INTRODUCTION

The aim of the thesis is; to explore the youth generated cultural practice in Western Sydney of graffiti, skateboarding, street machining, and street dancing, with their concomitant style and language, and demonstrate through an analysis of their creative process that these practices rival traditional notions of culture and the arts. I would also clarify that the graffiti I am looking at is not washroom graffiti or messages on walls but the more distinctive pictorial images, done with spray cans and brushes, that appear in open public spaces.

I focus on the types of cultural practice that are, in the main, generated by the young people themselves, (hereafter called 'youth generated cultures') who fall within the age group of 14-20 yrs. I do not deal with adult centred or adult generated pursuits such as 'writing, music or poetry, reading novels, or making solitary visits to the art gallery, the museum, the theatre or the cinema' (Australia Council, 1991, Part 4, p 12). Although I acknowledge that young people engage in a range of other, more individual and private creative/cultural activities, this is not the inspiration for this research.

In broad terms this thesis examines three main points:

a) Whether youth generated cultures are, by intention, sub-cultural
b) Whether youth generated cultural practices are properly considered as creative and artistic
c) What is the function of the cultural practice of youth generated cultures

The thesis tests the hypotheses that youth generated cultures engage in criticism using aesthetic criteria, and have also, in a united and structured manner, provided for themselves a framework of economic and pedagogical support that has afforded them a place within the cultural mainstream without the recognition or approval of mainstream cultural establishments. The thesis will show that these particular youth generated cultures are not rebellious or destructive subcultures but are primarily creative in nature and have been established in order to produce and display their cultural practice.
It is important to recognise the value of these young peoples cultural practice to the arts. Through my professional experience and continued research I am aware that youth develop cultural practice and produce objects as an expressive means of identity and for recognition by the mainstream. I have also observed that they employ aesthetic discourse in their creative process. The findings of this thesis confirm my hypothesis that youth generated cultures actively engage in criticism via the use of aesthetic processes. The analysis of their cultural practice suggests that within youth generated cultures in Western Sydney there exists clear aesthetic criteria at play that indicates a traditional creative process.

One of the major objectives of youth generated cultures, however, is ‘winning space’ within a cultural milieu and this cannot be achieved solely by creating aesthetic objects and disassociating them from the context in which they were created. Within the broader cultural environment, the space they claim as theirs is a postmodern context of consumerist and post-capitalist realities and is characterised by mass media; new post industrial technologies; mass marketing and new fast systems of transport and communications. Postmodernism heralds the dissolution of the distinction between high and low culture and as Jameson (1984) asserts, it has become ‘a cultural dominant’.

In the discourse regarding postmodernism and the high/low art debate, elitists have a tendency to define youth cultures as subcultures which are, by virtue of being organised into a subcultural group, in opposition to mainstream culture and have the potential for anomie and anarchy. Few commentators who support the cultural hegemony actually draw attention to the creative pursuits of youth cultures and when they do, it is often to gather creativity into the argument for rebellion.

Whether these commentators do so intentionally or not, in defining youth cultures as subcultural they raise the spectre of delinquent sub-groups such as the skinheads and punks. Therefore, to dispel this paradigm, oppositional theories regarding youth culture are critiqued within the thesis as a means of citing youth generated cultures outside the persistent labelling and stereotyping of subcultures. Rather, I intend to show that these particular forms of youth generated cultures do not suffer from any ‘James Dean or Leader of the Pack paradigm’ (Australia Council, 1991, p 12), and have
moved beyond the conventional framework of delinquency or opposition, in which some commentators have traditionally placed them.

As the areas chosen for investigation - skateboarding, street dancing, graffiti and street machining - are male dominated, this project leans towards masculine cultural forms. The explication of these forms lies within the cultural practice of boys. Street dancing with, its concomitant move into disco dancing, is the exception; girls are as involved as boys on the disco floor, but significantly, not in the development of the dance routines displayed on the streets. Within the scope of this thesis, it is impossible to look at all factors within the construction of youth cultures such as gender differences, ethnicity, family background and individual interests.

Therefore the thesis focuses on the dynamic structure of youth generated cultures, consisting of active and direct experiences, which are collective in nature and are distinctive because of class determinants and youth agency. Youth agency is essential to the character of these youth generated cultures and it is this agency that is under challenge from the cultural hegemony. The young people involved in youth generated cultures demand that any account of their cultural practice must also include youth agency, as the young people see agency as fundamental to their cultural status.

Youth generated cultures in Western Sydney are extremely public and accessible, and perhaps the most interesting factor is that these youth generated cultures are in a significant developmental stage of cultural and social metamorphosis which in itself makes them notable among youth cultures per se. They have developed a dynamic structure of aesthetic language, style and pedagogy which enables them to by-pass the need for recognition by mainstream cultural institutions and find cultural acceptance within the market place. It is this significant detour and the means by which they achieve acceptance that is the process focused on in this thesis.

I first became interested in youth culture while working as a Community Artist in the inner city region of Sydney in the 1980s and as an Artist in Schools, an initiative of the Disadvantaged Schools Program, through the NSW Dept. of Education. Through training and experience I found that the most successful visual art activities with young people were those which incorporated a substantial component of art learning and were, on the whole, youth centred; that is, they were constructed around the interests and
everyday experiences of young people and had a firm connection with popular culture and the everyday lives of young people.

The term 'art' became somewhat misleading and restrictive when applied to the cultural practices of the young people I was dealing with. The term 'art' has become over-associated with its various institutional manifestations and fixed forms which are intended to protect notions of artistic practice but in many instances destroy or negate it through rigid interpretations of what rightly constitutes art. One example of this, Klee and Picasso's indulgent interpretations aside, is the relegation of child art to a mere precursor of the 'real thing' which develops in later life. The formal use of the term 'Art' tends to deny other creative practice an artistic or cultural function.

Although the ambitions of the avant garde theories and artworks of the Futurists, the Surrealists and the Dada movement were considered to be the subversion of elite or high art and a general re-examination of what art might be (Goldberg 1978), in retrospect it is now generally acknowledged that the Avant Garde were always operating within a high art milieu and only constituted a link with popular culture insomuch as popular culture was viewed by the Avant Garde as a source for ideas, much like 'primitive art' was the source for primitivism. Nevertheless, their discourse about the nature of art, significantly represented by the work of Marcel Duchamp, opened up a substantial debate with regard to art theory, high versus low art, cultural practices and objects of the everyday, and their respective relationship to fine art. (Featherstone 1991)

In 1990, as part of a research team contracted to the Australia Council's 'Youth & the Arts' project, we were specifically directed to investigate 'non-traditional' art activities of contemporary youth in Western and South Western Sydney. The discussion paper and case studies from that research, entitled Marking The Landscape (Mooney et al, 1990) became part of a collection of research works on Youth Arts, published by the Australia Council under the title Ideas Facts and Futures (1991)

Ideas, Facts and Futures was prompted by the Calouste Gulbenkian Enquiry into Arts and Cultural Provisions for Young People conducted in Britain in 1987-88. Guided by the British initiative, the Australia Council has gathered data on artistic and cultural activities of youth to provide the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts and local Councils with information for future cultural
development and planning in the area of youth arts (see Chesterman and Schwager 1990; Ideas Facts And Futures, 1991). These enquiries take a cautious and bureaucratically functional approach to youth and the arts and revolve around the accessing of mainstream culture by youth, and the promotion of mainstream culture for youth.

Marking the Landscape focused on the 'non-traditional' objects and practices the young people in Western Sydney created, and questioned whether:

- they could be called 'art works'
- regionality is significant to the types of creative products produced
- youth cultural practice in Western Sydney depended on the dichotomy of rebellion and acceptance.

The limitations of the project did not allow for sufficient investigation of the influences of schooling and class issues, nor was aesthetic criticism and the nature of how they structure and transfer their cultural capital examined and discussed adequately.

An significant factor within my analysis of youth generated cultures in Western Sydney is the issue of class determinants. Postmodern theory as a concept of analysis, has seen class, to some extent disappear. The argument is that the disappearance of class as a category within youth cultural analysis, was brought about by a recognition of post-war circumstances of affluence and consumer power, as well as meritocratic status through education and employment. These notions of social mobility were once seen as a more appropriate means of cultural analysis of post-war society. Nevertheless, despite some real changes in attitudes and living standards ‘what comes through most strongly is the stubborn refusal of class - that tired, ‘worn-out’ category - to disappear as a major dimension and dynamic of the social structure’. (Hall et al 1976 p25)

The research for this thesis was undertaken in the Western Sydney region, which is the largest expanding population in Australia, and is generally labelled a socio-economically disadvantaged region, thereby constituting a ‘class’ of people. The study of youth generated cultures in Western Sydney offers scholars of culture, the arts, national and state government and the regional community a vital source of knowledge regarding:
• the ways in which young people develop cultural identities, forms and expressions
• how these young people experience class distinctions
• how class distinctions inform cultural practice
• how these young people adapt to cultural disadvantage.

The illustrative examples throughout the thesis are taken directly from the case studies and research conducted by the writer in the Western Sydney region and from previous research experience in *Marking the Landscape*.

The role of researcher as interrogator and analyst was devolved and adapted to a more integrated position by the young people involved. In a reversal of the usual structure, they ascribed to me the status of ‘student’ and responded with generosity and openness which seemed to me characteristic of what I term, their ‘pedagogical structure’. Pedagogy is the means by which they develop and disseminate the creative component of their cultural practice. These youth generated cultures displayed energy and verve, creativity and innovation, and I sensed the identity and drive of young people involved in the pursuit of their own cultural practice.

Their sense of contribution to a broader cultural tradition is, admirably, not diminished by the dubious reception the young people receive from their families, school, cultural institutions and bureaucratic authorities. Interestingly, their most supportive venue is the market place, the capitalist system and consumerism. We will see that this support is a dichotomy of patronage and commodification. It’s the type of support that encourages their particular form of creativity on the one hand and then sells it back to them as a ‘cultural commodity’ on the other, thereby ratifying the objects of youth generated culture as authentic components of a postmodern culture.

The new Coke advertisement where the young people street dance on roller blades in an environment covered with graffiti is an excellent example of this authenticity via commodification.

In Raymond William’s book *Culture and Society* (1958), the definition of culture as ‘a collection of signifying systems which involve all forms of social activity, combined with specialised notions of culture which are artistic and intellectual’ is the definition of culture applied within my study to youth generated cultures. The research also draws upon contemporary youth
generated cultures. The research also draws upon contemporary youth cultural theories of Stuart Hall et al (1976), Paul Willis (1990), Dick Hebdige (1979, 1988) and Ian Chambers (1986, 1990), where culture is defined as a system of ascribing meanings and values to social activities and their ensuing cultural objects.


Researching and analysing youth generated culture in western Sydney will contribute to the vital knowledge needed to inform the current debate between youth cultural practice and traditional culture by providing a fresh groundwork from which we can lift the current discourse; moving from an understanding of ‘what’ it is that youth generated cultures do to an understanding of ‘how’ they do it; how they construct their cultural formation. This understanding will allow commentators of youth cultures to move into more productive dialogue regarding youth, culture and the arts.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review falls into two sections; an examination of the issues relating to subcultures; and the exploration and ramifications of the cultural/social environment, with reference to aesthetics and postmodern criticism.

The first section concerns primarily sociological concepts of culture; the second deals with issues related to the nature of cultural practice.

With regard to youth generated cultures, I claim that in their leisure time the young people form or become part of groups and engage in creative cultural pursuits within which they find or construct a separate social reality. I label these groups ‘youth generated cultures’, but there is no intention to imply anything in the use of the word ‘cultures’ other than being distinguished from each other and from the dominant culture, by their creative activities.
YOUTH CULTURE AND SUBCULTURES

Throughout this study the reference to ‘culture’ is twofold. One is the William's definition of everyday meaning of signifying practice combined with specialised notions of culture, which I align with youth generated culture; and the other is the high art definition which I refer to as dominant or traditional culture.

In sociological terms, ‘Culture’ can be seen, simplistically, as ‘all learned behaviour which has been socially acquired’ (Firth 1951 p27).

This definition is expanded by sociologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action.

(1952 p2)

In sociological terms it is important to remember that culture is not a neutral concept, it is historical, specific, ideological and most importantly it is dynamic. We are born into social classes which posses distinctive lifestyles, defined more precisely by region and neighbourhood. We are influenced by the perceptions, values, behaviour and institutions which affect the social structures of specific groupings.

The dominant values or ideologies are constantly being modified and are never homogeneous and within the dominant value system with its stratified social structure there are a wide variety of subcultures. The major forms of these are class cultures, and subcultures can be seen as sub-sets of these class cultures.
To discuss cultural concepts, art concepts and concepts of the everyday, we need to be clear on the differentiation between the sociological definition of 'culture' as 'all learned behaviour which has been socially acquired' (Firth 1951 in Brake 1980 p5), and the meaning of 'culture' in terms of cultural practice.

There are two meanings applicable to the definition of 'culture' as cultural practice, and these should be clarified from the outset:

(One is)...the anthropological or everyday meaning in the sense that all societies involve signifying practices, and (the other is) culture in the sense of high culture, the product of specialists of symbolic production whose gain in power potential since the eighteenth century has given rise to the sense of an autonomous cultural sphere with pretensions to producing universal cultural guidelines for social practice.  
(Featherstone 1991 p 55)

Ultimately, to focus the definition in terms of this thesis, Raymond William's (1958), definition of culture as 'a collection of signifying systems which involve all forms of social activity, combined with specialised notions of culture which are artistic and intellectual' is the most valuable definition for the description of the cultural practice of youth generated cultures.

In terms of cultural practice, Mike Brake tells us:

Subcultures, by their very existence, suggest that there are alternative forms of cultural expression which reflect a cultural plurality in a culture which seems on superficial examination to dominate the members of a society.  
(p8 1980)

Subcultures share elements of the larger class culture (sometimes called the parent culture) but remain distinct from it to a large degree by their fashion, language and performance. When sub-cultures develop within another culture, the culture they move out from initially is referred to as the 'parent culture'.  

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This relationship is not to be confused with the relationship a child has to their parents, but that the resultant sub-culture will share some things in common with the culture from which it derives. Cohen suggests that subcultures like the Mods, Skinheads etc. represent, in their different ways, 'an attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in the parent culture, and to combine these with elements selected from other class fractions...' (in Hall et al 1976 p 32)

The culture of a group or class is the distinctive way of life of that group or class, the meanings, values and concepts embodied in their social relations and beliefs and in their customs and ideals, in the use of commodities and materials. Young people born into a particular set of institutions and relations is by the same token born into a particular set of meanings, which align them with 'a culture' and within social encounters:

...participants are able to detect, monitor and react to the symbolic power manifest in the unconscious bodily signs and gestures: the dress, style, tone of voice, facial expression, demeanour, stance gait ... which betray the social origins of the bearer.

(Featherstone 1991 p76)

Membership of a subculture involves membership of a class culture and the subculture may be in support of or in opposition to the larger class culture. If the subculture is in opposition to the parent culture they are defined as 'deviant', such as the neo-Nazis in Germany. Subcultures may merge with the class culture or form a miniature world of their own. (Brake 1980 ) Youth generated cultures construct a separate social reality, however my research findings suggest that this construct is, in the main, no different from the economic and creative constructs of dominant groups.

Subcultures exist where there is a consensus of values, behaviour and response to a given situation which differ significantly from the prevailing set of norms, i.e. the dominant culture. The term subculture however, has within it a sense of stereotypical vagueness with regard to the cultural and structural elements of the concept.
Brake (1980) determines that subcultures develop in an attempt to resolve collectively experienced problems within the social structure and that they generate a form of collective identity from which an individual identity can be achieved outside an ascribed class, education and occupation.

Brake (1980) has developed four definitions of collective response strategies:

1. Delinquent subcultures - the most socially threatening, developed particularly amongst the working class youth as a response to collectively experienced problems. Examples would be street gangs, colour gangs, football hooligans, punks and skinheads.

2. Cultural rebellion - where culture is used against the prevailing hegemony either through avant garde art forms such as Duchamp, or bohemian and expressive subcultures such as the Mods, the Gothics, the Glam Rock groups.

3. Reformist movements - Pressure groups formed to extend existing values and protect specific subcultural groups. Tolerance within the existing hegemony is appealed to, with the intention of highlighting the similarities between both groups. Some commentators within welfare and education are representative of this category.

4. Political Militancy - Radical solutions are suggested which not only claim equality but political power and self determination. Within this group a high degree of consciousness leading to an analysis of the hegemonic bloc is required.

It would seem at first glance that Brake's description of Cultural Rebellion could be a useful in analysing youth generated culture, however to analyse
specific subcultures we need to understand:

- their structure and relationship to their parent culture
- age, race gender
- generation,
- class
- particular focal concerns.

It is the particular inherited cultural knowledge, based on regional idiosyncrasies, that young people incorporate into their creative practice. It is this regionally idiosyncratic way of ‘knowing’ about their world and the things in it, that makes the contribution of youth generated cultures in Western Sydney unique and valuable to a broader cultural understanding.

As the influences of the young people’s regionality inform their cultural practice, their cultural practice develops a specific regional style or mode of presentation. This style is perceived by other viewers or participants in youth generated culture as a specific Western Sydney style, to be critiqued and adopted along with all the other means of informing their cultural practice.

Within Western Sydney, cultural pursuits are on the whole, oriented more towards popular than high culture. The people enjoy television and videos, car races and football, barbeques and backyards. They understand and talk about popular culture through their association with characters and images they see on ‘telly’ and on videos; they understand and talk about the importance of group identity through their spectator roles in car racing and ‘footy’; and they learn to disseminate through instruction and tuition, their knowledge of the world and their place in it, at the backyard ‘barbie’.

Young people stroll the streets in Western Sydney and know these streets in a way that only a child can, with an attitude of wide eyed curiosity. They see things within their suburban landscape in a manner that makes those things symbolic and extremely meaningful. They cognitively map their environment and build up a store of images and memories that form associations of place and style. The suburban conditions of Western Sydney introduce the young people to the particular aesthetics of their built environment.
The style of language which the family uses is the style of language the child will use. The family modes of self representation within fashion, image and the objects of accoutrements are the modes the child will initially know and be comfortable with.

It is through the everyday practices of walking, talking, eating, looking at and consuming media images etc that we determine our unique selves. And it is the manner of these everyday practices that inform us most uniquely. If as a child your family has a great regard for ballet and discusses it over the dinner table, you as a child will learn the inherent language, form and function of ballet within a social structure. If your family has a great regard for cars you will likewise learn the signs and symbols inherent in that discourse.

Total, early, imperceptible learning, performed within the family from the earliest days of life and extended by a scholastic learning...differs from belated, methodological learning not so much in the depth and durability of its effects...as in the modality of the relationship to language and culture which it simultaneously tends to inculcate.

(Bourdieu 1984 p66)

It is from this cache of inherited family culture that the young person moves out into the wider cultural environment. ‘These structures of social relationship and of meaning, shape the ongoing collective existence of groups. But they also limit, modify and constrain how groups live and reproduce their social existence.’ (Hall et all 1976 p11)

Therefore, to understand how social structures limit and restrain groups, youth generated cultures must also be analysed in terms of their relationship to the overall cultural power, or hegemonic power within society.

I am reluctant to declare youth generated cultures as sub-cultures per se; it is true the young people involved have developed a wider network than their own class group, drawing on elements selected from other class factions as Hall describes, nevertheless, their principal motivation is cultural adoption rather than cultural resistance. Defining youth generated cultures as subcultural, negates the concept of cultural plurality. Cultural plurality is an imperative to accept the non-oppositional nature of youth generated culture.
A subculture has two perspectives, which support each other but often become confused or amputated, one over the other. There is the empirical evidence of what constitutes a subculture which is drawn from the social conditions and there is the interpretive aspect of what the subculture 'means'. (Brake 1980). It is important to remember as we proceed with any overview of subcultural analysis that subcultures involve an organized set of social relationships as well as a set of social meanings.

After such a determined effort to be regarded with authority and respect, to declare the meaning of youth generated cultures sub-cultural at this stage is to once again place them in a stereotyped position of incorrectness with regard to dominant culture, and ask them to relinquish the cultural space they have already won. It is important to consider that, for youth generated cultures, this cultural space is no longer an imaginary relationship to real conditions, nor an ideological goal (Hall et al 1976), the space has been won in a real sense and dominant culture has been compelled to consider youth generated cultures with some veracity.

It is the particular focal concerns of youth generated cultures; the search for cultural relevance, and the exclusion from full membership of mainstream culture which leaves them in 'no-person's land', that demands they be analysed outside stereotyping and within a more interpretive construct of 'subcultures'.

The Territorial Base of Social Organisation.

The portrait of the delinquent as trouble maker has its history in the notion of the 'hooligan' of the 1890s, who became the 'folk devil' and perpetrator of 'moral panic'. This description persisted until after World War II (McGuigan 1992, p90). The hooligan, a term coined from the Irish was seen as the agent within society that initiated disruption and violence at public gatherings and celebrations. The hooligan was male, displayed himself overtly, was rude, antagonistic to authority and sometimes violent. Most importantly, the hooligan was perceived as coming from the working class, the 'dangerous class', which was seen as a threat to the bourgeois ideologies and hegemonies of the time. The hooligan was regarded as being in direct opposition to the status
quo, disruptive of it and therefore a prime target for surveillance, control and punishment.

During the 1920's there was considerable interest in youth as an urban social problem although the interest was within education and developmental psychology (Burt in Brake 1980). Poverty became the issue, but not material poverty, rather moral poverty was seen as the primary influence of delinquency.

The social ecology model, based on plant ecology and adapted to the city, was used in America, by members of the University of Chicago in the post war period, to examine urban gangs that formed within the changing intersections of urban space. The work of the social ecologist F.M.Thrasher (1927) is of relevance to the youth generated cultures of western Sydney in that although his study was on delinquents, he saw territorial aspects as being significant to the identity of the young people he studied.

Thrasher emphasised the meaning that the life-style of the gang had for the slum-corner boy (Brake 1980). In slum life the street became an arena of excitement and play for the young children who spent much time outside. The street is the backdrop where dramas can be constructed and performed. The street was the playground of the delinquent, and where there was little else to take pride in, it became a defensible territory.

Thrashers view was that the street was an adventurous, free area seen in contrast to the constraining agencies of social control, which were regarded as weak, dull and unattractive by young people. A corollary can be seen in the youth generated cultures of Western Sydney, where the street is of great cultural importance because it is the venue for cultural activity and public life.

Within working class, poor neighbourhoods there was a distinctive social structure with specific norms and patterns of behaviour. Urban expansion disrupted these norms and the poor became ghettoised while the respectable artisans joined the lower middle classes in the suburban areas. Park et al (1925) attempted to trace the social relationships between specific geographical areas and the structural
and social organisation of those areas. Small residential areas had recognised boundaries and distinct cultural groups, while the city was a collection of these residential areas with a concentric flow from the centre to the periphery. Where an area was in the throws of transition there were intersecting spaces.

Different neighbourhoods formed the territorial base of different social organisation. These differing elements of social organisation open up the possibility for conflict within neighbourhoods. The conflict may be present in two areas - firstly, in the local political economy where resources such as housing, income, education and health are scarce, and secondly within cultural interpretations and ideological solutions to structural contradictions arising from policies over the first issue of conflict.

Downes (1966) developed a theory whereby specific neighbourhoods could be seen to represent the territorial base of differing traditions. Thus social disorganisation became translated into differential social disorganisation linked with the concept of social and cultural pluralism. This differential organisational model requires us to consider the material relationships in a pluralistic society, and further, to understand that cultural pluralism is an imperative in the understanding of youth generated cultures.

It is important to note that theories of pluralism at the time confused cultural pluralism based on class and ethnicity, with political pluralism. It does not follow that because there is a culturally rich and diverse differentiation of social life in an industrial society, that the various communities within that society have any real influence of major political and economic decisions.

Expanding on the social meaning that territory has in the local working class neighbourhood, Brake (1980 p35) tells us, 'Physical space is not merely a simple territorial imperative, but is symbolic of a whole way of life'. Central to this concept is the status of the local neighbourhood which must be understood in the wider context of the struggle for decent housing in working class areas.
Pride in the local territory as an expression of 'belonging' became mixed with the desire to 'defend' it, often resulting in violent clashes against other outside groups. As a result, amongst working class districts there is a very heavy police surveillance, which only serves to further define and devalue these neighbourhoods as socially undesirable.

Matza (1969) argued that disadvantaged groups move in search of meaning as well as identity by the interpenetration of other cultural worlds and the symbolic availability of various ways of life elsewhere. This includes the use of imagery and role taking in the construction of identity.

Matza's analysis has relevance for youth generated cultures whose interpenetration of other cultural worlds is fundamental to the young peoples creative practice. Winning space is an imperative, both territorially and culturally. The interpenetration of other cultures is seen in a graffiti artist's use of comparisons, regarding individual style and how it develops, between high art and graffiti:

...Like in the old days with Picasso, Michelangelo had their own style which would be theirs and how they present it, that is now in the graffiti scene, you do your own lettering word or character that is particularly yours, it's your style.

(Graffiti Artist)

**Anomie and subcultures.**

Predominantly derived from Durkheim, the concept of anomie argues that there develops a condition of 'normlessness' when social order is disrupted. Within the situation of social disruption various groups perceive the opportunity to rise above the social order of control and develop aspirations which they are unable to fulfil. The source of anomie is to be found when individual interests and aspirations are at odds with the collective moral authority or 'collective conscience' (Brake 1980).
Anomie was regarded as a result of the dissatisfaction arising from the ever increasing need to consume, which entails, for some, expectations that can never be met. Some commentators maintained that people had accepted that material gain was a dominant social value. American social theorist of the 50s and 60s developed what they termed the "illicit means' theory. The theory rightly observed that within American culture a high status was accorded to those that possessed and displayed economic goods. The degree to which one could acquire economic goods however, was distributed unequally throughout the population. 'Among those segments which have the least access to legitimate channel of 'upward mobility' there develop strong feelings of deprivation and frustration and strong incentives to find other means to the achievement of status and its symbols' (Cohen 1955 p35)

Brake argues that this view can be challenged in that people may understand that money is essential to existence but does not necessarily define everyone's cultural goals.

Young (1971) extends the concept of anomie to include a theory of 'expressive anomie' where a given culture becomes inadequate for solving problems and a new cultural means is constructed. For Young, class is of primary importance as he argues culture is transmitted intergenerationally. Culture becomes transformed to meet the necessities of a new social situation. Young points out that 'The old culture is the moral springboard for the emergence of the new.' (1971 p92)

There exists within the working class neighbourhood the opportunity to enter a system of criminal subculture which offers an apprenticeship into adult crime. Cloward and Ohlins (1960) solutions were technocratic, in suggesting that if the opportunity structure was improved society could eradicate strain, which is the cause of social breakdown (anomie) and leads to illegal means of resolution. In later work Cloward takes a radical stance against countering anomie merely as technocratic inefficiency and argues for social justice and an examination into the use of welfare to control labour disparities.
It may be expected that youth generated cultures in Western Sydney experience some feeling of anomie in their relegation to a cultural ‘no-man’s land’. My findings indicate however, that they have developed a construct that complies to a large degree with given ‘norms’ of cultural production, and have incorporated aspects of consumerism within their cultural construct that enable them to feel very much a part of consumer society.

Matza and Sykes' analysis of subcultures offers support for the argument that youth generated cultures of western Sydney are not oppositional per se. They reject the earlier models of subcultural theory and argue against the claim that delinquents subvert conventional values. Rather, Matza and Sykes say, ‘they are committed to wider values which do not reject conventional morality but which seek to neutralise its moral bind’ (1957 p46). Matza argues against determinism and projects a humanist approach to subcultural theory by developing a much more mature and comprehensive study of deviancy which involves will. He claims delinquents are not objects propelled by social forces but real people involved in a meaningful interaction with their world.

**Subcultural Analysis Within Cultural Studies.**

In a move away from the delinquency model towards cultural issues, members of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1970s Britain (here after called the Birmingham School), conducted ethnographic and textual studies of youth cultural meanings and oppositional lifestyles using Gramsci's theoretical conceptualisations of class (See Jefferson Clark and Hall 1976, Willis 1978). The empirical studies of Teds, Mods, Rockers and Punks were conducted within a new disciplinary framework called ‘Cultural Studies’ which draws on relevant theories from anthropology, sociology, literary studies, linguistics, art history, aesthetics, media studies and more recently, women's studies and semiotic textual analysis.
Dick Hebdige (1978) in *Subcultures: the meaning of style*, still retained some links with the more traditional sociological approach to subcultural analysis. He chose to analyse Punk style in opposition to the State and the current social circumstances in Britain in the 1970s. Working class youth cultures were read politically as symbolic challenges to the dominant culture. This committed oppositional stance towards subcultural creativity should be recognised as populist or romantic in its approach. McGuigan reminds us that:

Radical conceptions of youth culture, including the recovery and sympathetic ‘reading’ of delinquent expression, are sometimes tempted into romanticising the ‘resistance’ of disadvantaged, exploited and oppressed groups, in a kind of reaction formation.

(1992 p91)

This romantic, oppositional stance is of no value in the analysis of youth generated cultures of western Sydney as it makes them peripheral in the cultural equation; a position they do not aspire to. I see class differences as more useful to understanding the cultural position of youth generated cultures of western Sydney.

**Classlessness and class based analysis within subcultures.**

In the 1960s, the proposition that post war affluence had emancipated the working class and particularly the working class youth, significantly contributed to a means of analysis based on classlessness. Graham Murdock, of Leicester University’s Centre for Mass Communication Research summarises the claims for classlessness, based on:

- firstly that people born after the Second World War had no memory of the economic hardship and deprivation of that time,
- secondly, and following on from the first proposal, the working class young had developed a generational consciousness instead of a class consciousness due to their sense of material equality with other classes and thirdly that this generational consciousness was shaped by symbols, styles and meanings.
of youth oriented consumer culture and popular music. Within this argument the ‘generation gap’ was born and seen to replace class distinction as the main source of conflict in postwar Britain. (McGuigan, 1992)

Murdock went on to dispute this construct and insisted the issue of class was still very much in play in young peoples cultural choices, particularly their choice of music. Working class youth preferred reggae for dancing as it supported their desire for collectivism or group participation while middle class youth preferred the more individual, contemplative ‘underground’ rock. He also suggests that although many middle class young people became part of a ‘hippy counter-culture’, they were educational successes, but working class skinheads were not.

In the 1970s and 1980s in Britain, education and welfare cutbacks reduced the cultural capital of what was defined as ‘economically disadvantaged’ groups and the material equality perceived to be pivotal to classlessness was undermined.

Once again a position of class as a means of cultural analysis emerged that made itself most apparent in the area of youth studies. Social and cultural disadvantage is felt most strongly by working class youth who face issues of unemployment and cultural disadvantage unparalleled by middle class youth. Consequently the notion of a single undifferentiated culture becomes unsound.

The work of the Birmingham school authors, such as Willis, Hebdige and McRobbie is grounded in class experience because they were ultimately bound to see sub-cultures in terms of their relation to the wider class-cultural structure or parent culture.
Commodity consumption in the analysis of Youth Cultures.

Inspired by a populist reading of Foucault on 'micro-politics', the creative objects and performance of youth cultural practice has more recently been recognised, examined and critiqued by cultural theorists who include notions of consumerism, the market place and economic capitalism as deterministic and relevant to contemporary discourse. (Nava 1987)

The feminist researcher Erica Carter saw the market place as:

a vast machine for the interconnecting circulatory flows...capital and labour...money, commodities, visual and textual signifiers through the circuits of consumption unlocked by capital...

and further,

If anything is to be learned about the lived realities of consumption, then we must shift the terms of the youth culture debate, looking first at the dominant forms of a supposedly conformist culture on consumerism (as well as its everyday subversion).

(Carter 1984 p198)

The integration or union of semiology with political economy initially introduced by Jean Baudrillard (1988) emphasised the sign value of the object or commodity and made it equal the exchange value thereby highlighting the seemingly overwhelming evidence of the reification of human labour and its association with the ideology of consumption. Use value was completely subsumed under the semiological form. Baudrillard claimed that reality was no longer able to be separated from signification and that we now live in a hyper-real world of 'simulacra' - here used within 'Plato's conception of the 'simulacrum' - the identical copy for which no original has ever existed' (Jameson 1984 p66).
Writers within the Birmingham School retain the idea of a distinction between exchange value and use value, thus enabling critics of cultural practice to observe the creative use young people make of commodities as resources and how they reinterpolate and reintroduce them into the circulation of capital.

It is helpful to look at both Baudrillard's concept of use value as semiological form and the retention of use value within its original meaning by the cultural populist, for both these paradigms are at play in youth generated cultural practice.

Paul Willis exemplifies the strengths and weaknesses in the new revisionism within his report on the Calouste Gulbenkian Enquiry into Arts and Cultural Provision for Young People. Through his books *Common Culture* (1990a) and *Moving Culture* (1990b) Willis explores the concepts of:

- youth as agent of their cultural production
- the importance of leisure as opposed to paid labour in the establishment of identity
- the orientations of arts policies
- community arts and its retained links with dominant traditions of arts practice
- symbolic creativity - the appropriation of popular cultural artefacts as 'art'
- common culture - the implication that creative practice is inherent in the everyday
- consumption practices of young people.

Willis draws on the theories of Raymond Williams (1958) (whose analysis of culture was anthropologically based) and argues politically, for popular access to the means of defining culture and its production. I would want to argue that an important criticism of Willis's work is that he somewhat misused William's position on the definition of culture and its production in that Williams was actually opposed to the endorsement of market based cultural consumption.
Willis favours a sociological understanding of culture as lived practice not static artefact. He maintains that to establish identity, we (people) produce ourselves by symbolic exchange thus affirming 'our active sense of our own vital capacities, the powers of self and how they might be applied to the cultural world' (Willis 1990a p12). In opposition to Baudrillard's assertion that postmodern culture is an implosion of meaning and surface reflections with no depth, Willis insists people provide their own meaning from what is on offer in a consumer society as consumerism is all they have, identity via labour productivity being denied to a significant number of people (particularly young people). And that these meanings have depth in a genuine sense through symbolic creativity.
Issues of masculinity within subcultures.

The Birmingham School did not always see eye to eye on aspects of youth cultural analysis. Although it was generally agreed that young people assert self and group identities which are often labelled as illegitimate practices by mainstream cultures, the preoccupation with youth as deviant, spectacular and male was critiqued by feminist researchers in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Researchers such as McRobbie and Nava (1983) focused not only on spectacular male youth actions on the street and the playground, but also on the ordinary, on the domestic sphere, on girls and on relations between boys and girls within everyday leisure practices and forms of regulation of young people.

With regard to the gender focus in youth cultural studies, McRobbie (1980) makes the comment that the overriding appearance of masculinity within youth studies undertaken by the Birmingham School during the late 1970s and early 1980s appears to be one of 'lads as trouble', with aggressive overtones within their language and display towards females.

The shortcomings of the youth cultural approach of the 1970s in failing to account for the cultural activities, forms and meanings of indigenous cultures, migrants and girls, were partially overcome in the 1980s through feminist contributions to Cultural Studies (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies 1982)

It could be argued that, historically, females have constituted a subculture of home making and child rearing which embraced all social classes.

This study makes no claim to explore female cultural practice or why girls cannot or do not express identity through public performance. The gender comparisons require careful research.
and a more thorough examination than this thesis allows. The gender issues within youth cultural practice are best served in another study at another time.

On the whole, youth cultures and subcultures tended to be some form of exploration or display of masculinity. Historically males have been taught that the proof of their masculinity lay in their effort in production which in turn, enabled consumption. As a corollary the predominance of males within working class subcultures was also seen as a tension between production and consumption (Cohen 1972).

Working class boys who are involved with specific youth subcultures are placed in the position of attracting attention to themselves by the identity-building resources they adopt. Conversely, this puts them in the position of having to defend any challenge made to their chosen identity role, which may encourage aspects of aggression within masculine youth subcultures. For working class boys, if they can handle themselves in a fight, this means that all dissent can be seen as a direct challenge to their identity and settled physically, thereby giving the boy status and value in the local youth hierarchy. (McGuigan 1992)

The aggression, the swearing, the sexist talk, the display of bravado is all part of male bonding which unites the individual male into the collectivity of masculinity. These characteristics can be seen as their shared values, symbols and language which constitute a male subculture.

Male bonding is institutionalised learned behaviour whereby men recognise and reinforce one another’s bona fide membership in the male gender class...male bonding is how men learn from each other that they are entitled under patriarchy to power in the culture. Male bonding is how they get that power and male bonding is how it is kept. Therefore men enforce a taboo against unbonding.
Men shrug off their need for close relationships and love with women, often reserving their deeper feelings for other men where there is no fear of a sexual relationship to threaten their independence. (Brake 1980)

This illustrates the importance of peer groups for males within youth cultures and the problem young homosexual males have within subcultures, which as we have noted is overwhelmingly masculinist in emphasis. Young gay people are swamped by the heterosexual emphasis within peer groups and subcultures and as far as popular culture is concerned they are nearly invisible. Subcultural responses to their problems are not a solution until they can find a large enough group of like people to ‘come out’ in. This often only happens when they have entered adulthood.

Secondary schooling and working class youth.

In any society, power and authority tend to reflect the interests and concerns of the dominant groups and classes. Maintaining and perpetrating structures of inequality and social division is a complex process involving a number of social institutions and one of the most important of these is the school. As an institution, the school encompasses characteristics which reflect the wider social, economic and political context within which it is located. (White 1990)

Education played a significant role in the formation and development of a youth culture. The introduction in the post war period of secondary education for all and the massive extension of higher education meant an increasing number of young people were spending an increasing amount of time together in age specific groupings from eleven years old onwards. This was quite different from pre-war years when children over eleven were receiving secondary education within an all-age elementary school system. The age specific grouping of children in schools was seen by some
commentators as creating the pre-conditions for the emergence of a specifically 'adolescent' society. (Hall et al 1976)

Adolescence can be described as a period of stasis; a 'no mans land' where youth are no longer considered children but are denied entry into adult culture and are therefore essentially denied cultural space per se.

The structure of secondary school, somewhat like a factory, consigned youth to a self contained world. They spend a significant amount of time amongst other young people, in an age specific institution, regulated by adults. Within their subordination to adults in the school environment, they have developed a separate class which is independent of the dictates of adult stratification. It is acknowledged that in the wider community they are subject to those adult stratifications from their family and neighbourhood, but it is this separate class of 'adolescents, developed primarily in secondary school, that determines the conditions of youth culture and contributes to youth subcultural solutions to their lived experience.

The importance of the meaning of school in subcultures is often overlooked. With regard to class inequality, the meaningless of secondary schooling for most working class youth was central to any analysis of delinquent subcultures. The meritocracy of the education system, which has previously been regarded as a means of social mobility, forcibly recruits working class children into a structure that excludes most of them from higher educational success. A disenchantment with this structure often results in dissociation rather than rebellion. The working class youth opts out of the middle class values that inform secondary school life. They see the available job opportunities as 'dead end' jobs and come to regard work as simply the provision of income rather than for any intrinsic importance or value, and ultimately turn their aspirations to areas that exclude work and include leisure. (Brake 1980)
In a quote borrowed from Cotgrove and Parker (within Brake 1980) we get a clear summary of the valueless significance of secondary school for some young people.

For the less able child in the lower forms of the secondary modern school, the dominant picture that emerges is one of school as a source of boredom and frustration...many expect little from work and are satisfied with what they find...The secondary modern boy leaving school at fifteen has received early training in dissociating himself from the demands which 'they' make on him. He simply does not care...dissatisfaction is the measure of the gap between aspiration and achievement. For many no such gap exists - their expectations and aspirations are centred on the world outside the factory.

(p 58)

Feeling they have no control over their school life and seeing no relevance in the secondary curriculum for their employment prospects, working class youth simply do not engage in school life and school requirements. Rather they focus on the world outside the school and in the youth subcultures found there, and it is from these that they create some form of identity.

Downes (1966) notes that in the absence of work opportunities, leisure pursuits take on significant importance, and that they receive 'job satisfaction' from their non-work. Importantly though, he points out that the working class youth subcultures share space and ideas with the technically classless 'teenage culture', whose practice depends on the dissociation from the restraints of the adult culture, but reflect the values of the adult world. Therefore, by their association with 'teenage culture', working class youth subcultures have as a hidden agenda the values of the adult world. Social success or failure is still ultimately determined by how well young people adapt to those values.
The Australian Context

The development of youth cultural studies in Australia is, as yet, still in its infancy. The major concepts, theories and methods for the study of youth culture have been imported from Britain and America and suffer from being culture-bound. (See also Jon Stratton’s article Youth Subcultures and their Cultural Contexts, in ANZJS. Vol 21, No 2, July 1985, for further reading on this perspective).

Australian youth work grew out of this mixed heritage, largely transmitted from Britain, which essentially depended upon 'adults' organising and directing the non-work activities of the younger generation, and which always acted as an instrument of moral ideology.

(Youth Studies 1990 Vol 9 No 4 p13)

There exists the danger that interpretations from Britain and America do not hold true for the Australian context. Information pertaining to the Australian experience of youth cultures is gradually being developed, and although a major new collection is forthcoming (White, ed 1993) further work is necessary to inform the perceptions particular to Australia.

Within No Space of Their Own (1990), Rob White deals with young people and social control in Australia. He concentrates his analysis on the means of social control applied to young people at present, particularly those most disadvantaged by economic crisis, and suggests these social controls are ill conceived, ad hoc and inappropriate to the needs of young Australians.

White examines developments in the areas of welfare and employment, education, training policing and community work. He continues the irrefutable argument of earlier British studies in youth cultures; that working for wages is a central measure of social value and a key means of social participation, and that a significant number of young working class people are being systematically excluded from meaningful paid work.
This process of exclusion cuts across ethnic and gender boundaries and while authorities would like to be seen to be responding to this problem, they have implemented active cutbacks in resources that directly affect the quality of life for young people and their chances of a better life in the future. In addition, as a result of the economic crisis in Australia at present, these cutbacks produce homelessness, poverty and crime.

White argues that the anger of young people as a result of the impact of current social and economic controls can be approached in two ways. Firstly, society may choose to apply a politic of hate, fear and insecurity which White says is associated with a system in decline, or alternatively society can apply the politics of possibility, creative alternative lifestyles and social justice associated with a different kind of system.

For out of the chaos of the moment, out of the collapse of the existing economic system, must arise a new form of social order. What form this takes is the key question of our age, and, ultimately, it is young people who will have a crucial role in determining which way Australia as a nation will go.

(White 1990 p211)

In Australia, White explains, the government approach to youth affairs has been one of ‘busyness’ and ‘control’. The government has been concerted in its efforts to keep the youth profile low and troublesome issues off the agenda, by encouraging young people to stay at school, enter training of some kind or remain in a job no matter how unsatisfactory these situations might be for young people themselves. White makes the very salient point that the structural transformations within the economy make it very difficult for employment opportunities for young people to ever again open up as they have in the past. Technology has replaced the youth labour force in many of the ‘untrained’ areas of employment opportunity, which has traditionally been the starting point for many young people.
The emphasis is therefore focused on training, and this serves a useful threefold purpose for the government; it blames the victim for being unemployed (if they were trained for work they would get work, it's their fault); it depoliticises the issue of unemployment throwing it back on the young people, who become ‘dole bludgers’ and families who become unsatisfactory in their social responsibilities; and it transforms the notion of education into one of skills based training programs rather than a broader, more whole concept of knowledge and its concomitant opportunities in a global market. (White 1990) (See also Dwyer, Wilson and Woock (1984) Confronting School and Work: youth and class culture in Australia. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.)

The concern has been more with social control and financial efficiency than with questions of equality and inequality. Within Western Sydney, identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in their 1988 survey as one of the fastest growing areas in the Sydney region, youth unemployment is extremely high and a reliance on benefit payments is also high (see the overview in Case Studies for a more developed profile of Western Sydney). Government response, on both sides, to this situation is to make things even more difficult for those forced to rely on state benefits. If young people do not choose to take up the narrow options for employment available to them they are labelled 'lazy and 'irresponsible and 'don't know a good thing when they see it' (White 1990)

Interestingly, one of the methods used to solve the ‘problems’ of youth is to transpose them from a collective problem to an individual problem, thus isolating and blaming the individual, consequently deferring attention from the group or collective experience.

The media contributes significantly to the negative profile of youth by ‘pursuing issues of unemployment and the state of young people in ways which, through images of young people as ‘threats’, ‘victims’ and ‘parasites’, target young working class people as a major source of woe in Australian society’ (White 1990 p194).

The media and the state both work together to shape young peoples perceptions of themselves in terms of some logical conformity process, thereby asking young people to blame and consequently discipline
themselves. A survey conducted by the Australian National Opinion Polls in 1986 showed that ‘young people attribute the cause of (youth) unemployment mainly to their own attitudes, lack of motivation (‘the dole is too easy to get’) and lack of skills’ and suggested that young people’s attitudes were a reflection of media representation as influenced by government policies (White 1990).

The response by young people to their position in society is considerably diverse. How a young person sees their world depends very strongly on the social context into which they were born and the familial and environmental factors of where they were raised. The experience of working-class youth has been linked with cultural elements such as solidarity with the neighbourhood and an importance attached to ‘lived knowledge’ which unites them in the everyday practices of their group (White 1990). It is logical therefore, that their response to social control and exclusion would be of a collective nature.

The neighbourhood can be seen as public space. Public space, in its bureaucratic manifestations of streets, parks, vacant land, parking lots, galleries, shopping malls etc, is a social and cultural commodity and access to it is status loaded. Only the creditable social groups who display appropriate conformity, can use public spaces with impunity. The rest are restrained by society's agents of authority and control. This is not to say that the designation of public space for youth will change the nature of the social structure, in fact designated space becomes controlled space and youth are again disempowered as a voice. They once again become invisible and ‘spoken for’.

Youth generated cultures are described as oppositional in intention by the hegemonic culture, but this opposition is a description applied by what is perceived as the dominant culture, as a means of domination and is not necessarily an intention of youth cultural practices. It could be argued that the real issue of contention for dominant culture is not the oppositional profile of youth, but the ‘agency’ of youth generated cultures - the desire of youth to speak for themselves.

White tells us that ‘the Australian experience is that youth subcultures rarely attempt to mobilise wider numbers of young people in a conscious effort to change (or reaffirm) the existing social structure.’ (1990 p 201)
He claims there is not necessarily an organisational connection between
groups and the similarities are due to common experience of wider
institutional structures and relationships rather than a shared
consciousness of purpose. This is true, however my findings suggest a
more overt politico/cultural response is being constructed by youth
generated cultures. Unlike subcultures, these young people have
developed a sophisticated and effective pedagogy which serves as an
organisational apparatus to expand the contacts of youth generated
cultures, develop their aesthetic language and promote their cultural
capital.

They may indeed be the best promoters of their cultural practice. Unlike
the academy, along with the media, who may both be seen as somewhat
in thrall to government policy. The academy and the media disseminate
information about youth cultural practice; they explain its intentions, its
social and cultural formation and its social relevance and
consequences, however their approach is often alarmist and hegemonic,
and their profile of youth can be greatly distorted by their servitude to the
status quo.

A feature article in the Weekend Australian (17-18 September 1988)
described graffiti practitioners as ‘looting and bashing for money... most
steal for their existence and sleep anywhere they can. When they do go
on the rampage, they combine three activities - ‘popping, searching and
rolling’, that is, taking pills, breaking and entering and assaulting’. As
White (1990) points out, what tends to be forgotten within stereotypical
reportage of this nature, is the wider socio-economic experience of
young people. In the broad generalisations about youth cultures as
destructive and anti-social, what inevitably happens is a further
restriction of youth and specifically those young people most
disadvantaged by the economic crisis.

Media stories on graffiti in particular have simply served to reinforce the
notoriety of such activities and stereotyped graffiti artists as ‘hooligans’.
Crime has always been associated with graffiti, and this remains a
persistently overplayed and useless association which misses the larger
point; that the practice is primarily creative. This is part of the process,
on the part of the ruling hegemony, mitigating against the acceptance of
youth generated cultures.
Society tends to respond conservatively to youth subcultures and falls back on the need to maintain the status quo in order to keep some control. Status quo - the unchanged position - is not simply a cliched phrase but a complex social structure of order and control through dominant authority.

To be seen to be dealing with youth affairs the government has affiliated agencies, which contribute to the maintenance of the status quo. These government agents have a mandate to deal with the needs of young people within the confines of a hegemonic order. Their chosen ideas and values serve to 'naturalise' the status quo by presenting it as the only possible social alternative and mystify the nature of exploitation and inequality in society. (White 1990)

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, one of the most important government agencies concerned with the maintenance of the status quo is the school. Secondary school, in particular, contributes to the economic and political status quo through its dissemination of control in the areas of labour power, ideology and intergenerational reproduction (White 1990) On the surface schools are seen to offer everyone the same valuable social commodity - education. Nevertheless, as White points out, the school performs three important roles in sustaining a particular social order.

First, it provides, without cost to the employer, an educated labour force which 'as far as possible is technically and socially prepared for capitalist forms of commodity production and work practices' (1990 p77). Secondly, the secondary school education system promotes the existing social order by the teaching of selective values to the exclusion of more marginalised values and finally the education system ensures that the working class youth get working class jobs, that gender roles are preserved so that girls do 'women's work' and the middle classes maintain the roles of controllers of industry and commerce.

Secondary schooling still does relatively little to ensure that each specific group of young people will not inevitably follow in the path of their previous generation by engaging in the same types of paid or unpaid work as their parents. There are of course exceptions to the rule,
mobilisation of working class youth through access and participation in higher education is a consideration, but these exceptions are not significant enough to refute the ultimately predetermined course of young working class peoples lives.

Another significant government agent in the maintenance of the status quo in Australia, is the Australia Council, which deals with cultural issues within the arts. Here too, there is a commitment to the values and ideology of the dominant group towards that which can be seen to be of cultural value within the community. The Australia Council also wishes to be seen to be acknowledging changes within the cultural practice of youth arts and to this end commissioned a national research project to investigate youth and the arts.

The Australia Council document *Ideas, Facts and Futures* was a Youth and the Arts Policy Development project conducted in 1990-91. It focussed on issues relating to the impact and significance of arts activities currently provided for or involving young people; youth creativity expressed in forms of cultural activity which fall outside official conceptions of ‘the arts’; youth attitudes to the arts; and the ways in which arts activities might be applied in the work of youth advocacy and support services.

Within *Ideas, Facts and Futures*, some serious concerns were raised by the writers in regard to the perceptions inherent in present government policies on youth arts:

- youth arts’ are usually defined as encompassing visual arts, craft, music, literature, dance, drama, design and the media, although the media are often accorded a low priority;

- major policy objectives of arts funding agencies have been to secure young people’s participation in ‘high’ art forms as producers or audiences without often recognising or acknowledging less traditional artistic activities;

- in pursuing such objectives, these agencies have worked through or with (i) major arts institutions of ‘high culture’ such as art galleries, ballet, theatre and opera, (ii) the education
system and (iii) community arts programs, via government agencies which provide access to young people 'at risk' - through long term unemployment, drug abuse or other forms of social disadvantage;

- notions of art on which 'youth art' programs have been based fall broadly into two categories: (i) 'high arts' - viewed as having a civilising and improving influence and as superior to commercial culture (ii) artistic involvement serving as social therapy or community identity formation and empowerment for socially disadvantaged groups.

(Australia Council 1991 Part 3 P 9)

Within *Ideas, Facts and Futures* however, one of the writers, Tony Bennett, was at pains to point out that what happens at a government level within youth arts can have little bearing on the lives of most young Australians. He goes on to say that this does not mean young Australians lack culture but that their cultural involvement can take other forms and be organised, produced and circulated differently from those characterising youth arts.

Although any initiative to further "understanding" of youth cultural practice is laudable, it must remain apparent that if the initiative is government funded, as with *Ideas, Facts and Futures*, the 'understanding' must in the long run, submit to the confines of dominant knowledge bases and dominant cultural structures. To imagine otherwise is to believe that the opposition of dominant and dominated is only a trite banality with no social consequence.

Non-government organisations such as the Youth Affairs Council of Australia (YACA) are intended to supply an 'independent voice for young people' but this must also be questioned in the light of their own funding by the government (White 1990 p202). Their main role is to consult with governments on youth issues and policies. Within these non-government organisations there is again the contingency of subservience to hegemonic norms in order to perpetuate their own existence.
Church groups, welfare groups, training programs and school based cultural activities for young people are all influenced by the desire to maintain the status quo. As a general rule they present cultural activities that are developed for young people by adults, rather than using the cultural practices developed by young people.

The small number of young people involved in these groups and the distinctly middle class nature of the people who run them, renders them suspect in terms of meeting the cultural needs of the young people classified as socio-economically disadvantaged. (Australia Council 1991 Part 3)

There remains an urgent need for in-depth analysis of contemporary suburban youth cultural experience in Australia which transcend notions of delinquency and resistance. I adopt this position within my research, and my analysis of youth generated cultures in western Sydney is defined within the parameters of:

a) not classifying youth generated cultures as sub-cultural;

b) youth generated cultures not being oppositional in their cultural practice;

c) resistance to youth generated cultures is mounted by the dominant culture to suppress the cultural activities of youth generated cultures - dominant culture labels them oppositional and rebellious, and

d) the dominant culture justifies their resistance by classifying youth generated cultures as sub-cultural, thereby perpetuating and encouraging stereotyping of the activities of youth generated cultures.
THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Within this section I describe the cultural influences and contexts in which youth generated cultures are formed and continue to practice. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, culture as defined by Raymond Williams is a collection of signifying systems which involve all forms of social activity as well as artistic pursuits. Social activities of the individual or group are influenced by social activities and interests of others and construct a cultural context of great disparity.

To explore how this disparity affect youth generated cultures, I have constructed a framework or cultural environment to facilitate explication.

Jameson designates the role of culture in late capitalism as ‘one cultural profusion produced by the logic of the commodity form’. Jameson sees culture as ‘the very element of consumer society itself; no society has ever been saturated with signs and images like this one’. He sees a decline of the semi-autonomous position of culture and a replacement by ‘a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life... can be said to have become ‘cultural’.
(Featherstone 1991 p 53)

This clearly follows Baudrillard in his explication of consumer society as saturated by symbols, signs and codes. Jameson asserts that everything has a cultural place and even the political and ideological modes of understanding have to be disentangled from their primary mode of representation, which is cultural (Featherstone 1991).

Commentators involved in the ideologies of culture and the everyday provide a veneration of ‘the art of living’ in which everything, their body, home car etc become stylised external selves and express their individuality. Bourdieu states this distinction via lifestyle makes ‘available to almost everyone the distinctive poses, the distinctive games and other external signs of inner riches previously reserved for intellectuals’ (1984 p371).

Alongside the market place, the intellectual community can be seen as providing resources of postmodern cultural goods for the construction and ratification of cultural capital within different audiences, public and consumers.
‘In short, the tendency is for social groups to seek to classify and order their social circumstances and use cultural goods as means of demarcation, as communicators which establish boundaries between some people and build bridges with others’. (Featherstone 1991 p63)

Of course the discourse of theory is only whole when it takes into account the subjective nature of the data it is using as a primary source. Indeed, when discourse on culture, society and the everyday takes place it is essential to acknowledge differences of opinion as to what these things mean, how they should be spoken about and the kinds of knowing we can have of them.

Commentators must establish the adequacy of language in describing and analysing what they are observing. On occasions the logic of language is unable to transfer the sense of style within a cultural practice. This relates very well to Hayden White’s use of the word ‘trope’ to describe the elements of style which cannot wholly be conferred within the discourse of analysis. White identifies for his own purposes four ‘master tropes’ - metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony - and that within these tropes one can engage in relationships which reside ‘within or among phenomena, but which are in reality relationships existing between consciousness and a world of experience calling for a provision of its meaning’ (1978 p 72)

Used most frequently in literary criticism, a trope is a figurative use of a word, with metaphorical not literal intention. Used in early English, the word ‘trope’ captures the force of the concept that modern English intends by the word ‘style’. For language theorists, tropes are deviations from literal, conventional, or ‘proper’ language use, ‘swerves in locution sanctioned neither by custom or logic’ (White 1978 p2). Tropes generate figures of speech or thoughts which are variations from the ‘normal’ usage of language, which establish associations between concepts not normally related.

A trope can be seen as a linguistic defence against literal meaning in discourse and a trope is not only a deviation from one possible, proper meaning, but also a deviation towards another meaning, concept or ideal of ‘what is right proper and true’.

Considered in this way, ‘troping is both a movement from one notion of the way things are related to another notion, and a connection between things so that they can be expressed in a language that takes account of the possibility
of their being expressed otherwise’ (White 1978 p 2). Thus, to ‘bomb a toy’ within the graffiti milieu does not mean to explode a child’s plaything, it means to spray over the work of an inexperienced or new graffiti writer. There exists within this graffiti phrase, implied judgement of behaviour, expertise, status, sensibilities, group allegiance and street manners that denote style or a lack of style.

Within the analysis of youth generated cultures, troping is a useful tool to describe how within the distinctive nature of the use of language within youth generated culture in Western Sydney, there exists a transit between the ‘proper’ use and meaning or words and the meaning intended by the usage within the youth generated culture.

A whole host of different activities in different groups takes place in the process of everyday life - eating, walking, talking, watching television etc. and these too may be seen as tropes, or as Lefebvre (1984) sees them, a set of functions within the everyday which connect and join together systems that might appear to be distinct.

This process may be seen to have a long and established history within the work of Baudelaire on modernity, and whose term *modernité* was intended to describe new experiences, shocks and jolts which break with traditional forms of culture and social behaviour from the mid nineteenth century onwards (Featherstone 1991). We are also able to perceive postmodernity in a similar way, where the production of culture has been challenged by the aestheticisation of everyday life through new modes of signification and the cultural use of consumer goods.

Youth in particular enjoy the range of cultural choices they can make in their stylisation of everyday life, as they move through what Chambers (1990) calls ‘the no place’ postmodern urban spaces.

There are historical links to the aestheticisation (this word may also be considered a trope) of everyday life one can make between movements such as the Bloomsbury Set in England in the early 1900s, and later the bohemian lifestyles of the Beatniks of the 50s and the art students and Hippies of the sixties. We can compare their raiding of cultural forms and the challenges their lifestyle represented to traditional culture with the similar raiding of cultural forms and lifestyle of youth generated cultures in more postmodern
times. The historical links may go back further than described above, but what is important here is not that postmodern cultural practice, by its nature of siting itself within a present, negates history, but that there is a history of the aestheticisation of everyday life. (Featherstone 1991)

Featherstone describes three ways we can talk about the aestheticisation of the everyday. Firstly artistic sub-cultures like the Surrealist, the Futurists and the Dada movements which sought to dismantle the boundary between art and everyday life. As discussed in a previous chapter, this was a wonderful initiative to address high and low culture and even though avant garde art was eventually placed squarely within traditional culture there are historical elements of this union of art and the everyday found within the popular media, advertising and consumer culture.

Secondly, the aestheticisation of everyday life can refer to the process of turning one’s life into a work of art. Like Oscar Wilde in the modernist period and Madonna in more postmodern times, they approach the production of ‘self’ through the stylised notion of life as art. Here we recognise the concept of the Dandy, which first emerged with Beau Brummel in England in the early nineteenth century and stressed the quest for special superiority, through individualism, originality, superiority and a contempt for the masses. Although these are not the objectives of youth generated cultures it cannot be denied that some notion of life lived as an aesthetically pleasing whole is part of their ethos.

But it is the third sense of the aestheticisation of everyday life that contributes most to the analysis of youth generated culture and the everyday. This is the rapid flow of signs and images which saturate and intensify postmodern existence.

The centrality of the commercial manipulation of images through advertising, the media and the displays, performances and spectacles of the urbanized fabric of daily life therefore entails a constant reworking of desires through images. Hence
the consumer society must not be regarded as only releasing a dominant materialism for it also confronts people with dream-images which speak to desires, and aestheticize and de-realise reality.

(Haug cited in Featherstone 1991 p68)

It is this aspect I take up with regard to youth generated culture and their connection with the everyday. Such cultures simulate a world for their constituents/participants within the aestheticisation of their everyday lives. The criticism that young people are not constructing this reality by themselves but are being manipulated by the media, advertising etc. has prompted commentators to argue for a more progressive integration of art and everyday life. Lefebvre, within his discourse on cultural revolution argues that we must 'let everyday life become a work of art! Let every technical means be employed for the transformation of everyday life!' (1987 p204)

As Lefebvre defines it, the everyday is a set of functions which join together systems that may appear to be distinct. The everyday, therefore becomes 'the most universal, the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden' (1984 p9). The everyday as a concept is determined by its dominant reality. Everyone has an 'everyday life' and it is this dominance that Lefebvre says provides bureaucracy with the means of control over social and economic systems, the law, education and consumerism.

Most importantly, Lefebvre draws a clear distinction between high culture and the culture of the everyday and sees cultural revolution not as an aesthetic discourse but one concerned with the transformation of the everyday experience of people into culture.

Connected to this concept of cultural revolution through the cultural empowerment of the everyday is Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital'. Cultural capital is the 'status-derived capital...enhanced by the advantages of...legitimate culture...in learning cultural skills'. It is easy to see how the cultural capital of previous generations provides ensuing generations with an entree to cultural knowledge, devoid of the 'deculturation, correction and retraining' necessary to critique this inherited cultural capital (1984 p 70-71). Within a class based framework, where dominant culture is ascribed

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supremacy, the most cultural capital is retained by those who have been economically advantaged and the least cultural capital is permitted those who are described as economically disadvantaged.

Groups which exist within the same society and share some of the historical and material conditions, also to some extent share one another’s ‘culture’. But these different groups come from different classes and are ranked unequally, in relation to one another and in relation to their cultural production. Therefore cultures are ranked differently and stand in opposition to one another in a relationship of dominant and subordinate within a construct of ‘cultural power’. (Hall et al 1976)

In terms of traditional notions of high culture, there is no denying the logic of this construct, but cultural capital, in a contemporary sense is generated by the production of culture not directly associated with high culture or class. Within the everyday practice of youth generated culture a cultural capital is produced that is determined and owned by that group, is distinctive to them and disseminated by them. This is Bourdieu’s notion of cultural competence (1984). Cultural competence is defined by its conditions of acquisition within a particular field. This field functions both as a source of information and as a market or resource. The appreciation of the cultural products within particular fields requires competency in various kinds of knowledge specific to the agents of that cultural practice. Which leads us to the struggle between the right of agency and cultural hegemony.

**Cultural hegemony**

Hegemony is not only the political and economic control exercised by a dominant class but its success in projecting its own particular way of seeing social relationships, so that this is accepted as ‘common sense’ and part of the natural order by those who are subordinated to it. It follows that revolution is therefore seen not only as the transfer of political and economic power but as the creation of an alternative hegemony through new forms of experience and consciousness. (Bullock et al 1988).

The use of hegemony referred to in this thesis is a Gramscian one which was much in favour with the Birmingham School in the
analysis of cultural issues, who rightly observed that the hegemonic order tried to frame all competing definitions of culture (or anything else) within its own ideology.

Gramsci states, hegemony does not rely on coercion but rather on a process of winning consent to the prevailing order. Hegemony can be seen as the power to define the agenda, to shape preferences, to prevent conflict arising in the first place and contain it when it does, by defining the sorts of resolutions that are acceptable—all within a framework determined by the institutions of civil society and the state. He described hegemony as a kind of social 'cement' intended to unify people, however the distinctive characteristic of hegemony is that leadership is never constant and solid, there is always a battle going on where the dominant rule is always struggling against various resistances and oppositions. At times concessions are won and the dominant group grants rights to subordinate groups.

The particular structure of a hegemony depends on the economic situation at the time and the balance of power between contending forces. Hegemony is, therefore, forever in contest, and this is a most important and useful characteristic. (McGuigan 1992) As Marx expressed it in the latter half of the 1800s...

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

(Marx cited in Hall et al 1976 p11)

Bourdieu tells us that social structure is determined by a basic paradigm of opposition. High/low, spiritual/material, fine/course, heavy/light, brilliant/dull etc. These oppositions constitute, for Bourdieu, the very foundation of social order and they all refer back, inevitably to the fundamental opposition of the 'elite' of the dominant and the 'mass' of the dominated. The fundamental opposition thus supports other oppositions along the line and within
culture these oppositions are at present, most visible. The
discourse initiated by the postmodern debate has brought the
high/low culture distinction out into the area most wholly, as an
opposition under the most challenging review.

The imposition of authority, discipline and passivity on youth
through bureaucratic and ideological means like education, the
law, community based centres and welfare programs has been
determined and matched only by their disempowerment in regard to
political, cultural and social participation.

Through all the hierarchies and classifications
inscribed in objects... in institutions... in language,
and through the judgements, verdicts, gradings and
warnings imposed by the institutions specially
designed for this purpose, such as the family or the
educational system, or constantly arising from the
interactions of everyday life, the social order is
progressively inscribed in people’s minds.

(Bourdieu 1984 p 471)

It therefore follows that as the established order defines them, so
too they will begin to define themselves: what Durkheim called
‘logical conformity’ (Bourdieu 1984 p 471). All attempts to alter or
reform the attitudes of young people will therefore involved dealing
with the constructions of conformity and nonconformity within an
hegemonic order.

In so far as there is more than one class within a society there will
be more than one culture, but the structures and meanings of the
most powerful class will serve to influence all the others. This is the
use of ideology as a dominant social-cultural order. (Hall et al 1976)

It would seem however, youth generated culture’s ready
acceptance of postmodernism as ideology, displays an ability to
read prevailing influences and use them to its advantage in a
culturally unifying way; as cultural cement.
Jameson asserts that the culture of postmodernity is less unified than that of earlier capitalism (and this can be said to be true if we look upon the practice of bricolage as a disconnected collection of images and styles, as Jameson does in his description of pastiche). The danger is that such a perspective has inherent in its claim that the cultures of traditional society were integrated and unified. It would seem there is, within Jameson’s discourse, some parity with hegemonic norms, as it can be asked - to whom is postmodernism less unified? Not the young people who have been involved in a postmodern discourse via popular culture and its antecedents, in the most intimate and cohesive manner.

Approaches like those of Jameson tend to regard history as the outcome of a particular relentless developmental logic and play down the role of classes, social movements and groups in creating the preconditions for such a logic in their various power balances, interdependencies and struggles for hegemony. (Featherstone 1991)

Hegemony is a social reality and it can be said ‘the influence of social origin is strongest in ‘extra-curricular’ and ‘avant-garde’ culture.’ (Bourdieu : 1984) It is perhaps a maxim that all cultural revolution, or more appropriately, all cultural renewal comes from the suppressed within that society. For example the Greek influence on the Romans, the black African influence on American culture and in contemporary Australia, the way Aboriginal visual art has transformed the regional expression of Australian artists. (Emery: 1989b Gulbenkian Inquiry)

If indeed the objective of hegemony, in the Gramscian sense, is one of ‘winning’ consent rather than consent by coercion, the social strictures placed upon youth may only serve to promote their sense of being peripheral and empower their ‘extra curricula’ activities. As a governor of human and social relationships, and for norms to be accepted as ‘common sense’ and part of the natural order, hegemonic opinion must tread a very wary path in its approach to youth cultural practice.
The hegemonic power bloc has conceded to the cultural influences of subcultural groups in the past, and it may well need to reconsider the strength and influence of youth generated cultures in terms of their acceptance by the economic forces within society.

Within a hegemony, for youth generated cultures to be accepted as culturally significant and 'authentic' they must dissolve the social paradigm of dominant and dominated by conforming, to some degree, to the given social and cultural norms. Youth generated cultures do not perceive themselves in opposition to social and cultural norms per se. They are willing to join mainstream cultural practice, but they want to contribute to it, not be subsumed by it. What youth generated cultures are not willing to do is lose their agency and their voice.

Their struggle with hegemonic attitudes has a long history within the high/low culture debate and class structure. The cultural space they have won has been hard won and their autonomy and identity are at stake. To conform means to lose these precious gains and become invisible again, under the blanket of adult centred culture. It must be asked, why do we insist that this happen? Is it that, until youth conform to adult centred culture they cannot be classified as adult - and where does the classification of 'youth' stop and 'adult' start? This is the 'no-man's land' youth generated cultures are endeavouring to manoeuvre through.

As we have seen, the secondary school environment is a fundamental starting point in the classification of 'the adolescent', however the school perpetuates the erosion of individual constructs of personal expression within the arts.

With regard to education and the arts, very young children are allowed to delight in their own creative expression and we support their creative autonomy within early childhood education and the arts. It is when we start to develop those creative impulses within elementary and secondary schooling, that we impose adult centred images, concepts and practices on young people. This is not to imply that art education is erroneous in its intention to develop the creative skills and aesthetic judgments of young people, indeed art
education can still maintain these laudable goals without
discounting youth centred cultural activities as part of their
curriculum.

The Visual Arts Syllabus for NSW State schools encourages arts
experiences that derive directly from the child's world:

Visual Arts is a process of creating images and objects
whereby students express ideas and feelings in visual
form. This involves discovering ideas and finding ways
of expressing them by making artworks. The
opportunity to give meaning to experiences by
expressing what they see, think and feel.

(Visual Arts (K-6) Syllabus, NSW
Department of Education 1987 Pg 8.)

From my research, it is clear that youth are giving meaning to
experiences in the pursuit of their youth generated cultures. They
work within a social environment that is both familiar and hostile
and deal creatively with it in a most communicative way. They spray
stories all over it, they dance on it, mark it with car and skateboard
wheels and move through it with explicit style! 'It is the creators of
these popular visual images who in large measure create the art
readiness and experience of our students.' (Chalmers 1979 p128)

It would seem that the young people involved in youth generated
cultures have willingly adopted the processes of the NSW Visual Art
Syllabus, but the objects and performances they produce are not
accepted by the institutions of dominant culture.

What is offered in educational programs influences what young
people perceive to be of value. If educational programs do not deal
with what is important to youth, what they are interested in,
educators are saying as a subtext, that they are not interested in
youth.

The question must be asked, why do we persist in rejecting or
ignoring their cultural claim? Could it be that hegemonic domination
would have to be deconstructed and reordered. 'The content of
hegemony will be determined, in part, by precisely which class fractions compose such a 'hegemonic bloc', and thus what interests have to be taken into account within it'. (Hall et all 1976 p 39) The reality is, that in legitimising youth generated cultures, a new 'power bloc' would need to be constructed and then the ranks of the subordinate group would be considerably depleted. Youth generated cultures present a crisis in the hegemony of the ruling classes, because dominant culture would have to change its definition of what is acceptable cultural practice.

A hegemonic crisis occurs when society polarises, as it has within youth culture, and conflict arises. The dominant classes still hold power but their ability to control by consent is considerably weakened. The use of social controls like the law, the courts, the police and the army, their use of legal repression and police constraint to contain conflict is seen as a loosening of hegemonic control and a shift towards coercion.

This is exactly what happens at present; society sends out messages of authority and control.

**Societal response**

In 1988 the Liberal Government in New South Wales introduced a Summary Offences Act as a means of social control against 'hooliganism'. It has the power to control the use of language and behaviour and this is of particular significance to young people in a working-class environment whose use of language and behaviour is already seen as 'rough, 'course' and lacking in 'proper' cultural expression.

The use of such legal powers by the police against marginalised groups of young people will simply not work as a means of reining in aspects of their public behaviour. On the contrary, such measures inevitably reinforce the subcultural identity of the targeted young people and contribute to further conflict in the local community.

(White 1990 p199)
The attitude and language used in these quotes from an article 'Graffiti Masquerades as Art' in the Australian Police Journal, April/June 1989, serves to illustrate the heavy fisted attitude towards graffiti by police.

From intelligence gathered, it has been ascertained that this subculture entered Australia in the early 1980's. A number of persons belonging to crews were detected, arrested and placed before the Courts in late 1983 and 1984. (p 8)

Intelligence indicates that a majority of these persons go on to major crime such as Armed Robbery, Offences Against the Person including Assault, Robbery, Steal From Person and Arson, Break and Enters and Stealing. (their capitals). Two offenders charged (with major crime) are described as street kids and were not strictly graffitists but were connected with the cult. (p 9)

Intelligence gathered from (the graffitist's) premises has revealed underground newspapers, "Vapours" and "Hype" with a subscription fee of $3.50, published by the Graffiti cult in Sydney. (p 12)

Foucault approaches discourse on culture through a knowledge/power relationship. He makes a connection between discourse and institutional practice which defines that connection as internal to discourse and declares the human body the tangible site of institutional control and conversely of resistance to that control. He suggests that in modern society, power has become limitless in its influence and '... reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives'. (Foucault 1980 p39). According to Foucault, by its very ubiquity, power becomes open and indeterminate, there being no one power but a multitude of interplaying powers, thus providing a construct which can be applied to society and the dominant culture.
It is an interesting anomaly that young graffiti artists feel themselves to be empowered by graffiti to a significant degree while they are below the age of eighteen. Their sense of cultural significance is ‘turned on’, but when they reach the age of eighteen the legal ramifications of being caught whilst doing a piece of work are so destructive to their future they consider their time of empowerment over. They are coerced into accepting the ‘norms’ of the dominant culture; a cultural force that has disregarded them and their cultural contribution.

A recent study by criminologists Susan Gleeson and Paul Wilson entitled ‘Preventing Graffiti and Vandalism’ 1990, acknowledges an upsurge in crime but wrongly, I believe, contributes this to the practice of graffiti.

...they misinterpret it, they see a tag and they think it is a symbol of violent crime. It is not really a symbol of violent crime because, you know, graffiti artists are not really interested in beating up people because they have got graffiti and it is something that takes up all their time. Also not many graffiti artists are into drugs, they don’t need drugs, this is our stimulus, the thing that keeps us going.

(Graffiti Artist)

Gleeson and Wilson fail to make distinctions between the figural forms of graffiti and the tags and slogans of intentional rebellion. It is difficult therefore to determine what practice is under criticism.

I don’t know, I think older people, they just group them all together, group us all together, they think the only reason we do it is because we are bad. They just don’t understand us.

(Graffiti artist)

Figural graffiti is a cultural contribution on the part of young people and the when the opportunity for cultural contribution is denied, the social and cultural gap between youth and adults widens,
frustration and misunderstanding increases and ultimately this pressure pot has to blow.

A quote from a young graffiti artists illustrates the frustration felt by these young people, when their creative endeavours are misinterpreted and bracketed into a stereotype of ‘vandalism and crime’.

The reason why aerosol art and graffiti have been forced to part (is) because of where it is done, like if they had kept it more from the beginning, in I’d say ‘80 - ‘81, something around there, or ‘74, I don’t know, if they had said “oh, there’s an art form there, let’s bring it inside, right, let’s bring it inside with the canvasses, let’s bring it inside with the sculpture”, it could have grown from there and instead of rejecting it and say “right we don’t want that”, so they go and put it on trains anyway. So it is your fault really, the older generation.

Gleeson and Wilson do concede that ‘graffiti’ is a result of ‘extensive alienation, hostility and social malaise.’ (Daily Telegraph Mirror. 10.10.90). Again, in the collective views expressed in an article compiled by Deborah Cameron (Sydney Morning Herald 27.2.93) graffiti is seen as dysfunctional social behaviour by ‘adolescent boys’, but it is acknowledged that ‘They are much more likely to be regarded as vandals by the courts and punished more stiffly than the adult graffiti writers who deface billboards as part of feminist or anti-tobacco political campaigns’. It seems a great pity that societal response is a heavy fisted backlash against youth, rather than a more humane and culturally aware adaptation.

It is true graffiti artists do valorise ‘illegals’ as a necessary part of the excitement and adventure of graffiti, however when the opportunity to do a legal piece presents itself, either through the local council, an art gallery, advertising companies or a private commercial venue, they are eager to publicly display their work to a broader audience. They view their work, first and foremost, as an
artistic practice and my research indicates that young people are looking for cultural adoption not abandonment.

(Graffiti artists) tend to see graffiti more broad and would prefer to do legal works in the community, from little centres which have been opening up. Like down at Bondi, there is a youth centre there that actually promotes it (graffiti) for the younger kids, to actually get 'em off the streets and off the railway system. But that was not a typical situation, I doubt it if politicians or groups would congregate in a style of what should be helping little kids, and telling them what is wrong and you should be doing it this way and it will come out a lot better than actually getting a criminal record, where they are worse off, you know?

(Graffiti Artist)

Perhaps, what youth are seeking to control in their creative practice, is not the inheritance of class or the impotence of adolescence but 'the force and expression of other human beings... if you like the work of culture on culture.' (Willis 1990 p 23)

The 'high' or 'elite' cultural practices of painting, sculpture, poetry, drama, dance and music are the domain of the learned 'expert' who is usually an adult. The practice and theory of these disciplines is disseminated down to the young person, creating a construct of student and teacher, learned and unlearned, dominant and dominated. This is the very position youth generated cultures are working to abolish, and to maintain their own cultural status they must assume an authoritative significance and voice for their regionalised cultural capital.

An example from the research data illustrates the already well developed proficiency of these young peoples creative awareness and expertise:

Ah, from the street to the indoors, that is two different atmospheres. In the street you tend to be more open and free in what you decide to do, but when you are
indoors you try to keep it a certain style where people can still recognise what it is and still understand maybe the words or the lettering or the character and have a different mind than what they actually would think. Like one person would probably think “Oh, this is a good way, he has done this good”, but another person might come down and say “he’s done this good, but he has done this good in this way”. You always get different views from other people, not the one type of view.

(Graffiti Artist)

Adult centred cultural activities, while robbing them of hard won cultural space, at the same time seem by comparison to their own youth generated culture, quite pedestrian and out-of-date to the young people.

For youth generated cultures, the self expression found in adult centred cultural practice, while its methods are...

...recognised and unequivocally acknowledged as legitimate, skilful and sophisticated ... self expression is itself equivocally dealt with...the principle of self expression is usually supported but its practice is often not...Rather the idea of the artistic is deployed as a vehicle for moral lessons about self expression, individuality and personal integrity.

(Australia Council 1991 Part 4 p13)

The idea of self expression is valuable, however the practice is hardly ever really encouraged and the corollary is that young people see more scope within their own youth generated cultures for self expression than adult centred artistic expression allows. Within youth generated culture self expression is a means to personal identity, it is a method of establishing cultural capital and an entree into the broader cultural milieu. ‘A culturally learned sense of the powers of the self is what makes the self in connecting it to others and to the world. In many ways this is a question of cultural survival for many young people’ (Willis 1990 p12).
What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems which are the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore their mobilization and demobilization:

(Bourdieu 1984 p479)

Young people behold a traditional culture and see very few codes within that culture that they have been part of in terms of construction, either through their home environment or their education, therefore they lack an affiliation with the structure and language of the dominant culture. This disconnectedness leaves them bewildered and isolated. They need to belong to and contribute to their world in a social and cultural way, so they make their own meanings and codes, codes that are often so complex that we need an interpreter to understand them.

So the position of power is reversed and those within dominant culture are denied access to the construction of the codes within youth generated culture and can only, without an interpreter, guess at what is signified by the young peoples behaviour and creative expression.

It is this reversal of the cultural roles of dominant and dominated that is most significant in the analysis of youth generated culture, because it is within this reversal that youth find their agency and are enabled to speak, with a descriptive language so loaded with meaning their cultural input becomes a distinctive genre with significant form.

**The Aesthetic Dimension**

Within The Australia Council publication on youth and the arts, *Ideas Facts and Futures*, the researchers made the point that:

questions of cultural taste and the discussion of relative value were central to the lives of the young people we interviewed, and - as we expected - that these issues
played a central role in the selective formation of identity and the intra-group discrimination.

(Part 4 p10)

We can attempt to identify the creative practice of youth generated culture through cultural definitions, while at the same time, we can find value in the artistic claims of youth generated culture through the materiality of their cultural practice.

My findings show that it is within an aesthetic dimension that youth generated cultural pedagogy starts, although aesthetic discourse is camouflaged by symbols, codes and structures not readily accessible to the mainstream.

When people perceive the world they perceive, without knowing it, the superimposed shape of their own mind, and things/objects can only be meaningful in so far as they find a place within that shape. Structuralist argument contends that not only do people create societies and institutions in their own mind’s image, but these in turn create people. (Hawkes 1977)

The Russian formalist, Shklovsky states that the purpose of a work of art is to force us to change our mode of perception. Perception, Shklovsky claims, becomes automatic and art develops a variety of techniques to impede perception, or call attention to the act of perception. Shklovsky’s theory of ‘defamiliarisation’, where the techniques of art are employed to disrupt the habitual way of thinking; to make the familiar seem strange, is useful in that it enables the perception of objects to exists as aesthetic objects, with qualities similar to that of works of art. (Hawkes 1977)

Also appropriate is the type of literary ‘deconstruction’ practiced by Barthes and Derrida, where the artwork or text was seen not as an object but the space between the object and the viewer (Milner 1991). This space was made up of endlessly proliferating meanings which had no stable point of origin, nor of closure. Derrida coined the neologism ‘differance’ to imply that within meaning there is difference and deferral. His construct of signifier continually deferring, not to the
signified, but to other signifiers, meant that meaning was constantly deferred and entailed an endless indeterminancy.

Wild style Graffti, a composition of text hidden within a pictorial maze, operates at this level with meaning continually evolving:

Public is something you do so everyone can read it, not just graffiti artists, whereas private wild style, (only) most graffiti artists can read it...it’s like our private society.

(Graffiti artist)

It is suggested that the methodologies within most aesthetic discourse are only capable of yielding truncated, self-referential meaning and this is recognised as having certain limitations with regard to youth generated cultures, where cultural practice is enmeshed with the young people’s social and economic environment.

Which brings us to postmodernism... for, however else we might view the postmodern, there can be little doubt that postmodernist art results from, the collapse, precisely of that antithesis, between high and low, elite and popular. (Milner 1991)

Postmodernism is not so much a theory of art (or anything else) as a set of movements which describe themselves in relation to Modernism. The prefix ‘post’ means ‘being after’.

...it seems to me essential to grasp ‘postmodernism’ not as a style, but rather as a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and co-existence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features. Consider for example, the powerful alternative position that postmodernism is itself little more than one more stage of modernism proper...it may indeed be conceded that all the features of postmodernism...can be detected, full-blown, in this or that preceding modernism

(Jameson 1984 p 56)
The dissolution of this distinction between high and low, typifies all postmodernist debate. Jameson is careful however, to distinguish postmodern realities from the modern by emphasising 'the very different positioning of postmodernism in the economic system of late capitalism, and beyond that, to the transformation of the very sphere of culture in contemporary society'. (Jameson 1984 p 57)

But the postmodern debate has essentially become a cultural dominant and the postmodern...‘the force field in which very different kinds of cultural impulses...must make their way’ (1984 p57) This force field incorporates post-industrialist, consumerist and post-capitalist realities and is characterised by mass media; new post-industrial technologies; mass marketing; an increasing mass market affluence and new fast systems of transport and communication.

Therein exists the possibility that these characteristics in turn produce what Eco (1987) terms 'hyperreality', where reality is simulated and all signs become self referential. It is contended that relativism takes place within a fictitious reality, but by virtue of application, the relationships become real, until finally art ceases to be a separate reality and enters the hyper world of production and reproduction so that everything, even the everyday practices of people, fall under the sign of ‘art’ and become aesthetic. (Featherstone 1991)

...we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in the object, unaccompanied as yet by any perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace. (Jameson 1984 p80).

Jameson maintains that the evolution of technology is developing at a pace which has outstripped our capacity to assign its' implications symbolic and/or cultural meaning. Alternatively technology can be seen as a 'culture' in itself and incapable of being subsumed in our cultural constructs.

To avoid this sense of dysfunction, Jameson's approach builds on the idea of 'cognitive mapping' which was developed, in the practical
sense, "to enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of the city's structure as a whole" (1984 p89-90). He maintains that this practice of locating oneself in a physical city by means of monuments, natural boundaries, built perspectives etc. can be transposed into ideology, whereby the subject can represent their imaginary relationship to their real conditions of existence by means of social class and national or international contexts. Jameson insists that the postmodern debate - 'whether apologia or stigmatization' - is a political stance on multinational capitalism (1984 p55). The implication is that if we are to locate ourselves in an increasingly technological world we must embrace postmodernism as a functional theory.

Featherstone (1991) claims one of the merits of Fredric Jameson's work is that he seeks to walk this particular tightrope: to treat the postmodern seriously and understand it as a sign of major cultural transformation while at the same time attempting to explain it in terms of social processes.

For critical theory to have an effectiveness in any other way than pure epistemology, it must engage in the given determinants of its discourse. As Janet Wolff, tells us, 'art criticism itself, although operating within a relatively autonomous discourse, is never innocent of the political and ideological processes in which that discourse has been constituted' (1981 p143).

Postmodernism, as Jameson describes it, is a useful analytical theory in describing and understanding the framework in which youth generated cultures operate, although it is acknowledged that there are problems with Jameson's placement of culture within late capitalism in that he employs an emphasis of cultural experiences over cultural practice.

He is also convinced that the present aesthetic modes of pastiche and the creation of the simulacrum (the identical copy for which no original exists) contributes significantly to the waning of historicity (the historical genuineness of events). As a consequence of an overabundance of manufactured cultural experiences rather than a
personal and community based cultural practice, Jameson argues, we are becoming increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experiences.

From the analysis of data in the Case Studies, Jameson's assertion that we are becoming increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experiences is dissipated by the regionally idiosyncratic interpretation of imported cultural experience, by youth generated cultures in western Sydney.
THE CASE STUDIES.

METHODOLOGY

One of the outcomes of this study has been the questioning of social and cultural systems. The questioning of existing systems may well lead to a reconstituting of the symbolic hierarchy, in favour of disparate groups. It is true that the opening up of new cultural categories provides a space to introduce new readings, interpretations and translations which may well lead to the 'institutionalisation of new pedagogies to guide initiatives' (Featherstone 1991 p56). Youth generated cultures in western Sydney are, at this present point in time, in the process of institutionalising new pedagogies.

For a clearer understanding of the regional environment of the youth generated cultures in this study, a profile of Western Sydney is provided from the Social Indicators, 1991, prepared by the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme or WSAAS.

The estimated population of Western Sydney, according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, totalled 1,355,100 which is 36% of the total Sydney region. When compared with other large urban areas in Australia, this is the third biggest region after Sydney and Melbourne and is slightly bigger than Brisbane. From 1981 to 1990 there was a 17% growth in population in the Western Sydney region. This rate of growth exceeds the Sydney region rate of growth of 11.5%.

Western Sydney has a young population, as at June 1989, the region had more younger people (under 29 yrs) and less older people (over 40 yrs) than the Sydney average. Growth rates in young adults in Western Sydney has exceeded Sydney growth rates by 5%.

The Western Sydney region is home to 48% of Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island population. The proportion of non-English speaking background people is 19%, this is slightly higher than the rest of Sydney.

The Western Sydney region has a slightly higher percentage of families with incomes less than $15,000 - that is poorer families (as at the 1986 Census), compared with Sydney as a whole.
The unemployment rate for males (as at February, 1991) varied from a high of 14.5% in Fairfield/Liverpool to a low of 6% in Outer Western Sydney. The unemployment rate for females varied from a high of 13% in Fairfield/Liverpool to a low of 5% in Outer Western Sydney. These figures compare with the Sydney average of 8% unemployment for both males and females. From available figures young people bear the brunt of unemployment, with 38% of 15-19 year olds unemployed in Fairfield/Liverpool and 30% in Canterbury/Bankstown unemployed.

A summary of the characteristics of Western Sydney are:

- growing population
- a young population
- low density housing
- higher dependency ratios (due, in the main to the higher proportion of children under the age of 14)
- a considerable proportion of Sydney’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- a slightly higher proportion of non-English speaking background people including new arrivals
- marginally more lower income families
- 39% of Sydney’s labour force
- a young labour force
- a lower rate of labour force participation
- a higher rate of children dependent on benefits and pensions than the whole of NSW.

**Ethnographic research**

The methods used to obtain data for this thesis were largely descriptive. There were two stages of data collection. First, data was collected and synthesised from a variety of secondary source material - journal articles, government papers, media reports and books. This literature was analysed to determine what had already been done in this area and to identify the major issues raised by the writers and researchers.

Next a series of descriptive case studies were conducted using interview techniques and ethnographic research methods. In order
to lend verisimilitude to the data I had to get behind the more public presentation young people are inclined to give an adult and meet them on their own ground, where they practiced their youth generated cultures. Therefore I used an ethnographic approach to observation, gathering data and conducting interviews. I took a position of comparative detachment, using objectivity and sympathy in observing and recording all I saw and heard. I was, as Junker and Gold describe (Hammersley 1993) 'a complete observer' whose identity, when asked, was openly that of a researcher, but for the main I simply wandered around and conducted myself in a manner similar to the participants.

The areas I determined to be representative of Western Sydney were Bankstown, Penrith and Fairfield and sought originally to interview subjects from these areas. Most of my subjects however, were eventually contacted through word of mouth and as one contact led to another I found I was drawing on a much larger sample of Western Sydney than the three suburbs I originally intended to focus on.

I conducted recorded interviews at meeting places chosen by the participants; some were at their schools, and others at their places of display and promotion, such as the streets, the railway lines, parks, shopping centres, parking lots and the discos.

I gathered field notes on their behaviour, fashion and language styles, while they were in the process of meeting and communicating with their colleagues.

At first, during the observation stage, I simply walked around the venue where the young people gathered, looking at what was going on and listening. Later I conducted informal interviews, in the main with groups, as the young people felt most at ease in a group, or with individuals when they felt comfortable to talk alone. I represented myself openly as a student conducting research on the creative processes involved in youth generated cultures.
Some issues I wanted to explore were:

- where they got their ideas from, and how did they develop the ideas.
- how did they make decisions with regard to constructing objects or performances in their cultural practice.
- how did they further their knowledge about their cultural practice.
- how their peers, family, school and society regarded them.
- what was the material relationship of their cultural practice.

These issues were introduced into the interviews during the natural flow of our conversations. Later the transcripts were re-read by the participants and transcription errors were noted and corrected. To analyse the data the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990) were used to identify central themes that emerged. This process was applied to the transcripts, field notes and images of each separate group before being applied to all four groups.

In the analysis of the interviews it became apparent that my professional teaching techniques of eliciting answers interfered with the validity of some of the responses, however there is great value in the majority of the data collected. Of course, I cannot simply assume that the material I gathered was all that ‘went on’ in the particular group I was interviewing. Therefore, when analysing the data I maintained a critical perspective in regard to the relationship between researcher and subjects.

There was a sense among the young people I interviewed, that talking about them, and what they were interested in and thought about was a novelty, and they exhibited their sense of pride in their cultural practice quite openly because someone wanted to listen and understand. This position of me as student and the young people as teachers also contributed to their sense of owning the subject material that was being discussed. Once they realised that I was
there amongst them to learn and not to judge they warmed to me and were sympathetic and appreciative.

Textual analysis

After gathering audio recordings and photographic and video images of the objects and performances produced in youth generated culture, I applied a textual analysis to determine the connection of the objects or performances to the overall cultural practice. I determined the process by which those objects and performances were constructed and how the destruction of existing codes from mainstream culture resulted in the reconstruction of new codes for youth generated culture.

Through the transformation of an initial set of items, such as clothing, dance, car parts, language - defined against the presentation of these items in mainstream culture, youth generated cultures produce a collective meaning. They did this by using the process of bricolage as it applied to the appropriation and new coding of the initial items.

These messages or meanings were read by other participants in youth generated cultures, but are not so easily read by the mainstream. This process of obfuscation allows youth to retain the agency of their cultural practice.
THE FOUR GROUPS

The four groups I researched were graffiti artists, street machiners, street dancers and skate board and in-line skaters or rollerbladers. All four groups are extremely visually oriented. For all groups the initial approach to their own cultural practice is through a visual critique of what they perceive. The young people spend a great deal of time standing around looking at the cultural objects and performances of their group, complimenting and criticising the value of what they see. They look closely at what is being worn, how it is being worn and how the overall appearance tells something of the cultural practice the person is involved in. They look for emergence of new signs and symbols and also look to see how they can construct new signs and symbols.

The street machiners.

I met with the street machiners at local garages in their neighbourhood and at a well attended meetings they have on Saturday nights at an empty car lot on Parramatta Road, Auburn. The interviews at the Parramatta Road venue are broken up into two consecutive Saturday nights because the first interview attempt was cut short by a massive police raid on the young people gathered together to display their cars and talk cars to others.

The street machiners, like the skaters are an extended, homogenous group, who mingle in large crowds to show off their cars. They talk to each other with a remarkable degree of equality and support. Anyone who owns a street machine is regarded as an equal, whether they are 16 or 25 years old. The young boys look to the older boys to teach them and advise them and the older boys are proud and supportive of the younger one’s effort and attempts at constructing a street machine. There is a general understanding that street machining is an expensive, time consuming cultural practice and you need dedication and commitment to get your machine out of the garage and onto the street.

The camaraderie is a distinctive element of the street machining alliance. This companionship means they can more readily facilitate work on their cars. One person may have panel beating skills, while another has spray painting equipment and yet another may be very
good with motors. They network and barter to exchange skills and build up their knowledge. The car represents the street machiner's ability to learn from others and apply those learnt skills. They regard their cars as the ultimate achievement.

Because these cars take so much money and time to prepare, the young people involved in street machining don’t mix drinking with showing off their cars. In contrast to popular stereotyping, it was testimony to the precedence of street machining as a creative practice rather than a rebellious one, to find no alcohol at any of the meetings I attended.

The group are low key in what they wear and low key in how they present themselves, preferring their car to be the centre of attention and the symbol of who they are. As a rule they drive moderately when they are in the public eye, partly to allow plenty of time for the public to view their cars and partly due to a constant police presence, which is very much a part of the cultural practice of street machining.

Speed and tricks are reserved for the out of the way, private streets in industrial estates and the more rural streets of the outer suburbs of Western Sydney. A street machiner who disregards this unwritten code of a subdued public presentation while keeping the more unrestricted display private, is thoroughly denounced as a ‘hoon’ or ‘lair’.

The cars are always immaculate. Some of the cars belonging to younger boys are basic in their appearance while others have had much money and time lavished on them and absolutely glow with chrome and deep, rich duco paint jobs. The upholstery is soft vinyl or leather and the carpets are sumptuous and deep and, in the case of vans, may go all the way over the inside of the roof and down the sides. The gear stick often has an individualised knob and there is sometimes a chromed badge of the owners name or the nick name of the car, on the dash board or on the outside of the car. The motor is tuned to perfection and very clean. Everything is attended to with great attention to detail and a lot of care as the car is the focus of visual scrutiny and the symbol of the street machiner’s identity.
**Graffiti artists.**

This group was the most covert, because graffiti is cloaked in a mantle of public disapproval. This disapproval continues despite the attempts by many graffiti artists (they choose the term 'artist') to lift the practice into a more creative and pictorial cultural practice.

The graffiti artist's dialogue was scattered with bitter comments on society, their school and the police. It was commonly felt that these institutions were not at all supportive and could see no virtue in the creative practice of graffiti or 'aerosol art' as the young people prefer to call it. Aerosol art refers to the more pictorial images the artists paint and spray on legal places, rather than the tags and slogans sprayed illegally on trains and public buildings.

I met with the graffiti artists individually, at their homes, or at their schools.
I only met with a group on one occasion, when they had a paid job painting the outside of a youth drop-in centre in a local suburb.

They were reluctant at first to be open with me. Even though I declared myself to be supportive of their cultural practice, they felt ill at ease and under threat to some degree, such is the influence of the discrimination levelled against graffiti.

When they did start to tell me about their work and saw that I responded with a knowledge of visual art practice and it's relationship to graffiti they were much more open and revealing in their conversation. We then spoke as one artist to another, rather than adult and adolescent.

As with the traditional artists, graffiti artists spend a lot of time on their own working out ideas, colours and styles. They practice at home, in their bedroom or the garage, for long hours, refining a particular piece before they display it to their friends. Sometimes they work through ideas in a small group, sharing particular skills within the group. Someone may have a talent for sketching the style of the letters in a piece, while another may decide on the colours.
When they execute an illegal piece they are very co-ordinated and operate like a squad - hence graffiti group names like Inner City Crew, Def Crew, All City Team etc. One person is outlining the piece while another is filling in the colour behind him, another is changing the 'caps' or nozzles on the cans and picking out the right colours while another is keeping a look out for the authorities. An illegal piece two metres by four metres can take as little as 10 minutes to execute. Of course detail and finish is sacrificed to speed and time considerations.

'Legals' can take much longer, partly due to the unfamiliar and daunting experience of painting under the scrutiny of the public eye and partly because the graffiti artists can include a lot more imagery in their work and devote more attention to detail and finish.

Graffiti artists carry scrapbooks around with them, sketching ideas as they occur, in much the same tradition as that of the artist's notebook. The ideas the young people develop come from experiences they have had or other works they have seen, sometimes the ideas are visual and sometimes they are textual. The meaning of a word may have significance (a word such as 'freedom'), and through a type of iconography the word will be transformed into a pictorial piece.

These scrapbooks are in themselves a fine display of the talent and expertise of the young people who produce them. The work in the scrapbook is executed with precision and careful attention to form, colour, line and composition. Scale is a major consideration in constructing a piece, as the young people initially work out their ideas using small drawings and then have to scale up the final work many times over. An art teachers dream come true would be to have their pupils put in as much time and effort on their art work as these young people do.

Graffiti artists travel in groups to promote their work and collect ideas. They often carry their scrapbooks or a series of photographs with them to display their work. In their groups they then talk about what they have seen and how their work was received by other
groups and develop up their knowledge and skills from these excursions.

Their fashion is similar to the skaters although not so flamboyant. They wear the prerequisite 'Nike' label shoes, jackets and caps and baggy trousers. These fashion codes are not as flamboyant as the skaters; graffiti artists often dress more casually and low key so they don't draw attention to themselves. This is no doubt due to the 'profile' police have constructed of the graffiti 'vandals' in an effort to control and discredit the activity. A thorough description of the graffiti artists fashion code has been circulated in the Graffiti Masquerades as Art (1989) package the Police Department prepared for distribution to their members.

I found in the graffiti artists I talked to, a strange mixture of daring and reserve. They were at once bold and challenging while at the same time furtive and withdrawn in their personal presentation, even in group situations. I can make little of this observation except to say that it may be the result of societal condemnation mixed with the typical contemplative practice of the visual artist.

**Street dancers.**

The dancers are a lively and energetic group, however their cultural practice usually takes place at night so they are not as publicly obvious as the skaters. I met with the dancers in their homes and in discos.

Like the graffiti artists they spend long hours in their bedrooms, practising dance steps and making up combinations that they can perform in public. They watch the dancing on video clips closely to learn new steps they can incorporate into their own style. They then transport these interpretations out onto the disco floor or the shopping mall and perform them in a group situation. When they perform in the street, whoever wanders by is their audience; when they are on the disco floor their audience are their peers.

Their clothing is extremely flamboyant. The boys, as a rule, are dressed more adventurously than the girls. They wear lots of silk,
because silk moves so well. Silk shirts, silk ultra baggie pants, silk vests and scarves, silk ties and bow ties. Their hair cuts are often shaved sculptures which have a lot in common with the sculpture of topiarists who clips shrubs, trees and hedges into unusual shapes. Their shoes are soft joggers or pumps that are light for dancing. The girls wear skin tight body suits and slacks or skirts.

The younger street dancers start their experimentation at home and then move out onto the neighbourhood street. They form groups known as Home Boys because they hang around their home town and are very territorial about who moves in on their turf. They have a truncated style of speech, that sounds mono-syllabic and staccato, and is extremely hard for the uninitiated to understand.

When the young people first move out into the public venues they attend under age discos or dance outside the entrances of the over age discos, or in shopping malls. They carry their music with them on big tape recorders as the rap dancers did.

Unlike the rap dancers, who often danced alone and performed steps that were gymnastic in nature, street dancers dance in tightly choreographed groups, with a sequence of steps that are in sync with the music. Their public presentations, as with all the other groups, are intended to promote their cultural practice and facilitate an exchange of ideas and styles.

The skaters.

I met with the skaters at a skating demonstration held at a park in Mona Vale. This venue is not in western Sydney, but is one of the few ramps available and the young people from western Sydney travel there to skate. The interview was conducted by one of the more 'expert' and well regarded skaters and the questions and responses in this interview are grounded in the banter more familiar to the young people. For this reason this particular interview with the skaters is rich in the performative language discussed in the section titled Cultural Environment. Video was used to document the skaters as movement was intrinsic to their cultural practice.
The skaters, more than any other group were performance oriented and overtly public in their display. They were also more keen to be photographed than any other group. This is probably due, as with the dancers, to the body/self being primary to their cultural practice.

When they skate along the street they call to each other, describing moves they are about to perform and indicating areas of the built environment on which they will attempt tricks. Along with the speed and movement, this calling out to each other also attracts attention and makes the skaters very public performers.

Among the group, there was continual banter and comment on the relative value of each move or trick and how that move was executed with style or was not yet up to scratch. There was no ‘bagging’ or put downs of other skaters and this is because they recognise that skating involves some degree of danger and personal injury if one is to extend their ability and try for a higher degree of skill. The boys joked with each other and were very supportive of any attempt at a difficult move that may have failed and resulted in injury.

Skaters need to be fit and alert and consequently do not take drugs or drink alcohol very much at all, and never when they skate. They are proud of their clean, healthy bodies and say the only drug they are into is adrenalin.

Skaters as a group, are an extended, homogenous group, where young people are continually coming and going and different people take their place on the skateboard ramp as others move off to let them have their turn.

Their language, more than any other group, is heavily encoded and derived primarily from the rap of African Americans. The skaters have hand gestures and body movements that accompany their stream of consciousness-like dialogue. Although there are a great deal of technical phrases in a skaters language, they also include coded phrases that describe life outside the skaters immediate world. This inclusion of the world outside into their own world is distinctive to the skaters and can be seen as a legacy of the black
American rap, where language is not constructed merely to describe a cultural practice but to describe a particular experience of life.

Commodification is most obvious in the skaters clothing. The clothing describes a flamboyant approach to life, designer label hats, colourful baggie shorts, long loose tee shirts, often with slogans or designer labels on them, and their shoes are something to behold! Skaters shoes are the piece de resistance, brightly coloured joggers made of suede and leather, specially styled for use on a skateboard ramp, with velcro flaps and ankle straps to give support and a sleek finish. There are no loose laces to trip them or hard soles to hurt them when they fall.

They monogram their skates and skateboards, they paint symbols and slogans on them and always have them at their side like a complementary companion to their overall style. They enjoy reading skating magazines, looking at skating videos and films, anything that extends the construction of their world. As they say, skating is a consciousness not just a magazine.
THE FINDINGS ON YOUTH GENERATED CULTURES IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Ask not why is their culture not like ours, but what is their culture like?
(Willis 1990 p9)

The analysis of the case study material provides a rich and complex picture of how youth generated cultures in Western Sydney initially develop their particularly regional creative expression, how they turn aesthetics into style, how they teach each other about style through their own form of pedagogy and how they find validation for their cultural contributions within the economic environment of the market place.

My intention is not to romanticise youth generated cultures within notions of opposition. Although I draw on areas of class difference and hegemony, my overriding impression is that resistance or opposition is not an essential instrumentality of the young people I studied.

Youth in Western Sydney have become increasingly alienated from government and bureaucratic thinking, and politics in general, because the messages they get from these authorities are dismissive and oppressive. This has shaped young peoples attitudes in the western suburbs of Sydney to a significant degree and their responses to their perceived position in society are varied. Some do involve themselves in political action while others use public spaces and social institutions in an alternative way, and this is the case with the youth generated cultures under discussion in this research.

Young people in Western Sydney live collectively as a means of establishing self identity and group identity, as well as a means of dealing with the various social and legal authorities who have an influence on that identity formation. Their cultural practice is a reflection of their cognisance of the need to claim social/cultural space. Youth have identified a resistant cultural structure and determined a way of becoming part of that structure through cultural contribution rather than cultural opposition.

Mike Brake (1980) defines four areas of collective subcultural response to deal with the external world: delinquent subcultures; cultural rebellion; reformist movements and political militancy. My study shows that the young people involved in youth generated cultures fall between cultural rebellion
(which is down played) where culture is used against the prevailing hegemony; and reformism where pressure groups are formed to extend existing values and protect specific subcultural groups. Tolerance within the existing hegemony is appealed to, with the intention of highlighting the similarities between both groups.

This study of youth generated cultures makes no claim for delinquency. This label is an external position applied by those outside the practice. To determine a clear profile of the young people involved in youth generated cultures, it was essential to see them as they saw themselves. Graffiti artists do acknowledge that within the early developmental stages of creative practice, risk, illegality and aggression are issues. The aggression is not a pre requisite to the practice but occurs through retribution for bombing another persons work (showing disrespect) or through the overtly antagonistic response by the police. As they develop creatively they move very quickly away from that environment towards what can be seen as creative practice more acceptable to dominant culture.

Within the groups I studied, their recognition of the practical and aesthetic value of objects, images and technologies from mainstream culture; their support and promotion of intra-group teaching and sharing and their commitment to creative practice as their primary goal, profiles them as operating within a ‘conflict’ that has more to do with the high-low culture debate, than with delinquency. From work already done on youth cultures, particularly by the Birmingham School, what may have previously been considered delinquency can now been discussed within a subcultural frame.

In a fascinating way the objects and performance of youth generated cultures stand out because they have not, as yet, established authority in their own right, within dominant culture. From an hegemonic point of view, youth generated culture has been approached in the past much like the piece that just won't fit in the cultural jigsaw; the piece that is the wrong shape, the wrong colour but in sociological terms, everyone recognises it comes out of the same box as all the other pieces. Society is confounded and threatened by the indomitable nature of youth generated cultures while cultural theorists are intrigued by their anomalies and compelled to understand how the pieces really do fit.
The youth generated cultures of Western Sydney are concerned with winning space within the hegemonic order and through youth generated cultural practice, issue symbolic challenges to the structure of dominant culture.

While the work of Paul Willis is primarily concerned with specific groups of young peoples creative production it does not engage, necessarily, with the Gramscian perspective on 'popular culture as a site of struggle between 'the people' and 'the power-bloc' (McGuigan 1990 p118). Within my own work I pursue a more connected relationship between youth generated cultures and that 'power-bloc' and suggest access to the dominant hegemony is enabled through the creative practice of consumption and symbolic reinterpretation of market goods.

The particular forms of youth generated culture I am looking at are predominantly male - they are male dominated but they do not engender the same behaviour as other spectacular youth cultures where bravado and aggression are very much a part of the display, such as the rockers of the 1970s, skin heads and punks of the 1980s (Jefferson 1975) and street gangs and football fans (Robins and Cohen 1978).

The young people involved in youth generated cultures do not find adult centred cultural activity sufficiently rewarding. These young people are of the view that adult centred activities do not encourage experimentation, freedom of expression or most importantly the personal construction of self identity.

For youth in Western Sydney, access to cultural forms deemed as 'high art' must entail some negotiation of their distinctive group practice and their economic reality. To be involved in gallery visits, painting classes, creative writing groups and music lessons means spending money and performing individually. For young people privileged with dominant cultural capital as well as economic capital these cultural activities are a viable option. For the youth of Western Sydney they are not, because these areas of 'high art' represent an arena of unfamiliarity, insecurity and implied disapproval.

The moral lesson of adult centred cultural activity is convoluted. Although self expression and personal creativity are lauded, both self expression and personal creativity exist only within the confines of an adult concept of cultural practice. Therefore the message that is ultimately delivered to youth is “do as
I say not as I do". In terms of dominant culture, it would seem that the creative processes within youth generated cultures are legitimate but the objects and performances they create are not.

It is therefore structurally predetermined that youth must generate their own cultural environment to meet their needs, and consequently youth generated culture is a product of necessity, identity and creativity.

In the following sections I will explain a) how youth generated cultures develop their creative practice; b) how they critique it and disseminate it and; c) how they find their place within the dominant culture.

**YOUTH GENERATED CULTURAL PRACTICE**

You think us mad. We are instead, the primitives of a new, completely transformed sensibility."

(Marinetti, ed. I Manifesti del Futurismo, 1914)

The avant garde art forms of Duchamp and his readymades, the performances of Marinetti and the Russian and Italian Futurists, the performance art of Joseph Beuys and Herman Nitsch and the happenings of Alan Kaprow and Yoko Ono (Henri 1974) can be compared to that of youth generated cultural practice, by virtue of their complex construct of performance, discourse, fashion, language and style, which include traditional notions of art and culture.

Of those artists mentioned above, indeed their mainstream audiences may have questioned their sanity, but they would also have had to acknowledge that there was limited opportunity on their part for disinterestedness or a simple aesthetic response with these cultural practices. The artists transgressed the clearly defined notions of aesthetic objects or practices in that they challenged a cultural norm and forced their audience to acknowledge a cultural politic present in the work. This required of their audience a further conceptual connection that demanded an inward gaze at the institution of art and culture.

By 1937 the utopian visions of the Futurists and Surrealists was largely undone by a growing specialisation in art practice that restored both movements to the art world. (Connor 1992) Ultimately, the avant garde
movement was never seen to move beyond the traditional art establishment. Their performance and discourse was intended for the cultural elite, albeit, clothed in what was often termed, art of the people (Goldberg 1978).

The objects and conceptualisation produced within the avant garde always retained the claim of ‘art objects’ or ‘art events’. The poems and ‘performance for feet only’ of Marinetti, the urinals and hat racks of Duchamp, the fat and felt of Beuys were all produced by ‘artists’ with the intention of being recognised by the art community.

Modernism, whether it began before the turn of the 20th Century or very shortly after, always had as its theme the notion of a redemptive function of art and an antagonism towards mass culture. Concurrently, whether one regards avant - garde culture as integral to modernism or in opposition, it also upheld the redemptive function of high art as an antidote to popular culture. Youth generated culture cannot be described as avant-garde because youth does not hold to this doctrine of art having a redemptive function, youth don’t accede to the ‘grand institution’ of art.

We want to be us, we want to express ourselves the way we do, we want to be spraying things the way we want to do, we want to draw things the way we want to do, we don’t want to sit in a room with a canvas on a board in front of us and paint with a paint brush...we don’t want to be different to rebel against other people, we just want to be different because we want to be different, alright!

(Graffiti Artist)

Youth generated cultures are, however, involved in a creative process. A full and comprehensive explication of creativity is not the focus of this thesis, therefore creativity within this study is meant to imply a process of imagination and inventiveness as well as the application of skills applied within a postmodern context.

Following the logic of James Clifford (in Conner 1992), if the grand institution of art were to adopt the ‘errant child’ of youth generated culture, that very adoption would illustrate that the objects of their creative process only had inherent (aesthetic) value when given authority by the institution, and conversely that aesthetic value was therefore not present in everyday culture.
It therefore becomes obvious that within this discourse on the creative practice of youth generated cultures we need to address the differentiation of 'art and 'culture', and see aesthetic value as process as well as product.

James Clifford suggests art has been traditionally identified with 'the ideal form of the authentic and enduring masterpieces' which are usually the work of a single authorship, and culture lies in the area of collective practice (in Connor 1992 p247).

Connor goes on to say:

In breaking down the strict distinctions between modern and traditional culture, such models also break down, or at least compromise, the interior distinctions between the artistic and the anthropological senses of culture in the West.

(Connor 1992 p250)

Culturological theories of art such as Dickie and Margolis describe, see art as a cultural phenomenon and use words such as 'social practice', 'artistic practice', 'art world', 'social institution', 'cultural entities', 'cultural context', 'artistic convention' etc. (Dziemidok 1988 p7)

Using these terms one can describe the creative activity of youth generated culture as art if the author claims it has qualities of a parallel nature to art i.e it has 'artistic convention'. By that I mean, an idea, elements of design, form and meaning, compositional structure and creative dialogue. The young people I talked to all had a clear concept of their creative practice as having all these elements.

The quotes below are of Street Machiners talking about how they do up their cars - they talk about their choice of engine size, the right colour for their cars and the right wheels for the right look. The decisions they make are based on the specific car they are doing up and their choices relate directly to the shape, model and style of that vehicle. They compare and test their choices with the results they see on other cars and go through a series of decision making processes that are an unmistakable indication that artistic convention is at play.
It's got a 1500 in it at the moment, but I am hoping to put a two litre twin cam fuel injected by about 1600 kilos so as far as that goes you have got no problems with weight, it doesn't take much of an engine....

Depends on the car you see on the road, that's the way you make a choice, what will look good on the car, you can't really say until you see it on the car itself, you get a test colour and match it up to the car, that's about it.

In terms of creative process, it can be said the youth generated cultures swing between detachment of their creative objects and an involvement in process much as the artist does, but the concept I intend to pursue is not whether youth generated cultures produce art, but whether they employ artistic convention in their cultural production. Moreover, that the artistic convention employed has as its foundation art theory, or specifically, aesthetic theory.

To do that I will describe how the objects and performances are produced within youth generated cultures and lead into an aesthetic examination of these objects and performances.

**Marking the landscape**

The focus is on the mobile nature of these young people's cultural practice and its' links with popular culture.

A significant feature of the youth generated cultures is that the participants move through an impersonal space, a space they can slip into and out of, which allows them to see themselves as part of a whole culture while remaining hidden, and apply their distinctive practice of marking the landscape.

Jameson (1984) maintains that our daily life, psychic experience and cultural language, is dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time. He sees this as a result of living within a synchronic, single point in time, where time fragments into a series
of perpetual ‘presents’, rather than a diachronic or historical experience.

It may be said that youth generated cultures operate synchronically, within a series of ‘perpetual presents’ rather than diachronically, with any historical experience. Their creative process is intended to occupy a space rather than a time, and their movement through space occupies a series of presents so to speak. The street machiners, the graffiti artists, the dancers and the skaters, all have an objective of movement through space, and as they move they mark that space.

It’s hanging around with people and ‘going all city’ is getting your name up all over the city, not just your line but everywhere.

(Graffiti Artist)

While youth move, virtually anonymously through these impersonal spaces, they scratch and mark, they paint and dance. Anything to be seen to ‘be’. And more importantly to be who they are and how they chose, for it can be argued that the young people involved in youth generated cultures have a firmer hold on postmodern hyperspace than does the slow moving behemoth of mainstream culture.

The notion of winning space is an important objective for these youth generated cultures. Graffiti is an obvious case in point where tagging as you go is akin to fencing your area. Skateboarders leave wheel tracks and scratches on the sides of buildings and the curb and guttering on the roadside, even safety railings down the side of public steps. The intricate wheel patterns street machiners leave on some of the back roads in the western suburbs of Sydney are intentional signals that at one time, this space was occupied by ‘us’.

This ‘us’, is a position of otherness, that implies youth’s own cultural autonomy. The marks youth leave behind are a signal to society that they have occupied that particular space at one time and they have changed that environment by contributing their cultural symbols to the collection of other cultural symbols within the landscape.
It is saying, "We are Youth, We Exist!".
(Graffiti Artist)

The overt movement/marking phenomena of youth generated cultures can be understood well, within the concept of cognitive mapping put forward by Jameson, who recognised that

...postmodern hyperspace - has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.

(1991 p44)

Youth generated cultures construct a cultural practice or custom of ideas, stylistic aesthetics, fashion and language, and via this practice transport themselves through the spatial realities of their postmodern world.

We all cognitively map our social relationships to local, national and international class realities. Through the regionally specific nature of these youth generated cultures, coming as they do from socio-economic and cultural disadvantage, the young people involved are also cognitively mapping their class realities and how those class realities too, can win space.

Chambers (1986) states that the aesthetic of popular culture is one of mobility and expendability, producing art works on the move, to be viewed on the move and to abandon or throw away at will; a case of immediate participation and expendable criteria.

Popular culture is tuned to the present in terms of forms, tastes and activities and offers a more democratic way of transforming everyday life. As Chambers says, we live through culture not alongside it and we need to examine the realities of the contemporary world to understand its contribution to culture.
Popular art is like the marks on the skin of the urban or metropolitan body. These marks are in themselves as important as the underlying source or unity we might assign to them. For it is on the surface that history intersects with desire, it is there that identities are realised.

(Chambers 1986 p 8)

Youth generated cultures draw heavily on images and objects from popular culture. The fashions, music and language youth generated cultures adopt or adapt are all taken from popular culture. Popular cultural images and performance on TV, video clips, magazines and cartoon books become the earliest educational resource for encouraging critical awareness and creativity.

Normally they have all the same steps because they copied it from television and they just come to the club and each one does a step...(they look at) M.C.Hammer, Vanilla Ice, Prince.

...things seem to change all the time, especially fashions, like Madonna for example was outrageous and another group like Euphoria, their new video clip is more outrageous than Madonna has ever done.

(Street Dancers)

...it just seemed like the greatest thing, like...I saw this movie called Beat Street and that showed kids in the American subway painting trains..

When I was a little kid I like to draw, I liked to watch TV, comics, like any little kid, draw from the characters on the TV, books, posters, anything
like that and then as I got a little bit older I went out with friends and saw new groups and new fads that were coming in and I kept doing my drawings from when I was a little kid

(Graffiti Artists)

Youth generated cultural practice is developed extensively by popular culture, rather than traditional or formal culture. Acknowledging also that our postmodern condition is dominated by spatial issues rather than issues of time or history, we cannot, therefore, avoid the need to adjust traditional modes of understanding youth generated cultures.

**The style of things to come.**

The participants in youth generated culture define who they are in terms of what they do and what they do becomes style. Style is defined as consisting of three main elements:

a) ‘Image’, appearance composed of costume, accessories such as hair-style, jewellery and artefacts

b) ‘Demeanour’ made up of expression, gait and posture. Roughly this is what the actors wear and how they wear it.

c) ‘Argot’ a special vocabulary and how it is delivered.

Brake (1980 p12)

Of course different young people bring different levels of commitment to the manufacture of their personal and group style. It can be a major part of their lives or it can be a hobby or diversion (Hebdige 1979, 1988).
Within youth generated cultures, the means to produce style are found primarily within inter-group pedagogy or self-teaching methods of aesthetic exchange. For example:

It depends on what is done to the car, for example it its got really wide wheels and if they are pushed underneath the guards, that’s called ‘tubbed’, if the motor’s got a super charger on it is called ‘blown’, you can talk about the sort of wheels they’ve got, what sort of paint it is, what colour, you might have a roll bar in it, a roll cage, racing harness, all sorts of things.

(Street Machiner)

The young people critique objects, processes and experiences, and make judgements on their worthiness in terms of stylistic value.

Style expresses a degree of commitment to the particular subculture and a membership of that subculture. It signals a departure from mainstream culture, and defines a group members’ identity outside of their class-ascribed identity. To show that one has ‘style’ the whole collection of attributes that define style must be performed with a sense of ‘presence’ which others within the group may put to the test or challenge at any time.

Well, most graffiti artists wear the ‘defest’ clothes, the best clothes, like Adidas, Nike or expensive sports gear and American sports gear, things that are hard to get. If I saw someone wearing an Australian brand like Tracks or something, I wouldn’t think they were very credible, there is no way I would think they were going to be a good graffiti artist because their clothes haven’t got style. With behaviour, the way you talk, it’s all part of your style as well.

(Graffiti Artist)

Style is a means of claiming status and must be carefully performed lest the presentation of ones style becomes a parody of itself and the
performer becomes merely a dilettante, a ‘try hard’ or ‘toy’ as the skaters and graffiti artists call them.

Style is to be new, make something new for everyone to stand up and look at what you’re doing. Style is to be adventurous and do something of a whole new concept, to be brand new, and if you have that sort of technique and you have the technique you use in the can, you’ve got it made, it’s easy!

(Graffiti Artist)

For youth generated culture, as with artists practicing within a high art milieu such as Oscar Wilde, Marinetti, Salvador Dali and Joseph Beuys, style implies the coexistence of author and style, living the art form and this is indeed where the social meets cultural and significant cultural marks are made.

Fredric Jameson insists that within the postmodern death of the ‘monad’ or single authorship we experience the death of style in the sense of ‘the unique and the personal, the end of the distinctive individual brushstroke’. His approach suggests that while there is no single authorship or ‘self’ at work it must follow there is no-one to experience feelings. Although he is willing to concede that postmodern cultural products may not necessarily be devoid of feelings entirely but that the feelings towards the creative process and its objects are free floating and impersonal. (1984 p 63-64)

My research data tends to contradict Jamesons’ contentions above. The young people involved in youth generated cultures are intensely involved!

…it’s something I put a lot of pride in, like I can finally kinda say “it’s my car”…you know, and I don’t think I’ve cared for anything and respected anything as much as my car. My car means basically everything to me.

(Street Machiner)
To them, their creative output is individual in its origins and provides personal identity. That their creative output joins a collective practice in no way diminishes their individual responses and feeling towards their cultural practice.

...I don't believe there is any satisfaction in letting someone else build your car. There is more satisfaction in seeing it came about because of the things you've done...you will find that probably 90% of the guys have built their own cars...

(Street Machiner)

...it's a way of expressing yourself. I think it is really good, you get out there on the ramp, you can just make your statement through your skating and it says a lot, it's a good way of expressing yourself.

(Skateboarder)

The skateboarders display their creative process in a moving picture with the urban landscape as their canvas. They skate on the street, they skate on ramps, virtually on anything they can find. And how they skate is of primary significance to who they are. Their identity is constructed from their cultural practice; from the skill of skateboarding. From the basic framework of skills they add language and fashion to build a composite 'self' saturated with meaning.

This example of one skater talking to another about his prowess at skateboarding illustrates, through their own language style, the identity and status constructed through their cultural practice:

Seen you go eight man, 'crooked cop' at the Easter Show, on the little ramp too, that was fuckin' wicked...I just want everyone to know that eleven foot is the highest ever recorded air in the
world and this man here has gone nine. That is remarkable.

The composition of meaning inherent in the language, skill and presentation is seen as style. Style is all important as a 'ticket to ride' and you must have it if you are to be assimilated into your chosen cultural practice.

The street machiners also have a style and language that describes who they are. The young people I talked to all knew the technical jargon needed to talk 'cars' and they also knew the modified 'insider' jargon that enabled them effectively engage in dialogue on style:

Basically ground up re-build, worked the motor, worked the gearbox, worked the diff.

Yeah, you can have something that looks like something called Junk Yard and it would go like the clappers...

Not many people like popping bonnets when they run big motors just for the fact that no one wants to know what other people are running...

(Street Machiners)

Style for a street machiner is being 'cool without appearing to be cool'. The only thing that should stand out in the crowd is the car. Personal presentation takes backstage. It falls to other enthusiasts to talk up the car and subsequently its' owner. The concept of 'self' is reflected in the vehicle and reflected in the dialogue it engenders.

Mainly...you’re trying to make the car reflect off you and like to be some kind of hero of the clan, you know, you try and make the car one of the best.

(Street Machiner)
Style depends strongly on the interconnection between young people, their ability to recognise nuance and subtlety, read the codes and symbols within the creative process of the distinctive cultural practices and feed them back in an appropriate form. We need to analyse the processes leading to a sense of identity or 'style'; perceiving style not as something which is fixed but transient, changing, active and continuously coming into being through language, movement and fashion.

**Eclectic collections as cultural products.**

The semiotic appropriation of commodities by youth cultures was much valued by the Birmingham School in their analysis of subcultures. Subcultures were seen as formed by the creative appropriation of commodities, specifically those of youth-oriented fashion and music. Levi-Strauss’s concept of ‘bricolage’ was used to define the practice of - ‘re-ordering and re-contextualisation of objects to communicate fresh meanings within a total system of significances, which already include prior and sedimented meanings attached to the objects used’ (Clarke in Featherstone 1991 p97)

The punk culture, so brilliantly explored by Dick Hebdige is an excellent example of the eclectic practice of bricolage. At their most spectacular punk style embodied ‘objects borrowed from the most sordid of contexts’ Lavatory chains, tampons, razor blades and safety pins worn through the cheek, ear or lip were all grist for the mill in the adornment of the punk image. The perverse and abnormal were valued for their political and social clout. Punk ‘attempted through ‘perterbation and deformation’ to disrupt and reorganise meaning’ (Hebdige 1979 p106 - 107)

Uniquely, youth generated cultural appropriation of styles and objects from the past are combined with very ‘now’ paraphernalia, which is intended to signal their connectedness and place within the postmodern world they are involved in. Their intention is not to reminisce or romanticise the past, or to vilify or degrade it, but draw together those influences and symbols from another discourse which will strengthen their own and help them to ‘think’ their own world.
‘And if a style is to catch on, if it is to become genuinely popular, it must say the right thing at the right time’ (Featherstone 1991 p 122)

Graffiti groups who used to like rap and reggae are now more interested in rock and roll from the 50s, the girls wear peace badges and patches on their jeans like the hippies from the 60s; the street machiners clothing is the iconic flannelette shirt and jeans of the labourer and the cars they choose to work with are older cars from the 70s like Datsuns, Cortinas and Valiants; the street dancer or disco dancer wears the ‘baggies’ or loose fitting pants reminiscent of the zoot suits of the 40s that they combine with state of the art joggers; skaters wear bandanas like the hippies and baggies like the dancers. Of course they all wear the prerequisite designer labels appropriate to their group, like Nike shoes, Stuzzy hats, Vision and Powell tee shirts which identify them with a market style.

Within this eclectic practice signifiers make reference to other signifiers in a circular and indefinite manner much as Derrida proposed, with meaning constantly being deferred. This openness enables rapid change without undue consequence to the overall structure of the creative process. Youth generated culture can still engage in the critique of styles and objects produced by their peers because this practice is grounded in a personally constructed and learnt aesthetic discourse.

This eclectic borrowing is not pastiche as Jameson would have it; ‘blank parody’ and ‘the imitation of dead styles of high modernism’. It would seem Jameson’s disinclination to recognise the distinctively semiotic value of bricolage is concordant with his mourning the demise of ‘the individual subject, along with its formal consequence, the increasing unavailability of the personal style’ (1984 p64-65). Jameson also sees the transformation of reality into images producing a sense of disconnectedness, in an historical sense, ‘which fails to link up to a coherent sequence’ (p58).

The finding show that youth generated cultures display a very real sense of connectedness, within the group, which allows them to also feel an appreciation of the historical aspects of their cultural practice.
...say in the late 60's and 70's they were bringing out all the muscle cars sort of like, if you have a look through history, the Fords and Holdens, they've got muscle cars...There were cars that came out from the factory that were sports cars, there were Hillman sports cars that the average bloke like us could not afford. Like it was about three and a half thousand dollars back then.

(Street Machiner)

Youth generated cultures of today, unlike the Punks and Mods before them, do not project an intentional aspect of violence and aggression as part of their style. But like the Punks and Mods they do draw on objects and styles from the past and modernist styles become postmodern codes.

I maintain that the bad press previous spectacular youth subcultures have engendered, stereotypes and disadvantages the youth generated cultures of this study. In an earlier paper on the Mods written for the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1974) Hebdige indicates that there was a significant abuse of amphetamine drugs as part of the style of the Mods. This contributed to a 'nervous, insecure, anxious behaviour, which often erupted into violent behaviour. The Punks too, were noted for their overt harassment of anything or anyone seen to be involved in 'the establishment' and mainstream society. They even turned dancing into a robotic activity of mindlessness, thereby eliminating the usual personal expression and creative involvement.

A societal pathology has been established by the spectacular anti-social behaviour of sub-cultures like the Punks, Skinheads and the colour gangs, that may be extremely hard to break down. The violence and drug abuse within these particular sub-cultures becomes a paradigm for reading other sub-cultures and this profile of youth sub-cultures as 'trouble' becomes a proforma response which is then applied to all youth sub-cultures.

Well, you know, people look at an adolescent and they think 'oh they are not that smart, they are so
young, they are not mature yet, they can't do anything right!". Also we get picked on by the police for just being teenagers. Police don't really go around picking on adults, but they get us, beat us up.

(Graffiti Artist)

This type of stereotyping and perceptual habituation is a persistent problem within the social aggregate and can be likened to the frustrating and ongoing attempts by feminism to break down the patriarchal pathologies and construct a more equal gender coexistence.

The aesthetic dimension in context.

Willis insists that youth generated cultures are already creative, already symbolically active, producing meanings of aesthetic value, but for Willis the aesthetic dimension does not lie in the object or consumer product but in its use.

Willis develops the concept of ‘grounded aesthetics’ to demonstrate his point. Grounded aesthetics implies value in everyday use rather than rare and abstract value. (Willis 1990)

Grounded aesthetics can be more usefully defined as aesthetics of the everyday or aestheticisation of the everyday which allows for the materiality within aesthetic theory to be developed and discussed within the discourse on the everyday practice of human life.

Through the human universality of ‘the everyday’ there exists the temptation to sentimentalise the everyday creative practice of ordinary people at the expense of the prior existence of the materiality of the cultural object or images. This means that the objects produced within the creative practice of the everyday become divorced from their aesthetic dimension and we forget to critique them for their own sakes.
The findings of my research indicated the need to acknowledge an aesthetic dimension to youth generated culture in order to describe the background in which pedagogical discourse starts. To understand how aesthetic discourse finds a place within youth generated cultures it is necessary to make reference to the objects produced. The young people apply a critical discourse to these objects which is based on an instrumentalist aesthetic of the function of cultural objects.

John Dewey's works on ethics and value theory, *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922. Holt: New York) and *The Quest for Certainty* (1929 New York: Minton, Balph. ch 10,) allowed Monroe Beardsley to develop an instrumentalist theory of value. This meant that, aesthetic choices are always relative to particular situations in which an end-in-view is fixed. Aesthetic choices and deliberations become a means to that end and within the means to an end lies aesthetic value. Further, decisions about aesthetic value are experimental and justified by empirical knowledge. (Beardsley 1981)

Aesthetic value can imply 'good' or 'bad', particularly in response to the success of the *function* of a work, but our aesthetic vocabulary is much richer than this, encompassing an almost endless variety of value judgements. Words such as elegant, cluttered, sparse, busy etc. are words we use in everyday speech to describe aesthetic responses. It is recognised, however that the aesthetics of youth generated cultures is expressed in language, symbols and codes not readily accessible to mainstream culture.

The young people in youth generated cultures develop words such as 'def', 'rad', 'mad' and 'bad' - these words all mean the same thing basically - they mean something is very good, and they imply a value judgement. From the quotes below we see clearly that young people approach their own and others work/style/objects with regard for the aesthetic dimension and how it functions within the creative process.

Basically everybody has got their own colour, like red, blue, black...it doesn't have to be what everyone else
wants, you put the wheels you like, like there are thousands of different wheels and patterns... you see car that you like, like you see a car like yours, like you say 'I've got one of these and I see those wheels and I like them, I go out and buy a set.

(Street machiner)

Yeah, well you have spent a lot of money, different people have different sized cams and things, and it is a combination... to get the combination right. Like when you say 'head work' and 'cams' and 'lifters' etc., its all got to go together to get your speed. Naturally its all got to be there and everybody has their ideas, everybody has a different combination.

(Street Machiner)

Like street machiners, skaters pass judgement on the movement and style of a particular presentation of skating moves. They determine whether the skater is sketchy (moves around a lot) or fluid and how this may add to the overall effect of the performance.

So many different skaters have a different look, some skaters can have a fluid style like a surfer, others can be a little more sketchy, like their feet move around on the board.

(Skater)

The street dancer compares steps and combinations of steps and determines the style or aesthetic feel of that combination in terms of how they are linked together and what rhythm they display. They listen closely to the music and judge whether the combination of steps match the style and rhythm of the music.

Most of the time it's just at home with their records and turntables... they watch video clips... they pick a clip of the music they like, they watch it and then they pick what they think is the easiest step or even if it is difficult they work on it until they get it and when they finally get
it they put it all together and make one small routine up between who ever is there, between the group...Me, I listen to songs over and over again until I sort of get a rhythm...you can really get into it when you are singing you know...it makes you feel part of it...it's good...

(Street Dancer)

The graffiti artist endlessly plays with form, shape and colour to design unique styles descriptive of their own approach.

...if you are going to do a legal that somebody is going to see, you're going to have to do it so they can read it, public style it's called...(what you create) depends what you are going to write and how you feel at the time and what kind of paint you have makes a big difference on what you are going to do... I love aqua, denim, I like pink, fushia and strawberry, I love those (colours)...it takes a lot of time to master that sort of thing, like you get drips and wrong colours go with each other...I've got wooden boards at home where I practice on...you devote all your time to it, or most of your time, anyway.

(Graffiti Artist)

It is worth noting that the graffiti artist named his colours using names derived from the commercial paint industry. The colours he knows are the colours packaged in spray cans and his teacher has been consumerism. That the young people involved in youth generated cultures do not use formal terms when they talk about their style or the style of others, in no way diminishes the construct of this initial approach to aesthetics.

Within the youth generated cultures in Western Sydney, the aesthetic features they discuss and teach each other are found in the style and objects that are produced in their own cultural community, not in the work of ‘others’ outside their community.

Their expressive codes are informed by the production of a personal/group aesthetic developed initially within their immediate
neighbourhood, and later in their immediate region and it is this regional specificity that promotes the development of a stylised aesthetic or style.

Their comparisons and connections are all made within a regional context. These contexts are primarily class and economically based and determine how the young people involved in youth generated culture see themselves placed within a cultural environment.

Well, like I said the times are changing, so a lot of people are starting to get help off each other, like round about 86, 87 there used to be wars against everybody, like they'd cap other peoples works and now it's sort of, out in the west they're starting to get more of a family, closer than family, and people are more reliant on each other.

(Graffiti Artist)

(Home boys are) ...another name for a gang really. They are called "Home Boys" because they live in your area, your home.

(Street Dancer)

(I started street machining) ...Through boyfriends and big brothers...just being around them at the garage all the time and watching them work on their own cars...

(Street Machiner)

Within youth generated cultures the young people involved display a clear antithesis to indifference. Their cultural processes incorporate distinct and committed choices to a range of cultural goods on offer from the market place and their peers. Consumer culture, by virtue of its eclectic consumption has produced for some a manufactured reality or 'unreality'. For youth, consumer culture is not a reification of reality, it is their lived reality.

Baudrillard (1983) claims that we can talk about the triumph of signifying culture, to the extent that we can no longer speak of class or
normativity which belong to the prior stage of the system. I contend that we are only prevented of speaking about class or normativity while we remain outside the process of creating cultures. The young people involved in youth generated cultures do not look at their world from the outside in, they are in the process of constructing their world, not just experiencing a production of a world.

Class issues still have a bearing on the promotion of youth generated cultures in western Sydney, as these young people are in the process of creating culture within a stubborn cultural hegemony.

**Reading, analysing and transferring the aesthetics of style.**

The young people involved in youth generated cultures talk about style in terms which are vivid and colourful and which provide a vocabulary of referred meanings they can communicate with.

Well, graffiti artists wear the 'defest' clothes...someone will say "your COE, seen your defest pieces!"...if you bite off anybody else you get your arse kicked

(Graffiti Artists)

...dropping down that back, into an alleyoop, twicked out backside air, yeah, method air, going for the stale fish, he's bombed, he's bombed...
I ride roller blades, they rip, that's my ramp board up there, it rips...

(Skaters)

The obscurity of these new terms or words, and the reversal of meaning applied to already existing words, represents, for traditional culture, a new sphere of knowledge only accessible through dialogue with the dominant within that culture, which is youth!

Here, the importance of naming is paramount, in that it allows specific groups to legitimate a closure of old traditions and generate new ones. In terms of analysis, the isolation or distancing of the object or style for contemplation, from the author or context is only a temporary and
partial means of coming to an understanding of cultural phenomena within a postmodern world. Using semiotics as a tool of analysis allows signs and symbols of any cultural group to be read within their context, through the adroit association between the signs themselves.

Within postmodern culture we not only need to read the signs themselves but must also look at how the signs are used by different groups of people in their everyday lives. Lefebvre (1984) tells us that the relationship of form to function to structure is by no means dead or useless in this process of reading signs and that within a postmodern world the distinctiveness of form, function and structure has become more pronounced, more visible and more readable.

The high/low art debate, the fragmentation of subject, the commodification of consumer goods as cultural goods are all part of a postmodern discourse on process; a process determined from within by participants, but with objects or style produced that can be analysed and critiqued from commentators outside the process. Whether or not the commentators analysis constitutes co-option of the practitioners objects and performances into an art academy debate, and whether this is indeed desirable from both parties point of view is not the subject of this research. My intention is to examine the dynamic structure of youth generated cultures and determine the means by which, through the dissemination of information and knowledge amongst the group (aesthetics and pedagogy), they can win space within a cultural hegemony.

The existence of an aesthetic dimension within youth generated cultures facilitates transference of style from one person to another, and from one interest group to another. The quote below from the research data indicates a process of transference of style no different to the communication between artists in the dominant culture:

"Yes, they communicate to a lot of people, oh yes they do, they communicate with people in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth if they want to, but they have to do the travelling first if they want to be known through other people in other states and then they will send 'em backwards and forth like pen pals,"
they send letters and photos... I know that there is people out there that communicate with other countries and get information on what is new and what is not and I have videos and photos to prove that there is people and basically once you get to know them you are like friends with them, you get to see what sort of styles there are, what is happening in that country, what is the new fad, trend and what is going on.

(Graffiti Artist)

The importance of transference cannot be made strongly enough. This constitutes the ability to transfer knowledge through pedagogy and promote 'style' which is made up of ideas, concepts and objects that have been produced through regionally unique cultural experiences.

Youth generated cultures in Western Sydney are created and disseminated within what is regularly classified as an economically and culturally disadvantaged area. Therefore, the ability to consume, both cultural goods and consumer goods is significantly reduced by the economic and cultural disadvantage.

Basically it has been done up a bit, I want to do a lot more to it again when I get the money, that's the biggest problem...

...the situation I am in, my age group, with the lack of money and so forth.

(Street Machiners)

Cultural acceptance and legitimisation could mean the end of illicit activity for some groups:

Getting money for doing graffiti is a bonus. It saves them from actually stealing the paint..

(Graffiti Artist)

Their cultural exchange is enhanced by their ability to be resourceful in their creative practice and to choose symbols and images from
within their environment that are accessible and idiosyncratic. These symbols and images are transformed into style and the style is transferred through aesthetic discourse on style. The regional specificity of this style is promoted and cemented as cultural capital.
YOUTH GENERATED CULTURE & CULTURAL CAPITAL IN WESTERN SYDNEY

The young people have significantly enhanced their authority to be able to talk about their creative practice, having constructed for themselves a language and style which is uniquely theirs. Their own language and style provides them with cultural status, knowledge and power - this is Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital'. Based on the 'style' generated by their creative practices, the young people can develop a repertoire of cultural forms and codes specific to their field. Via fashion, performance, objects and language they are able to enrich their cultural capital within a framework of self generated meanings.

That young people persist in displaying something of themselves through their youth generated cultures is testimony to their courage and belief in themselves and their creative potential. In the face of strong opposition from all quarters; society, education, bureaucracy and the state, young people continue to carve out a friendly place in a not so friendly environment.

The quotes below illustrates the social environment many young people are dealing with in regard to their cultural practice:

I have known friends who have gone in and out of prison and one just recently came out prison in Queensland, Boggo Road. He turned himself in to see if he could get maybe one or two months sentence but he was in there for around six months...he has tended to slow down a bit more but he keeps in contact now and then.

(Graffiti Artist)

...we just have to put up with these things (the massive police raid on their meeting at Parramatta Road) all the time. If someone was doing something wrong you could understand it, but having 12 police cars stop people from eating and everything else, it's not really fair.

I think they should leave us alone and let us go about it, as long as there's no illegal drag racing sort of thing. We should be allocated a place to race sort of thing...not
Eastern Creek, but just make it for street meets, out at
Oran Park, at the old track, just street meets out there.
(Street Machiners)

The lack of sanction youth receive from the dominant culture is why they
make creative marks on the landscape and why they are involved in youth
generated cultural practice; not being able to find a place within dominant
culture, they construct a culture of their own. How our young people live is
who they are, who they are is what they do, or more precisely what they want
to do. If we acknowledge their agency, we can start to provide a sound
cultural place for young people with the long term goal of encouraging a
more critically, aesthetically aware individual, contributing actively to a
broader cultural discourse.

**The production of cultural capital through aesthetic language.**

Raymond Williams (1989) sees cultural productions as... ‘a material
phenomenon in two main senses: first as a meaningful transformation
of materials in social interaction (language and so on); and second,
constituted within determined economic relations (such as circulation
of capital’). Stuart Hall (1980) adds to this the notion of ‘articulation’,
which he intends to mean ‘to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate’...the
so called ‘unity’ of a discourse is really the articulation of different,
distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because
they have no necessary ‘belongingness’. Therefore, to whom does
language belong; can it only be understood in the context in which it is
uttered?

Eco suggests that postmodern texts are double coded, in that they
incorporate the pleasures of popular fiction and the play with language
of a modernist kind (McGuigan 1991). The same can be said of the
language, and its association with the process of bricolage,
implemented by youth generated cultures. When they say things like...

you have snitches and snakes out there that lag
you in
(Graffiti Artist)
or
the way you throw your body up, the way you
twist your legs

(Skater)

...they are using formal language with its inherent structure and
systematic rules, but they have cut it up and pieced it together again
to give new meanings and codes to the words. 'A figure of words or
style is always only an alteration in usage...' The double coding exists
within the play of words and also within the obscurity of meaning to
the uninitiated. This obscurity of meaning also diverts the attention
and inclination to pounce, by the 'authorities and models of conduct',
on incorrect usage and uncouth language as a sign of low cultural
capital. (Bourdieu 1984 p227 -331)

Here we are talking about the 'productivity of language' where
language is seen as an active, transitive force which shapes and
positions the 'subject'(as speaker, writer, reader) while always itself
remaining in process. (Hebdige 1979 p119) The production of a
common language within the group places the subject in a position of
power. The cultural information contained within that language
becomes, not elite as some commentators would say, but constructed
and owned by the group. As such, it becomes a cultural commodity
they can trade within a broader discourse on culture and the arts.

Body language must also be included in the repertoire of aesthetic
language. Every streetmachiner knows that he or she is the only one
allowed to drape themselves over the car or touch it. The skater
knows that to pick up your board with style you flick it up with your
foot, not bend down and touch it with your hand. As Bourdieu says,
these serve as 'memory joggers' charged with the group's deepest
values, its most fundamental 'beliefs' (1984 p191). Add to these the
deliberate modification of appearance; the hairstyles of the dancers
and the skaters, the baggie pants, the hats, the badges and flannelette
shirts, the grease under the fingernails which all 'function as social
markers deriving their meaning and value from their position in the
system of signs which they constitute and which is homologous with
the system of social positions' (1984 p 192).
Youth generated cultures develop cultural capital through aesthetic language specific to ‘them’. When we talk of an aesthetic language we must think of the forms, tropes and configurations that are all a part of this compendium. Our language has a specific role in describing and analysing, in conveying concepts that can be shared and critiqued. Some examples of our specific language are:


(Hanfling 1992 p63)

Youth generated cultures create a specific aesthetic language which has exactly the same function. The words may be different and specific to their culture but the aesthetic function is still apparent. Their language is used to describe, analyse and convey concepts in the same way aestheticians use language. For example:

Colin Brown here out with a backside air ... Ok that’s someone backing up. Building up his speed. Looks like his just a learner. ... Backside kick turn there. ... An unknown dropping in, out with an axle stool. Coming up with a rock-di-fogy, 180 rock-di-fogy ...Blind, rock and roll, rock and roll, front side air ... his out of there. One of the bikes coming in, this is Jamie. Yeah out with an air ... Front wheel, table top, down side bear can, cross-up, crossing the handle bars together, one handed, disaster, pulls it back in, call that a peg stool, air over the channel, peg grind very smooth, another peg ...(Young male interviewer commentating on skateboarders, BMX bike riders and rollerbladers using a ramp)

This commentary went on for at least 3 to 4 minutes. My young male advocate and I were standing side by side watching seven or eight other young males, around 15 to 19 years old, perform on a
skateboard ramp. Acting as teacher to me as student, he was excited and enthralled. His head swerved back and forth in rhythm with the skaters' arc, eyes transfixed. The spiel he was involved in was not necessarily just for my benefit, he was engaged in aesthetic appreciation of someone's performance. He was vocalising, without pause for reason, diction or breath, something he was intimately experiencing. Using verbal 'stream of consciousness' he was describing style through aesthetic language.

The notion of stream of consciousness as employed by Henri Lefebvre (1971) is intended as a means of communicating the many experiences of everyday life and for these young people everyday life is intrinsically linked with what they do to express themselves culturally. The 'rap' songs of the black American adolescent is an excellent example of the everyday experiences of these young people transposed into a cultural form.

I spent several evenings with street machiners, head bent under the bonnet, careful not to smear the chrome or scratch the paintwork. We all hung around 'the car', only the owner being allowed to drape him or herself over it, listening to the vocalised stream of consciousness so particular to youth generated culture.

It is a big block chevy... a 454... it is not the biggest cube motor you can get out of a chevy... you can get 500 cube but for the street it is quite big, especially for a Torana which this was originally... this was a 4 cylinder... to go from a 4 cylinder to 8 cylinder... it is a big capacity. Not many people like popping bonnets when they run big motors just for the fact that no one wants you to know what other people are running... that is all it is... you just don't want people to know what you are running... maybe for car theft too, as well... once they know you are running big things under your bonnets or big motors... I suppose that's got a lot to do with it.

(Street Machiner)
In addition to stream of consciousness the concept of performative language is applicable to youth generated cultures. The function of performative language, as described by Dickie (in Hanfling 1992), is to bring facts into being by the very act of ‘saying’. The notion of performative language, where the setting and the performative act are a paradigm that endows the spoken with authority, can thus be applied when young people talk about their cultural production.

Dickie draws on Austin’s speech-act theory, where speech acts are statements of authentic feeling. Later, work by Habermas provided a tripartite distinction of locutionary, illocutionary and expressive, which McGuigan simplifies for us as:

1) statements of fact, or objective truth claims;
2) statements of mutuality, or dialogic closures and openings;
3) statements of feelings, or subjective truth claims.

(1991 p193)

For example, within this one comment from a graffiti artist, there exists all three components of performative language:

(I started) about 14 or 15, something around there...Oh yeah, I worked on from old styles to new and created my own, and to me my own being, and the styles are there.

1) statements of fact:..............(I started) about 14 or 15, something around there.
2) statements of mutuality:.......I worked on from old styles to new and created my own...
3) statements of feelings:...........and (created) to me, my own being...

Or further:

OK, we've got Mick Mullhall, this guys a hard flier, he's dropping in, yeah, nice backside air, very stylish...into an alley...another air., building up his speed, plugging a little bit,
plugging means getting too close...very
sketchy skater, its a disaster, front side grind,
yeah, bailing that one, yeah, yeah, no worries
man.

(Skater)

Finally; there is beginning to emerge a sense that in some electronic
media representations, like MTV and advertising, language structure
in a Sassurean sense of signifiers referring to signifieds has
completely disappeared. Images are being strung together without
referents and systematic rules.

If postmodern culture can move beyond language as a structured logic
of signifier and signified, if indeed there is a figural means of
communication being developed that surpasses language, this begs
the question: if there is a figural communication within postmodern
culture that is not based on language structures are we still able to
attribute it with an aesthetic dimension, and further, can figural
communication be seen as an aestheticisation of everyday life?

As with the electronic media images, the interesting aspect here is
that these collective images (seen as style) appeal more wholly to
perceptual memories and the unconscious, which does not have a
logical structure like language at all.

Lash (1988) suggests there are a number of features of postmodern
culture that may well allow us to describe that culture as 'figural';
emblematic and metaphorical, not literal. Firstly postmodern culture's
emphasis is on primary processes (desire) rather than secondary
(ego); secondly, its emphasis is on images rather than words; and
finally, its immersion into the object or practice rather than a
maintenance of 'distance'.

For youth generated cultures, figural communication is apparent in the
interconnection of their fashion, language and behaviour which is seen
collectively as style. Youth generated cultures are a complex mixture
of modernist and postmodern practice in that they do communicate in
a figural sense, while at the same time they can maintain a critical
distance from the objects and performance of their cultural practice.
They would not have been able to develop an aesthetic language or
criticism if they did not maintain some distance from their cultural
production. Within the union of modernist and postmodernist practice
in youth generated cultures, the emphasis of primary processes
(desire) over secondary processes (ego) is also questioned. The
search for identity and a place in the cultural hegemony requires youth
generated culture to focus more on identity construction or ego, rather
than immediate desires.

Well, you can't really vote, you haven't got much
say. Graffiti is just our way of expressing ourselves
(Graffiti Artist)

Cultural symbols of Western Sydney.

Among young people generally, the notion of the young 'westie'
incorporates the ubiquitous flannelette shirt and jeans, tattoos, hotted
up cars, rough use of language, low intellect, violence and gangs. This
is a description that is even held by young people who live in the
western Sydney region. In an article in the Sydney Morning Herald,
the author Tony Squires informs us that this stigma is not new and
was first applied to the 'slum-infested' heart of the city and stuck
stubbornly to them as they were relocated further west. (August 21,
1993 Pg 41)

There is a great reluctance to be associated with this derogatory
image of the 'westie' and has a lot to do with the west of Sydney being
seen by the city centre as peripheral, and therefore diminished in
cultural status. This is a concept inherited from Modernity, where
artists and intellectuals were located within the big cities and from this
'cultural nucleus' all ideas were disseminated outwards, setting up a
spatial demarcation of those who had cultural capital and those that
did not.

In her book Out West (1993) soon to be released by Allen and Unwin,
Dianne Powell does much to disarm this persistent 'westie bashing'
as she calls it and asserts that the west of Sydney has a great deal of
social and cultural equality with the rest of Sydney.
Research is developing to determine a profile of what the specific cultural symbols are in western Sydney. The University of Western Sydney, Nepean has recently begun research into this area and foresees an expanded knowledge of regional cultural symbols.

My own research into the cultural profile of youth generated cultures in western Sydney, however, leads me to believe that the notion of ‘the westie’ is disappearing. The people living in western Sydney have been absorbed into a more holistic cultural grouping, which has more to do with urbanism than with suburbanism.

Western Sydney people now regard their regionality with a mixture of pride and as the last vestige of territoriality. I found it exceedingly difficult to identify obvious cultural symbols of western Sydney other than a general style inherited from childhood environmental learning.

**Group behaviour of youth generated cultures.**

Nobody can create a language single handedly nor can anybody create a style that way. One man cannot build what only a society can do.

(Sharp 1988 p 313)

When looking at the creative activities of contemporary suburban youth in western Sydney we notice that there is a group authorship at work, although it is noted that within the parameters of the group there is also great scope for individual expression.

The working class inclination for collectivism among subcultures contributes significantly to an explanation of the group phenomena.

subcultures arise as attempts to resolve collectively experienced problems resulting from contradictions in the social structure...they generate a form of collective identity from which an individual identity can be achieved outside that ascribed class, education and occupation.

(Brake 1980 pvii)
Group structure is a phenomenon of age, but it is also a result of young people's perception of their position in society. They regard themselves, perhaps rightly so, as being disenfranchised because of their lack of power, joblessness and an adolescent inability to control their own lives and history.

Many of the traditional resources of and inherited bases for social meaning, membership, security and psychic certainty have lost their legitimacy for a good proportion of young people. There is no longer a sense of a 'whole culture' with allocated places and a shared, universal value system. Organized religion, the monarchy, trade unions, schools, public broadcasting, high culture and its interwinings with public culture no longer supply ready values and models of duty and meaning to help structure the passage into settled adulthood.

(Willis 1990 p13)

Unfortunately the concept of youth in groups generates a sense of uneasyness and perhaps fear among members of society and this has its corollary in the notion of the hooligan and the menace of the football crowds in Britain. The fear that society feels towards youth in groups is a result of stereotyping on the part of the media and, in some instances, the academy.

During the course of my research I met with a large group of about 200 street machiners at the Donar Kebab diner on Parramatta Road, Auburn (see section titled The Four Groups) which serves as one of their meeting places. While I was there at least 8 to 12 police cars pulled up in an overt show of strength. They blocked off both entrances to the parking lot and began serving defect notices on the 100 or so vehicles of the trapped young people. No-one knew who called them, or why. I asked one of the older street machiners if there was any apparent reason for this action:

No, all the time we have been here no-one has done anything wrong, there has been some nice
cars come, people have been eating and drinking (soft drink) and just talking, no-one has done anything illegal or wrong so I don’t really know what this is all about.

Another instance is the aggression displayed by the transit police towards a young graffiti artist and his friends travelling on a train:

...we weren’t mucking around, weren’t smoking or putting our feet on the thingo’s right...but then before the station they (transit police) come up and they said “Are you boys doing something?” and we said “no, no, no”, “You got a ticket?” and we pull our tickets out right, and we give the tickets to them and they say “No, this is no good boys” and it was the right tickets and they were asking for trouble, we knew it alright, we knew it was going to be on. Like these are under covers, not clothes police, there was about two or three of them...they were hmm...how do you say it...they were over weight, over aged people right, we knew in our own hearts...we could feel it in the air, they were asking for trouble right, because we didn’t do anything.

It seems that the power at play here is very much a part of the stereotyping of young people and contributes to their perception of their relationship to the dominant institutions. Much of the conflict between youth generated cultures and the police lies in the inequality and depressed material circumstances of these young people.

But the group phenomena or collectivity among youth generated cultures is more akin to the secondary schooling process, where youth collect in same age groups and learn through shared experience. Youth generated cultures move among the crowds in the streets, the shopping centres and the arcades with the intention of observing and using the cultural goods they recognise as valuable to their own cultural needs.
The reason that the young people work in groups is to share ideas, skills and resources and develop a materials relationship that supports their cultural production.

Well, like I said the times are changing, so a lot of people are starting to get help off each other, like round about 86, 87 there used to be wars against everybody, like they'd cap other peoples works and now it's sort of, out in the west they're starting to get more of a family, closer than family, and people are more reliant on each other. So they would rather go out with someone watching their back than going out alone. So they would rather go out and hang a piece with more of a group and it's a lot o easier.

And war, well they ask for it. ... like I said.

(Graffiti Artist)

They work in groups to reaffirm their cultural identity with regard to class distinctions and disadvantage and to maintain a solid front against the hegemonic attitudes of mainstream culture. They work in groups to instruct and teach other.

There's kinda two groups almost, those who have health amounts of money who can basically say I want this car with this engine with this done to it and they will just pay for someone to do it and then there is the other group who prefer to learn themselves so they do it up by word of mouth. I know a friend whose done up a ute and basically he didn't know what a spanner was before he started and he's built this really filthy 350 chev ... one tonner and he's built it virtually from scratch and so he has learnt, its taken him a long time but he's now filled with that knowledge on how to do it.

(Street Machiner)

A small group may start to develop a creative style within a circle of friends from school or in their neighbourhood. They then take that
style out on the street for public display and affirmation. It is observed and critiqued by others who share a similar interest. They take it back into their immediate groups and develop it further and present it again.

Other young people within their immediate circle of friends or within the neighbourhood join them, and the group expands. They move out into other neighbourhoods, other venues and start to share their ideas and pick up others from a wider pool of creative practice. As indicated in the chapter on transferring aesthetic qualities, graffiti artists communicate with young people in most of the capital cities in Australia and correspond and send photographs to practitioners in America. Through commercial sponsorship, one of the skaters has travelled to London, America and Europe doing skating demonstrations.

Individuals and groups from western Sydney become known for a particular style, body of knowledge, skills and access to resources. Their growing cultural capital provides entry into the wider group of corresponding youth generated culture.
PEDAGOGY WITHIN YOUTH GENERATED CULTURES.

When we look at the cultural practice of youth we find they are constantly defining their existence in relation to the social and economic determinant of the dominant culture. Not as an oppositional stance but merely one of placement in a cultural space. Their use of cognitive mapping is fundamental to their cultural production and so too is their innate understanding of the ‘pedagogical and didactic function of art’ (Jameson 1991 p89).

Jameson claims that, for knowledge and art to avoid an arcane death within a postmodern discourse, they must retain some pedagogical function. The teaching function of art was always stressed in classical times, albeit in the form of a moral lesson, while today the relationship between art and culture, between culture and capitalism calls for a reappraisal of the relationship between culture and pedagogy.

Youth generated cultures have a vested interest in advancing their cultural practice through dissemination and promotion, because it is their cultural practice that embodies notions of self identity and a place within a cultural aggregate. They have developed their own ‘schooling’ to meet their specific cultural needs because they perceive a certain cultural space and advantage they can claim by this schooling.

They disseminate their ideas through language and performance, they go to ‘gatherings’ and ‘meets’, they barter, they co-opt, they watch and listen, then they redistribute, amongst each other, the knowledge learnt from these experiences. In this way the young people involved in youth generated cultures teach each other skills, technologies and aesthetics.

You fiddle about, yeah. You get a line or a curve off someone else’s piece and you work off that and you expand out, you wouldn’t just bite, like I was saying, so you expand off one little thing off someone else’s piece, or a colour, or the feel of someone else’s, you change it and work off that.

As a (teaching) model, of graffiti... they see you around, you've been here, you are known and they tend to think “Oh, you're good, you still are good, why don't you teach me
and can I come around with you and see your styles”. You actually present yourself up on the walls and things like that. It is good, it is good being a model but on the other hand you tend to tell the kids, "Don't try to copy our style, build your own and progress in it".

(Graffiti Artist)

It's hard to say, but things I think, things have changed, yeah, I mean there is certainly a lot of older people out there with a lot of technical know-how, which again comes back to helping out a lot, but trends for today are a lot different to trends from before plus the technology kinda thing. So they do learn of them, but I suppose it's only in the technical sense what the older people have to offer, you know, whereas this new stuff comes in unless the older person has directed themselves in that type of way they don't really know.

Yeah, it does help. You do one person a favour and they'll do you a favour...it's like, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, that's how it works in the game. You know, if you want something done them they will help you to do it

(Street Machiners)

...The first thing they do is sit down and watch, and if they are game enough they get up on the dance floor...The first time I went to a nightclub I watched some steps and went home and practised, that's honest! ...Sometimes you're looking around the room and you see someone do something, so straight away you'll start doing that.

(Street Dancer)

Featherstone urges us:

to focus on the transmitters of postmodernism who have an interest in the success of the term and all it implies within their struggles in the academy with the guardians of established symbolic hierarchies, and an interest in the creation and education of audiences and publics who can
recognise and use post modern cultural goods in practices.

(Featherstone 1991 p64)

Obviously, Featherstone is referring to the carriers of cultural information within the academy, but a corollary can be seen between the pedagogical functions and objectives of intellectual commentators on postmodernism and the pedagogic processes developed by youth generated cultures.

Within the hegemonic bloc, acknowledgment of youth generated cultures ‘cultural credentials’ has come from the market place, advertising and the academy but these acknowledgments are qualified and self interested.

The generative process of pedagogy that takes place within youth generated cultures is far more successful in establishing ‘cultural credentials’ because it takes place from within and is informed through internal practice and not external experience. The young people involved in youth generated cultures develop ‘cultural credentials’ by being the producers, promoters and distributors of their own product.

The pedagogy of youth generated cultures, therefore, claims itself for itself, so to speak, and makes of the practitioners qualified experts and teachers. Youth generated cultures in western Sydney have, through their pedagogical practice, retained the authority to speak on their own behalf and promote and exchange their cultural capital.

The exchange of cultural capital is an important point. For cultural practice to have capital it must be seen to have value in terms of theoretical constructs and conceptual appeal. These are the necessary cultural goods employed in any cultural interchange.

For youth, who have been historically poor in both economic and cultural capital, there is little for them to exchange in the way of cultural goods. This is why youth generated cultures, which produce their own exchange value goods, are significant in the cultural game, because they have provided cultural wealth for themselves that empowers them within circumstances of cultural and social disadvantage. Bourdieu implies that we are involved in the game of culture by virtue of our existence as creative beings, and through the construct of society and class distinctions.
Culture is a stake which, like all social stakes, simultaneously presupposes and demands that one take part in the game and be taken by it.

(Bourdieu 1984 p250)

Youth generated cultures play the game seriously, using complex notions of postmodern culture, aesthetic frameworks and self styled pedagogy, and by employing their self-constructed interpretations of these cultural commodities they win!

They win the right to speak for themselves, they win cultural space and they win self affirmation. Strengthened by these prestigious victories, they are enabled to confidently claim their own unique cultural capital, which they can then use and exchange as a unique cultural commodity.
EXPANSION

Expansion takes place through the market orientated consumption of youth generated cultures cultural goods. Through the process of bricolage the youth generated cultures of western Sydney create cultural objects and style. It then follows that the commodified object created by one socio-economic group is consumed by another socio-economic group who may combine the cultural artefact with other objects and produce some other style, which is in turn commodified - and so the circle goes.

Initially, in their formative stages, youth generated cultures stay within their own neighbourhood. The young people often start to be involved in their particular cultural activities around 12 to 13 years old and are therefore too young to move about freely.

I started in 1986 when I was 13. When I started it was just after the craze had come over from America after it had really got big and everyone around was doing it.

(Graffiti artist)

( the kids would start) About 14

(Street dancer)

The suburban environment is familiar and knowable. It is a first proving ground and a home base. They know where to find sites to perform, they know where to find resources.

It was a safe place because nothing is ever touched, it is just a local park we used to hang around a lot and we just decided to test out. Just to see what our style was like and whether we could do it.

(Graffiti Artist)

Eventually, their commitment to their cultural practice puts them in touch with other practitioners in the area. They start to travel to venues outside their immediate neighbourhood and start sharing ideas with groups from other suburbs within the Western Sydney region. They are comfortable with groups
from their regional environment and the Western Sydney interchange of
cultural capital is expedited by familiarity and shared common experience of
growing up and living in Western Sydney. This is the case for the Home Boys
from the street dancing fraternity.

They are a group of kids all under the age of 17 called
Home Boys because they live in your area, your
home...and they have got this special style about
them...they all dress and talk exactly the same...they have
got all these hand movements...and greeting each other,
they have a special way of doing that...But they seem to
understand what they are talking about.

(Street dancer)

A sense of pride develops, as youth generated cultures become aware that
there is a considerable interest in their particular creative practice among
other young people in their area. Their regional identity is enforced as a
positive attribute and provides them with their own cultural enclave, and their
region becomes a safe place to develop styles which are informed by the
idiosyncratic cultural capital inherited from their experiences in, and from the
environment of Western Sydney.

Ultimately, the size and force of the regional groups distinguishes itself and
demands recognition by virtue of its own cultural competence.

Well, it is fame for doing it yourself, like a big
advertising game where you are famous for doing
something by yourself...

(Graffiti Artist)

Youth generated cultures in Western Sydney become more confident of their
own creative practice and start to move into other sites and venues. This of
course, more often than not is the city, which still remains the cultural hub of
interchange in ideas and styles. The city is a relatively neutral, unclaimed
space, recognised by all groups as a space to eventually gravitate to if they
are to test their cultural practice within a wider network.
CONCLUSION

Surface and depth are not simply metaphors. Three presences - the opaque, the luminous, and their meeting - make up our world; like the past, the actual and the possible. These differences speak to us all, not only to the philosophers: the calm abstraction of the heights, the terrible peace of the abyss, the agitation of the surfaces. There on the surface, movement, waves and horizon are delineated. The superficial is freedom. Even if we suppose that in the depths there exists a monster, Leviathan or Moby Dick, if he never rises to the surface we could never meet him. The depths hide themselves, the heights are beyond us. There remains the surface, infinite and finite. Whatever emerges, whatever rises from the depths, or descends from the heights, that is all that counts...Between everything and nothing there is something.

(Lefebvre in Chambers 1990 p92-93)

Between everything and nothing there is something. Between hegemony and revolution there is the everyday. Between the cultural institutions and the social means of control there is youth generated culture. They do not stand in opposition to everything and nothing, they stand in autonomous authority to something.

The thesis set out to test the hypotheses that youth generated cultures transfer style or aesthetic knowledge within a framework of economic support and pedagogy developed specifically to meet their needs; and that the specificity of this structure has afforded them a place within the cultural mainstream without the recognition or approval of mainstream cultural establishments.

Three main points were proposed for examination:

The first point was whether youth generated cultures are, by intention, sub-cultural. My findings show that youth generated cultures do not intentionally take an oppositional stance, however stereotyped perception, on the part of dominant culture, of youth sub-cultures have labelled youth generated cultures as 'sub-cultural'
and therefore oppositional. From the interviews conducted it is clear that what is of primary importance to youth generated cultures is acceptance by dominant culture. However that acceptance is made conditional on the right of youth generated cultures to retain agency and not be subsumbed by dominate culture.

The second point for examination was whether youth generated cultural practices are properly considered as creative and artistic. It would seem, from examination of literature and an analysis of the data that although the creative process of youth generated cultures is acceptable to dominant cultural values, the objects and performances that result are not. This is because the creative processes of youth generated cultures lies within already established norms, but the objects and performances produced do not. Youth generated cultures make a claim for space within the cultural hegemony to legitimise the participants cultural practice.

The final point was to determine the function of the cultural practice of youth generated cultures. It is clear from the data collected that the function is to win cultural space. Youth generated cultures have set about constructing a cultural framework that endows them with cultural capital that enables them to enter mainstream culture, while maintaining their agency and voice.

The notion of oppositional messages of resistance has been the predominant discourse within youth cultural studies, particularly in the way it has been associated with subcultures. However, Hall (1976) reminds us that subordinate cultures will not always be in open conflict with the dominant culture. They may coexist within it, negotiate spaces and gaps and make inroads into it and can never be reduced to a simple opposition.

In an argument against opposition as stimulus, the data suggests that the overriding impetus within the youth generated cultures I have studied is not necessarily resistance but the notion of ‘winning space’ within the hegemonic order. This may be likened more to a strategy of offence rather than resistance.

The young people involved in youth generated cultures in Western Sydney identify no place within mainstream culture for their cultural capital. However, to their credit, they have moved beyond rebellious resistance and are actively employing strategies that allow them to make a place for themselves within the cultural hegemony. The analysis of the data has shown that, through their own particular form of creative practice and its regional character and affinity
with the everyday cultural practice of Western Sydney, and through specific, self deterministic culture which provides agency, they win an autonomous space where their voice and their style is the only proper authority.

Enabled by postmodern realities, the sense of alienation of youth generated cultures from the cultural hegemony has been transcended by the development of their own cultural capital and the adoption of their cultural forms by a significant social institution - the economy.

With regard to the persistent stereotyping of youth cultures, the great depth model of alienation and disalienation has to a large degree been critiqued and dispelled by postmodern theories... ‘concepts such as anxiety and alienation...are no longer appropriate in the world of the postmodern’ (Jameson 1984 p63) and the need to rethink the position of youth generated cultures within a cultural hegemony is seen as a result of postmodern discourse.

The shift in today's postmodern cultural formation is described by the alienated subject being displaced by the fragmented subject. Indeed, within the group nature of youth generated culture, the subject is fragmented by its collectivity. However, the research data proves that the fragmentation of the subject through collective practice, and the concomitant intertextuality at play, does not constitute a lack of depth. On the contrary, youth generated cultures are dynamic and ongoing in their commitment to establishing a specific genre of creative practice with significant depth. Theory within arts practice, aesthetics and youth cultural studies supports this rationale and helps to contribute to an incisive discourse on their creative processes and cultural practice.

In terms of an epistemological base, they draw, in an informed manner, on a variety of cultural resources, images and symbols, and their discrimination is the consequence of aesthetic awareness. This aesthetic awareness lies not only within the active use of cultural symbols but in the recognition of aesthetic qualities within the symbols themselves.

Through the creation of their own aesthetic criteria, situated within style, fashion and language, they have developed an aesthetic legitimacy they can transfer. This allows them to operate in a pedagogical nature within their own cultural associations, bypassing the less supportive cultural institutions and
providing for themselves affirmation of their creative potential, their regional character and their self expression.

The data shows that the material relations of youth generated culture is a group structure of barter and sharing. They share resources, ideas, materials, skills and labour, making their cultural production economically viable within a position of socio-economic disadvantaged.

Through analysis of the regional context of these youth generated cultures, it can be shown that identity is defined and strengthened through the production of a unique cultural capital, which they can in turn offer to mainstream culture as a cultural commodity. The fact that mainstream culture is ambivalent about taking up the offer is somewhat circumvented by the acceptance of the market place. Capitalist involvement reflects support for youth cultural practice as authentic and valued and the cultural goods produced by the market place echo the young people’s creative expertise. Sociological and cultural opposition is replaced by economic acceptance and validation is no longer needed from dominant culture/society.

The once firmly entrenched notions of opposition, regarding youth cultures, is dissolved within a construct that has about it all the epistemological and structural framework of an autonomous ideology and practice.

What remains to be accomplished is a shift in hegemonic norms which can incorporate youth generated cultures without altering or appropriating their agency and voice.
AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Within the process of researching and developing the thesis I realised that significant areas of interest and issues of concern that arose during the analysis of the data could not be adequately discussed within the confines of my topic. However, these issues and areas of interest are important to the development of discourse on youth cultures and are therefore suggested as areas for future research:

1. Throughout the study, the concept and function of language was an extremely important issue and one that could not be dealt with thoroughly within the scope of this thesis. Further studies on the language and communication modes used by youth generated cultures would enable an understanding of the following areas:

   Firstly, does the jargon, used by all youth generated cultural groups studied, simply function as an entree into the cultural group, somewhat like an ID card, or does the use of jargon indicate a knowledge and skills already gained? Is jargon a means of transferring knowledge through embedded meaning or simply a symbol system to indicate belonging?

   Second, language variables, in terms of regional differences and stylistic difference of youth generated cultures in other suburban areas and other States should be tested. The results of such a study may contribute to the first question on the function of jargon.

   Finally, it has been suggested by Lash (1988) and Featherstone (1991) that a figural language is developing through media presentations such as MTV and video clips, which is moving beyond a sign system in the Sassurean sense. It is suggested that this figural language is bypassing the logical language structure and appealing to the subconscious, where logic has no part. From analysis of the data on youth generated cultural practice and through my communication with the young people, it would seem that they also operate in this figural manner to a significant degree. It would be most interesting and of significant value to studies on culture and the arts, to examine how this variation in communication modes occurs and whether it is occurring collectively as a result of group pedagogy.
2 Employment opportunities deriving from youth generated cultural practice is an area of study that is essential for education, employment and the arts. The cultural links between a postmodern cultural practice and the new cultural intermediaries who provide symbolic goods and services needs a more full investigation. This relationship has been touched on in this study, however a detailed, in-depth analysis of the relationship will serve to provide functional information for future policy and employment initiatives.

3 The data suggests that youth generated cultures aspire to acceptance by the dominant culture, however what still needs to be determined is how youth generated culture can be promoted without the young people losing their agency. It is felt a study on how to facilitate the shift in hegemonic norms to incorporate the autonomy of youth generated cultures would be an appropriate starting point.

4 Before we can make a proper start on researching young women's culture today, the past must be addressed in regard to women's missing space in Modernity. This lacuna must be filled in and the missing relational aspects of modernity must be described by the part women played. Following on from establishing a tradition of women's cultural practice within modernism, research on Australian girls and their cultural practice would need to be incorporated into the profile of youth cultures per se. A comparison of gender differences in modes of production and dissemination could provide an extension to studies already conducted on girls cultural practice.
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# APPENDIX

## DICTIONARY OF TERMS

### Skaters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front side invert</td>
<td>hand plant facing outside of ramp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twank or Dank</td>
<td>hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dude</td>
<td>mate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rad</td>
<td>radical, cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ollie</td>
<td>stand on the back of board and spin it around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slam</td>
<td>fall off badly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fakies</td>
<td>up and down ramp backwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>metal pipe at top edge of ramp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>gap in top of ramp for entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerbside grind</td>
<td>street manoeuvre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deck</td>
<td>board without wheels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backside air</td>
<td>jumping above the ramp with your back towards the ramp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontside air</td>
<td>opposite of backside air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twick</td>
<td>flick board out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock-de-fakie</td>
<td>rocking on coping and come down backwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock and roll</td>
<td>rocking on coping, turn and come down frontwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table top</td>
<td>BMX bike horizontal to top of ramp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross up</td>
<td>BMX bike handlebar manoeuvre in mid air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peg stool</td>
<td>BMX bike pegs rest on coping of ramp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peg grind</td>
<td>same as peg stool but bike slides along coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air over the channel</td>
<td>jump over the channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plugging</td>
<td>getting too close to falling off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big air man</td>
<td>a person who does really high jumps on the ramp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method air</td>
<td>bend your knees and hold the board to your feet in the air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stale fish</td>
<td>hold board and lean right back in mid air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splice</td>
<td>BMX bike with one peg up and one peg on coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-50</td>
<td>balancing board halfway on coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster</td>
<td>small air above the coping and land 50-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleyoop</td>
<td>an air off the ramp and turn around more than 180 degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graffiti

Dogging it  being a coward
Bite  copy another graffiti artist's style
Bomb  spray graffiti on chosen site
Buff  erase graffit
Cap  spray paint nozzle
Chromie  black on chrome or silver
Crew  graffiti group
Def  good (derives from death)
Fade  blend colours
Kill  bomb excessively
Writer  graffiti practitioner
King  best writer
Throw ups  outline, with no colouring inside
Tag  short identification name
Toy  inexperienced or new writer
Lag  to inform to the authorities

Street Machining

Straight  a standard car, or stock
Worked  changed things from stock
Popping  lifting the bonnet
Running  what is under the bonnet
Pass  a run at a race track
Tripped up manual  an automatic without a clutch
Tubbed  wheels pushed under the guards
Blown  a super charger
Cherpees  squeaking but not spinning wheels
Burn out  spinning the wheels with lots of smoke
Donut  a burn out and spinning the car

Street Dancing

Rap  sharp harsh moves
Straight funk  like rap

MA Hons. 1993

Linda Forrester
<table>
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<th>Youth Generated Culture in Western Sydney</th>
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<tr>
<td>Running man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Streetmachiner and car.
Badges and emblems.
Female Streetmachiners.
A Hot Rod.
The Engine
The younger Streetmachiner's cars.
No-one touches the car but the owner.
Streetmachine and number plate.
A Streetmachine oldie.
Graffitti artists go public.
Graffitti.
Graffitti.
Graffitti and text.
Graffitti and figures.
Both.
Street Dancer haircut, Front.
Side.
Back.
INTERVIEWS

GRAFFITI ARTIST
Peter (17)

Venue is Cambridge Park High School, in Western Sydney

Question  How does a young person get started doing Graffiti, when did you start?

Answer   I started in 1986 when I was 13, when I started it was just after the craze had come over from America after it had really got big and everybody around our area was doing it.

Question  What area was that?

Answer   Blaxland. A lot of people were doing it and my brother was doing it as well.

Question  Whereabouts were they doing it?

Answer   All over the trains and everywhere on every vacant wall and it was just something I had to do.

Question  Had to do, what do you mean?

Answer   Like everyone was doing it and there was not much else to do then.

Question  Was that peer pressure that you are talking about?

Answer   Kind of peer pressure, but it was just such an exciting thing, that it just seemed like the greatest thing, like, American stuff is always exciting, and I saw a movie called Beat Street and that showed kids in the American subway painting trains and it just seemed like the best thing to do.
Youth Generated Culture in Western Sydney

Question: What do you mean by the best thing?

Answer: You know, it had all the elements that kids like, like risk, art and adventure and I had always been drawing when I was a kid as well so it just took off from there.

Question: Do you reckon all kids like those elements of risk, art and adventure?

Answer: I think most do. There were also a lot of people who did not like graffiti then.

Question: Kids?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: What did they say about it?

Answer: They thought we were bombers and tried to beat us up and everything, there was a lot of that, it still goes on now.

Question: Violence you mean?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: What happens there?

Answer: Well, you know, people try to pick a fight with you just cause you are a bomber and in Melbourne there is a crew called the Wrecking Crew that go around painting over panels, just writing their names all over the panels just cause they hate graffiti.

Question: So when you were a kid you did graffiti for risk, art and adventure, why do you do it now?

Answer: Fame. Fame and art, and adventure. Same reasons.
Question: The risk has gone, you have dropped the word risk, is that significant?

Answer: Adventure and risk, same thing. Like, if I go out and do something it is just the best feeling.

Question: So that best feeling that you keep saying has to do with fame now, you continue to do it because you want to be known, is that for your creativity or for your daring?

Answer: For both. Mainly artistic fame but also daring because to be credible you have to do some illegal stuff sometimes otherwise people think you are a bit soft.

Question: What do you think about moving graffiti into the art gallery?

Answer: Graffiti, it is not really about art galleries, it's about doing your best with what you have got.

Question: Doing your best for yourself or doing your best within an environment or doing your best within a society?

Answer: Well, it is just about saying who you are and also when I go out and do something illegal people look at it and say he has done the best for where it is, he took the risk, you know, it is in a risky place and with a certain amount of cans and in the night time when it is pretty dark.

Question: So if risk remains an important factor of a graffitist's pursuit of their career, where can they go with graffiti as they get older. How can you develop graffiti skills and what could happen?

Answer: I don't know, it does not help your future, it's a childhood thing 'cause you can't really advance with it, once you stop doing illegal stuff.

Question: It would not move into Graphic Design or Sign Writing?

Answer: Maybe.
Question: Do people do that or do they frown on that?

Answer: They kind of frown on that 'cause it's pretty tame.

Question: No risk or adventure?

Answer: Yeah and sign writing, you know, it is all public, public style.

Question: You mean it is easily read with none of the private elements of say wild style?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Tell me about those styles and what you mean by public and private?

Answer: Public is something you do so everyone can read it, not just graffiti artists whereas private wild style, most graffiti artists can read it. It is just the best you can do. It takes a long time to get a good wild style, you have to sit down and design for maybe years to get a really good style. People look at that and say you are pretty good and you have put in the time to have advanced this far?

Question: If fame is also an element of pursuing graffiti, how do you think that would work with the institutionalised production of graffiti, like putting it in a gallery or having a Council designated wall?

Answer: Well, it is fame for doing it yourself, like a big advertising game where you are famous for doing something by yourself, with no help from other people.

Question: Still very much linked with the risk?

Answer: Yeah.
Question: What about young women, do they do graffiti?

Answer: Some, not many.

Question: Why do you think that is?

Answer: It is just not a girls thing. Girls are more interested in other stuff, not risking themselves.

Question: Well, what other stuff?

Answer: I don't know, whatever they do.

Question: I don't know either, I can't find out what young women do either!

Answer: They are into making themselves look beautiful, but it just doesn't really appeal to girls for some reason.

Question: You are still at school and don't have a job I assume, how do you get the materials to do your pieces?

Answer: Well, a lot of them are racked.

Question: What does that mean?

Answer: Stolen. From hardware shops and things.

Question: What do you do. Go in with a bag and take one or two cans at a time do you?

Answer: No, you can't take a bag 'cause that will get searched.

Question: So where do you put them?

Answer: You could wear a bulky jacket or just anywhere, but if you take a bag they are going to search you for sure.
Question: Do you worry about that, that you are shoplifting?

Answer: No, not really, it is not as hard as actually doing a piece, an illegal piece, you know, racking cans is pretty easy. Still a lots of cans like Pascoes and Tuxan you can't rack, you have to buy them.

Question: Why is that?

Answer: They are the cans that are in demand, people started stealing them a few years ago and the shops learnt to put them high on the counter or just in hard places.

Question: Do you think the community is still anti-graffiti?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Why do you think that is?

Answer: Because they don't understand it, they can't read it, they look at a tag on a train and they just think what a mess. Also they misinterpret it, they see a tag and they think it is a symbol of violent crime. It is not really a symbol of violent crime because, you know, graffiti artists are not really interested in beating up people because they have got graffiti and it is something that takes up all their time. Also not many graffiti artists are into drugs, they don't need drugs, this is our stimulus, the thing that keeps us going.

Question: The fact that the general public can't read the tags and pieces alienates them, doesn't it?

Answer: Yeah, it's like our secret society.
Question  Do you think that is an interesting change about of positions? That you, coming from the position of being an adolescent in a society that disempowers you, turn the tables and disempower them right back. Would you like to comment on that disempowerment?

Answer  Well, you know, people look at an adolescent and they think, oh they are not that smart, they are so young they are not mature yet, they can't do anything right. Also we get picked on by the police just for being teenagers. Police don't really go around picking on adults but they get us, beat us up.

Question  They beat you up?

Answer  Yeah, police think "Aw that's a kid, we can do whatever we want to them". I was in a police station a few weeks ago, I was at a party and a fight broke out and the police just came and took a whole lot of people and I saw police beat up people.

Question  Local Western suburbs police?

Answer  Yeah.

Question  That is very interesting that the police feel they can beat you. What else makes an adolescent alienated and disempowered?

Answer  Well, you can't really vote, you haven't got much say. Graffiti is just our way of expressing ourselves.

Question  Which leads me back to that other question of isn't it interesting that you throw that graffiti up on the wall, people can't understand it and they immediately respond negatively to it, you have reversed the positions haven't you?

Answer  Yeah, well you have to have style, you can't do everything public or it would not be that good.
Question  What is style?

Answer  Style is just the way you do everything, the way you shape the letters and characters, everything about it, the fill.

Question  The fill did you say or the feel?

Answer  The fill, the filling in the letters.

Question  Do you draw a lot from cartooning, they use that language, fill, ink etc?

Answer  I don't know.

Question  Does style also slop over into dress and behaviour?

Answer  Yeah.

Question  Want to talk a bit about that?

Answer  Well most graffiti artists wear the "defest" clothes, the best clothes, like Adidas, Nike or expensive sports gear and American sports gear, things that are hard to get. If I saw someone wearing an Australian brand like Tracks or something I wouldn't think they were very credible, there is no way I would think they were going to be a good graffiti artist because their clothes haven't got any style. With behaviour, the way you talk, it's part of your style as well.

Question  Do you know what "hanging around with dudes and going all city" means?

Answer  Yeah (laughs). Shall I tell you?

Question  Yes

Answer  It's hanging around with people and "going all city" is getting your name up all over the city, not just on your line but everywhere, doing pieces everywhere.
Question  Is graffiti a regional thing?

Answer  Kind of, I don't know that I can expand on it more than that.

Question  It used to be more regional than it is now and I know what might have influenced that change. It could be that now you don't fight with each other.

Answer  Yeah, well there used to be a lot more graffiti artists, should I say a lot more taggers, people who don't really do many pieces and they used to come from different areas so people didn't make friends much, they sort of competed more but now there is not many graffiti artists so we just get together and we all know each other, most of the good graffiti artists know each other and we don't have any fights anymore.

Question  You are seventeen now, what sort of problems would you get into if you were caught for graffiti?

Answer  I have had a caution already so I would probably be arrested and go to court.

Question  Children's Court?

Answer  Yeah.

Question  And what happens when you turn eighteen?

Answer  Well at eighteen you can be sent to a proper prison, it is just the record, whatever I do now will be wiped off at eighteen from my record, but when I am eighteen it will stay there and employers could look at that and they could say "Oh he has a criminal record, we won't employ him".

Question  Will that influence your graffiti production?

Answer  Yeah.
Question: What will you do then?

Answer: I won't be doing any illegals, like if I do it will only be safe ones.

Question: So could we extrapolate, that means blow up and expand, that all the illegals are going to be done by the under eighteen and only very few would be done by over eighteen, do you think that would be the case?

Answer: Well there are the really dedicated people like Unique, he still does some illegals and he is nineteen or twenty. Some people don't think of anything else, if you had been doing for the past six or eight years you don't really think of giving it up, not now. As I said, you have to do some illegals to be credible.

Question: What about when he is forty?

Answer: When he is forty (pause) well, I don't know much about adults so I don't know what he would be doing but there is a guy in America called Scene, he writes Scene, he started about 1972 and he is still going.

Question: And Keith Haring, but they have also exhibited in art galleries as well, they have legitimised it.

Answer: But Scene, he still does illegals, he has tattoos all over him saying "Graffiti, my life story" and you can tell he is not going to give it up.

Question: Do you see it as a political thing, is graffiti making a statement against society?

Answer: It is saying, "We are Youth, We Exist".

Question: Do young people look up to graffitists, are you a role model for younger boys?

Answer: Yeah, it used to be more, like in the old days. Maybe four years ago, when I was a kid, I really looked up to the graffiti artists, I
looked up to them just like any rock star or anything and just
wanted to be like them. I don't know what it is like now, now that
the fad part of it has died out. there aren't that many kids
starting now.

**Question**  Are the practitioners of graffiti doing more pieces than tags
now?

**Answer**  Yeah.

**Question**  So the art is taking over the politic?

**Answer**  Yeah the art is taking over.

**Question**  Is there anything you would like to say?

**Answer**  I just don't like the way people think the graffiti artist is a bad
person, a violent person, I know a lot of graffiti artists and they
are not violent people. They are just like anyone else. If you
give them trouble they might be violent but they are not more
violent than other people just cause they are graffiti artists.

**Question**  Where does that notion come from that they are violent people?

**Answer**  I don't know, I think older people, they just group them all
together, group us all together, they think the only reason we do
it is because we are bad people. They just don't understand us.
GRAFFITI ARTIST
Simon (20)

Venue is parent’s home in Blacktown.

Question  Tell me about how you got into graffiti, right from when you were young.

Answer  When I was a little kid I liked to draw, I liked to watch TV comics like any little kid, draw from the characters on the TV, books, posters, anything like that and then as I got a little bit older I went out with friends and I saw new groups and new fads that were coming in and I kept doing my drawings from when I was a little kid. But now I tend not to do my drawing, which is graffiti, because of my age and the circumstances I would be getting into if I got caught by the police.

Question  So when did you first start doing graffiti. When did it change from drawing to graffiti?

Answer  From the age of sixteen upwards.

Question  When did you do your first public graffiti?

Answer  About 17.

Question  Where was that?

Answer  Oh, that was in the local canal in a park around my place.

Question  Was it a safe place or a very dangerous place.

Answer  It was a safe place because nothing is ever touched, it is just a local park we used to hang around a lot and we just decided to test out. Just to see what our style was and whether we could do it.
Question: Did you do it with a group of other young men and women?

Answer: I did it with a few friends and their sisters and brothers.

Question: Were they all graffitists?

Answer: Not all of them, they were just friends that decided to come down and watch and see how it turned out.

Question: Do young women do this?

Answer: Oh yes, they do! I have known quite a few that do it and they are actually quite good at it.

Question: Are they as keen to take the risks with the illegality as the men or is there a gender difference there?

Answer: Half of them do take the risks and the violence of it and there are some who do not want to participate in the illegal side of graffiti but just participate in the music, the way they dress, style of clothing and what is up to date in graffiti.

Question: What sort of music do graffitists like?

Answer: Oh, back when I started there was a new American fad, Hip Hop and rap music, but now these days, a lot of people around my age tend to slowly get away from the rap and are starting to like reggae music and now back to the old rock and roll style and maybe even classical if they want to.

Question: What is the dress for a graffitist, is there a distinctive style of dressing?

Answer: Dressing is just, for a guy, jeans, a good brand of shoes and a good brand of shirt and maybe put a jacket on top. The shoes would be either Nike, Reebok, Puma or Adidas. Same with the shirt, sloppy joe or singlet and the jacket would be relatively the same.
**Youth Generated Culture in Western Sydney**

**Question**  
Same for women?

**Answer**  
The women actually put more jewellery on 'em. They put mainly peace badges, "stay alive" badges and try and get little patches and put them on their shirts, Adidas patches, NDC (?!) patches, stuff like that.

**Question**  
How long do young people stay at graffiti?

**Answer**  
Depends on the person. If he started off young and hasn't been caught by the police yet he will eventually keep on going, he maybe will say to himself "Well, I haven't been caught by the police so I might keep at it one more year or another day's state of grace". But there are people out there who have been caught and you tend to stop it at a certain age. Around 18 years of age you stop from getting prosecuted by the police who are on your backs all the time.

**Question**  
What is the difference between 18 and younger, with the police?

**Answer**  
When you are younger, under the age of 18, you tend to get a bond if you are 16 or 17 and maybe a little fine, but when you turn 18 you get prosecuted for heaps of things that you wouldn't believe. Break and enter, damaging property, more fines and even a criminal record on top of that. And that is why a lot of people around my age stop, they don't want a criminal record for job prospects.

**Question**  
Do people go to jail for this graffiti?

**Answer**  
Oh yes they do! I have known friends that have gone in and out of prisons and one just recently came out of prison in Queensland, Boggo Road. He turned himself in to see if he could get maybe one or two months sentence but he was in there for around six months, even though he was wanted in both NSW and Queensland. He has tended to slow down a bit more but he keeps in contact now and then.
Question: So even though you can end up in jail, and these people have obviously ended up in jail, they consider graffiti still worth doing when they come out or do they have a change of heart?

Answer: They still think graffiti is still worth doing and like my friends who have just come out of prison, they have actually set up shows and got paid doing stuff on business peoples walls and on their shops and that is what they like about it. There is a legal side, even though there is an illegal side, you can still get away with the legal side, like you can get permission to do your own graffiti even though it would be under a different business name, you would have a business name but you could still write your own signature on the bottom saying that it is yours and it is your style.

Question: What do the police think about it?

Answer: Arh, they think it is just another mess that is going on, they don't like it at all, maybe I'm wrong and there could be some police officers that like it, perhaps in a safer atmosphere than actually on the subway system.

Question: How do they treat you when they catch you?

Answer: I have known friends that have been abused and based by them and then they tend to reconsider what they are doing, but then on the other hand they tend to say, "Oh the cops shouldn't do this to us, we have such rights as any other people would" and they tend to keep on going and they go through the consequences of the courts and the police themselves.

Question: What about the general community, what do they think about graffiti?

Answer: In the beginning when it was a new fad a lot of people didn't recognise it and they were discouraged from it getting popular, now these days there are people out there who tend to view graffiti as good, it can be good if it is done right and there are new people out there who can express themselves with new
styles and what they can do instead of kind of locking it up inside you and not showing anybody.

Question  What about the artists, do our Australian artists have an interchange with graffitists, do they swap work with you?

Answer  Yes they communicate to a lot of people, oh yes they do, they communicate with people in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth if they want to, but they have to do the travelling first if they want to be know through the other people in other states and then they will send ’em backwards and forth like pen pals they send photos and letters. They have pen pals overseas in America, England, France, West Germany. For me, I know that there is people out there that communicate with other countries and get information on what's new and what's not and I have videos and photos to prove that there is people and basically once you get to know them you are like friends with them, you get to see what sort of styles there are, what is happening in that country, what is the new fad, trend and what is going on.

Question  Does each person have an individual style, is there some individual creative expression going on in graffiti?

Answer  Oh yes there is! If you are a graffiti artists that only likes to do characters then you tend to do a more specific character that everybody recognises. Like in the old days with Picasso, Michelangelo had their own style which would be theirs and how they present it, that is like now in the graffiti scene, you do your own lettering word or character that is particularly yours, it's your style. Whereas, if somebody tries to copy that, it's not so good but everybody will recognise that that other person copied from the original owner who started it off first and it was his from when it began and they should never copy what isn't theirs.
Question: That is similar to artists who paint pictures for galleries, they have original styles don't they. Do those artists have an opinion about graffiti?

Answer: They tend to see graffiti more broad and would prefer to do legal works in the community from little centres which have been opening up. Like down in Bondi, there is a youth centre there that actually promotes it (graffiti) for the younger kids, to actually get 'em off the streets and off the railway system. But that was not a typical situation, I doubt it if politicians or groups would congregate in a style of what should be helping the little kids, and telling them what is wrong and you should be doing it this way and it will come out a lot better than actually getting a criminal record where they are worse off you know?

Question: So what do politicians think about graffiti?

Answer: The politicians don't like it at all, they prefer to have notes than to see what is going on around them.

Question: They would prefer to have votes rather than look after young people?

Answer: Ah well, politicians don't know that younger people would be voting and if they don't get the right treatment from the older generation they could lose a lot of votes. There are a lot of children from the age of 15 to the age of 18 that will soon be voting but they don't know yet, and if the politicians don't know or even agree, they could be in parliament or even out of parliament soon.

Question: Do you think that if local council provided areas for graffitists to work on, it would be a successful thing, or do you think they need to do illegal bomb (graffiti pieces)?

Answer: Oh, with the council helping it would be much better but there will be a few people that will do totally the opposite and try to bomb, but they will still come down to the centre to see what's happening.
Question: You said in an earlier part of our conversation that older graffitiists like to be open and play it safe but the younger kids like to be a bit more daring, do you think there is a place for interchange amongst the different age groups with people like yourself looking out for young ones, like some sort of support structure?

Answer: I reckon there would be. The older guys would tend to look out for the little ones and say "Stop doing it this way and you can do it this way" so you could actually avert them going through the legal courts and getting a criminal record. There would be support for it, if they can be helped.

Question: What do little kids think about graffiti, do they look up to you?

Answer: As a model, of graffiti, I reckon they would, cause they see you around, you've been here, you are known and they tend to think "Oh, you're good, you still are good, why don't you teach me and can I come around with you and see your styles". You actually present yourself up on the walls and things like that. It is good, it is good being a model but on the other hand you tend to tell the kids, "Don't try to copy our style, build your own and progress in it".

Question: Be individual and creative yourself!

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do you think that doing graffiti for money, getting commissions, changes what graffiti is?

Answer: Getting money for doing graffiti is a bonus for the guys. It saves them from actually stealing the paint and it helps them along the way that they get recognised for promotion work or film clips. Like, people I have known have done film clips for Kylie Minogue's "Locomotion" and the background for Rose Tattoo, the background for one of their songs and getting on kids TV shows. That would be a bonus for any graffiti artist to actually
get money and promotion and their work on screen or art gallery or out in the street.

Question  So there is no problem from changing the venue from out in the street to indoors?

Answer  Ah, from the street to indoors, that's two different atmospheres. In the street you tend to be more open and more free in what you decide to do but when you are indoors you try to keep it a certain style where people can still recognise what it is and still understand maybe the words or the lettering or the character and have a different mind than what they actually would think. Like one person would probably think "Oh this is a good way, he has done this good, but another person might come down and say "he's done this good, but he has done this good in this way". You always get different views from other people, not the one type of view.

Question  So graffiti is site specific?

Answer  Yeah, on the wall it would be good to do a big work on reggae, pop, characters, whatever you tend to choose. If it turns out good "Good on ya!" and you get recognised, not maybe by the community but by your other comrades in the field doing the same thing as you.

I think we will leave it there for now, thanks Simon.

Thank you.
GRAFFITI ARTIST
David (18)
Venue is Plumpton High School, in Western Sydney

Question  So we are talking to David of Plumpton. Do you live at Plumpton?
Answer    Yeah.

Question  How old are you David?
Answer    Eighteen.

Question  And you're in your final year of high school?
Answer    Yes

Question  You're a graffiti artist?
Answer    Not actually graffiti. Graffiti artists can be put in different terms, all I can say is I'm an aerosol artist.

Question  Define the difference?
Answer    Well, graffiti is more like going out and wasting trains, just tagging off on everything, aerosol is more of an art where you set out and plan and sometimes get paid for something.

Question  Is there some rule, differentiation between a graffiti artist and an aerosol artist, what has brought that about?
Answer    Well, it has been a big change as people, more people are getting busted for doing illegal graffiti and the like, there's a magazine that comes every month or so, right, "Hipe" magazine and they encourage legalisation, so everyone sort of, tends
to legalise it. It's more of a trend these days cause you don't have to run from the cops, you can do it at daylight and that's about it.

Question
The term aerosol artist has come about through the notion of trying to legalise the practice of graffiti artists, is that what you're saying?

Answer
Yeah, it is. Do it all, get paid for it and do it legally.

Question
Tell me Answer, with the other interviews that I've done on graffiti artists they say that the thrill of doing it illegal is very much a part of the work, how do you feel about that?

Answer
Yeah, it's very much true and seeing the final product of what ever it is, it's an accomplishment like if you do it on such a big thing like a train, like a whole car and to work with other people, so that's mainly what it is all about, and to go against the law most of the time.

Question
Can I take you up on two points there, I'm very interested in the notion of collaborative work, working with a group and also to go against the law. Let's talk about the collaborative notion first. As an aerosol artist, do you work collaboratively, or is that something you do on your own?

Answer
Well, like I said the times are changing, so a lot of people are starting to get help off each other, like round about 86, 87 there used to be wars against everybody, like they'd cap other peoples works and now it's sort of, out in the west they're starting to get more of a family, closer than family, and people are more reliant on each other. So they would rather go out with someone watching their back than going out alone. So they would rather
go out and hang a piece with more of a group and it's a lot of easier. And war, well they ask for it. ... like I said.

Just recently the transit police, or cops, they're starting to carry pieces like, usually they buff a whole car... ah right, a whole car is the train, they just paint the whole train the same colour it was before, but now they put lines through it, now that's asking for trouble, they know, they've got the money, they've got the time, they've got the power to paint the whole car, they only put wires through it to show, they make a mess of the thing, it's like capping, it's actually, I don't know, everybody knows it's there, the tension we all know. Like, from my experience OK, I was travelling on a train with a group of friends with the crew right, we don't actually call them crew, we went and bought paint right, because it was legal. So we were easily detected in the way that we dressed, brand names, the shoes and they way we talked to each other.

Question
Tell me the way you were dressed?

Answer
Well, I was dressed in black baggies and a Nike t-shirt, with Nike shoes and a Nike hat, right.

Question
What are black baggies?

Answer
Black baggies they're break dancer's pants with a huge crutch in them, really baggy. I call them black baggies, anyway. And we were all dressed and like we weren't asking for trouble we were just going on our own way right we weren't hanging from the train, we were just sitting there doing nothing, we weren't mucking around, weren't smoking or putting our feet on the thingos, right. And they walked passed us and they saw us and...
they hang up the top level of the train and they saw us and we sort of walked away, sort of thing, up to the other side of the carriage and they went over the top, like there's two sides of the carriage and they were waiting there and we were just waiting for the next train, cause this has happened before, heaps of times right, so we said alright we'd get of the next station and walk it right, but then before the station they come up and they said "Are you boys doing something" and we said "no, no, no", "You got a ticket" and we all pull our tickets out, right and we give the tickets to them and they say "No, this is no good boys" and it was the right tickets and they were asking for trouble, we knew it alright, we knew it was going to be on. Like these are under covers not clothes police, there was about two or three of them right, there mm how do you say it, they were over weight, over aged people right, we knew in our own hearts, they knew, we could feel it in the air, they were asking for trouble right, because we didn't do a thing, and they said "What's in the bags", cause we had huge bags, we had 2 litre bags sort of thing and it was huge full of cans, chocker block, we had about 200 bucks worth of paint in it, something like that.

**Question** How did you get a hold of that amount of paint?

**Answer** We're doing a legal for, what is it, a radio station.

**Question** Who arranged that legal for you?

**Answer** What was his name, a guy down Blacktown, Street Level Theatre, you go to him and he tells you what to do and fixes you up with other artists, someone that can find legals for you and he fixes it up for you and after he tells you they want a legal there, you have to go there, you have to give
them a quote and they give you the money and you buy the paint, you go, you usually do four or five outlines and like I was saying you'd set up a legal and you'd spray it and it would be alright from there. These days a lot of people, like they're non violent movement side of graffiti they're more leaning to legals because it's a lot safer and you get to do, a lot more people, they won't get caught straight away and they won't get it done over the next month or so.

Question

Legals are actually a more planned and art oriented piece, would you agree with that statement?

Answer

Oh well, more art oriented?

Question

More oriented towards traditional notions of art than say a big wild style burner or would you not agree with that statement? Tell me what you think about that because you're looking puzzled?

Answer

Well, I consider it as an art but other people don't think it's art at all.

Question

What other people?

Answer

Public in general. I know that people have been affected by the bad side of graffiti, like the ones that have had houses broken into, the ones that their fences have been sprayed on, cars have been sprayed on, all that sort of thing, these are the people that have the negative attitude. You can find here and there that people have worked with graffiti have a good attitude towards it.

Question

So these legals that get to stay up a lot longer and earn you money, do you see them as a bridge between being a kid and having this talent that
you have and being an adult and working
something of the talent?

Answer I don't know about being a kid, I could name about
five kids or good sprayers that are over 25 and
they do it as a profession so they know they're
good at it. But beside about being a kid, they
don't understand... so.

Question What age did you start mucking around with your
graffiti styles and your note book and all that sort of thing?

Answer About 14, 15 something around there.

Question And what age did you say you are now?

Answer 18

Question So that's say four years of practice, so you were a
kid when you started you would say?

Answer Oh yeah.

Question And you developed artistically since then?

Answer Oh yeah, worked on from old styles to new and
created my own and to me, my own being and the
styles are there.

Question Your in your final year of high school, what do
your art teachers think of your talent and do they
allow you to employ it in your art work?

Answer In art, a few teachers that are a bit negative, some
are quite positive about it, but out of ... art for you
but like in the maths department and social
science and english they fully promote it like
they've let me do legals in their classrooms.
Question
Did you do these ones on the wall down here?

Answer
Sad to say but true, yeah.

Question
They're good ..... 

Answer
Very, a bit mixed up because there's a group of people focusing on one person on one wall and like these group of people we only met and they weren't organised so it was one big mess. But if you have a group of people that plan it out, plan the colours, plan your outline, they know what it's going to be like, then it will turn out 'A1'.

Question
Tell me Answer, when you do that group work or even when you work on a piece on your own how do you go about making those decisions about line, shape and colour, what is it that allows you to say I'll do this here, I'll do that there?

Answer
Well you work off old styles like that sort of thing, but I don't know, it depends on what you're going to do, if you're going to do a legal that somebody is going to see, you're going to have to do it that they can read it, public style it's called, I don't know if you're familiar with it, but public style you use for public use, that's probably why it's called public style, I don't know. Whilst I just use it for my own use, because I don't know, it depends what you're going to write and how you feel and time and what kind of paint you have makes a big influence on what you're going to do.

Question
There is another situation with the law, lets not stay on the law too long, but just this thing, I'm wondering how it affects you that when you turn eighteen you can get put in the slammer for graffiti, whereas when you're under eighteen you
don't go to the slammer and people have ended up in Bogga Road in Queensland for graffiti. Does that affect what you do, has that made you turn to legals?

**Answer**

It's a coincidence you ask that, but my birthday is in a months time and I'm starting to consider giving it up, like my cousin did, cause his the one that gave me the idea to start, like he started early before me and he's turned twenty one something like that and he's quit, I don't know I've got mixed feels that he's sorting of dogging it sort of thing.

**Question**

What does dogging it mean?

**Answer**

Cutting out, scared, not doing it, being a coward, I don't know. Now that I'm turning eighteen I'm starting to consider, like just stick to legals or just keep it on paper that's about it.

**Question**

In the graffiti or aerosol artist fraternity, group, network, is there a big exchange of ideas or do you tend to develop your own work and then share it through viewing?

**Answer**

No, you wouldn't share it, no. You make your own style and develop your own style, if you bite off anybody else you get your arse kicked.

**Question**

What does bite mean?

**Answer**

Biting means copying, to copy someone else's style which you wouldn't want to do, unless you don't want to stick around for very long. To copy someone else's work is to steal the whole entire concept and that's not what you do.
Question: Is it like stealing part of themselves?

Answer: It's like actually stealing a property from, a name, it's like stealing your own name from them and putting your own name on it.

Question: So what does a style mean to you?

Answer: Style is to be new, make something new for everyone to stand up and look at what you're doing. Style is to be adventurous and do something of a whole new concept, to be brand new. And if you have that sort of technique and you can have the technique you use in the can, you've got it made, it's easy.

Question: And is this style meant to reflect you, the person Answer or is it meant to reflect your creative talent. Is it more you or is it more your creativity, would you say?

Answer: It would be more my creativity, it's not the style of Answer it's the style of COE.

Question: COE, I've seen that around a lot, actually.

Answer: People know me as COE, not as Answer. You have snitches or snakes out there which lag you in.

Question: Lag you in?

Answer: Dob you in, tell the transit cops, cause people might get caught, the transits will be smart, right, and they'll think, oh yeah, you give us about five, six, seven names and we'll let you go, you do that and they'll let you go. So you keep your name to yourself sort of thing.
Question: Do you have favourite colours?

Answer: Oh yeah, I love aqua, denim, I like pink, fuschia and strawberry, I love those.

Question: Now these are names that you're naming off a paint can, do you know what colour fuschia is?

Answer: No, no I don't.

Question: It's a pinkie purple, isn't it.

Answer: Yeah, pink purple, darker.

Question: It's interesting that you learn your colours through a trade name. What about things like putting texture and tone on it, do you know how to do those sorts of things?

Answer: Yeah, that takes a long time, sort of, master sort of thing like you get drips and wrong colours to go with each other and it takes a while to learn how to do that sort of thing, like I remember when I first started I'd be too scared to use this colour for that one because in those days it was just starting. Like I didn't have any money, so I was putting throw ups everywhere.

Question: What are throw ups?

Answer: Outline with no colouring inside, it's a quick outline or something. No complex lines, just rounded, curved with lines of what your tag is, whatever.

Question: So how did you end up choosing your colours and getting braver, what was that process?

Answer: Trial and error, really. Cause like I've got boards at home, wooden boards where I practice on that
and use colours. That's if you want to be original, some people just lay back and do normal pieces, chromies or stuff like that.

Question
What is a chromie?

Answer
That's black on chrome, silver colour.

Question
So there's a lot of really tight and careful visual analysis of other peoples work and your own work, would you say, you're looking critically all the time with your eye at other peoples work and yours and making comparisons or do you sit down with your notebook and just fiddle about?

Answer
You fiddle about, yeah. You get a line or a curve of someone else's piece and you work off that and you expand out, you wouldn't just bite like I was saying, so you expand off one little thing off someone else's piece, or a colour or the feel of someone else's, you change it and work off that.

Question
This notion of getting texture and tone, you said that was pretty difficult and it takes a while to do, that means it takes a lot of your time and also it takes a lot of your money, or it takes a lot of paint, doesn't it?

Answer
Yeah, it does really, it's in your hobby so you devote all your time to it or most of your time, anyway.

Question
So where does the commitment come from to devote all your time to it? What are you after?

Answer
Fame, fame in what you do. To be recognised. Like, you'd walk down the street someone will say "your COE, seen your def pieces, why don't you do some for me" and that sort of stuff, just to be
respected by elders and say "ha that guy's got some talent why don't you produce it" or something like that and instead of being dumped on all the time about what you do and why you do it.

Question Would you say that your aspiration, your goal, the thing you are reaching for in adulthood .... Let's do it another way, because I don't want to put words in your mouth. What is that thing that you think you're reaching for, not just to do with graffiti but all round what is your goals for yourself, what do you hope for yourself?

Answer What, outside graffiti?

Question And including, if you see it as part of it.

Answer To express myself the way I feel, like, I like doing drama, I like writing scripts and that sort of thing and I like graffiti they're all sort of expressing myself. I want to express myself in the way that is original. Not just writing plain print type sort of thing, I want to be different, I don't know about society, if they don't like then it's the way it goes.

Question There's always this bit of shit comes up from other adults, my contemporaries who say "oh yeah but they can't be original cause it all looks the same and they all dress the same and all the music sounds the same and they all do the same thing and they go round in groups". What do you have to say to those people?

Answer I don't think these people who are criticising the art have took the time out to deeply look inside it to understand what really goes on in there and the people who do it. Like one person I know can't read graffiti alright, I done a few outlines and I
showed the man and he couldn't read it so he
already had a negative attitude about it, you know
that's probably why these people don't understand
it because, not because they can't read graffiti, it's
because they don't go deeper into the reason why.

Question  Do you think there should be some sort of link
between youth and adults in terms of the different
sort of creative things they do, or do you think that
youth would think that was a waste of time
because what they do is just rebellion?

Answer  That type of question I don't understand.

Question  Two parts to it really I guess, do you think it's a
good idea to have education programs about
youth arts?

Answer  Yeah, should promote it more so it would be
more legalised, like the only reason why nobody knows,
legalises it these days is, like, it's only a minimal
amount of legalisation is because nobody knows
that you can go out, don't be scared to go out and
ask for legals, don't be scared to show your talent,
that's what the problem is these days no-one has
the knowledge that they can do that, it's not illegal
to ask for a legal.

Question  What's the other part to the question, did you
remember it?

Answer  Something ....

Question  What was the reason? Or Answer what about the
notion of what you're doing and the skateboarders
skating on the streets, the dance challenge guys
getting out in gangs and that sort of thing. Do you
think that's just rebellion or do you think that it is
something more than that, what do you think it is?
Answer

Well, it's rebellion and a message, they give a message out "I want to be us, no-one else", no we want to be the people that we are, we don't want to be the carbon copy Joe Bloggs that's wearing a suit and tie and walking around doing that sort of thing. We want to be us, we want to express ourselves the way we do, we want to be spraying things the way we want to do, we want to draw things the way we want to do, we don't want to sit in a room with a canvas on a board in front of us and paint with a paint brush, we just want to be different, we don't want to be different just to rebel against other people, we just want to be different because we want to be different, alright. Now a lot of people might say "your just doing it cause you want to be different, you want to be different in society and that's it" but it goes deeper than that with graffiti or aerosol art. The reason why graffiti and aerosol art have been, they've been forced to part because where it's done, like if they had of kept it more from the very beginning in, I'd say 80, 81 something around there or 74, I don't know, if they had of sort of said "oh there's an art form there let's bring it inside right, let's bring it inside with the canvases, let's bring it inside with the sculpture" it could have grown from there and instead of rejecting it and say right "we don't want that, so they go and put it on the trains anyway. So it's all your fault really, the older generation.

Question

You can say it's my fault, but what I'm doing here is basically is institutionalising something that you don't want to be boxed up. One last question then, I'm heading towards the end, but you keep bringing up interesting points. This notion of moving around in gangs, why do you do that, what have you got to say about that? Young people, not necessarily colours but just the phenomena,
the fact and the interesting fact that the young people do like to go round in groups and in that group gets called gang.

Answer

Well, a group of people, we don't group, like, I know Bill, Bill knows Fred, Fred knows Mark, right and we come altogether at the same time. We don't do that deliberately, we just do it cause we're friends, right, we don't go "OK Holms let's go out, let's gang around each other and lets start fights". We don't do that, some people do, but like have you ever heard of KOA? Well, KOA is more of a crime crew sort of thing, KOA stands for Kiss Our Arse, right, now they hang tags, you know what tags are, well all they do is hang tags up everywhere and cap everyone's pieces. Now, KOA all they do is roll people, that's all they do, and they're the ones that go out, they're the ones that say "hey, let's form a group, let's go out and roll, and let's get power, let's do drugs, let's steal cars or break into houses. That's what KOA is, right. Other crews like KMS, MTV and TPR, that's a different story.
SKATEBOARDERS

Venue is a suburban ramp, the interviewer is one of their peers. Some members of this group perform professionally and have sponsors.

Question

Colin Brown here out with a backside air ... Ok that's someone backing up. Building up his speed. Looks like his just a learner. ... Backside kick turn there. ... An unknown dropping in, out with an axle stool. Coming up with a rock-di-fogy, 180 rock-de-fakie ...Blind, rock and roll, rock and roll, front side air ... he's out of there. One of the bikes coming in, this is Jamie Marn. Yeah out with an air ... Front wheel, table top, down side can can, cross-up, crossing the handle bars together, one handed, disaster, pulls it back in, call that a peg stool, air over the channel, peg grind, very smooth, another peg ... OK we've got Mick Mullhall, this guys a hard flier, he's dropping in, yeah nice backside air, very stylish, ... into an alley ... another air, building up his speed, plugging a little bit, plugging means getting too close, ... backside air, now this is Colin Brown ... front side all over the channel .. very sketchy skater, its a disaster, front side grind yeah, bailing that one, yeah, yeah no worries man. Alright, this is Glenn Robinson, out with a rock'n'roll this is his first run of the day, his just warming up ... this man's being skating for about 5 years, his a 1990 Triple J Australian mini ramp champion and runner up in the vertical section. Very cool style, .. OK we've got Mick Mullhall dropping in, big air man, this guy knows how to fly, at least five foot there, ... dropping down that back, into an alleycop, twicked out backside air, yeah method air, going for the stale fish, he's bombed, he's bombed, chucking a temper tantrum, yeah Mick, give us a smile. OK, Jamie Marn back on the ramp, another member of the Australian free style team recently seen doing demonstrations at the Royal Australian Easter
Show, yeah table top grind, he doesn't muck around, plugging a little bit, into a disaster, peg stool, only two inches of peg there ladies and gentlemen, a splice ... one peg up and one peg on coping, coping is the metal bit that you see at the top of the ramp, peg grind, no, bails that one. OK got another biker, as you can see all the guys are wearing their pads, their not stupid, they now what's going down, oooh that's a nice air. Yeah table top, cross up, dropping down, that's a one foot, yeah no footer, ... Glenn Robinson back on, with a 50/50 grind, backside air, ... like I said before his only warming up, you gotta give this man a bit of time, give us a smile Glen, he hates cameras. Colin Brown on the ramp now, yeah front side invert. This guys sketchy when he pulls out some of these tricks, rock'n'roll ... backside air, mean air, bailing, as you can see the knee pads come in handy, very handy. Mick Mulhall, yeah crooked cop, front side air, backside air, frontside air, yeah, backside, ... tail, shuffle to fakie, disaster to smith stool, backside disaster, 50/50 foggy, it's hot, into a disaster, takes it on the butt, oo he's hurting a little bit, bit of a nasty slam, but he's alright. You get winded? Glenn Robinson back in, out with a backside air, like I said before very smooth soul with a 50/50, yeah one axle 50/50 into a fast plan, mean tail, and he's out, still warming up on the ramp, member of the Australian free style team, ... yeah, ... peg stool back in and his out of there. Backside air, it's mad, ... rock-de-fakie, into an axle stool, backside air, slide and going for the half, ... cut, cut he's still warming up.

Question: What's your name?

Answer: Michael Greg Mulhall

Yeah.

And what do you like doing, Michael?

I like skateboarding, and I like playing with my computers and hassling females.

Yeah, as we've seen at the Easter Show.

Highlight of my year.

And what do you do for a living, Answer?

Nothing, I basically play with computers.

Play with computers, what do you see as your favourite tricks on the ramp, see you rip on that ramp.

Basically I do a lot of airs, I try and get into real hard ... my adrenalin rushes fast..

That's what you like, what's your highest recorded air, man?

Well, unrecorded I know it was 9 foot, I've got it on a photograph at home, at Manly once.

9 foot, shit

My average is 7, 8 foot. 8 foot when I work hard.

Seen you go 8 man, crooked cop at the Easter show, on the little ramp too, that was fuck'n wicked, sorry about the swearing. I just want everyone to know that 11 foot is the highest recorded air in the
world and this man here has gone 9, that is remarkable. Throw a few tricks at us. Some skate linguo

Answer 360 foggy, aussie blind, kick, backside disaster revert, ... fakie and I don't know, big fat stale fish.

Question You can do all them tricks, that's going hard, that is going hard. And have you tried the world skating, man?

Answer Yeah, I went to London, and to LA in 1989, this last year 1991 I went to Europe for four months and travelled in France, Geneva London again and then on back to San Fransisco for three months. Had a girlfriend too.

Question Have you got a girlfriend. So you've been around

Answer Yeah, the last 12 years I like travelling, I've been all over Australia ...

Question I just like you to know that this guy is one of the best in Australia. How long have you been skating, Answer?

Answer 12 years now

Question 12 years

Answer I'm 23

Question And your 23 years of age. Right, contest result?

Answer Up until I about 17, the few contest I went in, I was getting first and second but once I turned 17 I kinda mellowed out I wasn't so consistent anymore ......
Question: Money, finding money that's what it's all about.

Answer: That's one of my pet songs I've taped, 'Love and Money'.

Question: Alright he's stowing hard.

Answer: Like my new hair cut?

Question: Yeah it's mad, it's mad. Actually all the girls like your long hair, you remember when you had your long hair.

Answer: My girlfriend made me cut it because I wasn't going to get a job.

Question: Bumming women troubles again, how's the women situation been, anyway? You don't care.

Answer: Yeah, I don't stress about it anymore, there's kinda confusing these two girls, both of them liked me now...

Question: And you can't choose.

Answer: No, I can choose, I fully quit on one and the next one..

Question: You'll know tonight, we're having a party at Shelley Beach, we're going to roller bladers, bikers, skateboarders, everybody, we're going to be tearing up that place, hopefully the pigs don't come.

Answer: Don't worry I've got my gun and my big black.

Question: Big black, what is big black?

Answer: Big black is your basic phallic symbol.
Question  We're back in action, Answer the crowd wants to know why do you do it? Why do you skate?

Answer  I guess it starts when I was a kid not much to do around my area, ... I used to ride a scooter there. For me it's just a pure adrenalin rush, I can say I'm lucky enough not to take drugs, I don't drink beer, I don't smoke pot, I admit to drinking spirits. But I don't need that stuff to have an adrenalin rush, even if I go out dancing. I could dance for 10 minutes and my bloods pumping ...

Question  That's what it's all about, that adrenalin rush.

Answer  Adrenalin, that's what we want.

Question  Adrenalin, that's our drug that's what we want. Alright Answer another question they want answered, do you think it is an art form?

Answer  Definitely, it is one of the only sports that pure self expression. So many different skaters have a different look, some skaters can have a fluid style like a surfer, others can be a little bit more sketchy, like their feet move around on the board.

Question  Like Colin Brown over there.

Answer  Yeah, ... your adrenalin rush with different styles, where to me it's aerials with someone else it could be technical tricks like Glen over there or some American skater like Ben ..., every skater is different, anyway.
Question  Yeah that's true, I'm just going to cut here for a second. How many people did you jump?

Answer  We jumped 11 people.

Question  Eleven!!

Answer  It was the shittiest dero we've every done. It was unorganised, unplanned we didn't even know what was on,... but we did it.

Question  And what's your name?

Answer  My name is Cal

Question  And what do you ride, man?

Answer  I ride just your standard Australian issue Rocess, knee pads ....

Question  Alright, what are your sponsors, man?

Answer  Coke, B.K. (British Knights), Rocess.

Question  One more question, man why do you skate, why do you like to do it? What's going down?

Answer  The fun of it, the feel of it, the adrenalin rush on the neck. The adrenalin is what you live for, why you skate.

Question  Right, that's what we want to hear. Addicted to a natural drug, that's the way to keep it. Cal, do women love you? that's not what I heard, man. Cal do you have a penis?

Answer  Yeah
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Alright. Do you think skating is an art form?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Sure, it's a way of expressing yourself. I think it's really good, you get out there on that ramp, you can just make your statement through your skating and it says a lot, it's a good way of expressing yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>There you have it ladies and gentlemen. Answer any last words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Skating rules, females rule even more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Oh no! So what do you want, man?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>We just finished a demo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Yeah, how was it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>... it was great we jumped twelve people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Twelve!! ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>No we just knocked it down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Oh man, and what do you ride?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>I ride rollerblades, they rip, that's my ramp board up there, it rips ... they call me Harry Hanger, the mecurachrome kid ....see, it's there on my skates... I dedicated it to all the people at the Easter Show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>That's right you did that at the Easter show, how was it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Pretty good, except we had this guy ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question  Hang on a sec we haven't got your name, what's your name?

Answer  My name's Harry ..... 

Question  And what's your real name John ....

Answer  Yeah, that's the one.

Question  That's the one, yeah, you forgot  How long have you been skating? Stop that man. ...  Yeah, we have another skater here, what's your name?

Answer  My name is Craig I met you in ...

Question  Yeah, I know.

Answer  .... I hate rock music

Question  Do ya? Tell me why do you skate?

Answer  I like skating, ... I like to skate because mmm ......

Question  Tell us Mike why do you ride?

Answer  It's rad

Question  Because it's rad, why is it rad, man

Answer  ... feeling up in the air ...

Question  Right, is it the damned adrenalin rush.

Answer  It is.

Question  Your addicted to adrenalin, man. Is that what you want to get every single day.

Answer  Yeah
Alright. And how's the women in your life?

Good

Yeah, I heard you got with this chick at the Easter Show ... Alright man, do you think this is an art form we are doing here?

Yeah, definitely

Yeah, why?

I don't know

The way you throw your body up, the way you twick your legs.

The way you express yourself

Some conversation amongst the boys.

We've got a bit of rain coming down, looks like no skating happening ...

General conversation amongst the boys.

What's your name Reece? That's Reece. And over here we have Kylie with Answer, that's Reece's girlfriend there playing with somebody else. Cut the rest of that out OK, what do you do, what do you do on this ramp?

What do I do? Try to get as high as possible, which I'm not getting today. Trying to do as many variations as I can.
Question: What on, what do you use, man.

Answer: Bike

Question: There it is there ... look at that bike. Tell us why do you ride that bike?

Answer: Cause I like to.

Question: You like to, is it better than drugs, man?

Answer: Yeah ...

Question: The adrenalin rush, is that what your addicted to, man? When you pull a new trick you get a shot of adrenalin just rushing through you.

Answer: Yeah, that's probably it.

Question: That's probably it, tell me, do you think it's an art form?

Answer: It's a pretty alright art form if it is one.

Question: Yeah, it's an alright art form. I think so too, man. Yeah I was going to ask this guy, any last words?

Answer: Yeah, be cool to everyone.

Question: Alright, and peace to everyone too. OK, here we go the whole skate community waiting for the ramp to dry, nothing they can do when the ramp is wet, just wait, that's all they can do, just wait. Yeah, Linda Forrester, the lady whose putting all this together we've got to thank her. Like check it out, we're all just waiting. Matt, what are you looking at in that bag?
Answer  Big black.

Question  Yeah, everybody likes big black. Tell me Matt, why do you skate, man? For the fun of it?

Answer  Yeah

Question  Alright, is that all you're in it for?

Answer  For the tricks, man.

Question  Yeah, what do the new tricks give you, man. What happens when you pull up a new trick? You get fully stocked?

Answer  Yeah

Question  Alright, that's what we want to hear and how old are you Matt?

Answer  Fifteen

Question  Fifteen, this guys only fifteen, fifteen man. The youngest man of what, the aerial assault squad.

Answer  The aerial assault squad.

Question  Alright, tell me do you think it's an art form, do you?

Answer  Definitely

Question  Definitely an art form, right, why?

Answer  The way you kick ass.

Interview  Because you kick ass, any last words there?

Answer  Yeah, kill all skaters and bikers.
STREET DANCERS

Cynthia (18) and Craig.

Venue is a Disco called El Tropo in the Revesby Workers Club.

Interviewer: Cynthia how old are you?

Cynthia: Eighteen.

I: Tell me about the dance steps that the young people do when you come to a place like this? Do you call it a Disco?

C: Night Club. Definitely a night club. Discos are more for the under 18, house parties, gathering as they call it.

I: What's a gathering?

C: It's when a certain group or type of kid get together and they plan steps they are going to do at a disco. Its like a disco.. they dance and everything but they plan their moves together and so when they do go out they do what they planned and it looks like a routine they have set up, but its not on stage.

I: How do they do that planning, where do they do it and what are the processes they go through to plan those steps?

C: Most of the time its just at home with their records and turntables..

Craig: There's video clips.

C: They watch video clips...

Craig: Normally they have all the same steps because they have copied it from television and they just come to the club and each one does a step.

I: Who do they copy it from on television?
Craig: MC Hammer, Vanilla Ice (Michael Jackson) Prince. How do they make decisions about what sort of steps they are going to do?

C: Well they watch the clip, they pick a clip of the music they like, they watch it and then they just pick what they think is the easiest step or even if it is difficult they work on it 'till they get it and when they finally get it they put it all together and make one small routine up between who ever's there, between the group.

I: What age group are we talking about now?

C: 17's 16's (younger).

I: You're an older group at 19.

C: Yeh you could say that but other people won't classify it as older group but, we cant go and make up a routine and go up into a night club and do it because people will just stop and look, sort of thing.

Craig: Well a lot of us are older and we've all worked and we don't have time to do stuff like that.

I: And you were saying that if you do do that at a big night club like this you're not allowed, you get stopped. Why do you think that is.

C: Attraction. It could cause fights. People start saying "show offs" or people just watch it and they don't like it, you know.

I: What sort of dance steps, dance styles are there that are current now in 1992.

C: Straight funk for sure. House, Acid. That's about the basics.

I: Can you describe those three Cynthia.
C  House consists of running man, stomp dancing; Acid consist of mostly 'smerf'. Smerf moves are when the feet they stay on the ground. Its all body work.

I  What's Running Man?

C  Running Man is the step that you glide your feet, you run but in one spot.

I  Is that like that Michael Jackson Moon Walking.

C  No because that travels. Running man you don't travel.

?  If you travel its only in a circle and it can be done frontwards side to side.

I  And what was the last one. House, Acid and...

C  Straight funk.

I  And what's that look like?

C  Rap. Its like Rap Dancing.

I  What's rap dancing.

C  How do you describe rap dancing?

Craig  You've lost me, I don't know.

C  Sharp moves, its not breeze ... its very harsh.

Craig  Moving the body quickly.

C  Yeh .... quick moves.

I  When those boys were doing that crossed legged stuff and flapping arms, what where they doing?
House. House dancing mixed with a bit of street funk.

What sort of clothes do you wear when you do these sort of dance.

For this club?

No, not for this club really. If you really want to be in the scene and you really like your dancing and you want to just identify with a style.

The MC Hammer look?

Tell me about that.

Normally its silk isn't it ....

And the pants ... baggies, overalls.

What are 'baggies'?

Really loose. Big pants...

Big pockets ...

Really huge pockets yeh. High cut shoes... high cut joggers.

hats, caps...

Stuzzy hats... its a brand ... braces....

What about Acid. What would those sort of people wear?

Similar ... the music its similar, the dances are different but the clothing's about the same...

For all three styles?
C: Yes... because that's what's 'in' now.... people wear what's 'in'.

I: How does one choose which style they would follow.

Craig: We base ours on America don't we... all the clothes come from America first and we get their styles later on.

I: What about the dancing that they might choose to do. Cynthia said that dance is different, the clothes are all the same. How do they choose the dance they would like to do?

Craig: Virtual depends on the person... what they're capable of and that.... so if they like a certain step and they think they can do it they'll go ahead and do it... even if they try one they don't like, they just wouldn't do it... they'll go to something else... try another step... that's virtually what it's all about... if you like a step, you try it and you do it... then that's if you know. You go do it at night time and that... so..

I: Its "like a step"- does that mean that they can do the step, they have a particular proclivity for that movement in their body so they continue to follow that sort of movement?

Craig: Like if they start off with one kind just say rap and that... they'll start with just the basics of rap and they go onto further things of it and that and then they might try something else as well... other kinds and that... its virtual up to the person.. what they like... what kind of group they're in, one group might like this, so then they follow this... but then they may not like this so they don't do that style of music and that... its virtually up to them.

I: How old would the kids be when they started to make these decisions?

All: About 14.

I: And how long does it go. How long do they keep dancing this style.
C
Until they leave School.

I
What happens then Cynthia?

C
Then they start mixing with other crowds like we did...

Craig
Different environment.....

C
Over 18 Disco in which you can't dance certain style anymore.

I
Why not?

Craig
It's looked down upon I reckon ... they get looked down upon....

C
Yeh. Its childish.

Craig
Yeah childish.

C
You've grown up now ... so you've got to ...

Craig
change... and dance like normal.... what we consider normal ....

C
Same with the style of dressing ... I like dressing in overalls and baggy pants.... but coming here I wouldn't dress like that without going out with my brothers and friends.

I
How old is your brother?

C
13, and my brother's friends are 16 and 17. When I go out with them, I dress in overalls and baggies, hats... that's mostly going shopping to the mall. But when I mix with Pete and Craig, you know... normal people ....

I
Where does your brother go when he goes out dancing?

C
Marconie Club.

I
Where's that?
C      Bonnyrigg.

I      Why does he go there?

C      That's where all his age group go ... its the under 18 disco they
      listen to their type of music and dance their type of dancing...
      they like it they have fun there.

I      What style of dancing do they do there?

C      Basically House Dancing because its an Italian Club and a lot of
      Italians show the House stuff. Different nationalities have
different taste in styles... Italians like House, Greeks are into
Street Funk... Asians are very into Street Funk and Acid music...
Spanish as well are into House... Australians are into Heavy
Metals.

I      Cynthia, you were born in Australia but your mum obviously
      wasn't ... what nationality is she?

C      Maritious Maritious. Mum say's Maritious... its not as if I'm a
      wog or anything.

I      Is Revesby Western Suburbs?

C      No, no

Craig    Yes it is, it is next to Bankstown so it is..

I      You just said there Craig that sometimes particular music comes
      on and that really makes you go wild. What is it about the music
      that sparks you. Is it that the music has a certain style or is it
      that the music has something within itself and not separate and
classified as style, but something within the music?

Craig    What we're talking about is going wild ...
and what is it within the music that actually prompted you to want to dance to it.

Craig Sometimes there is a quick beat or the beat's so electrifying... the base of the song makes you move, or my body move quicker . . . and I just go wild and throw my hands around do anything that look ... people might look at you, but you know...

C the stuff ups adds to it...

Craig Yeh.

C so it doesn't worry you...

Craig Someone has got to at least start it off and then everyone will like say "lets go".

I You say 'wave your hands around' and do anything that looks good. How do you make those decisions about what you're going to do?

Craig You don't . its just comes out .... it changes really quickly... it might be above your hand, you do anything, you know...

C ... at the time you just go with the flow....

Craig Sometimes you're looking around the room and you see someone do something, so straight away you'll start doing that ... like I sometimes copy Cynthia ....

C ... and I copy him. Its just a natural thing that we do... we just end up doing things together.

I So are you dancing together?

Craig Yes... we sometimes copy each others steps and you're counted like "together".

I Do young kids copy each other on the dance floor.
All the time. Especially when they first start going out to Discos. The first thing they do is sit down and watch, and if they’re game enough they get up get on the dance floor....

The first time I went to a night club I watched some steps and went home and practices... that’s honest... The first time I went to a night club I thought "Geez, that’s how they dance and that’s how I should dance... and you go off and try and do it so...

What do you do? Go home to your bedroom and practice in front of the mirror?

I do. I put the music on and just dance around and just do anything, you know...

I dance around the house when no one’s home....

You got to have rhythm but... sometimes people just don’t have any rhythm and they’re normally the ones that just stand around the Clubs and just look...

...and drink. Most of the time everyone joins in and if they’re got the flow, they feel confident. Like me Peter and Craig we really don’t have anything to worry about... we like music and so we just go up and we go with the flow.

Tell me. What do you say about this criticism that’s levelled against youth cultures, particularly in the dance and fashion area, that we are using everything that comes from the States (US).

There is nothing wrong with that... Sometimes you think "why can’t we have own style... why do we always have to get things from another country" but why not? Its going really well over there, and everyone likes the style, so why not bring it here? Everyone likes it here as well. Use it. Use the style, don’t try
and make up our own because it won't work. We've tried it before.....

Craig

don't forget, we've got Australians now who are making it big. Kylie Monogue... I have to say that, I have to say that... and a new group, Euphoria they're going strong so they're like a new...

C

...success

I

Do you think in using the stuff that's coming out from the States you are being uniquely individual in the dance steps that you create and the fashions that you wear or not?

Craig

Ummmmm. I don't know... things seem to change all the time... especially fashions ... like Madonna for example was outrageous and another group like Euphoria their new video clip is more outrageous than Madonna has ever done..

I

What about you two.?

Craig

Us?

C

Us?

I

Do you think you're being uniquely individual when you dance?

C

Oh yes. We don't dance the same as everyone else.

Craig

No no, it's like... I don't know about everyone else, but I am into music and I'm always buying it and I can spend like...

C

It's Mr DJ we've got here... a box full of records, tapes.

I

So when you look at the television and those video clips you don't just copy, you actually adapt. Is that right? Is that what you're saying to me?

C.

Yes. Definitely.
Craig. Me. I listen to songs over and over again until I sort of get a rhythm and we just get a step to the whole song... that's what I do... I don't know what you do.

C That's what I do exactly ... and knowing the words off by heart... I can sing a song from top to bottom.

Craig It's good to sing a song while you're dancing, too.

C You can really get into it when you're singing you know... it makes you feel part of it... its good.

I We are talking about 'Home boys'. What's that Cynthia?

C Home boys? They are a group of kids all under the age of 17 where they think that they are the coolest in the suburb that you live in.. Wetherall Park, Fairfield, Liverpool... there's just a group of them..

Craig Another name for a gang that's all.

C Another name for a gang really. They are called "Home boys' because they all live in your area... your home...

Craig Their home environment, that's why they are called Home Boys.

C They are Home boys and they've all got this special style about them...

I Do girls do this stuff?

C No. The girls just go for them. If you're in a Home boy group everything's just "wow".

I. What did you do when you were 14.

C The Home boys were like Mafia... you stayed away from them. But now they are just a group of guys that hang around the stations and they ...
Craig  They all dress the same...

C  yes definitely... they all dress and talk exactly the same.

I`  How do they talk?

Craig  Its hard to say... you'd have to go and listen to them. They have got all these hand movements... especially shaking hands with each other or greeting each other they have a special way of doing that. I can't do it.

C  Its not like "Hi how are you" its like "yo, what ya doing, yeh... I catch ya my house"... everything's really quick, short to the point. But they seem to understand what they're talking about. My brother could go up to them and say "Yo, tonight" and they'd say "Yeh". You said there dumbfounded and think "what is tonight?" and "where are you going?" but they know. Just by two words.
STREET MACHINERS

Venue is the old Capitol Motors car lot in Parramatta Road, Sydney, which has a Doner kebab van on it, selling food and soft drink. The Street Machiners have a big gathering here most Saturday nights. This collection of interviews was at the old Capitol Motors vacant car lot and in a local garage at St Marys. The interview at the old car lot was cut short by the Police, who closed the meeting down and I had to return the following Saturday to complete it.

Question  
Tell me about your car.

Olga  
Not many people like popping bonnets when they run big motors just for the fact that no one wants to know what other people are running, that is all it is, you just don't what people to know what you are running... maybe for car theft to as well, once they know you are running big things under your bonnets or big motors, I suppose that's got a lot to do with it.

Tracey  
Yeah well, you have spent a lot of money different people have different size cams and things and it is a combination to get the combination right like when you say head work and cams and lifters and etc its all got to go together to get your speed. Naturally is all got to be and everybody has there ideas everybody has a different combination Olga is not quite big in fact it is a 454 is the biggest you can go in a big block, not the biggest but it is big...

Olga  
It is a big block Chevy, a 454, it is not the biggest cube motor you can get out of a Chevy, you can get 500 cube, but for the street it is quite big especially for a Torrana, which this was orginally, this was a 4 cyclinder, to go from a 4 cyclinder to 8 cyclinder it is a big capacity.

Question  
How old are you Olga
Olga 24

Question How old are you Tracey

Tracey 25

Question Now this thing about not wanting people to look under the bonnet this must be something to do with a creativity in terms of mechanics would you say rather than the look of the car you're been creative with the manufactured power under the bonnet

Olga Yes that is right could not have put it better myself.

Question Where do you use the car do you use it on the street?

Olga Yes well it is street registered, just. I built it this time round to do a pass at Eastern Creek I wanted a street registered car that would do a really good time.

Question What is a pass?

Olga A pass is a run.

Tracey Well its also got to be to a certain extreme before you can race it, there are certain things you have to have done to the car. I don't know, if you have a tail shaft loop or things like that, you just can't take it, even though they sound good or go quick there are certain things at Eastern Creek before the car can even pass to go on the tracks to start off with.

Question What's a tail loop?
Olga

Tail loop, it stops your tail shaft ...

Tracey

... from blowing to the gearbox, and it spins and its doing certain degrees at a certain spin and if that is to snap that can dig into the ground because it is a long bar underneath the car, if that snaps that can dig into the ground and actually catapult you type of thing, so what the loop does, if by some chance... by a certain amount of revs... obviously they rev it off the line... and get the motor to a certain amount of revs... if that snaps the car can virtually fly.

Olga

You can kill yourself, in other words, so they take a lot of precautions, safety wise with cars at Eastern Creek. My car is not a problem except if I do one certain time... if I'm doing the time I am hoping for I am going to have a full ... I only have a half so they wont let me do a second pass at Eastern Creek if I do those times that I want, I think it is 11.

Question

So you're fairly serious about racing, but how did you start into the street machines and that sort of thing?

Olga

Through boyfriends and big brothers.

Question

Did they teach you mechanics?

Olga

Yeah, just being around them at the garage all the time and watching them work on there own cars, like she didn't know a thing, Tracey.

Tracey

I met my boyfriend at the drags 7 years ago I had a Mini as my first car. I did not know a thing about cars, now tonight I've driven my boyfriends Torana here and he's got a small block Chevy in it... and everyone is just sitting there listening and just
watching. He's pulled it down so many times and built it back up again and I have gone and actually brought the parts so many times while his been at work. I've been his little courier going around and getting everything. You have to know what you are buying, I mean you walk into a spare parts shop and say I want such and such, and they think you don't know what you are talking about and they are going to try and bluff and what size and certain things, where as you listening to them you sort of pick up bits and pieces that they wouldn't expect a woman to know.

Question: Who does all the work on the car?

Olga: I do and my boyfriend does a lot to.

Tracey: Pulling them down is no problem we know how to pull them a part.

Olga: I put this one back together.

Question: So its just got a standard gearbox in it?

Olga: No its about a 400 tripped up manual.

Question: What is a tripped up manual?

Olga: It's a automatic without a clutch.

Question: So you have electric preselection or something?

Olga: You can't take off just in drive you have to start in first, second and third you can't just stop it of the line and then clank it.

Question: Its only got three gears?
Olga: Yeah, it's only got three gears.

Question: And what sort of diff, just a standard?

Olga: 9 inch

Question: 9 inch diff, what do you call a 9 inch diff?

Tracey: It's a Ford. Ford came out with a 9 inch diff... this guy has a GT so what they do is get a Ford 9 inch diff and they cut it down. Cut the axels down to fit into a Torana. Obviously Toranas don't come out with a 9 inch diff, it's a Ford.

Question: It's a hard drive to give you top speed?

Olga: My gear ratio, no I do, I don't grab traction well at all.

Question: Has this got a turbo converter in it?

Olga: We better get going there is cops coming, there is three or four outside.

Tracey: Sorry about this but we're going to have to cut this short because if we stay in here we'll get defects.

Question: Why do they do that?

(No answer... they had already left the car and were standing in the crowd watching.)

Question: We are just standing here on Parramatta Road now, there are at least 8 police cars pulled up on Parramatta Road... no, 12 we've counted so far. They have block off both entrances to the Diner and they are serving defect notices on the young people as they move about. We are talking to Kim, an older man with a fairly fancy, more
expensive street machine or a hot rod, would you call it a street machine?

Kim
Yeah, it's before 1948 it's a hot rod so mine is a street machine, we have to just put up with these things (the police) all the time. If someone was doing something wrong you could understand it but having 12 police cars stop people from eating and everything else, it's not really fair.

Question Would you say Kim that the kids were doing anything wrong?

Kim
No, all the time we've been here no one has done anything wrong there has been some nice cars come. People have been eating and drinking and just talking... no one has done anything illegal or wrong, so I don't really know what this is all about.

Question We were talking earlier to Kim about getting to the stage where you could do your car up to the stage of your car. How do kids start and how do they move up towards the sort of car that you have, tell us what car you have and how the process goes?

Kim
Usually they find the car or body style they like or manucature they like and just try and improve on the manufature's specification to exactly what they want as personal means of transport.

Question When they are here, do they talk to you readily - age any problem here?

Kim
No not at all, everyone got the same interest, just cars.

Later that night at a local garage at St Marys...
We are talking to Dave from Penrith, we've just come back from the street machine gathering, where was that place?

Capital Motors, the old Capital Motors on Parramatta Road.

How do you talk to each other, what is some of the language you use when you young people talk about your cars?

It depends on what's done to the car, for example if it's got really wide wheels and if they're pushed underneath the guards, that's called 'tubbed', if the motor's got a super charger on it is called 'blown', you can talk about the sort of wheels they've got, what sort of paint it is, what colour, you might have a roll bar in it, a roll cage, racing harnesses, might be fuel injected, all sort of things.

Some of the kids were saying they do something called cherpees?

Cherpees, it just squeaky your tyres a little bit its not spinning the wheels, its just cherping the wheels a little bit, as opposed to a burn out where you are spinning the wheels and a lot of smoke is coming out, you're burning the tyres. What else do you want to know?

I want to know all that stuff.

Well, you can do a 'donut' which is burn out and you spin the car around in circles, you can go drag racing.
Youth Generated Culture in Western Sydney

**Question**
I have seen fairly intricate wheel patterns on some of the back roads is that some kind of marking of the road, is it purposely for mark making?

**Dave**
Well people go down there where it is quiet to do burn outs.

**Question**
We are looking at a hot rod, what sort of things do you see about your car that give it what you call style?

**Boys**
I don't know, it looks alright, its pretty mad, its good for picking up women.

**Question**
You talk about how much the petrol costs?

**Boys**
You put the petrol in and what you do is there is school girls at the lights or something and you want to show off so you rev your car and do all that and do a wheelie and take off.

**Question**
What do they think of you?

**Boys**
I don't know, you don't see them, you just take off.

**Question**
It's not a very effective way of picking up women is it.

(much laughter)

**Question**
Does your car reflect you and your creativity?

**Boy**
It's my life.

**Question**
How do you mean your car is your life.

**Boy**
You know, you live in it, you don't really want to go home you want to keep driving it.
STREET MACHINERS

Venue is the old Capitol Motors car lot on Parramatta Road, Auburn. This is the second visit to this venue.

Question  What did you buy?

Boy  Datsun 121 ute

Question  What did you buy that for?

Boy  I'm a carpenter by trade so I needed something to get around in and help with work and I saw it at Gosford actually and it's quite a goer ... it looks real nice.

Question  What did you do with it?

Boy  Basically it's been done up a bit I want to do a lot more to it again when I get the money, that's the biggest problem, I'm in the middle of paying it off ......

Question  How old are you?

Boy  Eighteen.

Question  And what do you want to do to it?

Boy  It's got a 1500 in it at the moment but I hoping to put a two litre twin cam fuel injected by about 600 kilos so as far as that goes you've got no problems with weight it doesn't take much of an engine ..

Question  So a datsun or something cheap to buy and good to do up?
Boy: Yeah, actually utes themselves can be real expensive because there is not that many of them around if you check them out a lot of them have broken clutch and the cams space is blown ... but it doesn't cost them very much. So that's why, with the parts as far as datsun parts are easier to find, you can get a lot of datsun parts you can fit basically anything on anything ...

Question: How much would a young kid spend on their first machine?

Boy: ... five thousand

Question: Five thousand really for a kid is a lot of money, isn't it?

Boy: That's the thing if you buy a car that's done up you can often get as far as that goes a better deal, but if you've got to buy a stock standard car and do it up as a street machine unfortunately the way it goes, it's not very often you make money on a car, you often loose very big. As a friend of mine over there he spent about 17 grand on a LJ Torana and if he was to sell that he wouldn't get that, he said he'd probably take six to eight thousand dollars for it.

Question: So why do these kids do that, it's not an investment, they loose money, why do they do it for?

Boy: I think it's the enjoyment I suppose, of doing it up, seeing it develop ...

Question: Is that what it is, just looks?

Boy: No, I suppose it's also speed ..
Boy 2 We don't speed anymore because there's police around. It's mainly looks, .... you like have a bit of fun with your mates, not only is it dangerous, but also a lot of police around and it's not worth risking your license, speaking as a person who has now lost his license.

Question With a street machine?

Boy 2 Yeah

Question For dragging?

Boy 2 Basically, yeah.

Boy ... like we've got a mate whose going to race tomorrow with a V8 Cortina his going to go and race it tomorrow, there's no where to race it on the streets, it's too risky with the police so he's going to take it to Eastern Creek, pay his money.

Question How old is he?

Boy Eighteen.

Question Where do you get all your technical know how? How do you learn about cars?

Boy A lot of it's through word of mouth I suppose hearing what other people have done.

Question In places like this

Boy Yeah, we've found that most people are quite willing to speak about it ... about things and what they've done ... magazines have a lot, street machines.
Question: So when you these kids talk about technical jargon, you know street machine lingo, do you reckon they know what they're talking about?

Boy: Apart from just fooling around with their mates, talking and they go to the next mate and say the same thing ... yeah the blokes do know what they're talking about. Basically the guys with descent cars know because they help you go through it ... just about sixteen, seventeen ... basically you've got to talk like that in order to be in the street machine set of things.

Question: And then once you're in the street machine theme do you pick up knowledge, do you think or do you pick that up in other ways?

Boy: There's kinda two groups almost, those who have health amounts of money who can basically say I want this car with this engine with this done to it and they will just pay for someone to do it and then there is the other group who prefer to learn themselves so they do it up by word of mouth. I know a friend whose done up a ute and basically he didn't know what a spanner was before he started and he's built this really filthy 350 chev ... one tonner and he's built it virtually from scratch and so he has learnt, it's taken him a long time but he's now filled with that knowledge on how to do it. And that's where the satisfaction comes too, I don't believe there is any satisfaction in letting someone else build your car. There is more satisfaction in seeing it come about because of the things you've done.

Boy 2: Half these guys here probably you'll find that 90% of the guys have built their own cars, fair enough you can't paint them yourself and like do other things but they've done it themselves, they've got
the money and got their own ideas, every car is like someone's master piece.

Question Where do you get your own ideas from? How does that come about?

Boy 2 Basically, nearly everybody has got their own colour, like red, blue, black any colour you like, so that's what colour your're car, it doesn't have to be what everyone else wants, you put the wheels that you like, like there's thousands of different wheels and patterns.

Question Do you make those choses out of magazines or do you make them out of coming to places like this or talking?

Boy 2 You see a car you like, like you see a car like yours, like you say I've got one of these and I see those wheels and I like them, I go out and buy a set. ..... 

Question It's a machine that Datsun you've bought, your total aspiration, is that where you put all you money and your energy?

Boy Yeah, definitely.

Question Why do you do that?

Boy I don't know, it's something I suppose, since my money does go out, it's something I put a lot of pride in, like I can finally kinda say it's my car. Whereas before you could drive around in your dad's and your mum's car and it's not your car, you know, and I don't think I've cared for anything and respected anything as much as my car. My car means basically everything to me.
Question: Do your parents understand that?

Boy: I think so, yeah, I really do, I think they try very hard to anyway how I'm feeling they know the situation I'm in and basically a lot of people in my age group with the lack of money and so forth.

Question: Are you employed full-time?

Boy: I'm actually doing a course at Gosford at the moment, full-time tech course ... carpentry and joinery, but next year, I do work part-time, but next year I'll be full-time employed, hopefully.

Question: Are you all paying your car off and working part-time and buying all these bits and pieces on part-time work?

Boy: Yeap, virtually that takes up a lot of my time. It's something I don't mind doing because I know in the end I know I'm going to get the result that I want.

Question: What's the result you want?

Boy: The ultimate street machine.

Question: What is the ultimate street machine?

Boy: It goes fast, that's what you want. Basically what you're looking for is um?

Question: Looks and speed?

Boy: Mainly... you're trying to make the car reflect off you and like to be some hero of the clan, you know, you're try and make the car one of the best. You compare it to one's that are the same, you compare it to different ones, like you say "look that looks good".
Youth Generated Culture in Western Sydney

Question
You say a clan there, you say this is a strong network people that are like a family, like a clan?

Boy
If you go to the street machine ?? and that you see all different number plates, and they're from all over Australia they come, I've even seen number plates from New Zealand and Perth, it's unbelievable. Everybody is in it, everybody, even older people like a descent car, it doesn't have to be done up, just a descent neat car, you know.

Question
Do young people learn off old people?

Boy
It's hard to say, but things I think, things have changed, yeah, I mean there is certainly a lot of older people out there who with a lot of technical know-how which again comes back to helping out a lot, but trends for today are a lot different to trends from before plus the technology kinda thing. So they do learn of them, but I suppose it's only in the technical sense what the older people have to offer you know whereas this new stuff comes in unless the older person has directed themselves in that type of way they don't really know.

Boy 2
Also there's a difference because, say in the late 60's and mid 70's they were bringing out all the muscle cars sort of like, if you have a look through history of Ford and Holden they've got muscle cars, Valiant, they've got. There were cars that came out from the factory that were sports cars, there were Hillman sports cars that the average bloke like us could not afford. Like it was about three and half thousand dollars back then. But now the sports car, like you look at the Holden they bring out a group A Commodore and that's got all the extras, but it's worth 60, 65 thousand dollars, like that's beyond any reach of just an average person.
Big wage, that's why those days is different and now we buy old cars and do them up.

Question
Also, do you think that places like this, where you come and share ideas is a place to share contemporary knowledge rather than the knowledge and know how about cars. Is this why you hand around places like this?

Boy
Maybe, I suppose. As far as that goes, a lot of it, you know, whether you say copy or not people show their cars. To be seen obviously, and nearly 90% of ideas the way people do up their cars comes from other people sort of thing. And I don't think many people mind that, you know, if their car has been admired and copied because of something they've done to it then I suppose you could feel that pride that obviously someone has appreciated it.

Boy 2
To get an idea of copying a couple of years ago a car was in the top ten street machine voted in a street magazine and it was a white car and this guy had put a new idea into it and put a fluoro colour, painted his wheels fluoro and odd things fluoro. It was like the first of its kind to be sort of advertised like that and within six months you saw odd cars painted a dull colour and then these fluoro bits put on all over it and that's what I mean everybody gets ideas. It's basically all the same.

Question
What have you got?

Boy
LJ Torana.

Question
How old are you?

Boy
Twenty.
Question: Are you full-time employed?

Boy: Yeah, motor mechanic.

Question: Motor mechanic, you do all your own work?

Boy: Yeah.

Question: What are you doing to it?

Boy: Turbo, six cylinder, with a five speed, I'm not sure about the colour, that's about all, I'm just half way through it all.

Question: How will you change the car?

Boy: Depends what colour I like.

Question: What colour do you like?

Boy: I don't know, red. I don't know what colour it is.

Question: How do you make all those choices about what you do to it?

Boy: Depends on the car you see on the road that's the way you make a chose, what will look good on the car, you can't really say until you see it on the car itself, you get a test colour and match it up to the car, that's about it.

Question: Is this the first car you've had?

Boy: No, second.

Question: What was the first one?

Boy: VJ Holden.
Question: Did you have problems with that, to be a street machine?

Boy: Yes.

Question: Did you make it into a street machine?

Boy: No.

Question: These one syllable answers are no good to me.

Boy: No

Question: What are you going to do with the second one, bonnet wise?

Boy: Bonnet wise, turbo, six cylinder.

Question: What's your car mean to you?

Boy: Money, a lot of money.

Question: Do you spend all your money on it?

Boy: Yes, a lot of money, yeah.

Question: And is it everything to you?

Boy: Yeah.

Question: Why is that?

Boy: Because you put a lot of money into it, you work hard for the money to put into it. All your money goes into.

Question: What's it say about you?
Boy Just shows you what you've been doing, how nice a car you can do up, that's about it.

Question Do you think it's a creative thing?

Boy Yeah, yes it is.

Question Why is that?

Boy Just your picking of your choice of colours, fittings, motor and everything, you know.

Question Is your car from the ground up?

Boy Yes.

Question We're just talking about the notion of trying the get a legal place for young people to use these machines. What do you think about the police turning up and harassing and what would you like to see done?

Boy I think they should leave us alone and let us go about it, as long as there's no illegal drag racing sort of thing. We should be allocated a place to race sort of thing not like Eastern Creek, you can race at Eastern Creek but just make for a street meet out at Oran Park, at the old track. Just street meets out there. It should be good for all the street cars to go and run, instead of Eastern Creek.

Question Do you think ... people are interested in anything like an illegal drag?

Boy It's hard to say, quite a few would be, yeah. Your car has to go through a lot of inspections to go across to racing on the tracks, too, especially at Eastern Creek, it has to be street ... to pass it all, it's very hard for some cars to pass, too.
Question: So would it make it safer if there was a legal place?

Boy: Yeah, it would make it safer, yes.

Question: What about the notion of the establishment getting involved some way, you know the police used to run red light discos to get the kids off the streets what about if they had a special squad for street machines to link up with the police or some sort of establishment. Would young people respond to that well, do you think?

Boy: Yeah, I think they would, yeah that would be a very good idea., yeah I think everyone would like that.

Question: (overheard a comment)... you did drags the other day?

Boy: Very substantial.

Question: Where did you do them?

Boy: Just out the back of Kellyville.

Question: That Kellyville area is an older area for this sort of thing?

Boy: Yes it is actually, it is. It's where you go to practice.

Question: What have you got?

Boy: I've got an XP Coupe, it's a two door Ford.

Question: Can you tell me what that is straight?

Boy: Basically a two door Ford.
Girl: It's a John Goss Special, a limited edition 5, there was only a 500 made of the blue and 500 of the green ones. I don't know...

Question: Did you do it from the ground up?

Boy: Yeah.

Question: How much money did it cost you?

Boy: $17,000.00

Question: And your 22 today?

Boy: Yeap.

Question: How long did it take for you to do that?

Boy: About two years.

Question: So you started when you were about 20, were you full-time employed then?

Boy: Yeah, mechanic.

Question: Motor mechanic, so you had all that technical information before you started?

Boy: Yeah, it helps. Yeah I had my friend over here to do all the panel work, he's a panel beater by trade, so he does all the panel work.

Question: Is that a common link up that you mix with people who know about cars to help you?

Boy: Yeah, it does help. You do one person a favour and they'll do you a favour.

Question: If that favour for free?
Boy: Yeah, it's like you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, that's how it works in the game. You know, if you want something done well they'll help you do it.

Question: What have you done to your car since you bought it?

Boy: Basically ground up re-build, worked the motor, worked the gear box, worked the diff.

Question: What's work mean?

Boy: Work basically means you change things from stock to make it either run better or, most people say go better, give it more performance out of an engine, rather than just having say stock that comes off the factory floor, we can change things like cam shafts, carburettor, head work, or heads, cylinder heads which sit on top of the engine itself. A number of things go into making it actually work.

Girl: To make them grease better.

Question: Grease, what does that mean?

Girl: Grease, the more fuel gets in there and the faster it goes.

Question: What is it, speed or looks?

Boy: Basically speed.

Question: Speed over looks?

Boy: Yeah, you can have something that looks like something called "Junk yard" and it would do like
the clappers or you can have something that looks alright and it does go.

Question: What does it mean to the person who has something that goes like the clappers?

Boy: It means that, well it's breath taking to drive it, like each gear change throws you back in the seat, you feel that the vehicle actually has power rather than just the normal everyday driving.

Question: What sort of aspirations do you have for your street machine, what do you hope to do with it, any more?

Boy: No not really, not really.

Question: Sell it and upgrade?

Boy: No, no it's the sort of vehicle you become attached to it and you don't want to sell it, you spend so much time and effort into it that there is really no dollar figure that can justify what you've spent on it, but it is what it means to you.

Question: Why do you hang out in places like this?

Boy: Basically to see what other people have got to offer. You know, to see what other customised things people have done to their cars. You know, see what sort of work people do to their paint jobs, what they do to make their vehicles go, what's different between your car and their car, you know.

Question: Is that what you talk about all the time when you're here?

Boy: Oh, basically. Basically everyone has got the same thing in mind.
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sharing ideas?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Yeah, sharing ideas, you know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>They don’t give secrets away, though.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>No they don’t, there are a couple of girls here last Saturday night and I asked them to lift their bonnet and they wouldn’t do it. They said no, what’s underneath is the power and I don’t want you to see that. Do you think the decisions you make are made out of a sense of art, a creative art?</td>
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<td>Boy</td>
<td>Yeah, it is an art, it’s like most things there’s an art involved, you know you like to learn, ..... you do what you feel comes natural to some people and other people have got to work on it. But it is an art.</td>
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YOUTH GENERATED CULTURES IN WESTERN SYDNEY.

LINDA FORRESTER.

M.A. HONS. ART HISTORY & THEORY.

1993

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY, NEPEAN.
Dedicated to my son Oliver.

With thanks to Helen Grace, Mary Mooney, Joan and John Paterson, Ross Booth and Debbie Commins.
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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the types of cultural practice that are, in the main, generated by the young people themselves (hereafter referred to as youth generated cultures) who fall within the age group of 14 - 20 yrs of age. The research was undertaken in the Western Sydney region, which is the largest expanding population in Australia, and is regularly defined as a socio-economically disadvantaged region, therefore, an important factor within this study is the issue of class determinants.

The paper explores the youth generated cultural practice of graffiti, skateboarding, street machining, and street dancing. These creative practices challenge traditional notions of culture and the arts, however the young people also employ strategies of an aesthetic nature in their creative process. Youth generated cultures are actively engaged in criticism through the use of instrumentalist aesthetics such as Monroe Beardsley (1981) describes. Through the analysis of their cultural practice it is argued that, within youth generated cultures in western Sydney there exists a clear aesthetic dimension that contributes to a more traditional creative process than former theorists outline.

However, one of the main objectives of youth generated cultures is ‘winning space’ within a cultural milieu and this cannot be achieved solely by creating aesthetic objects and disassociating them from the context in which they were created. Within the broader cultural environment, the space they claim as theirs is a postmodern context of consumerist and late capitalist realities and is characterised by mass media; new post industrial technologies; mass marketing and new fast systems of transport and communications. Postmodernism heralds the dissolution of the distinction between high and low culture and as Fredric Jameson asserts, it has become ‘a cultural dominant’.

Oppositional theories regarding youth sub-cultures are critiqued as a means of citing youth generated cultures outside the standard model of ‘opposition’. Rather than adopt this persistent stereotyping, the intention is to show that these particular forms of youth generated culture do not suffer from any James Dean or Leader of the Pack paradigm, indeed they have moved beyond the conventional framework in which academics have traditionally placed them.
The thesis proposes that youth generated cultures have, in a united and structured manner, provided for themselves a framework of economic and pedagogical support that has afforded them a place within the cultural mainstream without the recognition or approval of mainstream cultural establishments. It is argued that these particular youth generated cultures are not rebellious or destructive subcultures, that they are creative in nature and have been established primarily to produce and display their creative cultures. Youth agency is essential to the character of these youth generated cultures and it is this agency that is under challenge from the cultural hegemony. The young people involved in youth generated cultures demand that any account of their cultural practice must also accept the agency of youth as fundamental to their cultural status.