when I started collecting data, I set out to explore leisure consumption within four particular music scenes: the mainstream music culture which is pop and three music subcultures namely, rock, jazz and classical. In the initial stages, when the research question was still very broad, I wanted to explore how these different music cultures work, and look at similarities and differences between them. At the time, the title of the thesis was planned to be 'Women's Leisure Consumption within Music Subcultures'. At the stage when the Consent Form, Information Sheet, Interviewing Topics were developed, this was still the working title, as can be seen in this Appendix. It was only later, as the research developed and my research question became more defined and the focus became particularly how young Maltese women made meaning out of the music they listened to, that the title changed to its present one.

### Consent Form: Women's Leisure Consumption within Music Subcultures

<i>Please tick the appropriate box</i>	YES	NO
Have you read the Research Participant Information Sheet?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?		
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?		
Have you had the opportunity to speak to anyone you wished about this research?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the study?		
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study?  At any time Without having to give a reason for withdrawing Without affecting your reputation		
I agree to my interview being recorded		
I agree to the use of non-attributable direct quotes when the study is written up or published		
Do you agree to take part in this study?		
Signature of Research Participant		
Date		
Name in Capitals		
<u>Witness Statement</u>		
I am satisfied that the above-named has given informed consent		
Witnessed by		
Date		
Name in capitals		



**Information Sheet:**  
**Women's Leisure Consumption within Music Subcultures**

This study seeks to explore leisure consumption within the mainstream music culture and 3 music subcultures namely, pop, rock, jazz and classical. It explores how these different music cultures work, how they are structured and it attempts to look at similarities and differences between them. This area is still under-researched in Malta and this study would provide information about leisure consumption on the local scene.

The research project is being undertaken as part of my doctoral study at Brunel University, West London, UK. A thesis will be presented for assessment and the study might later also be used in other printed material such as journal articles and books.

Interviews will be recorded, transcribed and translated, and later analysed. The analysis and results of this study should be completed by 2013.

Participating in this study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the study at any time without being obliged to give explanations and without any future consequences.

Anonymity of participants, confidentiality of data and protection of identity in publishing of results is guaranteed. If any compromising data needs to be published, this will be done only if and after participants give their consent.

The University's Examiners and the supervisors of this study will be given access to my notes if necessary, for verification and cross-checking purposes only.

Attached is the approval statement of Brunel University Research Ethics Committee.

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Interviewee Characteristics								
Interview Number	Date	Pseudonym	Age	Social Class identified by Interviewee	Occupation	Music Preference	Type of Involvement	Commitment to Music
1	03.07.09	Ilona	23	Middle	Lecturer	Soft Rock, Classical	Fan	Active Drifter
2	09.01.10	Marika	20	Middle	Medical Student	R&B, Pop, House, 60s, Classical	Studying music	Passive Drifter
3	10.01.10	Elaine	19	Middle	Engineering Student	Various	Musician	Active Drifter
4	13.01.10	Helen	24	Middle	Law Student	Various	Studying music	Active Drifter
5	16.01.10	Bertha	18	Middle	Commerce Student	Jazz, Classical, Soft rock, Rap	Studying music	Passive Drifter
6	23.01.10	Michelle	19	Middle	Student	Soft rock, Trance, Electro	Studying music, Fan	Committed
7	31.01.10	Mary	22	Middle	Accounts Student	Classical, Rock	Musician	Committed
8	22.09.10	Ella	21	Middle	Education Student	Rock	Fan	Fully Committed
9	30.09.10	Theresa	30	Middle	Lecturer	Various	Fan	Committed
10	02.10.10	Anna	16	Middle	Student	Death Metal, Heavy Metal, Gothic Rock, Rock	Fan	Fully Committed
11	08.10.10	Amanda	17	Middle	Student	Turkish, Latin	Fan	Fully Committed
12	20.10.10	Kirsty	27	Middle	Lecturer	Classical, Jazz, Big Band	Musician	Committed
13	20.10.10	Janet	34	Middle	DJ	Clubbing, Underground, Electronica	Learning music	Fully Committed
14	22.10.10	Joanne	27	Working	Administrative Officer	Trance, Clubbing	Fan	Fully Committed
15	26.10.10	Tamara	20	Middle	Education Student	Jazz, Swing	Studying music	Committed
16	26.10.10	Dina	21	Working	Education Student	Classical, Pop	Studying music	Active Drifter
17	28.10.10	Tania	21	Middle	Counter Assistant	Various	Fan	Active Drifter
18	04.11.10	Lisa	22	Working	Service Manager	Various	Fan	Passive Drifter
19	05.11.10	Jessica	20	Middle	Accounts Clerk	Indie, Rock	Fan	Passive Drifter
20	06.11.10	Mandy	19	Middle	Medical Student	Film tracks, Classical	Fan	Passive Drifter

## **Interviewing Topics**

Women's Leisure Consumption within Music Subcultures

### **WARM UP**

#### **1. GREET PARTICIPANTS**

- a. Explain study
- b. Information sheet
- c. Consent form

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **2. SOCIAL BACKGROUND**

- a. Tell me about you
- b. Age
- c. Sexual orientation
- d. Race
- e. Ethnicity
- f. Parental Employment
- g. Subjective social class (what you think)
- h. Family intactness (2-parent?)

#### **3. ECONOMIC CAPITAL**

- a. Economic Status of parents during childhood
- b. Present economic status of participant

#### **4. SCHOOL MEASURES**

- a. Grades
- b. Skipping school
- c. Suspension
- d. Education stream
- e. Academic/vocational
- f. Importance attached to education
- g. Anticipate to finish post secondary education/tertiary education

**LEISURE****5. LEISURE**

- a. Free time
- b. Leisure + understanding of leisure
- c. EXAMPLES
  - 1 Clubbing
  - 2 Drinks
  - 3 Theatre
  - 4 Concerts
  - 5 Cinema
  - 6 Restaurants
  - 7 Coffee
  - 8 Indoor Sport
  - 9 DVDs
  - 10 Internet surfing
  - 11 Chatting
  - 12 Listening to music

**MUSIC: how it is consumed****6. MUSICAL PREFERENCE/TASTE**

- a. How much do you like each of the following types of music? (5 point Likert scale)
  - 1. Jazz
  - 2. Rock
  - 3. Pop
  - 4. Classical
  - 5. Etc.
- b. Favourite music
- c. Periods in life when favourite music changed
- d. More than one favourite?
- e. Family music preference
- f. Where/ when do you listen to favourite music

**MUSIC AS LEISURE****7. MUSIC AS MAIN ENTERTAINMENT OR BACKGROUND**

- a. Is listening to music leisure?
- b. Do you distinguish between music as leisure and music while doing work?
- c. Live/ recordings / downloading
- d. Concert style or more relaxed in a club + drinks
- e. What is music to you?

- f. Music as leisure (main entertainment) at different times
  - i. Weekdays
  - ii. Weekends
  - iii. Travelling
  - iv. Home
  - v. Bedroom
  - vi. Nights out
- g. Music as background to leisure
- h. Music as background to work
- i. Does music make work / obligations seems less like work?

## **8. MUSIC IN PEER GROUP ACTIVITY OR ALONE**

- a. In general what do you like doing as leisure?
- b. Is music included?
- c. Possible Categories:
  - i. Solitary Leisure
    - 1. Listening to music alone
    - 2. Going for a walk alone
    - 3. Working out alone
  - ii. Leisure in pairs: best friend or boyfriend/husband
    - 1. Listening to music
    - 2. Going for a walk
    - 3. Dining out
    - 4. Going for a coffee
  - iii. Peer dominated leisure
    - 1. Driving around with friends
    - 2. Visiting friends
    - 3. Shopping with friends
    - 4. Hanging out in the streets
    - 5. Hanging out in coffee shops
  - iv. Hedonistic leisure
    - 1. Kissing
    - 2. Fooling around
    - 3. Sex
    - 4. House parties/ Raves
    - 5. Bars/ Nightclubs
  - v. Illegal Leisure: Index of drug use/ alcohol consumption
    - 1. recreational drugs
    - 2. alcohol
  - vi. Illegal Leisure: Index of Delinquency
    - 1. forms of delinquency

**GENDER****9. GENDER DIFFERENCES**

- a. Do you consume music differently to men/ boys?
- b. Do you feel that a man's leisure is different to a woman's?
- c. Do you feel that a man's music consumption influences you?

**POWER: Capital****10. CULTURAL CAPITAL**

- a. Play musical instrument
- b. Attend cultural events
- c. Go to library
- d. Go to symphony/opera
- e. Go to museum
- f. Read book for pleasure
- g. Involved in hobbies

**11. SOCIAL CAPITAL**

- a. Friends
- b. Influential people in the subculture
- c. Influential people in the mainstream culture
- d. Hierarchy within the subculture and within society in general

**IMAGE****12. IMAGE**

- i. Lifestyle
- ii. Typical lifestyle
- iii. Image
- iv. Typical image
  - 1. Clothes
  - 2. Shoes
  - 3. Hair
  - 4. Make-up
  - 5. Accessories
- v. Language

## Typical Biographies

**Elaine** comes from a family of four. Her father works at the Education Department and her mother is a teacher. Her father is also a musician and comes from a musical family. Both Elaine and her elder sister, who now works in a pharmaceutical company, took music lessons when young.

Academically, Elaine is a very good student and she went through Primary, Secondary and Post-secondary schools with relative ease. Elaine started taking music lessons privately at the age of 6 and took her studies to Diploma level. She plays with the National Philharmonic Orchestra on a part-time basis and performs in functions and concerts, but never wanted music to be her full-time job since she considers opportunities to be very limited in Malta. She is studying engineering at University. She managed to buy a car, still lives with her family and goes out regularly with friends and sometimes boyfriends.

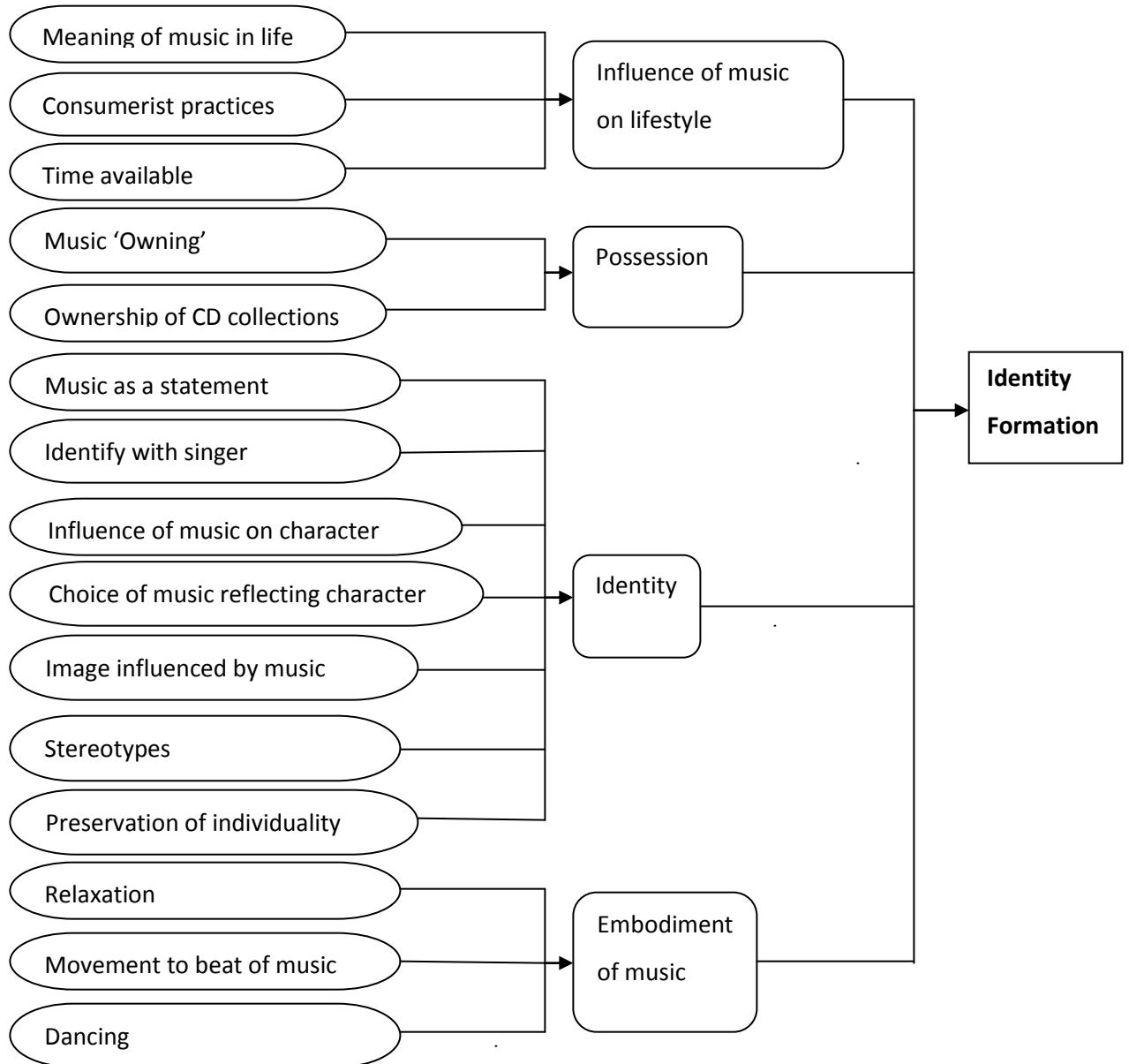
**Tania** comes from a family of four. Her father works in Administration of a private company and her mother is a Medical Laboratory Scientist. Her father is a musician too. Tania used to learn ballet when she was young but gave it up later. She enjoys playing around on her father's instruments trying to play tunes from popular songs. Tania went to primary and secondary schools in Malta and to college in the UK where she studied Photography and where she met her present boyfriend. She works part-time as a counter assistant in a Take-Away food franchise and also does some modelling jobs. She enjoys playing computer games with her younger brother. She regularly goes clubbing with her boyfriend and friends.

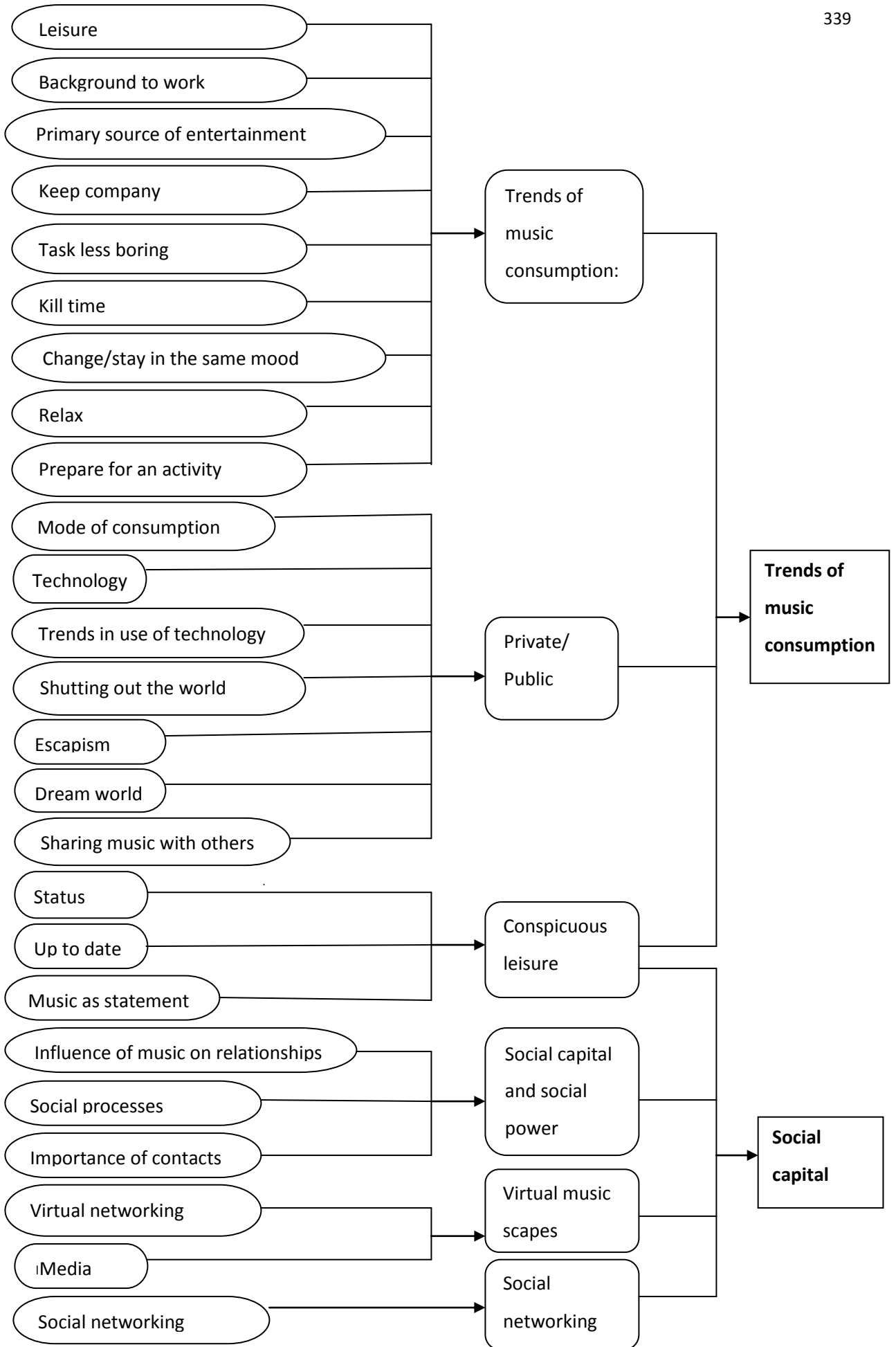
## **APPENDIX B**

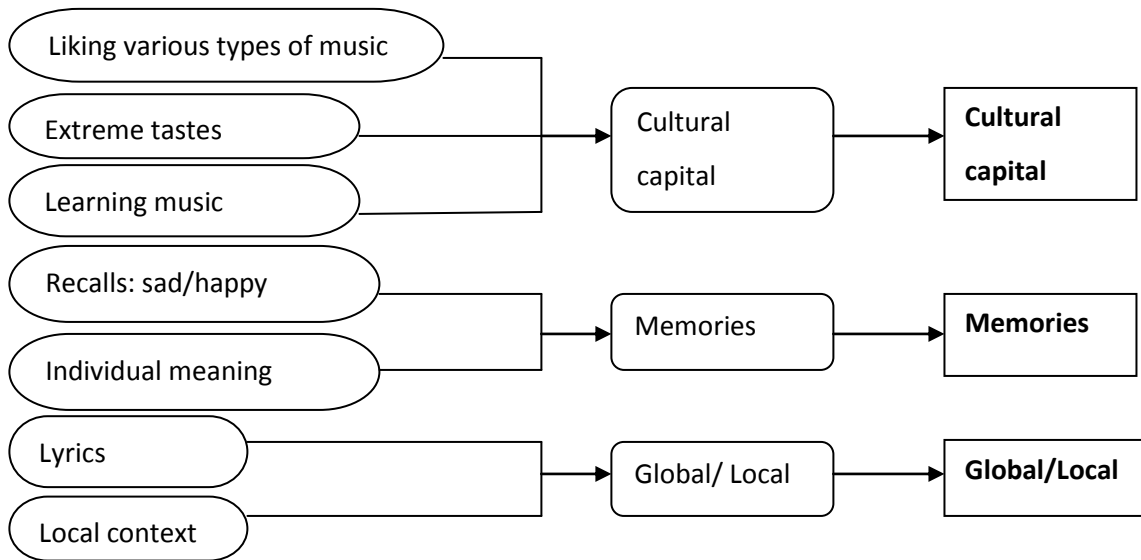


The Development of Themes and the Framework for Coding and Categorising show the initial stages of how through coding and categorising of data, several topics were grouped into sub-themes and themes. The development of themes was the very first stage in the process of the data analysis and interpretation. Only after this process were the four categories of Fully Committed, Committed, Active Drifters and Passive Drifters developed, as seen in Participant Categories.

## Development of Themes







## Framework for Coding and Categorising

1. POSSESSION (Veblen: conspicuous leisure +possession)
  - a. 'My music' as ownership
  - b. People introducing you to their music
  - c. Owning songs, posters etc
  
2. IDENTITY (De Nora)
  - a. music they listen to as a statement ('my music')
  - b. 'will not hang out with people who do not like my type of music...we would argue'
  - c. identify with singer through lyrics and music/ fan
  - d. influence of music on character/ music reflects character/ mood: music=tool
  - e. image influenced by music, way they dress as a statement
  - f. preservation of individuality vs stereotype
  
3. CULTURAL CAPITAL (Bourdieu + sub cultural capital Thornton)
  - a. Liking all types of music is considered as being more versed
  - b. When individual's tastes include extremes, they keep their tastes to themselves: line of divide
  - c. Learning music
  
4. SOCIAL CAPITAL (Bourdieu)
  - a. Influence of music on relationships, intimate and not intimate (will not hang out with those who have different musical tastes) + influence of relationships on music
  - b. Whether they feel comfortable talking about other musical tastes within certain groups
  - c. Social processes
  - d. Importance of contacts
  
5. SOCIAL POWER (Abercrombie and Longhurst, De Nora)
  - a. Music gives you status
    - i. Personal level
    - ii. Social level
  - b. Importance of keeping up to date (radio)
  - c. Conspicuous leisure/meaning of leisure
  
6. SUBCULTURE (DeNora, Hodkinson, Jenks)
  - a. Relevance of term in context
  - b. Fluidity of tastes also in relation to dominant culture
  - c. Commitment to the lifestyle
  - d. Elements adopted and those resisted

- e. Preservation of individuality (Muggleton)

#### 7. PUBLIC/PRIVATE

- a. Mode of consumption: always changing because of modern technology+ what you listen to (trend)
- b. Element of shutting out the world (head phones)
- c. Escapism plus dream world
- d. Sharing music with others (Stereo)
- e. Memories

#### 8. USE IN EVERYDAY LIFE (Bull, Hall)

- a. Background to work: fluidity
- b. Keep company
- c. Make task less boring
- d. Kill time
- e. Change/stay in same mood +prepare you for activity
- f. Relax (embodiment) +sleep

#### 9. EMBODIMENT

- a. Movement to beat of music: dance, work

#### 10. INFLUENCE OF MUSIC ON LIFESTYLE

- a. Meaning of music in life
- b. Consumerist practices (limited to time available)
- c. Distinctive or very fluid

#### 11. GENDER

- a. Differences in the way young men and women live music

#### 12. VIRTUAL (Peterson and Bennet)

- a. Translocal + media
- b. Networking: social networking

#### 13. LOCAL CONTEXT

- a. Particular to the Maltese music scen

## Participant Categories

Willis (1978) Analytical Framework	Themes	Categories			
		Fully Committed	Committed	Active Drifters	Passive Drifters
Indexical analysis	Level of activity/ passivity in their music choices	Listening to their choice of music is a dominating priority/ Active, high intensity of involvement in their music scene	Listening to their choice of music is important/ Active in their music scene	Consciously drift from liking types of music/ liking various types	Listen to whatever is being played/ No distinct tastes/ No active choices in music
Homological analysis	Importance of being up to date	Up to date in particular music	Up to date in particular music	Up to date in areas of music they like (charts)	Being up to date is not important
	Knowledge of music	In-depth knowledge of music considered prestigious	In-depth knowledge is important	In-depth knowledge is not so important	In-depth knowledge of music is not at all important
Integral Analysis	Effects of music on individual	Seek to go deeper: image/ learn instrument	Image does not always/ necessarily reflect the music they like	Image reflects a mixture of tastes/ commercial	Image is not consciously connected to any sort of music
	Sense of belonging to group	Music considered as a label of identity	Music considered as having a substantial amount of influence on their identity	Usually resist being stereotyped as rockers/ rappers etc	Music is external to the character/ music does not form identity

## **APPENDIX C**



At the time of the request for approval from the Research Ethics Committee, the title of the research was Women's Leisure Consumption within Music Subcultures. It was much later, after data collection was finished and I started analysing the data did the title change to reflect more closely the way the focus of my study had developed towards the way young Maltese women make meaning of the music they listen to in their everyday life. Therefore, although the title and the focus had shifted, or rather funnelled towards a particular area, there had been no changes in the interviewing process or ethical issues that might have arisen.

## Research Ethics Committee Approval

Ms Tatjana Chircop  
Prasada Court Flat 2  
Tal-Hamrija Str  
Marsascale MSK 3572  
MALTA



15<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Dear Tatjana

### **RE36-08 – Women’s Leisure Consumption within Music Subcultures**

I am writing to confirm the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Sport and Education received your application connected to the above mentioned research study. Your application has been independently reviewed to ensure it complies with the University Research Ethics requirements and guidelines.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority, is satisfied with the decision reached by the independent reviewers and is pleased to confirm there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study.

Any changes to the protocol contained within your application and any unforeseen ethical issues which arise during the conduct of your study must be notified to the Research Ethics Committee for further consideration.

On behalf of the Research Ethics Committee for the School of Sport and Education, I wish you every success with your study.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Bradford  
**Chair of Research Ethics Committee**  
School Of Sport and Education

## **APPENDIX D**

## **Fully Committed Category Interview: Anna**

### **Can you tell me a bit about the music you like?**

Death metal, heavy metal, gothic rock and rock. I do not know how it started. Since I was much younger, I have no idea how I came to like this type of music but when I listen to this music I...like... relax, even for example when I am full of anger...even though the music is exciting, it relaxes me and I still feel at peace. Most of the music has a meaning behind it so I like relating to the song.

### **Can you tell me what you mean by meaning?**

The lyrics have a certain meaning. For example the singer or artist would have gone through experiences and if I am going through the same experience and I listen to that song, I would calm down and reflect.

### **OK...what do the lyrics talk about in these songs?**

I like listening mostly to Evanescence, it is the most gothic rock. It is soft...I like it because the lyrics relate about her life, childhood, or about love. Sometimes when something happens and I feel down I listen to her. It is sometimes about people in general, what is happening in the world nowadays, the badness around, the good around...

### **So do you listen to them to feel better or to remain in the same mood?**

Both, both.

### **Ok, you mentioned what is happening in the world. We listen mostly to music from USA, UK, some Italian...**

And some German as well...

### **Ok, so we get music from around the world but then we listen to them in Malta. How do you relate to these things...what meaning do we give them?**

I think we give them the same meaning...maybe sometimes different, but the same.

### **What does music mean to you in your life?**

It helps me a lot. I am not a musician or anything, I do not play an instrument but it means a lot to me. What I listen to means a lot because when I say I like that music it is like I am saying what my character is like, what I like wearing, what I like doing, what I am like, my character.

**Can you elaborate on this?**

For example the way I dress...gothic, all black, and like Cradle of Filth you know, who like dressing up that way, even their type of music, my character, when I am angry, moody, hyper or happy...

**What do you mean?**

I mean the music is building my character, the music helps me in the way I think and it helps me mature too. Although what I listen to is harsh, it helps because once you listen to the lyrics you realise the topic it talks about etc

**Ok, can you try to remember an episode or explain to me how music helps you mature?**

Like, before I was more like a child...I didn't think. Nowadays I think twice before talking. I look at life from a different point of view now. More...how can I say it... I take it more seriously rather than lightly.

**Do you think that without that music you would have been different?**

Yes. I do not think that I would be what I am today. Maybe my character would be the same but it would not have been like I want it now.

**What would have been different?**

I think I would be weaker because the music sort of strengthened me inside, it built my character...strength... I do not show emotions and I do not succumb to weakness but I am stronger and more assertive

**Where do you listen and how do you listen to music?**

When I am with my friends, we either go to Valletta and just listen to the music on the mobile. Then at home on the computer, You Tube or Music Player, I tunes etc and sometimes when I want to be on my own I just go to my room, on my bed, put on my headphones, some music and just think and reflect

**Would that be on I Pod...computer?**

Mobile, always mobile as an mp3 player. I do have some CDs as well. Ruben gave me some CDs to copy on computer, sometimes I also take my sister's CD player in my room and I listen to the CD ...but mostly it is the mobile I use.

**You do not drive but on the bus, while travelling, do you listen to music?**

A lot...I love listening to music at that time especially on the bus because time passes quickly. With my mum no, I mostly sit quietly but on the bus I just listen to music and think of what I will be doing that day.

**Is there any other time when you listen to music on your own with headphones?**

Sometimes when I do Homework...mostly not while I need to concentrate like doing Maths or anything like that but more when like I am copying notes or I know I can do the task without having to concentrate much. I like listening to music because it relaxes me and I know what I am doing more if I have music.

**You know what you are doing...ok...home-work, cleaning your room...do you listen to music?**

Yes of course ...and I hurry according to the tempo of the music or depending on the song, I do my stuff. I feel hyper and I do my room much quicker then.

**So what you are saying is that the rhythm of the music is incorporated and you move according to the music...like aerobics...if it is fast you exercise fast, if it is slow you do it slower...**

Yes, yes very much so.

**Do you use music to sort of build your body like aerobics, gym. At one point you said the music builds your character. Do you use it also to build or tone the body?**

No...well sometimes I do dance to a song or two, but I do not use the music for workouts etc...no.

**Ok, why do you use headphones in your room?**

I feel that with headphones the music goes straight to my brain, it is in my ears and I hear it more clearly and I can listen to the lyrics better and I feel that the music goes right through me...that is the way I see it.

**Is it also the case of shutting the rest of the world out?**

Yes. Sometimes when I have a fight with my mum or my sister, I just go to my room, put on the headphones and listen to music, alone, like going into a private world of my own

**In this world of your own do you dream?**

Yes a lot a lot

**What are your dreams?**

You are going to see this as strange example like fantasy of Vampires, fires and monsters, a sort of religion but not religion or Catholic, I sort of build a story in my head, I do some day dreaming, I dream... if I were this person who had this special gift...and I dream in my own world.

**So it is like you are building a film on your own?**

Yes, yes and I do it very often, I escape into my dreams.

**So you do this in particular songs?**

Evanescence and Disturbed.

**Ok. You mentioned heavy metal....**

Gothic rock, death metal, metal, rock...

**Ok which one do you identify with mostly?**

Gothic rock and death metal because sometimes I can be really soft and if there is someone with a problem I feel I can help him...and at other times I feel I am protective of myself. Example when I listen to death metal I feel very superior, I can do anything, I feel strong. When I listen to Gothic rock which is softer, I feel in peace.

**Can you explain what Gothic is to you?**

There are many different types of Gothic styles. I like the gothic style for example in art...have you ever seen the chapel at Addolorata cemetery? That is Gothic architecture, a pointed style, and there are the gargoyles, which I really like, they fascinate me. Then there is something minor...the clothing...corsets or a particular design on trousers. But mostly, I see gothic as a way to live like your lifestyle, not exactly the clothing but also what and who you are, your character, your way of thinking, the music you listen to, the person.

**Lifestyle...what is the typical lifestyle of someone who likes Gothic?**

You will not be like the others...who like classical music and so on, you would be different. You would be darker. You would like to be on your own...not that they do not socialise but they like different types of environments, for example if people like doing picnics at Buskett, Gothic would prefer to have a picnic at the cemetery...It is true it is more strange.... But for them it is more peaceful and more in their environment.

**Do you have friends who like this type of music?**

I had but they were not good people because they used to hang around with bad people who took drugs etc. so... now I hang out with a much better group and they like that music too. I have a best friend who is like my sister...she likes the same music...she is like my twin...I can open up to her. At school I do not have that many friends because they see me as weird but I do not mind because that is who I am and if they do not like it I could not be bothered.

**It is like you have a certain pride in this?**

Yes...I am different. Everyone is different and if they see me as a freak etc. I do not care because I know I am not and I know I am in a way normal but different because I have

different tastes and I do not have to worry because they like different things and maybe think I am strange, I do not mind.

**But why do you think they see you as strange?**

Because the things I like, they see as not normal. There are only a small group who like Vampires, monsters, the type of music.

**Macabre maybe...or is that not the right term?**

Hmmm they think we are bad because we wear black...they judge a person, they judge a book by its cover, they do not bother to see what is inside us, they judge us by our appearance. Like if you see someone full of piercings and wearing different you immediately think he is bad, when in fact you do not know the person so you cannot tell... it does not mean that just because of his appearance he is like that inside. For all you know he might be the most wonderful person in the world...that is why I do not like that attitude because in reality that is not the case.

**How do you dress up?**

Hmmm, always in black, sometimes I add a colour. I like wearing corsets which are typical Gothic, sometimes lace but that is evening. I would not go to Valletta like that. A T-shirt with a rock band on it, Disturbed or Iron Maiden, but I do not wear that one much because the size is too big...then just comfortable things...I would not wear high heels...no, just comfortable slippers, running shoes, trousers and a top with a nice design.

**Is there a difference in the way boys and girls dress up in Gothic style?**

There is a difference but not much...Well, the girls wear fish net, skirts, nice boots...feminine with an elegant top. The boys wear a nice pair of trousers with some chain, boots and sometimes like a shirt but it is not a shirt, with chains...even T-shirts and trousers... in normal life they wear comfortable clothes. They would not say let me wear this so that people see me this way. They wear that way because they want to. They do not wear a certain style for appearance sake.

**Ok. For instance someone who like classical does not wear certain clothes because of that. Now if you like Gothic, don't you wear that style because you want to make a statement, to tell those who see you, that you like Gothic?**

Well, maybe but I wear them because they fascinate me. Sometimes I dress up with nothing of rock as well...but those sort of clothes...that's really me, you know?



**So you have integrated this...in which other areas do you feel that this is you....music, art, dress?**

Mostly in art and music.

**What about make up?**

Make-up....eye-liner... for example I love make-up, so for example I do elaborate eye-liner and...mostly eye-liner. I do not put on lipstick or anything else. But eyeliner sometimes I do a design which goes down across the cheek....to make it look cool.

**Just eye-liner?**

Yes, no foundation or blusher, I do not mess around with those, just eye-liner and mascara.

**How does the music you like affect you with your family, friends, school, society...you already spoke about school friends...can you tell me more?**

Well other friends accept me as I am and I get along very well with them. They can relate to my emotions. If I am frustrated, they help me etc. Family...my mum understands me ...I get along well with her...sometimes I do feel that she does not understand me but at the end of the day I say maybe it is because she is my mum and she cannot know what is happening exactly with my friends etc. Then many times I feel comfortable with Ruben because he likes the things I like and he understands me and he went through what I go through. So when I have a problem I go to him because he can help me, since he is older he can give me advice on what I could do.... That's it I think.

**Do you seek for help from people who like that type of music?**

Not necessarily but mostly yes because they can understand me better, what I am feeling etc. For example if I go to my sister for instance who has a completely different character to me, she would not understand me

**What type of music does your sister like?**

Pop, Arabic, Middle Eastern, Turkish music etc.

**So you do not imagine that she could understand you if you went to her?**

No, no.

**Regarding school, teachers, did you ever have any problems because you like that sort of music?**

I did have a problem once because on my diary I either draw for example, Iron Maiden...they have this character Eddie who features in several of their albums and he looks like a monster and because I drew it at school and like sort of devils ...because I like them, to me they are beautiful, but I had problems with the headmistress. In a way I do not

blame her because it was the school diary, although it is mine, but I should not have done it on a school thing so I learnt from that experience. Then teachers, I do not talk with them much and I do not give them the opportunity to get close, so school is school...maybe there is a one teacher who understands me, the art teacher.

**Ok you said you learnt from this experience...what did you learn?**

That there are certain things...for example at school you cannot do certain things, you have to follow the rules, you have to lay low at school. Just because I like those things, I cannot do them at school because it is not the place to do it. Outside it is ok, but even in future if I want to find a job, I have to adapt to that environment, I cannot dress like that or express myself because it is not right.

**Why is it not right?**

Because school is different. At school there is discipline, there are school rules and you have to follow them. You cannot be talking to friends about the monsters I like because you might affect them, especially since it is a Catholic school the headmistress does not like it. Even if I want to get an office job in future I cannot have loads of piercings and in black because I do not see it adequate, it is not the place for that. There is the right time and place for everything.

**So you learnt to keep what you like to yourself?**

Ehe, except when I go out etc...School or work better not.

**Ok, now that you are starting at MCAST Art and Design, do you have a uniform?**

No...that helps because I will be able to express myself...at Sacred Heart where I was, I could not express myself in art. Some time ago we had a project...it was a competition. I had won it, it was Gothic style and it was really nice ...no monsters or anything but Gothic style but the Headmistress was not very happy about it. At MCAST Art and Design I will be able to express myself to my heart's content and draw what I like because there they will understand you...I see it as freer.

**Where do you go when you go out, for leisure?**

I go out with my friends. We go to Valletta, not to see a film or anything like that...we either go to a Public Garden, Bays, close to the terminus, on the right. It is quite elaborate and it is frequented by my type of people and the people I hang around with. We hang around there, talking and joking, just relax. We do not go to restaurants or films, it is more like hanging around with my friends, my second family, I can tell them what happened

during the day, then we invent something to do, we just hang around, doing nothing special...we have nowhere in particular to go.

**Is there music?**

Yes of course. On the mobile...then my friend has a small amplifier which you can connect to music. Sometimes we take that...even when we go to the beach we take that.

**You told me you used to frequent a group who used drugs. Do you think that it is a typical trait?**

It is not typical for everyone. It depends on your character. For example ...Marilyn Manson, they say that if you listen to his songs backward it is satanic lyrics etc... it depends on you. If you are going to listen to it and you can relate to it, you do not need to do what the music tells you or what the artists do. For example many artists died because of drugs and alcohol. I think it is not true...it is not the songs....they do affect you but not that much because it depends on your character. If you know those things are bad you won't repeat or do what the others are doing.

**So you are, like, in this gothic culture but you chose the elements you liked and left out other elements which you did not like?**

Yes, yes.

**Do you listen to other types of music...pop etc?**

Yes I do....I am not close minded...just rock, heavy metal etc, no...I like listening to other things, like pop, rap, I like M&M a lot because I like his lyrics a lot, then Techno like Pa Pa Americano I like a lot or Edwards Maya...I do listen to them, I have some of them on my mobile. My sister listens to these too, so if we are in the car and sometimes she tells mum to put on her CD, yes I do listen and I do like them sometimes. It is not just rock which I like.... But I do not like them as much as rock

**And their lifestyle?**

No, not the lifestyle, that tells me nothing.

**How old were you when you started liking this type of music?**

Hmmm.... I am 16 now so I think it must have been about 13

**You told me you do not know how you came to like this type of music...**

No I am not sure exactly...I always liked that sort of thing and I used to dream and so on...but well, come to think of it Ruben listens to a lot of music of this kind, while cooking, he always puts on some music of Iron Maiden, Led Zeppelin, AC/DC etc and I started listening too and then I used to go on computer, You Tube and it is obvious, once

you put in a band, other bands come up too, so I explored on my own...obviously there is a big variety. Regarding friends I do not know how I met them exactly...maybe Face Book... I probably added someone who was similar to me in her profile and then we met after some time and she had introduced me to the whole group etc. but I do not hang around with them anymore. Now my boyfriend has a group and we hang around with that group. They are really nice people like they are similar to me, they do not take drugs or anything...some of them do smoke...but I think that is normal. They do not smoke near me because I tell them not to...so I am hanging around with OK people now.

**So your boyfriend has the same musical tastes as you?**

Yes but he prefers classics 80s and 90s to death metal...I like 80s and 90s a lot too.

**How important is music in your relationship?**

It is important, we listen to music together, sometimes we sing along together, we fool around head-banging etc.

**Did you ever argue over music?**

No and I do not think we ever will because if I do not like his music, I cannot tell him do not listen to that...I would be a control freak if I told him you have to listen to my music!

No we leave each other free regarding what music we listen to

**Is there anything associated to music which is very important to you?**

Art... I associate that to music a lot...gothic art, buildings, cemeteries, I like this artist Victoria Francis who draws gothic art...real people but then she creates them herself, putting blood dripping down, roses...then I like drawing figures and nudity. I really like nudity because the structure of the human being fascinates me. That is why I associate it with music...if I did not like that type of music I would not like that type of art.

**Nowadays you know you have internet etc, you can download anything, it is cheaper than CDs...over the internet, do you look for others who like the same type of music...even not Maltese?**

Hmmmm... not really...sometimes but not a lot because you cannot tell who the other person is...it might be a 60 year old! Face book, Twitter etc, I do not feel very safe. On Face Book though there are groups of Iron Maiden and you join...people join from all over the world...Sometimes I write a comment on the wall and we start a conversation but that is how far it goes...we never meet and I never add them as friends etc.

**Is it important for you to communicate with others who are similar to you?**

Yes, because it shows that it is not only in Malta but all over the world...so yes.

**Within your group are there leaders, the ones who do not really belong etc. etc?**

I arrived last in the group so I am definitely not a leader but yes there are two who are...well not exactly leaders but they are responsible for the group....but everyone expresses ideas etc. there is no one who commands. There is the person who had started the group and he feels responsible and he like, takes care of us.

**Can you tell me more?**

Well I like the fact that there is someone older than us ...he is 19...who takes care of us. We look up to him, he is very responsible, he is a very good guy, even if we have a problem, we discuss it with him...he earned being the 'leader'.

**What about his image, his ideologies...do they help him to be responsible?**

The way he thinks...if there is a problem, he is very mature, and looks for a solution.

**Do you think that in future you might change or shift your musical taste?**

Yes, yes...mum and Ruben always say this is a phase...but I say no. If I listen to this type of music every day, I think that it will grow inside me rather than change.

**You mentioned a sense of peace...can you explain what is the link?**

Hmmm, Evanescence for example, the lyrics and beat are soft and it like calms you down...it makes you sleep...not really sleep but it calms you and if you are angry, without wanting to, you calm down and everything inside you becomes peaceful and at rest. It is the music rather than the gothic style, I think. I think I made a mistake, because peace is more to do with music than Gothic in general...

**Ok, what is gothic like?**

A bit of everything...peaceful, angry, hyper, not nasty...but a lot of things and positive things.

**So how would I recognise a gothic song?**

The style, how they play the instruments, not harsh like heavy metal, you understand the lyrics because the singer sings them clearly so they are either gothic rock or gothic metal.

**Soft rock...can you understand the lyrics?**

Yes but that is different like Tokyo Hotel...I do not like it much.

**In Malta there are lots of bands formed in garages etc. Do you frequent these and concerts?**

I had a friend who was in a band but I do not talk to him anymore. They used to take it very seriously. But I think it is good to start so early and start a band but many times there are conflicts and they disband, they stop. That is why I do not like it...just because there is

a conflict they stop. They should solve it and go on...I mean many successful bands started young in this way, then they worked hard and then they made a name.

**Do you as an individual feel different to these Gothic groups in any way?**

Yes I do have my personality. Everyone in a group has his or her identity...the way he reacts to things, how he understands things, the way he speaks...

**Are there any things that bother you in the group? What are the things where you feel you are an individual and different? Is there an episode you can tell me about?**

Nothing bothers me in the group really. In that group I used to hang out with, they used to because they smoked, you feel you should do the same...and I had already started doing the same ...then I talked it over with mum and I realised that you do not need to be exactly like them. It is much better to be different because if everyone is the same....ok the group likes the same music but if you think in exactly the same way and people are all exactly the same it is boring. It is much better for people to have their own personality.

**Ok is there anything else you would like to mention?**

No I think we have covered everything

**Ok thanks**

## **Committed Category Interview: Tamara**

### **So would you like to tell me what music you like listening to?**

At the moment, I am enjoying listening to music which is more modern...not anything like rock mind you, but more like jazz, swing...that is what I am listening to.

### **Jazz and swing...did you go through phases when you listened to other types of music?**

I used to listen to a lot of classical but then all of a sudden I changed about a year, year and a half ago, I got this craze...not only to listen to, even when I play... if you give me something on the modern side I enjoy it but if you give me something purely classical I am not very happy...not because I do not like it...I mean if I were to go to a classical concert I would go but when it comes to choosing what to play then I prefer modern, if I have the choice.

### **At home do you listen to music?**

All the time...even if I am studying...You Tube is on all the time but then I choose the songs too...but all the time. If I am going to University its headphones ...even if it is some radio, but I need something going on, not words but music.

### **So is it always swing and jazz then?**

No it could be something normal... not while I am studying because then I do not want words. But if I am on my way somewhere and there is a song on, it will definitely not be a noisy song...so then I listen to it.

### **Do you mean with lyrics and without?**

Yes because the words distract me, I have to listen to them then so better just instrumental so that there is something going on... otherwise I get a break down if there is silence. It could be I am in a closed room and I am listening but I cannot stay without hearing anything. Even if a song ends and I did not realise, I think hey how come there is nothing? So I look for it.

### **So it is like company?**

Yes sometimes I prefer staying in peace and quiet listening to music than talking to someone. Even if I go to the library at University, I make sure that I have the headphones. Downstairs it is very quiet and the quiet bothers me but upstairs it would be noisy so I prefer to listen to music than a lot of mumbling.

**Why does silence bother you so much?**

Uff... for eg I spent a day cutting out Maltese poems...I got fed up...how long can you be cutting out poems? So, something I have to listen to I need to listen to...Silence? If you drop a needle you can hear it? No, so I want something going on.

**Is it to make something boring less boring?**

Yes, yes and time moves on much faster then, with music. Time flies that way ...true then I closed everything and went downstairs...I mean after a day cutting out poems, not talking to anyone, you then need a break...but the nice part is that I would not see the time passing by.

**You play in bands as well right? How do you see that, do you frequent band clubs all the year round?**

Now I have started going to band clubs round about the time of the feast because you start realising that the mentality is different somehow. Even if you go to a rehearsal, sometimes you end up on your own or you happen to be sitting near someone who couldn't care less and you start saying but I am not like that. So I go only to the last few rehearsals so that the good musicians are there and you do not get fed up.

**We are talking about playing... do you like listening to the marches?**

Yes, yes, I like them... in fact I would want an evening when I am not committed to play but if I go as part of the audience then deep down I say, I wish I was playing...you cannot understand yourself sometimes, but I do go. Even at home, I put on a tape of marches and listen yes...but not anything lively in that case but funeral marches then not anything lively, even though it might not be in context... normal marches are too noisy for that, funeral marches are more calm...

**Ok, do you go for a drink at the band club?**

Yes, yes, if you are in good company sometimes it is better than going to Paceville. I live in Qormi so I do go to the band club there but if there is the Żabbar feast and I met my friends there, we go to the band club there, it does not really matter.

**What about Saturday nights in general? Do you look for music?**

Yes...nowadays I prefer to go out and listen to some music rather than going up to Paceville...it gets boring always the same. I used to enjoy Paceville but how long can you go to the same places, do the same things...it gets boring, so, for example, last Saturday there was a concert by the Mosta band and I went...since I went to listen to a live



performance...better that way...good or bad, I am learning something. Even if it is just discussing pieces of music.

**So you have sort of 3 areas of music, bands, classical music, jazz and so on. How do these affect you in society?**

Well you need to try to combine them. If you are playing in a band, you are going to meet several styles: classical, more modern so it is better if you do not just listen to one style because if I am playing and I find a score in front of me of whatever music I can play it. At university all my friends do not play...once we were in a lecture and the lecturer said bands started before the theatre and said that the bands remained at a much lower level though and he was criticising bands very strongly. I just sat quietly...what he was saying was true...one cannot deny that can I? So then there was a student who is into feasts and knows I play and told him be careful about how you talk because you could be hurting people's feelings! I just sat quietly ...but it goes to show...ok you play in a band but then just because you play in a band they cannot associate you only with that...I mean... in that case why on earth am I studying... they saw you there and they do not know what else you do apart from bands. My friends like everything but you would not ask them to come with you to a performance... no...would not work...so I prefer to take my brother with me...I know he likes that...and we can discuss the music, we are on the same wavelength.

**If there was Rod Steward...or maybe something more modern, would your friends come...is there a difference between telling them let us go and listen to a band, let us go and listen to classical etc?**

If you tell them that, they would come... but not if you tell them let us go to Rockestra, forget it, as if! In general they do not...ok you do find that one person who would come.

**How do you feel about this?**

It bothers me in the sense that you know they cannot appreciate the music. The ones who just listen to the Paceville music...I cannot stand that mentality. The way I see it is, I have my own life, I do as I please and they do what they like. I used to be bothered about what they think of me but then you learn, I could not go on like that. If they like that, I like this, so what...and I do not mind talking about my tastes with them...only because I know what they are...I know they would not criticise and make fun, on the other hand they give you courage etc. I would not tell others who are not in my group of friends, no, as if, because I am afraid they would make fun of me...you still find those type of people.

**So you need to trust them?**

Yes exactly.

**All the music you had in your life, did it influence your character?**

Yes, yes it helped me come out of my skin. In the last 3 years... eg this is one of them, that I now believe that I can like whatever I want and they can do the same, what can you do? Even if I am in a situation...for example, last time I was for my driving lesson and she said did we not do it last time? And I said yes and told my mum, well in music it happens so often that you would have studied and it is perfect and the week after every little thing goes wrong in the same piece! What can you do...so I learnt to apply many things from my music to my everyday life...I would not realise but then I say Ah! This is like what happens in music....

**So we are talking about the discipline, the practice, falling and picking yourself up...**

Yes, for example, in an band you meet people from all walks of life...all sorts of people, it is a fact that you meet these people, all types, all characters so after a summer playing every day, in several bands and making loads of new friends you realise...Oh how I have changed in a month...it is like you would have taken on a status...I don't know, for example, this summer I made friends from there and sometimes I prefer to go out with them than my University friends...because I know I am going somewhere with them and we will enjoy it. That is what I was thinking...when I started University I started with this motto....she says what she likes, he says what he likes... people who ask for my notes etc. because I have a friend who is like an octopus to get my notes...this year I cannot remain like that... you start realising how much you have changed in a month. For eg. my friend told me, do what you have to do, do not take any notice of the others and I realise I listened to him and followed his advice a lot.

**So there is something social in it as well...and you said it gives you a status...can you try to explain it?**

You take your independence, if you go to a rehearsal, before, I used to worry that I knew no one, now I think, we'll see, if any one speaks to me I will speak to them...if they do not speak to me I will not speak to them...whatever, you know...but before I was not like that at all...I used to be so stupid.

**When you talk of status, do you also mean that people in that scene know you?**

Yes, many people start getting to know you, so apart from the status within yourself, your character etc. but people know you. For example, you went somewhere, a rehearsal for a

feast and there were some 20 pieces for this concert and I told the person next to me, I said, oh dear, this promises to be very long. The maestro, whom I did not know, and had never spoken to him, told me, you of all people are grumbling? Your concert took so very long this year. And you know...I said how on earth did he know that? When I told my brother he said you have no idea how much people talk ...about you and you would not even know it. So you start thinking...how did he hear about me, how does he know about me...then. For example, someone came to me saying, you know how much so and so talked about you and he said he really liked your playing then he asks you to play for a concert with him the week after etc. etc.

**So we are talking about contacts right?**

Yes because then if you go the first time, you start thinking it is my first time there, I do not want to arrive late, I do not want to make a fool of myself, you know? You have to do your job well. If you go for the first time, you say you cannot afford to make a fool out of yourself here...

**So you take care of your reputation?**

Yes because if you do something wrong then they talk, you have no idea how much they talk!! You heard her? She had a note she did not do it etc. etc. I hear them talking like that. In my way of thinking I say everyone is human and can make a mistake, even the really clever ones...I mean we all have bad days but people do not think in this way.

**Apart from playing, the music you listen to...you said sometimes you choose...did that type of music affect you?**

Yes in the sense, if I put on a tape of Sting that is what I am going to listen to, nothing else, I would not look for anything else. On my mobile, it is full of that, nothing else so I would not listen to anything else. Even if I am walking to University, sometimes it even changes my mood. Sometimes I get the bus and I have to walk in to University and I like listening to something lively...not too noisy but lively...even that starts me off in a good moo....I go in to the lecture nice and fresh.

**Your image, how you dress up....**

Hmmm that as well, as well...my mum tells me... because I tell her as if I am going in jeans and slipper...nothing wrong but if, for example, people got to know you, if you feel you have taken a certain status, you know...being a girl...at least for me, the way I dress also affects the way I feel and think, so, for example, if I have 1 lecture and that's it, it is ok if I wear slippers and jeans but if I have a full day ...and I have to go straight to a

concert, then I have to wear something which will make you feel good and keep up a good mood.

**So you wear things that will make you feel good within yourself as well as to keep up your reputation.**

Yes so if they say, she is a serious girl, in a good sense, you do not want to ruin that. For instance if someone says to me, I used to sum you up as so serious...then I say, who me? But at the same time, a girl has to keep her dignity and not say, Hey man, you know like men do...you know? But the way a girl dresses up, even when you enter a room, people are going to get an impression of you if they do not know you. I am not saying that if there are people you know, you do not say hi but not in a happy go lucky way. In a nice way...mind you there are men who do it in a nice way. You know why because if someone sees you, they get the impression that you could not care less...but if your image gives the impression of a barrier I think it is better.

**Does this only happen in village bands?**

No it is all over, even on classical music groups...even simply at University let alone.

**Ok, now in your relationships with family, boyfriends etc. how does the music you listen to affect these relationships?**

It is good...In the sense that my dad is not a fanatic...but he is not the type who would stop you if you practice...never. My mum is ok with it and my brother, many times thank God there is my brother...I learnt a lot from him...he would be studying something and all the time he is going Tam come and listen to me, Tam this and Tam that... but I enjoy it because I learn or if he is listening to something he makes me listen to it, or I send him something on a link etc...and your mind opens up, your vision broadens. My mum realises this and tells me, you were not like that before. I have become nervous eh as well! It is either because I have loads to do nowadays or I do not know. And sometimes I say, do I really feel like going to a lesson? Sometimes I see it as extra. However if I do not go, would I really manage to go without lessons? I am not capable of going home after University and staying there. My friends go home after University while I always go out for some reason, rehearsal, lesson, quartet...at the same time I keep myself busy....so I think I cannot stop everything... like a quartet rehearsal, I prefer it to going out in the evening... they tell me eg on Friday we have a long day at University till 5pm...then I come straight to Valletta for clarinet choir till 7pm so you can imagine how I arrive home.

They go out all nice and fresh to Paceville in the evening...but I would not feel like...apart from that when would I do University assignments?

**You mentioned how you learn from your brother. How important is it for you to listen to all sorts of music?**

You cannot just listen to one type...I mean...there are people who tell you they like only Paceville music...Only Paceville music! I mean it must have originated from somewhere....but I would not say this to anyone. I would not say this to someone who would try to make fun of me. But at the same time why should you listen to other things. If I did not play an instrument I would listen to other types of music. My friend does not play an instrument but she listens to everything from classical to whoever and the way she talks about music is different from someone who is like a closed box, he is limited to one type of music. I mean, you say, she knows how to listen to music...she can pin point what a nice beat etc.... so she has a better background, a better cultural background...and if you are talking to her you know you can talk about anything. We send links to each other ...and even if I send her something which I liked with only piano, she will listen to it you know?

**How does the music you listen to affect your body... you know sometimes the body moves without us realising it...**

Yes it happens to me...Before I go to bed I would be on the bed and I put on the headphones ...it would be nothing special ...I think it was some classical music and yes your hand starts moving...and I realised after about an hour!!

**Why do you think that happens?**

It might be because you are very down, or because the music you are listening to helps you to vent out your sorrows...I think it is something like that

**Is it similar to people dancing to music?**

Oh yes, they would be letting off steam through their dancing definitely.

**When you clean up your room, do you put some music on and does it affect you?**

If I am feeling OK, in a good mood and I am listening to something fast, yes it makes you finish earlier...or you would be looking forward to finish the chore, to get it over and done with and do something else.

**Do you use music to change your mood?**

If I am cleaning yes, I want to change the mood. My mum always puts on the stereo full on when she is cleaning and I guess I grew up in the same way. Sometimes I get home and find the stereo full on, I call her and she does not even hear me, she would be washing the

floor etc...so, I got it from her and when I tell her to lower the volume she says, oh as if, let me be, I enjoy it. It drives her crazy not having music in the background. So I am used to that environment

**How is the volume in your room?**

If I am in a bad mood, I want to hear no one so I just stuff the headphones in my ears...at night, out of respect I use headphones too but if I am in a good mood, I just put on the stereo and leave it on. You know with headphones you can listen to all the details...sometimes without headphones you cannot hear what is going on in the backing so if I am doing something and I want to forget, I put on my headphones and close the rest of the world outside.... Like I closed the door and I locked it to the world. When I do not use headphones it is because I am probably happy and want to share the music...you know? Because I know there would be someone interested. Even if I am on MSN and there is my friend...if I listen to something which I like, even just 5 minutes, I send them to her. Even the friend whom I went abroad with...she is always sending me music...listen to this, listen to this...it is almost too much... since I came from the music workshop abroad I came all vitalised.

**When you listen to music with headphones by yourself, what do you think of?**

Sometimes I do not know what I am thinking... nothing in particular and everything at the same time.

**Maltese context...we receive music from abroad, how do you think Maltese girls sort of digest this music?**

Well we have this mentality that Saturday night you have to go to Paceville for instance...I think people abroad appreciate music much more than us...they would not think twice to go to a concert ...here no...I felt a big difference when I was abroad... even when we were out or having dinner they only talk about music...only music. Here if you do not find someone like you who has a break down like you, whom you could talk with, there is no one else to talk to...Even if they went out to have a drink, the topic is music, just music...you do not get bored but I mean it is so different, so different.

**Why do you think it is so different?**

I think they are brought up differently. Like I was brought up in a certain environment but not everyone is the same. I think then people look at things through a different lense.

**You spoke about internet etc. you download, send links to each other...how important is this to you?**

I do not know...either you find someone who has the same tastes as you...at the same time you are sharing with others, you know, if I am in a bad mood, I listen to something and tell them this is what I am listening to because I am not in the mood for a lot of noise...so it helps to communicate with others...like something in common.

**So you use music to make new friends over the internet?**

No not really... I listen to music and that is all... I do not like talking to people I do not know...I just go on internet to listen to what I want to and that is all...the important is that I send it to someone whom I know will like it and that is it.

**So would you know what you would like, how do you listen to new stuff?**

Either someone encourages you to listen to it...or you discover it yourself...but best is if someone makes you listen to it because if you are always communicating with the person, for example, I would say I know you will like this...You know because you get used to the tastes of others. Now, for example, the one I went abroad with is more inclined towards classical so when I find something I send it to her and at the same time there would not be that feeling of no, I will keep this to myself...because it is obvious that she can come across it and listen to it...but there are people who do this, like it is a possession.

**Do you feel that music is a possession therefore?**

Yes we refer to my music and your music...I do not know why...even when we have a score, she tells me...here because it has lots of notes...Yes it is like taking it for yourself, like it belongs to you. Even if you are playing and there is a piece of music, you get the feeling of hoping that he would let you play the same music not place you somewhere different but it is because it is really part of you...but you have to be careful.

**Is there anything else that you think relevant to the subject which I might have overlooked?**

No I do not think so... but the thing we mentioned before the mentality in Malta... the mentality of the people in general, not musicians because you find all sorts of musicians...and there are people who have a broader vision and can appreciate everything but not those people who have that closed mentality, they do not listen to other things, if I am laying it this way, that it the right way....they do not even listen to other opinions or other interpretations. Even if you are studying a piece and you look for it, you find

different interpretations, then you try to make it your own...but you cannot say he is playing it bad...but the Maltese mentality is that it is being badly played.

**Why do you think we have this mentality?**

I think the village bands have a lot of this mentality... especially those who just play in bands...they are very different to those who play in other places and always try to improve... if you do not do that, you are going to remain with the same mentality. I do not like it when they label me as one of the village bands, with the mentality of those people because not everyone is the same and there are people within these bands who are trying to change this mentality in the village bands... people change, if there is a new Maestro and his mentality is different, he tries to influence others' mentality...so slowly they are trying to change...at least it is a beginning...even if you just gather the youths and you show them another version...it is already something...the older musicians are difficult to change, there is no hope, but the younger ones are the ones who absorb most so that is where you have to start, you start instilling some enthusiasm.

**Ok. That is all, thanks.**



## **Active Drifter Category Interview: Tania**

### **So what do you like to listen to?**

Anything...I listen to the Charts...top 20 top 40 so whatever is on. Either that or stuff like Michael Buble, swing, a bit of jazz as well so not like just the new stuff, even old stuff. Generally people play music for me and I like it ...I like a lot of stuff apart from heavy metal and stuff like that.

### **So you get to know about the music because people...**

Lately people say have you heard the song by them ...no...ok...they play it for me and then I start downloading songs by them...or I just go by the charts...the British ones...UK top 40 usually.

### **Did your tastes change over time?**

I always watched MTV and the music that was played there and on the radio I downloaded then and I listened to it on You Tube or whatever. It has always been like the top 40 or whatever is in clubs at the time like dance music. Hmmm generally stuff with a rhythm or a melody not repetitive electronic music...you know something you can sing to, something catchy.

### **What about your friends, what do they listen to?**

My friends were a bit different before they met me to be honest! Then I showed them 'my' music like, you know. They started listening to the same kind of music, some of my friends, R&B and stuff.

### **You just said they listen to my music...why my music?**

I always download like happy music. I have a few ballads and stuff but only if they are nice ones, happy ones, not ones where they were broken up etc I hate music like that because it makes you feel worse...so just happy stuff. And I like music from Disney...or films...orchestral music.

### **Music that makes you feel happy...**

The lyrics are a bit part of it. Quite often lyrics are really morbid, you know like metal music, if you understand what they are saying is like really sad...but like orchestral music sometimes it has the power to change your feelings...but that is more like a story line, to make you listen to the story that is why I like it, even if it is sad music. Whereas if I am going to listen to a song and it has really horrible lyrics it is like uffff! I don't know.

**So when you are sad and down, would you listen to music?**

Ehe, I do...happy music to make me feel better....usually I play some from a film to get into their story, if you know what I mean like, for example, Phantom of the Opera to get away from my life and go into someone else's...it is like an escape.

**Does music make you dream?**

No I have never had any dreams.

**So does it make you remember the film?**

Yes as soon as I hear the music I know the film... Or if someone mentions the film then I say Oh yes that music has really nice music, for example, Beauty and the Beast is my favourite film because of the music, the orchestra etc. and every time it comes on I am like ...Oh my God...I'm happy ...but it is really eerie music...

**Ok, so you have memories attached to the music then?**

Yes like a princess and the beast and stuff and the music still makes me cry and the story line is like...oh my god, he comes alive, he lives in the end, Tania...but I still love to cry! If there wasn't any music it would mean nothing....it would be quite a crap story to be honest.

**Ok, before you said my music...**

The music that is on my I Tunes...

**Ok, do you feel like your music gives you an identity?**

It does yes. It does stereotype people. You do stereotype people by the music they listen to. For example, Skaters listen to Ska music...it is quite happy music. People like Goths and Emos listen to sad music and people who go out clubbing listen to the charts and stuff like that...things you can dance to. It is very stereotypical.

**Do you feel like you have to be part of one of these groups?**

No I don't because I hate to be stereotyped but a lot of people are like you know they are plastic they listen to all the charts.

**But you still listen to the charts...**

I listen to a lot of different stuff. I try to get a feel of everything so I...I do not want not to listen to something because I fear it is going to make me a type of stereotype.

**So you want to keep it wide on purpose...**

Yes exactly, if I...and a lot of the time people ask me who my favourite artist is ...I do not have one because ...like I like a song from Our City but I do not like a lot of their music because it is all the same or I like Black Eyed Peas but then they have many songs which I

do not like so I never have a favourite artist....I am not loyal to one artist...so ...I have favourite songs...a lot of favourite songs ...and then they change very often.

**What do you mean?**

I listen the hell out of them and then maybe a year later I find it...oh I remember this song, I put it on and I feel ugh, I have had enough of it.

**Do you think it is because the times have changed then?**

Probably and it makes me feel like what I was feeling at that time. It is very linked...music with my life. Or if I listen to songs...like this song reminds me of Santa Fe when I went on holiday with my friends...this song reminds me of the time we went out...and if it is a bad time I do not like that song...even if it is totally unlinked song...it is just a song...I was there at that time I was not happy I do not like the song.

**Ok so it is like you are giving a personal meaning to the song...**

Ehe.

**Ok what about the way you dress up...do you have a particular way of dressing up that reflects music?**

I know that people like Lady Gaga influence fashion and I normally follow fashion. I do not dress according to a particular artist or anything like that. I think nowadays artists follow fashion...nobody, like, make their own statement any more apart from Lady Gaga...she is the only one I can think of. There is still, like, the punk style, the emo style...they follow them ..I do not follow them much...what is in the shops I buy...so...

**What about the people who surround you...do they like the same music...does it affect your friendship?**

It did with my boyfriend actually because he likes metal and Ska music and he used to dress like quite skatery ...moshery...big black T shirts baggy dark jeans with chains, generally long hair, and DCs ad stuff like that...that is quite moshery they call it. But then we sort of met each other and I started listening to skater kind of music and then he started listening more to the charts and people who are up today and he started to dress differently. He buys clothes from Topman and stuff like that. So he has changed... I have always been the same.

**And what about your friends? Was there any peer pressure to be accepted in groups?**

Yes, yes, quite a few years ago. My friend was like Oh! Oh! Tiesto! and I say who is Tiesto and she goes...what you do not know who Tiesto is? And I say, hmm yes I know who he is when in fact I had no idea. Then at the age of 15, like, it was important to like

what the others liked, to be accepted in the group. Now I do not care ...if I like music that you do not like that is opinion. I do not have to like this song for you to like me.

**How is this music you listen to affecting your intimate and not so intimate family?**

I like going clubbing and that is the type of music I like and my boyfriend does not come with me because he does not like clubbing music so that is like quite a big barrier...we cannot go out together very often. Then he likes going to gigs...live music and stuff but I do not really like that so I do not go out with him there. But most of my close friends listen to the same music so we are quite all right there.

**You said it is a barrier right? Let us take friends..if you had friends who like different types of music would that mean that their character would be different and...?**

Yes, I have a friend who does not listen to the charts...she likes people like Muse...quite guitary and dark lyrics...and she has got bright red hair, she is really outrageous and I am not like that so we have grown apart.

**Because of the image, character?**

Mostly the character. She is like too lively for me. I am laid back and I listen to laid back, happy music....she is different...and she listens to different music than I do.

**So you are saying that the music is reflected in the character?**

Ehe, I think your character reflects...no the music reflects your character if you know what I mean. The person you are...if you are laid back you listen to nice music, if you are outrageous you listen to...it does affect it

**Ok it is not the other way round or sometimes this way and sometimes that way?**

I have always listened to quite nice music, especially the lyrics it gets me down like ...that and quite a lot of 80s music... it makes me feel weird...like uff the 80s...go away! That type of music I really do not like.

**Ok now how do you listen to music in your leisure time?**

If I am travelling like on the bus and I forgot my I pod all hell breaks...I can't ...I would be bored out of my face. I need music and then it makes time go by quicker...it is like...or if you are getting ready for a night out you put music on that you will be listening to so it gets you into the mood. Hmm that is one of my favourite times to play it. As well if I am having a dinner party I play music because I think that without it is a bit dead. I think music gets you talking and stuff like that, it breaks the atmosphere a bit.

**Ok and in your room on your own do you listen to music on the I pod?**

No on computer...I just put it on.

**While working?**

While I am working it has to be off or low because music affects me quite a bit ...I get lost in it...it is distracting...because I really like this song then I'll stop and I start singing...

**Do you listen to music while doing boring things?**

Yes while ironing...I am weird with that...I would be ironing and to speed it up like, I say by the end of the song I have to iron 3 T shirts...so I use it as a timer! When I used to walk I had a walking playlist...stuff like David Guetta...stuff to make me lose more weight...I cannot not walk to the beat of the music so if I get off the bus and walk to my nanna, I am walking to the beat of the music and then it might switch to a different beat and I change my pace.

**So music in a way is shaping your body?**

Like a metronome yes

**Is there any other time when you use music for something?**

Hmm I cannot think...maybe if I have a bath or something I put some music on but I do not want clubbing music then...some easy listening.

**Do you ever listen to music to shut the world out?**

Why yes, on the bus...that is why I do it I think... I am sick of the world and I want my I pod ...it helps to make the world go away like if there is a child screaming...people, just put it in and forget about it.

**Do you do that at home as well? Listen to music when you are angry ...**

Hmmm no I do not think so because when I am in a really bad mood I do not want to put on my favourite songs because then I will ruin them...they will make part of the bad memories, so usually I just sit and cool off.

**Ok you know we listen to British, American, Italian music etc. How do you think that we as Maltese sort of digest this music coming from everywhere?**

My friends who were very Maltese...you know those from Valletta and stuff like that used to listen to Italian music. The ones who were up and coming...Sliema...English music and charts. Then American music is very wide ...I have a cousin in America...when she comes to Malta I listen to her stuff...I have heard nothing of all this...and it is all like R&B and stuff like that and I am like...there is nothing like this in Malta. There is controversial music in England but in America it is much more controversial.

**How is the nightlife in Malta?**

My boyfriend is British...he comes clubbing with me in Malta but in England no. In England it is very...the music is all the same. There is one beat for the whole night then they change the song to match the beat...so it is like 6 hours of techno and it is horrible and the kind of people it attracts...I do not want to go clubbing any more. Here it is very different they play chart music...songs that people know. It is quite stereotypical in Paceville like you have Coconut plays rock, places like Havana plays dance music and Footloose plays charts...so you can change, you can have a bit of everything and so it is a lot better because there is a variety and different people have different clubs...this group of people go to that place and dress like that, the other group of people go to the other place and dress like that. I mean I wear a dress and go to Coconut...I do not feel I have to wear what they are wearing to go to that club. I feel comfortable but I do get people staring like...she's trendy what is she doing in here? But me and friends go in because we like the music...we do not have to dress like that to like that music.

**Can you tell me something about the typical lifestyle of people like you who like that type of music?**

Shopping.....we like shopping. Hmmm but I am very varied with my music so I do not just ...I like shopping, I like cooking and I like just sitting back with my friends in a pub somewhere like quite laid back...it is quite varied and I do go to a few gigs but they are usually soft rock. I try to vary a bit so I am not stuck in one stereotype.

**In society, we have a certain image of rockers, a certain image of rappers...do you think people like you are sort of richer inside?**

Hmm I think so you know I do not want people to feel like if they are rockers and they listen to a song by Michael Buble, their friends are going to make fun of them...because that is stupid. People listen to what they want...if you are a rocker and you listen to classical music, that is your choice completely...you do not have to you know fit into a certain group because you think people won't like you if you don't. Or if your friends dress like that then you have to dress like that as well. I mean I have quite a big group of friends who dress outrageously and I don't dress like them.

**And you think their image is because of the music they listen to?**

I think it is a package. They want to look like the singers maybe because quite often, away from the charts, if you get to like skater music and rocker music they have an image and if they like that music they then dress like that, or if they dress like that, if they look like that

they'd think I look like a rocker so I will listen to this type of music...one can influence the other I think, probably.

**Ok. As you said I do not have to wear like them...so do you have an individual identity....you purposely do not want to be part of a group? And you want to have your own special identity which is not like all the others?**

Yes, that is me I think. I really do not like being stereotyped like if someone goes you look a bit rockerish today and I say, ehe? I just like the top. Or if I wear my leather jacket because I like it people go you look like a biker...no I don't look like a biker...

**So they are always trying to pin you down...**

Yes but people cannot pin me down because I would have skaters shoes, skinny jeans and a leather jacket. Because it looks alright, I wear it and people go ...what is happening...they cannot pin me down.

**And you do it purposely?**

I do it purposely because I think it looks nice. I do not purposely try not to fit in a group but I'd rather not fit in a group. If I happen to look like a skater then it's fine but I do not like being stereotyped, it annoys me.

**Do you have friends like you?**

I have a couple...I have a friend who dresses very pretty and princessy and she listen to heavy music and R&B and you wouldn't think it you know with the stereotypes and stuff.

**So don't you think you are forming a group?**

Hopefully...

**With your own ideology of not forming part of a group?**

That is what it ends up doing...like emos and stuff...we do not want to conform, we do not want to conform to anything...but by not conforming you all look the same so we are all...but hopefully it is a group of happy people who listen to what the hell they like and dress what they like and we are called the ...I don't know...The Miserables...ha ha ha! I don't know and we will end up being stereotyped in a few years...and I will listen to my own beat.

**Ok You said you cannot go out with your boyfriend when you go to gigs...**

I do try.

**But you do not like the music**

It does set a mood.

**Hmmm. Do you fight about it?**

I have been grumpy about it at times...He says it is crap music, I don't like it, you know, so I say just forget it... you are out with your friends. There is just nowhere to go, so at least we're going to go there, listen to crap music but at least we are together somewhere.

**We said before that character reflects music or music reflects character. Do you think that his music reflects his character and your music reflects your character and so you can't...**

Probably...but there is...I mean I am very laid back. I do not make any decisions. I never decide and that annoys him and he is the same in a way but he is different. I am laid back because I don't care about anything and he is laid back because it is his image...so he cannot make decisions. So he is like...decide on something... and I say no you decide on something.

**So you are similar yet different**

Exactly

**The idea of power... what about the idea of power in your group of friends? Do they look up to someone in particular because they are up to date or because they know more about music?**

Yes it is like that...you know because I read magazines so I know what is in fashion what is up and coming, actors, who has just made a movie and who is going to hit it big and it is like...this is happening and this colour is in fashion and it is like oh really, oh ok and you are like ha ha! I know...I know because I read magazines but really it is not intelligent at all...you just read magazines.

**Ok not intelligent but in your circle it means something...**

Yes it does because it is like wow really? I'll listen to him then and I am like I told her that and she listens to that because of me.

**It makes you feel good?**

Yes and like my brother who is 11, or anyone of that age...if you're singing the lyrics of the song, even when I was that age, you say wow they know the lyrics of the songs and you start learning and memorising the lyrics because you think it is cool...my brother is like that as well...

**So there is an element of being cool...**

Yes I think so



**Outside that circle does it have any value, being cool, being up to date... in the wider society does it mean something as well?**

None whatsoever unless you are working in that kind of dept...like the fashion industry or the media...you need to be up to date...but if you just like fashion it does not really mean anything to people other than your friends because they usually don't care about what you care about so...

**Interesting...internet. It is easy to listen to all sorts of music, download. Do you think this has made a difference to the world of music around the world?**

People have more access to different kinds of music. There is ...you can get your hands on very unknown controversial kind of music, and music videos which are basically pornographic. Internet changed people's lives basically. I do not know what this generation would do without internet...people would probably just fizzle out and die! I remember when I was about 12,13 I did not have a computer but my dad did so I had to go to my dad to download songs and if he did not like the song...no...or if he downloaded the wrong song...Damn it. I remember the time of buying CDs .

**Would you like to have, for example, Buble's songs all his songs because you like him so much?**

Probably. If I like an artist I tend to download his songs even if I do not like them. I do not know why. I never listen to them but I like having them.

**Hmmm you like having them...like a sense of possession?**

Ehe...like wow...I have all his songs.

**Like a status...like you can boast about it?**

Yes ...like have you heard that song? Yes...I know that song, of course....

**It gives you a certain standing in your circle?**

Yes like my friend said yesterday...Cheryl Cole's new album is quite good by the way and I am like ...she has a new album?!?! Ok...I have heard it but I do not really like it (when in fact I would not have heard it) ...there are certain hidden rules of keeping up to date.

**Let us think about the way that music over the years has changed in Malta...Eurovision etc...what do you think?**

Eurovision is nothing like what it used to be. There are people who do not take it seriously. It is quite a joke now the Eurovision...it is like people do not really care anymore and in Malta we are still taking it seriously and saying wow we are in the Eurovision. People come up with this really stupid song and they win cause it is funny...it changed a lot. It is

really difficult to come up with your own kind of statement in music. Before it used to be like a new song comes out wow they are different, wow they are different ...they sound like them now, they are just copying them., they are like them, they are redoing Frank Sinatra, they are doing that.

**Could it be that because we are listening to a wider variety of music through the internet so we can compare?**

We have listened to everything and we can compare...If it is new, people do not really like it because it is too unlike music...it is like computer sounds. It is not just in music, everything has been invented...

**Do you on the internet look for friends, try to network with people who like the same music you like?**

I never put the music first...I very often put the person first. The type of music I listen to ...my music is my time and very often the Disney music not a lot of people like...you know some of it is quite embarrassing... like, yey! Lion King!

**Why embarrassing...childish?**

Yes people are like you listen to Disney? Yes it is nice and grown up people play it sorry, with degrees in music.

**Ok so you would not chat for the sake of music?**

No when I used to chat on Cazal.. people used to ask what kind of music do you like? And I am like I hate that question...I like everything...and it stops the conversation then because it was always one of the first questions to try to get to know the character of the person and I have never stereotyped music...you know my friend listens to this, my dad listens to that and he plays that and then...my dad had part of it because he played jazz a lot and stuff like that and I like that kind of music so I listen to that, and I listen to others, then my cousins come over and they listen to R&B and I like it so I listen to it, then I like Disney, I watch this film and I like him and I find out who the composer is and I find that musician who wrote that music like Memoirs of Geisha and then I realise he wrote Harry Potter as well...so I am widening...

**Do you feel that some people look at you as if you do not have a character in music therefore? You do not fit into...**

Yes...Once my boyfriend laughed at me eg the band Trivium they scream a lot...they are heavy metal and they scream and it gets on my nerves and I am like Shut up shut up...say something do not scream...just sing it nicely. And there was a riff of a guitar which was

quite good and he said ah you like it? It is Trivium..and I said yes it is ok until they start screaming!

**Ok hmm do you think there is anything else relevant to the subject that I might have overlooked?**

Hmmm do not let people push you into liking music just to fit in...listen to your own music, if it is your music, try to introduce people to it and if they do not like it, finished.

**Did you always think in this way?**

No...

**How long ago did you start being assertive like this? You are 21 no?**

Yes... when I tried to make new friends...I was sick of being stereotyped...after secondary school, you know you start finding yourself then...so it is like I do not like Tiesto...shove it, I am going to delete all his music I do not care...I do not like it and I am not going to listen to it...you know, you snap one day...you grow out of it and then your influences change, you meet different people who like different music, you learn you get street wise and you get life experience and you learn that peer pressure is a load of crap.

**Ok thanks.**

**Passive Drifter Category Interview: Jessica****Would you like to tell me about the music you listen to?**

Mostly I listen to the radio a lot when I am working especially...I listen to what is out at the moment, mostly Indie, I little bit of rock.

**You listen to it at work?**

Yes I work as an accounts clerk and it is the only thing I have access to...XFM and in the car...I spend most of my time at work so...

**Why do you have this music on?**

I like listening to the music, it keeps me some company, because it could be boring at work, so it gives you company and you keep a bit up dated. My friends are all up to date with what is out and all that so I keep myself a bit updated with what is going on. I do not listen to TV, I do not watch MTV so the radio is what keeps me updated.

**Why is that important...**

They listen to more music than I do...they are more obsessed than I am... they listen to different music than I do. But it does keep me company, I enjoy it so...it helps time pass.

**You said they are more obsessed...can you explain that to me?**

Hmmm because they compare a lot with each other...did you listen to that, what do you think about that? We have been to festivals abroad. I went to my first one last summer, so when I am going to a festival I would want to know what I will be listening to so, so I need to know what is out at the moment, what is liked by most people of my age. I do not listen to disco music, I rarely do unless I am at a party but it is very rare.

**What about in the car? Radio or CD?**

I have CDs but sometimes I get annoyed of the routine so I just switch to radio.

**So it is what the radio decides...**

Yes and if I do not like it, I just change the station or put on a CD, so...

**Do you have playlists?**

I do have a CD or 2 but I do not always listen to the same playlist...like when I listen ot music on my lap top I do not listen to fixed playlists no...what I just feel like listening to at that time.

**And at home do you listen to music?**

A bit very rarely in the evening before I go to sleep I put on my lap top and I listen to one or 2 songs and that is it. I do not spend a lot of time at home so I do not really listen to music at home.

**So you said pop music, a bit of rock and Indie...what about your friends?**

They are not into Indie but more into...I do not know. Many times they just change from one style to another... they are going through a phase of techno at the moment...I do not like it... but they listen to that. Hmm Indie, a bit of rock, it kind of a bit the same unless it goes into the heavy stuff...I do not listen to heavy stuff

**Ok and when you go out with them, and they choose places where they play techno, do you still go?**

It depends on the techno, if it is heavy techno no, if it is not that type that hurts your head and then yes I can put up with it, it is fine...I am not that particular, I am not fussy at all.

**How important is music in your life?**

Hmmm, I listen to music which puts me in a good mood not music which puts me in a bad mood because it affects me a lot. The...particular music it affects me so many times I listen to cheerful sort of music, for example, Evanescence I can't stand them, I do not listen to, they are depressing. Other than that, what it means to me I do not know really but mostly I enjoy listening to things which keep you cheery not anything dull.

**Whenever you do housework, etc do you have music going on?**

Yes, very loud, very loud...

**Why?**

Because when you are doing housework and things like that your mind is like free to think anything, so you are dancing and singing to the music...and it passes a bit quicker too.

**Do you do gym or exercise?**

No I do not.

**So let us go back to the listening, how do you listen to the music?**

At work it is on the stereo, car as well...in my room it is just the lap top unless it is annoying someone I do not put on headphones. I usually put on the headphones only not the bother people around me like at work. At home I am in my room and unless it is bothering someone, I listen on my laptop. I would not listen to music that is annoying someone near me...I would not listen to it. When I used to catch the bus, obviously I used headphones not to annoy people.

**Do you ever go to your room and put on music and just stare and think, and not speak to anyone?**

Yes but rarely...because I rarely have time for it...I get home late. Many times I get home after 8:30 so I usually have dinner watch a series or something and go to sleep. I do like having my own time before I go to sleep...that half hour or an hour by myself but I do not listen to music that much at that time...I prefer peace and quiet.

**What does Indie music do to you...why Indie?**

There are different kinds of Indie...soft Indie which you can listen to when you are in a passive mood, Indies which you can listen to when you go to a party so it is more moving so it really depends on where we would be. At work I do not mind listening to any type, when I am by myself listening to a quick song I do not mind. It depends a lot on the mood but...when we are at a party we listen to the more moving kind of melody because we are out with friends...it keeps you going.

**When you said I like keeping up to date...you know in groups there are, like, people looking up to you for something and looking up to someone else for something else...how is it in your group?**

There is one who is always super up to date and would know exactly what is going on but she does not listen to Indie only she listens to techno a lot, she is going through the techno phase so I just do not follow then because it does not interest me that much. I could listen to it but I would not download it myself. Hmm... but yes there is someone who is always ... you listened to this one? But when you listen to the radio many times, a new song it gets it out straight away and so you will have listened to it yourself or you pass on an e mail with the link and you listen to it.

**How often does this happen, passing links to each other?**

Very often...on a daily basis...sometimes I get introduced to new songs that way but I think since I have started listening to the radio...I have only started listening to the radio recently because I used to listen to You Tube but now they blocked it at work. So on the radio since they always play the recent songs, I would be quite up to date. But when it is something by a band which is not well known, I get to know about it through links sent by friends.

**Do you use internet to make new friends, music friends?**

No, no. I use it to chat with friends I know, but I do not spend much time on chats...many times I have conversations face to face with my close friends.

**Now about your image...does it reflect any type of music?**

No, not that I know of...I have no idea... I pick what I like, what is on the shelf ...I do not think it affects music no...are you referring to...

**Like rockers wearing black etc.**

Actually I do not think my style matches any style of music no.

**Do you feel that through what you wear you are stating something however to the society?**

I do not really think so. It does not really affect me. I do not label people by what they wear. There is a difference between wearing bad clothes, thorn clothes. I think I wear just normal. I do not like labelling people according to what they wear unless it is really out and obvious like the rockers, then yes. Otherwise I do not think so.

**Ok with these latest music...charts etc, there is not like a dress code is there?**

I think you can find a dress code but it is so broad, I don't know, I think there are so many different styles, floral, polka dots. I do not really follow what is going on now. I just have my style and I stick to that.

**When you go out in the evening do you choose a place because of the music?**

If it is a party yes, if there is a specific party like an Indie party, yes. We go just for the party. We rarely go to Paceville and go from one club to another. Most places we go to are parties

**Those are one off events right?**

Yes there is always like one a month. There are much more but we go to one or 2 a months, it depends...sometime we go more often it depends. At the end of the year we go more often, but then it depends on how much they cost, how much money you can spend bla bla bla...

**What do you wear for these things?**

I go quite normal I guess, that is, casual, smart sometimes. Sometimes you go in a casual dress and heels...quite smart because you go out in the weekend. It is a bit of an excuse to dress up sometimes. I mean during the week you dress normal so...

**Is there a difference between girls and boys in the way you dress up for a party?**

Yes very different. Boys would wear a pair of jeans and running shoes, or comfortable shoes and a T shirt that they come across...that is how I see it at least. Girls take forever thinking of what they are going to wear, if it actually matches, if it is adequate for the event...

**Why do you think?**

I don't know...probably because they pay attention more than guys...I have no idea. I think boys could not be bothered whether it is good or not...at least boys as I know...it is always the same...a T shirt and jeans...maybe they change their shoes because it is a weekend...

**You know we get Maltese music, British, Italian etc. How do you think we absorb music...some people think that people from the south like Italian music and those from the north like British...do you have any thoughts about it?**

Hmm I do not know really I do not think it depends on where you come from because it depends on what you like listening to I mean if I like listening to Italian music it will not stop me just because I am from here and not from the south. That is how I am at least. I do not think you should...if I want to listen to Maltese music because I like Maltese music, then I do. Now if people think that Maltese music is not that good or not...it is Maltese music, it is shit music, if that is what they think I am not going to not listen to it because that is what they think. If I like it I listen to it.

**What about village bands, the festa bands?**

There are a couple I like, like Airport Impressions...we have gone to gigs of theirs. I do not listen to them on a daily basis unless I come across it. I wouldn't ...I have come across myself downloading a song by a Maltese band, a well-known band, yes, I do listen to it, but I would not look for it unless I come across it.

**What about the village festas, the feast and the band with the marches, in procession?**

If I happen to be there, I listen to it but I would not go there for them especially the festas. I can put up with them but I would not go purposely...I do not like the crowd, all over each other...I'd rather listen to them at a gig.

**Do you think a certain class of people like that type of music?**

I think that they are there mostly for the feast not for the band. Unless you are a bunch of friends like I have my own friends who are in bands and I go to watch them, they are not known in Malta as in they are not that known...they are known by people my age because



they are all over the place ...I would watch them but I would not go to a feast to watch them...I would go to a gig yes but not a feast...I am not that crazy over them

**Have you gone through phases when you like other types of music?**

Yes a lot when I was younger ...I remember going through phases of Britney Spears and phases of Spice Girls...that was ages ago but since then...before music used to mean more to me...Then I spent a lot of a time when I could not be bothered and I listened to whatever. Now that I have a bit more time on my hands to actually listen to music because I am bored at work...that is the only place I listen to music really...that is when I started to listen to more music.. But I went through phases when I listened to soft slow music, hard music, pop...I used to listen to pop music a lot, there was a phase I used to listen to Italian music...I do not understand Italian but I used to like the music but not anymore. It is not exactly a phase unless this is a phase of listening to the radio...it could be a phase...

**Hmmm you said before the music was more important to you...in what way?**

I used to have more time, I used to download, I had my own playlists, I used to have an evening playlist for eg...I spent time listening to the radio before I went to sleep. I used to listen to more music and download more music...now I just don't

**How was it with your friends then...did it translate to being part of a group?**

It was different. I was with different friends, different school. I was at Junior College so everyone used to do practically the same thing. You are at home after 2 so you get a lot of time before you go to bed, more time to watch TV, more time to listen to music, more time for everything practically. But now it is very different, I am rarely home...I do not look for music that I want to listen to but I listen to anything that comes across me

**How has this baggage of music, your going in and out of phases...do you think it has affected your character?**

Not my character as such, I do not think so... my moods yes, but not my character.

**Let us imagine you have a boyfriend who is into death metal...an extreme...do you think you can be compatible?**

Just death metal? I do not think so. I do not know. I guess it does affect your character a bit if you listen to death metal, or Britney Spears. I do not think so no. My boyfriend sometimes listens to Merlin Manson...I just cannot stand it but it is not like it is all the time...it is just a 2 day phase like sometimes you listen to some old music the Beatles for a couple of days and that is it. I cannot stand death metal but I do not think it affects the character that much.

**So you would not be compatible with the person because he would be listening to that music all the time not because his ideology and way of thinking is different?**

No it is probably because...his character reflects on the music ...his character does not depend on the music he is listening to. But I guess it does say something about your character...I like heavy stuff, I love soft stuff...I think it does show, explain some part of your character...I do not know what it does but I think it does explain some part of you. Some people are heavy, the savage type and listen to heavy music, others are softer, they just go with the flow...I guess...I can be wrong. I know someone who was crazy over metal but we are just friends, we never discussed music...he is like a companion like.

**Do you think that your identity now, who are you...my music...it is like part of you...part of what you are. Do you feel that way?**

I do not know I really cannot say because I listen to different kinds of music, sometimes one and sometimes the other. I do not think there are people who can tell what the character is like through the music they listen to... I never label people according to the music they listen to.

**So it is an important part of life but not that important**

I do not think it can actually give you an identity. It is what you like ...like anything else you can like...like if you like cooking it does not mean you are a chef.

**What do you understand by identity?**

It is more than music...I know it is something you like but there are a lot of things which build up your identity...music could be a part of it...it actually is a part of it, cooking could be a part of it. I do not think they can label you as that specific person from the music you listen to. Then again I listen to music with people I actually know, so they probably before even going to music they already know exactly... they would have figured out the person's identity somewhere or another before actually listening to music. If I had to picture someone's identity I would not see what music they listen to before I figure someone's identity.

**Do you look for friends you do not know on internet who like Indie like you?**

No... I go to parties and I assume that there are people I do not know who like the same music so I do not mind meeting someone over there, making friends. I am not the kind of person who looks for people on line no.

**Let us imagine that... in your group there are boys and girls, right? There is, like, a difference in the way girls and boys absorb to music. Do you see any difference?**

I do not think so no, I think mostly through You Tube, over the radio...they do download more music than I do and they do have more CDs than I do that is for sure. But I think at the end of the day...Or they know a specific band is getting out a new album so they download the whole album and I do not do that...unless they pass on the CD. I do not download the whole thing just to listen to it.

**Have you gone through the phases where you collect posters of a specific singer?**

No...I had friends...girls who did that mostly of boy bands....it was when I was young. People my age, I do not think do it, as far as I know but when we were younger yes they filled everywhere with posters. My friend was crazy with KISS before and she had her room full of posters of KISS.

**What is behind that?**

I do not know...either they like one of the band...maybe they like the music I guess. They become their idols... they look up to them, not exactly imitate them but they look up to them.

**Do you grow out of it, what happens?**

I do not know I have never been through it...the friends I know, they just grew out of it. It just is an obsession, a crush and then it just blows over. It happens to music as well. Sometimes you like a song, you listen to it so many times then after 2 weeks you just ...say oh, what the hell did I like in it...or it just is nothing special anymore.

**How important is the media in the music you listen to?**

I think it is mostly important because it is how I listen to it. In this case the radio is important because it is the only way that I listen to new music and so on. But I do not really think they have a say...

**What about the songs they promote?**

I just think that they just play the recent ones. Even if it is a song which they know should not be on air, they just bleep it and it is on air just because they know people like it... to keep up with other people because that is what other people are doing. It is what is out at the moment...the craze of the moment.

**Do you think there is anything relevant to the topic which I might have overlooked?**

I do not really think so...I don't know. No.

**Ok then, thanks a lot.**

## Glossary of Terms

**Blues:** Music of black southern African -American folk origin, usually in slow tempo and using the twelve-bar sequence.

**Classical:** What is also known as serious or conventional music which conforms to established forms and principles.

**Death metal:** An extreme subgenre of heavy metal. Characterised by use of dark, violent and gory imagery, heavily distorted guitars, tremolo picking and deep growling from the vocals, blast beat drumming and complex song structures.

**Doom metal:** (Also known as drone doom or drone metal). An extreme form of heavy metal using slower tempos, low-tuned guitars and characterised by a gloomy atmosphere and the use of drones which are sustained notes or chords repeated throughout the song.

**Folk music:** Music originating among the common people of a nation or region usually characterised by simple tunes and that is usually passed on through the oral tradition, often with considerable variation.

**Garage band:** Typically an amateur rock band rehearsing in a garage and having a local audience. The term garage rock originates from such bands and was synonymous with punk rock before it developed into a raw form of rock and roll first popular in the USA and Canada in the 1960s.

**Ghana:** Traditional Maltese music characterised by guitars and vocals with lyrics being rhymed spontaneously over established harmonies in established form. This tradition was passed on orally over generations.

**Gothic rock:** (Also known as goth rock or goth). A musical subgenre of post-punk and alternative rock that originated in the late 1970s. Characterised by a combination of dark music usually heavily distributed on the keyboards with introspective dark lyrics.

**Heavy metal:** (Also known as metal). Originated in the late 1960s with bands such as Deep Purple and Black Sabbath, this music is characterised by flashy guitar playing, high-pitched male vocals and lyrics reflecting the dark side of the human experience.

**Hip Hop:** Closely associated with rap music and with the style and fashion of African-America inner-city residents. A culture of self-expression that consisted of graffiti art, DJing, MCing and breaking.

**House:** A style of electronic dance music that uses the 4/4 beat, originating in Chicago, USA in the early 1980s, developed by dance club DJs. House music includes several subgenres such as funky house, electro house, disco house and groovy house.

**Indie:** Indie, in short for indie rock is a genre of alternative rock originating in the UK and the USA in the 1980s. It is very diverse with sub-genres that include indie pop, jangle pop and so on.

**Jazz:** American music originating in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, from African rhythms and is characterised by improvisation on a melody and harmony.

**Pop:** Music that generally appeals to teenagers and is commercially produced for the mass market. It is a version of rock'n'roll with more rhythm and harmony and an emphasis on romantic love.

**Rap:** Urban African-American music that is characterised by spoken lyrics, often reflecting current social or political issues, over a background of sampled sounds.

**Rock:** Originated in the early 1950s and developed into hundreds of sub-genres such as soft rock, heavy metal and so on. It incorporates a combination of African-American rhythms, blues, folk and country music.

**R&B:** In short for rhythm and blues, originating in the 1940s, it is characterised as upbeat funky music originally performed by African-Americans.

**Techno:** Various styles of dance music characterised by electronic sounds and high-energy, fast, heavy and rhythmic beat.

**Traditional:** Music which has been performed by custom over a long period of time, thus it incorporating folk songs and country dance.