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“1990s US Pacific Northwest: Sociomusicology and Politics”

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research.

YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

School of Humanities

September 2022

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### Abstract.

This thesis investigates the political activism, motifs, and ideology of the 1990s Pacific Northwest movement in the United States. The aim of the thesis is to examine the movement through the perspective of sociomusicology with particular focus on melancholic music and its relation to society. As well as using the methodology of sociomusicology, the music of the movement is investigated as a reflection of Generation X and American society of the 1990s. This study investigates the socio-economic situation in Seattle in the 1980s, prior to the mainstream recognition of the scene. The socio-economic aspect is evaluated as the social fabric behind melancholic music from Seattle. Through the methodology of sociomusicology and the socio-economic investigation, this study argues that the movement was politically motivated and involved. It is a political movement against Republicanism, particularly against the 1980s Republican Party and Former U.S President Ronald Reagan.

The significance of this study lies in the way that it outlines how the movement maintained its political agenda and protests in its mainstream format and how supportive of democratic policy and ideologies the scene was. The majority of scholarship regarding the subject does not acknowledge the political aspect of the movement. It is overshadowed by a consensus that the scene was self-absorbed with drug culture and focused on depression. This study investigates the opposite and highlights how important melancholic aspects of music were for the scene in Seattle. The focus on such elements camouflaged and downplayed the importance of Democrat support for the movement, allowing for the movement to maintain and progress in a mainstream format.

## Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES	1
Introduction.	2
Chapter I: Reaganomics & 1980s West Coast hardcore punk scene.	7
Every single sound speaks in the plural: The recession of 1981-1982 and heroin culture.	10
Underground economy in 1980s hardcore punk.	16
SST, Alternative Tentacles, Dischord Records and Grunge.	19
Chapter II: Alternative music and social fabric: Cobain and Westerberg.	27
“Loser” – the hero of the 1990's, rise of single parent homes and melancholic dissonance.	29
Alternative Music and the outsiders in 1980s Punk: Cobain and Westerberg.	34
“Can't wait to sell out”: Changes in punk.	35
The Replacements: Start of grunge.	39
Chapter III: Parents Music Resource Centre, Democrats, and conservative Christians against rock.	43
Celebrities as political coordinators.	47
Republicans and Democrats against grunge: PMRC.	51
Telecommunications Act of 1996: censorship in alternative music.	60
Conclusion.	65
Bibliography.	69

## LIST OF FIGURES

*Figure 1: Real estate agents Bob McDonald and Jim Youngren's billboard in Seattle.*

*Figure 2: There's always room for jello – slogan for Jello Biafra's campaign (real name Eric Reed Boucher)*

*Figure 3: There's always room for jello – slogan for Jello Biafra's campaign (real name Eric Reed Boucher)*

*Figure 4: Dead Kennedys cassette for "In God We Trust", 1981.*

*Figure 5: Eddie Vedder from Pearl Jam wearing Sub Pop's Loser shirt.*

*Figure 6: Mark Arm from Mudhoney wearing Sub Pop's Loser shirt.*

*Figure 7: Seattle band Coffin Break wearing the 'I buy music for minors' shirt.*

*Figure 9: Eddie Vedder wearing the 'I buy music for minors' shirt.*

*Figure 9: Krist Novoselic at the WTO protests in Seattle, November 30, 1999.*

## Introduction.

Grunge is an important American movement. It is musically and socially significant. My research focuses on the 1990s U.S Pacific Northwest grunge movement; specifically on its political activism and its significance for Generation X. For the first time in twentieth century the American pop culture underground alternative movement (which represents the middle/lower class) received mainstream attention. Media, politicians, and fashion industries absorbed and appropriated the Seattle movement. The movement's ideological positions are important to note as they contrast with the dominant ideologies of the 1980s and 1990s. Grunge initially expressed an anti-corporatist, anti-capitalist, and anti-Republican mentality. It was a symbol of protest against President Ronald Reagan's 1980s social policies and George Bush's in the 1990s. The movement symbolises a desire for political change and marks a change of values in American society. American society in the 1980s celebrated material wealth as a symbol of success and aspiration, however, this dissolved with grunge. In the 1990s, grunge became mainstream and encouraged anti-globalisation, and anti-mainstream activism. Likewise, grunge made thrifting culture fashionable. It worked as a symbolic protest against 1980s consumerism and the wealthier American class. The thrifting culture associated with the working class became sought after. Plaid flannel shirts ripped jeans and the muted colour clothing associated with the working class became trendy in 1990s fashion houses. Notably, Marc Jacobs created a grunge collection for the Perry Ellis 1993 spring collection, even copying the famous brown corduroy jacket of Eddie Vedder. However, the original jacket was thrifted whilst Marc Jacobs increased the price and sold it to the wealthier class. All of this marked a change in American society; the display of wealth was not fashionable anymore.

I have chosen to focus and analyse grunge through a sociomusicological method. Particularly focusing on the work of Theodor W. Adorno and Sandra Garrido. Adorno focuses on the philosophical aspect of music. For example, he credits dissonance and atonality as indicators of falsity of a social order (Payne and Roberts, 2019, p.476). When looking at hardcore punk music and grunge, there is the re-occurring theme of rebellion and protest against politics and society. Adorno's framework allows for an understanding of the role and importance of activism by musicians. He provides a framework of how music should be examined, by theorising atonality and distortion which is important for punk and grunge. As such, Adorno explains that protest in music is not only achieved lyrically but by shifting musical standards. He argues that distortion sounds as if it has "not been completely subdued by the ordering principle of civilization" (Payne and Roberts, 2019, p.476). He also defines social fabric as the environmental factor which is responsible in his opinion as the chief catalyst for music. This means that when music is analysed the external factors should be considered as well as the musical elements.

I have conducted research on the 1980s domestic political situation in the U.S through a range of academic journals and books, as well as autobiographies and by examining presidential speeches. For example, *The 1980s* (2007) by Bob Batchelor and Scott Stoddart, *The Impact of Financial Hardship on Single Parents: An Exploration of the Journey From Social Distress to Seeking Help* (2017) by Rebecca Jayne Stack and Alex Meredith, and *Sing Backwards and Weep* (2020) by Mark Lanegan. I have also looked at photographic material from the hardcore punk scene and grunge scene which I have incorporated throughout my chapters in order to provide evidence for my arguments throughout my study. Additionally, I have engaged with autobiographical sources from the artists, musicians, and important figures within grunge and hardcore punk. This is important to do so for my arguments, because it ensures that both the overall environment of the 1980s and Generation X are addressed whilst also considering the individual experiences of the musicians. The musicians are representatives of Generation X and by considering their individual experiences it provides a closer and more accurate history and discussion. I have done this in order to understand differences between Generation X in the Seattle region and other areas of the United States which could have potentially been the catalyst for grunge music. I analyse album covers and cassette tapes from grunge and from West Coast hardcore punk. I look at video performances, interviews and the lyrics of key grunge and hardcore punk artists within this research. This allows to understand the musicians' personal ideas and aligns with Adorno's framework. Furthermore, I have interviewed Pat Blashill for this research and my *Close Focus* (2021) video series in order to get direct insights about the grunge and hardcore punk scene in Texas, US. Blashill is a photographer and the author of *Texas Is the Reason: The Mavericks of Lone Star Punk* (2020) who captured the 1980s Texas punk scene, DIY and the US alternative movement (including grunge).

Danny Goldberg's *How the Left Lost Teen Spirit: (And how they're getting it back!)* (2005) focuses on Democrat politics, the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) and Nirvana (Goldberg was the band's manager). This book differs from other academic texts about grunge as it is an autobiographical source which discusses Democrat interference and censorship in the popularity of grunge. It marks the social and political significance of grunge and music in the 1980s and 1990s. Likewise, Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic's book *Of Grunge and Government* (2004) is the only autobiographical source from a grunge musician which highlights the importance of political activism in the movement. Novoselic stresses issues of censorship and conformity that musicians felt in the 1980s and Seattle, stating that grunge was a politicized movement from the start. Other biographical academia about grunge musicians does not centralise the importance of politics. This is the case of *Total F\*cking Godhead: The Biography of Chris Cornell* (2020) by Corbin Reiff despite Soundgarden and Chris Cornell involving themselves with political activism against Republicans. Popular academia that addresses the grunge movement (not

individual biographies) such as *Everybody Loves Our Town a History of Grunge* (2011) by Mark Yarm or *Grunge Is Dead: The Oral History of Seattle Rock Music* (2009) by Greg Prato use an interview format. Significant sources include direct citations from the artists themselves. However, all of those mentioned do not examine the significance of grunge in the context of sociomusicology, which is my methodology. I am using this framework because it allows music to be used as historical evidence and as a reflection of Generation X. Likewise, it provides an explanation of the necessity of music and its importance in society. In return, this allows a better understanding of the scene and why the musicians felt really passionate about it and used it strategically. This framework demonstrates why music is important for political purposes and has a greater power beyond entertainment and pleasure.

Likewise, my research highlights the significance of the hardcore punk movement and its influence on grunge. A significant source that includes direct quotations from the artists within the hardcore punk scene is Kevin Mattson's *We're Not Here to Entertain Punk Rock, Ronald Reagan, and the Real Culture War of 1980s America* (2020). This source places the hardcore punk scene in the context of 1980s politics. It provides evidence and arguments which illustrate the movement's fight against Ronald Reagan's ideology. However, this source does not equally credit the importance of grunge. It suggests the opposite by suggesting that grunge was not as political and was only a consumerist product. My research fills the gap in grunge academia and punk academia as it argues that grunge was a political movement which shares characteristics with hardcore punk. However, my research also addresses the limitations of hardcore punk identity, something that Kevin Mattson's book does not mention. For example, Mattson does not place The Replacements as equal to other hardcore punk bands. Whilst The Replacements may differ in their approach and musical sound, the discreditation of their punk roots and political messages showcases how limiting hardcore punk membership can be. This is the same situation with grunge band Nirvana which I address in Chapter II: *Alternative music and social fabric: Cobain and Westerberg*. The limitations of the hardcore punk scene and its strict identity codes have not been discussed in regard to grunge and my work addresses this.

Chapter I: *Reaganomics & the 1980s West Coast hardcore punk scene* focuses on the political aspect's of 1980s hardcore punk music, particularly focusing on Ronald Reagan. This chapter examines the hardcore punk identity of the 1980s and its protest against the 1960s mentality which 'overemphasized the theme of liberation and freedom while ignoring the self-destructive and diluted political visions of the 1960s' (Mattson, 2020, p. 22). When my work addresses Republicanism in the context of 1980s, I characterize it with conservatism. This is evident particularly in issues around supporting gun rights, restrictions on abortion and immigration, and traditional values on gender and morality. Hardcore punk is representative of the middle and lower class; therefore, this chapter explains the financial issues and exclusivity that some of American youth at the lower end of the class

system experienced. This is important to note, as hardcore punk music expressed anger, rebellion, and ideological disagreement with 1980s mainstream society. This is discussed in chapter I, as chapter II: *Alternative music and social fabric: Cobain and Westerberg* addresses grunge and its connection with the same middle and lower class youth and Generation X. Throughout my work, when I address Generation X, I am defining it as individuals born between 1960-1980. Chapter I and its focus on the 1980s hardcore punk scene is important because grunge musicians have expressed their admiration for hardcore punk and protested (just like hardcore punk) against Republicanism. This chapter addresses why Seattle experienced financial struggles the greatest, which Chapter II continues with a more psychological perspective.

Grunge music often has a melancholic characteristic about it and this became popularized in the 1990s mainstream media. This is the central element addressed in chapter II: *Alternative music and social fabric: Cobain and Westerberg*. This chapter focuses on a comparison between Minneapolis band The Replacements and Seattle band Nirvana, specifically on frontmen Paul Westerberg and Kurt Cobain. Limited academic material mentions Paul Westerberg's influence on Seattle and on Kurt Cobain (who became the central figure in the grunge movement). There is no academic material which evaluates Paul Westerberg through sociomusicology and in the context of grunge. This is what my work adds to existing scholarship regarding grunge. This chapter highlights how The Replacements influenced grunge as well as how limiting the hardcore punk scene and identity was as the band was ostracised which, in turn, contributed to the formatting of the grunge genre.

The Replacements are important for grunge as they were, like Nirvana, excluded from the hardcore punk scene. Music wise, Nirvana is closer to The Replacements than to any West Coast hardcore punk band. Both band's lyrical themes share similarities of melancholy and nihilism, themes which are characteristic of grunge. I address and evaluate the significance of melancholic music through Sandra Garrido's book *Why Are We Attracted to Sad Music?* (2016). Garrido evaluates work from theorists such as Paul Hindemith and provides an explanation of why sad music is popular and important for society. As such, this provides a framework which I apply to grunge music and alternative music. I also apply ideas about the popularity of sad music in regard to Generation X and the environment that had shaped grunge. Other ideas regarding musicology, music theory and the philosophy of music from Jared Levinson, Jenefer Robinson, Kurt Blaukopf, Christine A. Payne and Michael James Roberts are also important and incorporated in chapter II. These sources demonstrate music's importance in society and its power to regulate emotions.

The ideas from the aforementioned scholars and my chosen methodology allow me to analyse grunge from a psychological perspective. This has shaped my understanding of the meaning behind the

pessimistic element of the movement and its significance for American society. This approach allows me to create an original body of work as there are no academic sources which discuss the significance of grunge for American society in the context of sociomusicology. The philosophical aspect of sad music and the significance of sad music has not been evaluated through the example of grunge. Also, there are no academic sources which focus on the significance of the political activism of grunge and the reaction of political figures to it. This is the central discussion of chapter III: *Parents Music Resource Centre, Democrats, and conservative Christians against rock*.

Whilst Chapter I discusses hardcore punk's protest and the 1980s, Chapter III focuses on the 1990s and Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC). Chapter I focuses on Republicanism; however, Chapter III focuses on Democrats. In contrast to Republicans, Democrats align with a more liberal ideology and are more progressive. They believe that government should intervene in the economy to promote equality. Democrats are more progressive and supportive of abortion and the subversion of traditional gender and marriage traditions. These ideas are similar to the ones expressed by grunge and punk. For example, Pearl Jam in their *MTV Unplugged* (1992) performance protested for Pro Choice and women's rights. Chapter III examines grunge's protest and reaction against music censorship and conservative politics. I have chosen to discuss the PMRC in the context of grunge as it demonstrates that Republicans were not punk and rock music's greatest opponent. Chapter III, with the example of PMRC, demonstrates how Democratic representatives such as Tipper Gore, Al Gore, Booth Gardner, and Bill Clinton wanted to minimize rock music's contact with American youth. This chapter is significant as it showcases how threatening grunge musicians were for politicians and how they increased censorship with the Telecommunications Act of 1996 as a result. The act gave power to the music industry corporations to set rules of entry in radio. It also set about standardizing and limiting underground musicians' entry on radio. This worked as censorship as rules set by the music industry corporations standardized music and took control of what the American consumer was exposed to. The act has not been discussed in the context of grunge before and adds to existing scholarship regarding grunge and Seattle culture.

## Chapter I: Reaganomics & 1980s West Coast hardcore punk scene.

The focus of this chapter is the economic situation in the United States in the 1980s and its influence on the alternative music scene. This chapter explores the social implications of Ronald Reagan's Economic Recovery Tax Act (1981), the issue of the Moral Majority and Reagan's concern with an underground economy. For this chapter and the following chapters, punk is defined as a representative of the middle/lower class Americans. Punk is a reaction to the aforementioned political issues as the lower/middle class was affected the greatest, especially in Seattle. Prominent Seattle grunge bands such as Pearl Jam and Soundgarden (discussed in chapter II and III) have praised West Coast hardcore punk bands such as Black Flag, Dead Kennedys and Fugazi. They have praised the politically driven lyrics and mentality that this chapter explores. The ideological foundation of the hardcore punk scene was modified and used as a framework by grunge musicians. The artist cannot be separated from the social construct and politics, something that Theodor W. Adorno labels the 'social fabric'. This idea and its psychological mark on artists and their art is discussed in chapter II. However, to situate grunge in the framework of sociomusicology, the social fabric of the 1980s must be addressed. As this social fabric is responsible not only for grunge or punk movements but is also significant for understanding Generation X.

Unlike Generation X, the Baby Boom generation and its counterculture had advertised a 'take it easy' mentality in the 1960s. It became its own form of conservatism saturated with ideas by Timothy Leary's book *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out* (1966). Whilst Timothy Leary concluded that his legendary phrase had been misinterpreted, the importance of detachment, consumerism and self-indulgence only intensified in the 1970s. President Jimmy Carter concluded his "*A Crisis of Confidence speech*" (1979) by expressing that: "too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns" (Carter, 1979, p. 4). This statement makes it clear that American society in 1979 had prioritised materialistic wellbeing. Even countercultures such as the Hippies who were agitating for social change and for peace and love couldn't win over capitalism. The 'take it easy' mentality was a façade which encouraged and progressed the politics of 1980s Republicans. Whilst at the same time, conservatives copied the style of 1960s counterculture not only in the political sphere but in the entertainment sector (Rising, 2010, p.285).

The California hardcore punk scene in the 1980s fought back at the 1960s counterculture and conservatives of the 1980s. Kevin Mattson highlights that "baby boomers overemphasised the theme of liberation and freedom while ignoring the self-destructive and diluted political visions of the 1960s" (Mattson, 2020, p. 22). Whilst at the same time President Ronald Reagan articulated the importance

of materialism and consumerism as “during the 1980s, they were once again celebrated as evidence that one adhered to righteous values such as hard work and prudence”(13.1 Conservatism and the “Reagan Revolution”, 2012). If the argument is made that the Hippie movement heightened the importance of non-materialistic qualities and advertised world peace, then such a transition towards Conservatism suggests flaws in the movement. Liberals and Republicans displaced a portion of American society as both political ideologies valued self-indulgence and aspirations that were not available for everyone. Hardcore punk, as a representative of the lower and middle classes, showcases how financially challenging the 1980s had become. Therefore, the transition to Republicanism in American society, specifically in relation to Ronald Reagan, is indicative of the failure of the 'take it easy' mentality and the 1960s counterculture Democrats. This becomes evident in the Dead Kennedys song “California Über Alles”(1987) which compares the hippie culture to zen fascism:

“Zen fascists will control you  
Hundred percent natural  
You will jog for the master race  
And always wear the happy face  
  
Close your eyes, can't happen here  
Big Bro' on white horse is near  
The hippies won't come back, you say  
Mellow out or you will pay”

(Biafra,J., East Bay Ray, Flouride, K., Peligro, D.H., 1987)

American punk artist Winston Smith (known for producing the artwork for Dead Kennedys and Green Day) recalls that, in 1968, “it was people fighting in the streets, wanting to burn everything down. When I returned [in 1975] everyone was frumped out on earth shoes and health food” (Mattson, 2020, p. 16).. ‘California Über Alles’ infers this with the line “hundred percent natural” suggesting 1970s popularity with organic products due to worldwide environmental organisations being concerned with pollution. Likewise lyrical lines “close your eyes, can't happen here” suggests the 'take it easy' mentality often resulted in delusional perceptions. George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and its themes of control and fear are referenced through the line “Big Bro' on white horse is near”, specifically referencing Orwell's Big Brother character in the novel. The dramatic difference between 1968 and 1975 indicates the progression and priority of the 'take it easy' movement and that it had become infiltrated into the mainstream. It's lack of desire for political involvement worked as an encouragement for indifference. Leary's 'drop out' phrase was reflective of Hippies disengaging from society, either by dropping out of education or work, or becoming engaged in drug

experimentation, particularly LSD. This is an issue that hardcore punk artists would address, as exemplified by the most prominent examples of Dead Kennedys, Black Flag and Minor Threat. Not only did hardcore punk protest against drug experimentation but also rises in alcohol use encouraged in the 1980s.

The 1980s Californian hardcore punks, such as the aforementioned Dead Kennedys, Minor Threat and Black Flag, took on a 'straight edge' mentality in protesting against the self-indulgence of the 1980s. Dead Kennedys "Too Drunk To Fuck"(1981) and Black Flag's "6 pack" (1981) reference *The Official Preppy Handbook* (1980). This book (popular with Reagan voters) discussed North American 'preppdom'; guiding the reader on how to mimic the aesthetic, lifestyle, speech pattern of those in prep schools and high-class society. It highlighted the importance of drinking culture in particular. It assured readers that "failure to master the skill of consuming large amounts of alcohol will result in a lifetime of denied invitations. The cocktail's ubiquitous presence proves that pleasure is life's main concern" (Mattson, 2020, p.35).

Kim Gordon, the bass player for Sonic Youth, explains that 'straight edge' disregarded addictive substances "not so much out of puritanism as from a desire to be in control, and to avoid being manipulated by the consumerist system" (Mattson, 2020, p. 34). In 1983, Ian Mackaye from Minor Threat claimed that: "straightedgers are a 'new breed of punks...I've got my head straight, my shit together, and I've got an advantage on you" (Wood, 2006, p.33). This indicated a new awareness in punk. During the 1970s, punk in New York or London had gained a heroin abuse reputation. Alongside the straightedge mentality, environmental conservationism had become more prominent. Some agitated for pro-vegetarianism with hardcore bands such as Burn addressing meat eaters by singing "this will lead to the destruction of our earth.... We have killed and shall be judged" (Malik, DiCara, Lang and Cage, 1990). Grunge band Nirvana touched upon such ideas in their song "Something In The Way" (1991). Kurt Cobain sings "It's okay to eat fish...Cause they don't have any feelings"(Cobain, 1991). Robert T. Wood argues that lyrical condemnations of animal exploitation had become more intense in the 90s and "the issue of animal rights became a fundamental element of straightedge cultural ethos during the late 1980s and seems to have persisted" (Wood, 2006,p.41). It was a clear contrast to the self-indulgent behaviour of the 1980s generation which had disregarded environmental responsibility, focusing on the celebration of oneself.

Every single sound speaks in the plural: The recession of 1981-1982 and heroin culture.



*Figure 1: Real estate agents Bob McDonald and Jim Youngren's billboard in Seattle.*

The political atmosphere of the 1980s is one of the most important factors 1980s punks addressed and which influenced the 1990s Seattle movement. Notably, the 1981-1982 recession affected the working-class sector by challenging the manufacturing and construction industries. For example, the goods producers held "30 percent of total employment at the time, they suffered 90 percent of job losses in 1982" (Sablik, 2013). Furthermore, by December of 1982, the "unemployment rate stood at its recession peak of 10.8%" (Auxier, 2010). The recession in Seattle "is somewhat deeper and will be somewhat longer lasting than that of the general national economy" (Markusen, Deitrick, Hall and Campbell, 1991, p.159). This was observed by Cleveland Anschell, the associate economist at Rainer National Bank. Seattle needed more political and financial attention, yet the situation did not improve significantly. Importantly, the declining timber and fishing industries, as well as the decline of the famous Boeing company in Seattle (Boeing Bust 1969-1971), left many to search for work outside of Seattle. Famously, as seen in Figure 1, real estate agents Bob McDonald and Jim Youngren "rented a billboard near Sea-Tac Airport and posted the humorous message *Will the last person leaving SEATTLE -- Turn out the lights*" (Lange, 1999). This remark visualised the financial struggles of Seattle and how the city had become economically isolated. Only with the birth of companies such as Microsoft, Starbucks, and Amazon in the late 1990s did the city start to transform. These corporate shifts led to such influence that even the recording studio owned by the Seattle grunge band Soundgarden was acquired by Facebook. Matt Cameron of Soundgarden comments that: 'tech squashed the grunge building' (Seattle Today, 2021). Like the Hippies, this is symbolic of the movement's inability to win over capitalism. Financial crisis is an important element when considering the punk driven Seattle

movement of the 1990s which had engaged visually and lyrically with the issue of poverty. For example, Pearl Jam's song "Even Flow" (1991) comments on this issue and the movement's preference towards thrifted clothing. The song is reflective of the struggles of the lower-middle class in the 1990s. Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam recalls:

"I'd fall asleep... and they'd lecture me about the reality of their classroom. I said one day, 'You want to see my reality?' I opened up my backpack to where you usually keep your pencils. That's where I kept my bills . . . electric bills, rent . . . That was my reality" (Hilburn, 1994).

This indicates how personal the issue of poverty and financial despair was for the artists within the movement and the broader struggles of Generation X across the U.S. Kevin Mattson notes that: "the dissolution of marriages and parental absence left many kids with a sense of mistrust. By 1972, Neil Postman, a popular sociologist, would announce the 'end of childhood'" (Mattson, 2020, p. 65). Parental absence created even more pressure on children who faced this issue and it was common. Eddie Vedder's statement showcases the lower-middle class issue. Teenagers, instead of focusing on their education and enjoying their youth, were forced to worry about their financial survival. This contributed to a mindset shaped by constant challenges, depression, and a lack of focus on individual goals. This illustrated the mindset of Seattle; a low-income town with no future that turned to drug use among its troublesome youth. As a result of the 1981-1982 recession, Seattle experienced financial despair and poverty. Combined with parental absence, the economic crisis meant that children's wellbeing was especially compromised in America. This is the social fabric of the art within the movement. Therefore, the thematic treatment of depression, which is present in the grunge aesthetic, is reflective of the political and social atmosphere. Poverty figures in the youth population in Marc Miringoff's study (1989) indicate that "one in five children lived in poverty in the United States. By the late 1980s, poverty figures once again reached the levels attained in the 1982-1983 economic recession (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007,p.35). Miringoff's study (1989) for Innovation in Social Policy, revealed that the:

"wellbeing of children in the United States declined dramatically since the 1970s. Miringoff created an index that measured 'social health' among American young people in areas such as infant mortality, child abuse, children living in poverty, suicide, high school dropout rates, and substance abuse. The index calculated each area on a 100-point scale. In 1970, the index for children's social health reached 68. In 1987, the number plummeted to 37 " (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007, p.35).

This study indicates how neglected children's social health had become and, when considering that children examined in the study would be considered as Generation X, statistics such as these are important indicators of the social fabric of grunge music. The study reveals that child abuse numbers increased by 300 percent between 1970-1987 and showed That "in 1987, more teenagers committed suicide than in any other year"(Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007,p.35). When considering that Seattle had been significantly affected by economic recession, the study foreshadows one of the reasons why grunge's pessimistic was especially significant for Generation X. Its popularity in the 1990s is a symbol of the economic and parental problems that Generation X faced in the 1980s. The study indicates that Generation X was especially marginalised and compromised. Recession impacted Seattle and social health among young people in the area was compromised. The prominence of heroin culture in particular resulted in low social health among Generation X.

Unlike hardcore punk, grunge did not promote a straightedge lifestyle. It did the opposite. Musicians such as Layne Staley, Chris Cornell, Andrew Wood, Mark Lanegan, Mike Starr, Kristen Pfaff, Courtney Love, Kurt Cobain and Mike McCready all battled heroin and alcohol abuse. Staley, Wood, Starr and Pfaff died from heroin overdoses. Cornell and Cobain committed suicide thirty years apart. A United States Senate hearing before District of Columbia Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1990 reports that in Seattle, "deaths involving speed balling of heroin or other opiates and cocaine have increased from 6 percent of drug related deaths in 1985 to 23 percent for the first quarter of 1988" (District of Columbia Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1990, 1989, p.155). NBC news reports stated that, by the late 1990s, Seattle had one of the highest heroin related death rates despite the "\$40 billion spent each year to combat illicit drugs" (Huus, 2001). Furthermore, in 1994 "heroin-related deaths per 100'000 people in Seattle nearly doubled, hitting a total of 144 in 1998. The number of heroin addicts in the city rose to between 15'000 and 20'000...Seattle earned the dubious distinction of heroin capital of the United States" (Huus, 2001). When considering Seattle and the recession of 1981-1982, the rise of heroin popularity is partly attributed to the recession leaving a significant mark on Seattle. The unstable and sparse economic status was the catalyst for the depressive themes associated with grunge music.

The fact that grunge figures like Kurt Cobain (suffering from drug abuse and depression) had become idolised in the mainstream outlets, demonstrates how desensitised Generation X had become when compared to their parent's generation. The issue of drug abuse was glamorised through fashion houses who capitalised on the Heroin Chic aesthetic. Evident in Perry Ellis and Marc Jacobs' collection of 1993. which glamorised of the drug lifestyle Popular and cult models such as Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington, Kate Moss and Tyra Banks further encouraged the aesthetic as fashionable and acceptable. The same became evident in Cameron Crowe's film *Singles* (1992) which featured grunge musicians Chris Cornell, Mark Arm, Alice in Chains and Pearl Jam as characters (*Singles*, 1992). None

of the characters are shown eating, only Janet (played by Bridget Fonda) is shown with an empty fridge and a salad bowl. She also wants to get plastic surgery and goes for a consultation. Fonda has a model's slim figure yet still is not confident or happy with her appearance. Yet at the same time, the empty fridge and the film being situated in Seattle is also reflective of the financial struggles Seattle faced. Professor John Komlos notes that such troubling characterisation of the generation was due to Reagan's Economic Recovery Tax Act (1981). He concludes that the act had created seven deadly consequences that are still felt in the contemporary:

“The rise in inequality increased the frustration of the less skilled and less educated because they were experiencing downward social mobility; hence, relative incomes mattered in generating frustration; desperate people are easier to manipulate and will do desperate things including voting for an unqualified presidential candidate who promises to end their misery; this is linked to the phenomena of deaths of despair documented by Case and Deaton (2017)” (Reilly, 2019).

Deaths due to drug or alcohol abuse or suicide, related to the lack of opportunities or inequalities and a bleak social and economic outlook as Dr Jennifer Dixon indicates (Dixon, 2021). As drug abuse was a national issue before the popularisation of grunge, the fact that it had become a popular aesthetic in the 1990s reveals a problematic society. The media and fashion glamorisation of heroin and diet culture presented self-destruction as fashionable. This is evident in grunge makeup trends such as the accenting of under-eyes to give the impression of a lack of sleep and the celebration of ultra-thin body shapes and their references to heroin addiction. In 1986, former First Lady Nancy Reagan addressed Americans on CNN about the drug epidemic with her 'Just Say No' campaign. The same video as front man Scott Weiland from Stone Temple Pilots remembers he was made to “watch for an hour in the evenings, Nancy Reagan looked into the camera and told us, 'Just Say No’” (Weiland, 2011, p.45). Drug abuse is often associated with weaker economic households. This illustrates that the problem was a national concern. Soundgarden's guitarist Ben Shepherd remembers that:

“[The] generation was completely different, and I don't understand it. This is going to sound square coming out of my mouth, but right when Hüsker Dü got signed, it seemed the generation of indulgent, bloated rock stars was over and the new kind of rock stars coming out were normal Joe blow kids that knew better than to do coke every ten minutes. But now, once again, the heroin thing - it never goes away. It's all media crap to think it actually comes and goes -it's been there the whole time” (Blush, 1996).

Shepherd refers to the heroin culture attached to the grunge scene which at times overshadowed the music itself. It also disregards the scene's (and the 90s generation's) rejection of the ideologies of their parent's generation.

Not only did Reaganomics alienate lower middle-class teenagers, it led them to be displaced and labelled as outcasts. Youth rebellion movements such as 1980s hardcore punk and the 1990s grunge movement constantly vocalised their dislike towards the Reagan years, particularly targeting Republican figures. Reaganomics resulted in the largest tax cut in American history in 1981 and it is important to note that youth rebellion in the form of grunge was a reaction not only to the politics and rhetoric of Ronald Reagan but also to such conservative ideologies. As conservatives constructed a new right wing (with evangelical Christians forming the base), the left wanted to alienate itself from socialists. Reagan supported employers who desired to destroy labour activism. Similarly, he fired "more than 10,000 federal air traffic controllers who were part of a union that was striking for a pay increase. Reagan replaced these workers with military personnel on active-duty orders, a move that quickly destroyed the strike and the union" (13.1 Conservatism and the "Reagan Revolution", 2012). Furthermore, Reagan slashed tax rates by 50 percent for top American earners by 1986 but neglected to offer lower income citizens a similar cut (13.1 Conservatism and the "Reagan Revolution", 2012). Justifying that high tax rates prevented the progression of talent across different fields, "Reagan argued that the best way to encourage job creation was to reduce the taxes for high-income Americans because these elites had demonstrated a talent for creating wealth" (13.1 Conservatism and the "Reagan Revolution", 2012). This resulted in the Economic Recovery Tax Act (1981) to increase the bottom tax rate from 11% to 15%, whilst top tax was lowered from 70% to 50%. For the first time, the United States lowered and increased tax at the same time. Alongside the act, to increase a household's tax deduction, the social security numbers for each dependent child needed to be provided. This led to "the disappearance of 7 million "children" on April 15, 1987" ("Reaganomics" and its Critics, n.d.). This is evidence of abuse of the government system, its faults, and a portion of American society willing to deceive their own government for financial gain. This indicates desperation and a lack of financial support as well as an increase in financially unstable households.

Due to such an environment, Generation X "would be the first generation to experience a lower standard of living than their parents and had developed an ironic style of consuming popular culture as a consequence of prolonged exposure to media and advertising" (Moore, 2010, p.118). Reagan marginalised the lower classes and this resulted in the underground, especially the Seattle scene, to adopt an outsider mentality (not fitting or conforming to the dominating ideology). The fact that such an outsider mentality became popularised in the mainstream and gained momentum indicates the large volume of Americans affected by such marginalisation. The movement signified a celebration of

the lower class, providing Americans in low economic brackets a sense of inclusivity. Leading to Eddie Vedder and Kurt Cobain being labelled as spokesmen for the 1990s generation who had grown up in working class households. Significantly, Vedder is not a Seattle native, but born in Evanston, Illinois. This shows that the issues mentioned are not exclusive to Seattle. This is one of the reasons why audiences could relate to grunge in a mainstream format throughout the U.S.

From a sociomusicological perspective, Theodor W. Adorno contends that "all music, even the stylistically most individualistic, takes on a collective content: every single sound speaks in the plural" (Blaukopf and Marinelli, 1992,p.45). Music is not separate from social fabric. Therefore, when examining spokesmen of the 1990s such as Eddie Vedder, the music of Pearl Jam and the mainstream position of grunge, the process is a reflection of wider American society.

Musical dissonance is symbolic of the emotional stance of American society in the 1990s and Generation X. This is evident in Nirvana's "Sliver" (1990). It features lyrics which contrast its upbeat pop tempos. The lyrics in the first verse inform of a child being left (possibly neglected) at their grandparents' home. To which the child begs: "Grandma Take me home"(Cobain, 1990). As the verses progress, we learn there is emotional abuse through the negligence of the parents who shout "Why don't you stop your crying? Go outside and ride your bike"(Cobain, 1990). In the next verse, the listener is presented with the child being picked up by their mother, waking up in her arms without a father, implying further negligence and demonstrating the one parent household model. The story continues with the repeated line: "Grandma Take Me Home" (Cobain, 1990) as the child finds the motherly figure and closest family member to be their grandmother. With the ending line: "Wanna be alone"(Cobain, 1990), Cobain suggests isolation, neglect, and dismissal of any parental figures, even their grandmother. Their need to be solitary is evident of a traumatic experience. However, the up-beat tempo overshadows the lyrics, romanticising them. It is an authentic semi-autobiographical work from Cobain, however, considering the popularity of his music and the re-occurrence of depressive themes, it is also a reflection of a complex society. This will be further examined in Chapter II.

The dissonance in such music is significant. In addition to the musical and lyrical relationship, "dissonance in modern art represents the contradictions of [the] contemporary [...] by dissolving the standards of musical composition, atonality shows in its form the falsity of our social order"(Payne and Roberts, 2019,p.476). Adorno further explains that "the dissonant chord, by comparison with consonance is not only the more differentiated and progressive, but furthermore, it sounds as if it had not been completely subdued by the ordering principle of civilization"(Payne and Roberts, 2019,p.476). This can be applied to punk when considering how often it is characterised as dissonant

and lacking in melodic phrases. Rock music too often uses dissonant chords and relies on heavy distortion effects (which provides another dimension of dissonance). Dissonance is, therefore, an important confirmation and celebration of freedom against a social order. Minor Threat's "Filler" (1984) and Dead Kennedys' "Advice from Christmas Past" (1982) use dissonant chords. The vocal tonality clashes with the music.

#### Underground economy in 1980s hardcore punk.



Figure 2 and 3: *There's always room for jello – slogan for Jello Biafra's campaign (real name Eric Reed Boucher) (Bickel, 2015)*

The hardcore punk movement was a youth rebellion against the political climate and perceived as resembling youth movements of the 1960s. In 1979, Dead Kennedys frontman Jello Biafra ran for San Francisco mayor (Item 2 and 3) and finished 4th with 6,591 votes (3.79%), (Bickel, 2015). Biafra (taking his pseudonym from the 1980s cult dessert and the starvation crisis in Biafra, 1967) remarked in "We've Got a Bigger Problem Now" (1981):

"I am Emperor Ronald Regan  
Born again with fascist cravings  
Still, you make me president  
  
Human rights will soon go 'way  
I am now your Shah today  
Now I command all of you

Now your gonna pray in school  
And I'll make sure they're Christian too"

(Biafra and Ray, 1981)

In addition to comparing Ronald Reagan to a fascist emperor here, in the song "Moral Majority"(1983) Biafra criticises the political, Christian right organisation founded by Jerry Falwell in 1979. Falwell, a televangelist, helped to strengthen the religious right in American politics and associated them with the Republican party. He gained momentum with other conservative Christians by taking on the satanic panic of the 1980s that claimed satanic cults were threatening to expand through godless teenagers and their musical preferences. This led to cases such as the *West Memphis Three* in 1993, in which "three teenagers whose wrongful conviction on homicide charges was based on little more than suspicion over their goth lifestyles" (Romano, 2021). Therefore, the growing underground scene's anti-religious stance needed to be stopped to preserve Christianity in American cultural systems. The relationship between police and punk was tense, as "cops thought punk was a rebellion that threatened them, the American society in general, and they wanted to stomp it out" (Blush, 2010, p.41). Pat Dubar from bands Unity and Uniform Choice states that, for the LAPD, the best targets were hardcore kids, as "most of these kids were runaways or from dysfunctional families or had parents that didn't give a shit. So, it was a safe bet that if they wanted to beat the fuck out someone, they could-95 percent of the time nothing would happen. So, it was a chance worth taking, and they did" (Blush, 2010, p.42). Such factors shaped the hardcore punks' anti-establishment and anti-police approaches, whilst also examining the practices of exclusivity conducted by the American political system regarding the lower proportions of the American class system. These elements were incorporated into the Pacific Northwest scene of the 1990s. Seattle became a focal point for the middle-lower class social bracket, celebrating the outsider-loser label, whilst subverting stereotypes about the lack of interests and limited intelligence of the lower classes regarding political, environmental, and social issues (all of which I will be discussing in chapter II).

Reagan claimed that he wanted to lower tax to increase talent within the elites. However, he was also concerned about talent and mobility in the lower ranks of society. Whilst the underground movements rebelled against such ideas, "Regan had expressed anger at an 'underground economy' based around a disturbing trend' of cash sales and bartering" (Mattson, 2020,p.76). The fan zines *Subterranean Pop* (later known as *Sub Pop* which would become the iconic grunge label) from Seattle and *Talk Talk* from Madison, WA produced cassette tape compilations with their zines thus showcasing local performers. Barry Soltz from the *Suburban Relapse* zine made it clear that "there's more in this cassette explosion that meets the eye, many people are and have been creating wild music and releasing it on limited

edition tapes [...] The cassette market is young” (Mattson, 2020,p.75). With such freedom, more artists could spread their music without the control of major labels and other authoritative organisations. Not only did major labels lose potential income but it made the underground scene thrive. All of this meant that underground music once again clashed with conservative ideas and ideologies. Bands such as Bad Religion lyricised their favour of atheism and cassettes were an easy tool to spread such ideas that posed a threat to evangelicals.



Figure 4: Dead Kennedys cassette for “In God We Trust” ,1981. (Mills, 2019)

In 1981, *Talk Talk* claimed that the music industry bore “a great deal of the blame for the near-collapse of the industry which exists today is placed on the 'home-tapers' or those who buy blank tapes and then record from borrowed records or from the radio. The previous year, Warner Brothers completed a home taping survey to help the Record Industry Association of America to get out of what Kevin Mattson describes as one of the worst years for the record industry. Mattson explains that Reagan feared such an economy did not generate tax revenue and that the economic problems faced by the major entertainment corporations (which helped to guide the president's career) in 1981 needed to be addressed. The fan zine- *Ripper* asked “why should you want to pay taxes now that the government has cut back on the programs that were helping people so they can spend more on the military to kill people?”(Mattson, 2020,p.76). Attitudes such as this helped to fuel 1980s punk against capitalism and turned American underground scenes onto left-wing ideologies. In 1982, Olympia, Washington's K-Records’ advertisements highlighted that the “cassette revolution is exploding the teenage underground into passionate revolt against the corporate ogre”(Mattson, 2020,p.75). The cassette tapes were an important element in American underground music and its progression but were also an important element of protest. Famously, Dead Kennedys became one of the bands to take on the fight against the record industry with their cassettes for “In God We Trust”(1981) (Figure 4). They had one of their sides left blank featuring a pirate logo (mimicking the slogan of the Record Industry Association of America) and the words “home taping is killing record industry profits! We left this side blank so you can help out!”(Mattson, 2020,pp.74-75). As mentioned before, such cassette tapes

advertised the hardcore punk mentality. They became threatening to politicians as the underground movement had gained momentum to the point of becoming the mainstream. This is the reason I have chosen to discuss bands such as The Dead Kennedys. Their ability to reach a wide audience showcases the power and importance they had in the underground movement and in wider society.

#### SST, Alternative Tentacles, Dischord Records and Grunge.

George Hurchalla notes that rather than “welcome the growth of all these new bands, localism about who had the best hometown scene became an issue among punk” (Hurchalla, 2016, p. 109). Ian MacKaye, who was a driving force and authority figure within the hardcore underground scene with his political bands Fugazi and Minor Threat, concludes that the scene turned “in the fighting sense-who is tougher than who. That’s what I felt was going on when I was tackled at a show. But apparently, it’s some kind of local tradition here, to tackle out of town bands” (Hurchalla, 2016, p. 110). The New Jersey band the Misfits, with frontman Glen Danzing, were famous for getting into conflicts with other bands, threatening to “beat the crap out of” Jello Biafra due to him “stealing Halloween” (using the same song name) from them (Nardwuar the Human Serviette, 2021). Hurchalla notes that “DC and Boston bands brough hostility to New York and LA, as they were resentful of the great attention that those cities always got, for everything that happened” (Hurchalla, 2016, p. 116). The conflicts extended further between punk and hardcore scenes. For example, “the consciousness that developed means that to this day relatively few Chicago punks agree with each other’s views on the scene” (Hurchalla, 2016, p. 143). As “large personality conflict between two of the most vocal people in the scene, John Kezdy and Articles of Faith frontman Vic Bonid, got far too much play in the undergoing media at the expense of everything else that was going on the scene, (Hurchalla, 2016, p. 143). The growing rivalry in hardcore punk was not followed by those in the grunge community. The media in the 1990s aimed to write a sensationalised narrative about a rivalry between Kurt Cobain and Eddie Vedder. Both, however, were quick to deny it. Band rivalry in grunge never became as prominent as in the Chicago punk scene. Rivalry in the Chicago punk scene overshadowed political messages and clarifies that power and influence were important for hardcore punk. Black Flag’s Henry Rollins, for example, became a glamourised figure across fan zines and went on to become an underground celebrity. But figures in the hardcore punk scene greatly influenced Seattle musically and ideologically by embodying protests against Republicans.

Important musicians such as Henry Rollins and Gregg Gin (also from Black Flag), Jello Biafra (Dead Kennedys) and Ian MacKaye (Minor Threat, Fugazi) played a critical role in the formation of the Seattle grunge scene. Notably, Black Flag was the first band Kurt Cobain saw play live (Nardwuar the Human Serviette, 2021). Pat Smear from the punk bands The Germs, Meat Puppets and Adolescent, who

played with Nirvana in 1993, worked at *SST Records* on Sunset Boulevard (@peskymeddlinggirls,2020). Seattle artists consistently showed support for hardcore bands with Eddie Vedder, for example, wearing a Minor Threat shirt. Photographer Pat Blashill asks:

“So, what does it mean today to see Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder wearing a Minor Threat punk-rock T-shirt? It means that he is acting out one of the most inexorable impulses of indie rock-that is, the fiendish desire to turn anyone who will listen on to something new: a band they might not have heard, a magazine they didn't know about, a snowboard shop they've never seen. It means that Eddie is a fan, not just someone who inspires fans. The rock T-shirt is the sartorial shorthand of our generation. It says, “I like this music-I am this culture”. No other explanation from the wearer is necessary” (Blashill, 1996, p. 21).

For punk and grunge, aesthetic presentation is an important element of protest. Eddie Vedder wearing a Minor Threat shirt indicates grunge artists' desire to be associated with punk and agreeing with its values as well as allowing Vedder to personally demonstrate his taste and cultural capital. The importance of the hardcore punk bands for grunge and their activist approach is important to note. Punk bands such as Blag Flag worked with the punk activist collective Positive Force who were established in 1985. The punk authorities addressed police harassment, communal housing, inequality, and justice. Later, Dave Grohl from Nirvana and Foo Fighters and a former member of the Positive Force, became a member of the board of We Are Family DC, created by the co-founder of Positive Force, Mark Anderson. The punk band Scream which Dave Grohl was a member of before joining Nirvana, worked with Positive Force actively. Scream released their song “Feel Like That” (1986) on the *Viva Umkhonto!* (1987) benefit album and “Ameri-Dub” for Mark Anderson's *State of the Union: D.C. Benefit Compilation* (1989). They supported:

“the military wing of the African National Congress [...] the Community for Creative Non-Violence and the American Civil Liberties Union. Such efforts formed a modus operandi that seemingly inspired a contemporary generation-like Bluebrain, Protect-U, and Painted Face- to omit to Positive Force outreach, too, by playing gigs for organisations like the D.C. branch of the Brain Injury Association. Others like Benji Madden of Good Charlotte, donated \$15,000 to We Are Family senior outreach networks, started by Positive Force ” (Ensminger, 2016,p.97).

Scream “spoke for those suffering at the bottom of the economic ladder, for those lost in the penal system, and for marginalised voices deserving recognition, which led them to play gigs benefiting the Martin Luther King Centre of Arlington” (Ensminger, 2016,p.96). Likewise, grunge took on the same

spirit when Nirvana organised a Bosnian Rape Victim Benefit in Daly City, California in 1993. Krist Novoselic co-founded JAMPAC (Joint Artists and Music Promotions Political Action Committee) in 1995, aiming to promote freedom of speech in music, as well as advocating for electoral reforms that focused on equal representation. Pearl Jam protested against President George W. Bush and his policies regarding the War on Terror. In their Lollapalooza performance in 2007, Pearl Jam protested against the oil company BP Amoco and sang "George Bush, leave this world alone! George Bush, find yourself another home" (Kaufman, 2007). To make their message clearer, the band brought up a disabled Iraq War veteran on stage. Yet, the telecommunications company- AT & T broadcasting the show edited this segment out. Whilst AT&T explained that this was not a censorship issue but an error, Pearl Jam claimed that "what happened to us this weekend was a wake-up call, and it's about something much bigger than the censorship of a rock band" (Kaufman, 2007). Censorship in the context of grunge is explored in chapter III, however, it is important to note that grunge, just like punk, was politically driven and faced criticism for its perceived threat to U.S. political stability.

The support of the left only increased after the 1980s hardcore scene in the United States. This becomes apparent when considering the left leaning politics of the grunge movement and how they reflect values present in hardcore punk bands. Notably, grunge agitates for similar ideas as the hardcore mentality, such as anti-consumerism, environmental preservation, and anti-corporatism. When Pearl Jam were inducted into the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame in 2017, bassist Jeff Ament wore a t-shirt featuring artists that have not been inducted and have been major influences on the band's music and mentioned Dead Kennedys and Black Flag in his acceptance speech. Notably, Bad Religion's controversial album *Recipe for Hate* (1993) features Eddie Vedder from Pearl Jam on "American Jesus" (1993) and "Watch It Die" (1993). Vedder is a big fan of Bad Religion. Guitarist Brian Baker (who was the founding member of Minor Threat) clarified that for "the last 30 years or so what I've been doing is explaining to people that there is no god, in fact the idea of God is the source of every single human problem [...] I'm not a fan of the church" (Baker, 2022). Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell expressed similar beliefs:

"So many bad things—as well as good things—have happened based on people blindly following religion, that I kind of feel like I want to stay away from any type of specific denomination or any religion period, for no other reason than just that." (THE STANDARD Chris Cornell #2, 2008)

Grunge, like hardcore punk, exudes anti-religious beliefs. Over time, the explosion of grunge and the political left's alignment with such artists, helped foster an ideology. Since Jello Biafra's label Alternative Tentacles signed T.S.O.L., Butthole Surfers, Melvins, Hüsker Dü, Subhumans (Canadian

band), The No WTO Combo (consisting of Jello Biafra, Kim Thayl from Soundgarden, Kurt Novoselic of Nirvana and Gina Mainwal from Sweet 75) and The Fartz (first popular Seattle hardcore band). Ian MacKaye owns Discord Records and has released records from Fugazi, Minor Threat, Scream, The Nation of Ulysses and The Teen Idles. Gregg Ginn owned the independent record label SST which signed punk bands extending from New York to Minneapolis, such as Minutemen, Hüsker Dü, Meat Puppets, Descendants, Bad Brains, Dinosaur Jr. and Sonic Youth. All of these bands would be credited as influences by Seattle artists, such as Kurt Cobain approved New Yorkers Sonic Youth, who revealed that SST "was the first record company we were on that we really would have given anything to be on" (Azerrad, 2001, p.261). This was something Cobain could relate to as he wanted to leave Sub Pop records for SST. This shows the influence that the SST hardcore California punk scene had on grunge. The fact Cobain wanted to leave Sub Pop and other grunge bands such as Soundgarden were signed under SST suggests that some of the origins of grunge branch from this influence.

However, among the bands signed on SST, Alternative Tentacles and Discord Records, there is a preference and trend towards politically left leaning acts, such as Bad Brains or Hüsker Dü. But SST records did sign the Seattle bands Screaming Trees and Soundgarden who were not as radical in their political display when compared to Dead Kennedys. Nirvana, however, was out of the question. Kurt Cobain even asked frontman Mark Lanegan from Screaming Trees to "get Greg Ginn to sign Nirvana to SST because they were a cool label with lots of bands he liked"(Lanigan, 2020,p.40). Ginn was "not interested at all in having Nirvana make records for SST [...] he simply and stubbornly just didn't get it, period"(Lanegan, 2020,p.41). The fact that hardcore punk bands did not understand Nirvana indicated a limitation when it comes to punk identity. Grunge in such a form captured the punk ideology and political stance yet changed the aesthetic and musical identity. This resulted in the Seattle scene being categorised and labelled as grunge and not punk. Likewise, Courtney Love from Hole clarified that: "I'm not punk-not California hardcore anyway. I always loved melody, glamour, romance. I love rage too. But Black Flag/SST/atonal angry boy music didn't do it for me; I could never relate at these shows"(Love, 2021). Grunge has elements of punk music, for example, distorted, fast paced and off beat vocals and drums. It also involves lyrical protest regarding politics and society and promotes the ideology of punk freedom and inclusivity. However, California hardcore punks contradicted what punk is about by creating a set of expectations and uniformity which, if not followed, excluded artists from using the term punk. Love's commentary showcases this as does SST not musically understanding Nirvana. As such, the 1980s hardcore punk scene is unlike the 1970s New York punk scene in that it appears to be conservative in its identity.

Focusing more on internal struggles, 1970s New York punks embodied the scene through poetics and romanticism. Celebrating the lifestyle and work of William S. Burroughs, figures such as Richard Hell

and Tom Verlaine had become "curious of heroin" (Hell, 2013, p.129). Something that 1980s hardcore bands like Minor Threat did not agree with as they advertised their straightedge lifestyle. Grunge, as already discussed, had become associated with heroin culture. Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine would set the characteristics associated with the New York punk scene of the 1970s with their band Television. Hell, quickly became a fashion icon of punk, having his hair spiked up and popularising the use of safety pins to hold his clothes together, inspiring the punk scene in England, as Malcolm McLaren would take the aesthetic and fashion ideas from Hell and implement them in Sex Pistols' styling. Richard Hell notes that "the Sex Pistols were the cream of the crop. They came in and topped everybody, for sure. They took all the existing strands and made a perfect package out of them" (Sebra, 2013). Whilst Sex Pistols mimicked the aesthetic vision of Richard Hell, they also took a politicized approach to their music which New York punks did not do.

Hell, in his memoir *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp* (2013), makes it clear that he was affected by the American political situation and strongly disliked former president Richard Nixon. The Vietnam War (1955-1975) had greatly affected American society and Nixon recognized that a military victory could not occur. However, a withdrawal would undermine U.S credibility in the world. With the Cold War (1947-1991) playing a big part in the Vietnam War, Nixon continued to order military bombings and the provision for South Vietnam of training and military-equipment. In 1970, Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia, leading to great protest and marches across university campuses. In 1973, the United States had signed the peace pact and pulled U.S troops out of Vietnam. The controversial Watergate Scandal resulted in the House Judiciary Committee indicting Nixon for impeachment. Nixon resigned, yet, when President Gerald Ford became 38<sup>th</sup> President, he granted Nixon "a full, free, and absolute" (Ford pardons Nixon, 2009) pardon. Despite all of this, New York punks did not vocalize their political ideas like the Sex Pistols were doing. Instead, they gained a junkie reputation which exuded egoism. This aspect was one of the reasons Jello Biafra preferred the Sex Pistols. Dead Kennedys were born after Jello Biafra had seen the Sex Pistols at San Francisco Winterland in 1978. He then replied to a music paper advert placed by guitarist East Bay Ray (Buckley and Buckley, 2003, p.276). Nevertheless, Hell explains that:

"things had become so extreme that you were confronted everywhere, every day, with the conflicts. Nobody trusted or respected anybody. Nearly everybody thought they had the answers, but nobody agreed with anybody else. Frightened and distraught and angry writings about Vietnam and Nixon fill my notebooks from the time. I especially sympathised with the Black Panthers and hated and despised Nixon and was horrified by what was

happening in Vietnam, but all I ever did was express those feelings in journals and in talks with friends” (Hell, 2013, pp. 85-86.).

Isabelle Anscombe and Dike Blair conclude that “American punk has more to do with boredom than with unemployment; it bears a closer allegiance to comic books than politics” (Curtis, 1987, p.310). Anscombe Blair’s view is subverted by 1980s. It became politically driven and changed American punk identity. However, after 1980s American hardcore punk had taken on a political nature, the example of grunge indicates a further trend and continuity of such an approach. Pearl jam had set up a:

“75-watt 'pirate' radio station on every bus stop on its tour. The station broadcast selections from their best albums. But there was something else besides the crashing chords, and this is what was interesting about Pearl Jam's venture into radio. In between cuts, a male monotone voice oozing vulgar Marxism droned on about manipulation of the media, the evils of corporations, and the sins of America generally. The recorded voice belonged to Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Noam Chomsky, the linguistic theorist and hard-core leftist whose career has bizarrely breached into the music business” (Barsky, 2009, p.14).

Just as William S. Burroughs had become an idolised figure in the 1970s New York punk scene, 1980s hardcore punk and grunge idolised Noam Chomsky. Likewise, R.E.M and Rage Against the Machine showed support for him. Rage Against the Machine (after frontman's Zack De La Rocha's departure, turned into Audioslave with Chris Cornell) interviewed Chomsky in 1999. In 2007, at the Rage Against the Machine reunion show at Coachella, Zack De La Rocha made a speech in which he revealed that: “a friend of ours said if the same laws were applied to U.S. Presidents as were applied to the Nazis after WWII, that every single one of them, every last rich white one of them, from Truman on would be hung to death and shot. And this current administration is no exception. They should be hung and tried and shot as war criminals” (Dasgupta, 2021). The friend addressed was Noam Chomsky. Chomsky identified himself as an anarcho-syndicalist and libertarian socialist. A respected figure within left wing politics in United States, he gained popularity in hardcore punk and grunge communities. Chomsky is critical of religion and, as previously mentioned, Chris Cornell was too. This is a trend across grunge and hardcore punk where atheism dominates. When considering hardcore punk's explanation of straightedge need to stay in control, atheism in both musical scenes appears as a protest to stay conscious. Whilst chapter III addresses the Christian right’s protest against rock music, it is worth noting how punk and grunge are actively protesting against any kind of religion. One of the reasons why hardcore punk and grunge found appeal in Chomsky is due to sharing similar beliefs. Chomsky

explained that “we should also remember that there is a secular religion which is even more devastating and that’s things like the concept of American exceptionalism” (Chomsky's Philosophy, 2015). This is something Bad Religion had touched upon in their song “American Jesus”(1993) which features Eddie Vedder's vocals:

“I don't need to be a global citizen  
'Cause I'm blessed by nationality...  
  
I feel sorry for the earth's population  
'Cause so few live in the U.S.A.  
At least the foreigners can copy our morality  
They can visit but they cannot stay...  
  
We've got the American Jesus  
Bolstering national faith”

(Graffin and Gurewitz, 1993)

Bad Religion addresses American exceptionalism and its contradictions through sarcasm. The song proposes that religion is a tool to advertise patriotism. In such a protest, the song is unpatriotic. The song states that American ideology can be copied but foreigners are not welcomed, contradicting the idea that America is the land of the free. The outro section of the song features choir vocals singing “One Nation Under God” (Graffin and Gurewitz, 1993) but they lack any specific emotion or dynamic. This is one of the most significant sections as it proves to be emotionless and soulless. When considering its sarcastic lyrics, the song suggests that America has been propagandised with Christianity. If Christian groups believe and promote that their religious duty is to help others, especially the poor, a line like “I don't need to be a global citizen” suggests otherwise. The following line “Cause I'm blessed by nationality”(Graffin and Gurewitz, 1993) infers American nationality's superiority over Christianity. To be American is more important than to be a global citizen, in such Christianity's benevolent ideology is not important or practised in American Exceptionalism.

Just like Pearl Jam, who had played Chomsky's voice on their pirate radio station, Bad Religion released an album with Chomsky's political analysis. *New World Order: War #1* (1991) featured two Bad Religion songs, with side B being left for Chomsky. The political analysis focuses on Mideast history, “the war that didn't have to happen, the media's role in it” (Bad Religion and Noam Chomsky, 1991). Once again highlighting hardcore punk and grunge values like being conscious and in control. Vinyl from Bad Religion addresses American media propaganda regarding the Gulf War. Specifically, it was released in order to protest the first Gulf War (2 Aug 1990 – 28 Feb 1991). Similarly, the Pearl Jam

song "Yellow Ledbetter" (1992), released as a B side for "Jeremy" in 1992, is also a protest against the first Gulf War. Eddie Vedder explains that it:

"was originally written about the first Gulf War, and I'd created this image of a young guy with long hair and grunge-wear clothes who had just got a yellow telegram telling him that his brother had been killed in action. He's walking by these conservative- looking, older folks on a porch, flying an American flag, and he waves to them in a show of solidarity, and they brush him off and give him the finger. So, you know, what did his brother die for?" (Pearl Jam LLC and Monkeywrench INC, p.280).

The Gulf War was significant for the United States as it was an armed campaign waged by the US military and 35 coalition countries against Iraq. This was done as a response to the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait. Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein was responsible for the invasion of Kuwait, a state producing oil in the Persian Gulf. The invasion was due to the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) in which Iraq was left with debts of \$37 billion to gulf creditors. Hussein asked the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait to cancel the debt, arguing that "loans should be considered payments to Iraq for protecting the Arabian Peninsula from Iranian expansionism"(Milestones: 1989–1992 - Office of the Historian, n.d.). The refusal to obey such demands led to the Gulf War. The United States asked for Iraqi forces to leave Kuwait by 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1991, however, this was ignored and resulted in President George W. Bush deploying U.S forces to force Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

Both Bad Religion's song "American Jesus"(1993) and Pearl Jam's "Yellow Ledbetter"(1992) appear anything but patriotic and reflect Chomsky's stance on American exceptionalism being more devastating than any religion. Pearl Jam's decision to play Chomsky on their radio indicates how politicised grunge was. "Yellow Ledbetter"(1992) is a melancholic song which emotionally, through the narrator's brother's death, protests conservatives and Republicans. Unlike hardcore punk, which is harsher in its approach (as example Dead Kennedys "California Über Alles") Pearl Jam, through careful use of poetics, do it more subtly. If the song is considered as a bad advert for Republicans, it is also carefully constructed in order to emotionally engage with the listener and after the emotional engagement is reached through melancholy the listener is faced with the question, what did his brother die for?

## Chapter II: Alternative music and social fabric: Cobain and Westerberg.

“The inhumanity of art must triumph over the inhumanity of the world for the sake of the humane. Works of art attempt to solve the riddles designed by the world to devour man. The world is a sphynx, the artist is blinded Oedipus, and it is works of art of the type resembling his wise answer which plunged the sphynx into the abyss”

- Theodor W. Adorno (Adorno, 2004, p.132).

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Pearl Jam's "Yellow Ledbetter"(1992) attempts to solve the riddles of the world, specifically raising the question of why the narrator's brother had to die and what for. It suggests that finding the answer lies in music. . For this reason, this chapter focuses on the musicology framework of Theodor W. Adorno and Kurt Blaukopf. Chapter I addresses the hardcore punk scene as a major influence on grunge. It establishes the political nature, ideology and identity of hardcore punk and the environment that shaped it. Chapter I focuses on the political environment of the 1980s, however, this chapter highlights the importance of the environment (social fabric) for analysing and reading music. In the context of grunge, the appeal of melancholic music for Generation X is explored and the musicians as representatives of this generation is evaluated. The alternative genre and the subversion of the 1980s rockstar identity is discussed through comparisons of Kurt Cobain and Paul Westerberg. This aspect will also showcase the limitations and conservatism of the 1980s hardcore punk movement regarding their identity. Overall, this chapter focuses on the significance of melancholic music for Generation X and its reflection of American society in the 1990s.

For grunge, the melancholic aspect is a key element of its identity. Hippolyte Taine indicates that “the physical temperature (the environment) is responsible for natural selection, the moral temperature of society affects the selection of talented individuals. A certain moral temperature is required in order for certain talents to develop; should this be missing; talents fail to develop” (Blaukopf and Marinelli, 1992, pp.28-29). Likewise, the 'milieu' (moral temperature) is responsible for the atrophy or development of individuals, especially crucial for artists and their art, as if “Oliver Cromwell had not lived in the milieu of Great Rebellion, he would have remained what he had been- a stern Puritan concerned more with his farm and family than with public affairs” (Blaukopf and Marinelli, 1992,p.29). Therefore, grunge is a result of external and social factors in the 1980s. As mentioned before, Adorno argues that the environment and the ideology of the environment and society hold an important part in the formation of art and artists. Music is not a reflection of the individual but a reflection of the environment which has shaped it. Without the social fabric of Generation X, grunge would not have

come to prominence and therefore such music is naturally political due to the social construction of it. Its messages and ideology speak for a great portion of American society, especially Generation X.

The early 1990s can be characterised as a depressive period when considering the stylistic and thematic elements within Seattle musicians and their work. Even more anomalous is the fact that such pessimistic music had become the mainstream in the United States. Daniel Grassian argues that in the "1990s, the media and popular culture exaggerated our natural inclinations towards narcissism and self-indulgence. Furthermore, the atmosphere of political correctness caused individuals to repress their own narcissistic tendencies" (Grassian, 2003, p.35). This suggests that such pessimism was exaggerated, aestheticized, and fetishized, therefore minimising the importance and characterisation of it for Generation X. The mainstream had embodied and appropriated the underground energy for the first time, therefore, it's worth highlighting the meaning behind such pessimism; whether exaggerated or underplayed, it is significant for the decade. Kurt Cobain explained that in the 1990s, "alternative music is finally being accepted although it's in a pretty sad form as far as I'm concerned, but at least the consciousness is there and that's really healthy for the younger generation" (T&H - Inspiration & Motivation, 2021). Such consciousness over the messages of the art and the large mainstream fanbase, which Cobain targeted in Nirvana's song "In Bloom" (1991), indicate how the rock revolution of the 1990s held a greater objective beyond means of entertainment and sales. As a representative of the grunge scene, Cobain highlights the importance of consciousness in music as well as indicating his awareness of the younger generation.

While 1980s US rock musicians (not only from the underground format) were conscious of their art, mainstream bands such as KISS or Aerosmith conveyed traditional, theatrical 1980s 'hair metal' aesthetics and ideology (the 'sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll' cliché), an aesthetic and ideology that grunge aimed to dismantle. Krist Novoselic from Nirvana explains that: "the old guard of big-hair bands touted a macho swagger packaged in a soft feminine look. Grunge was its symmetrical opposite. It broke through with sensitive introspection wrapped in aggression and facial hair" (Novoselic, 2004, p.22). Whilst the forefathers of the alternative genre such as The Replacements and Hüsker Dü (discussed later in this chapter) conveyed anti-hair metal and an anti-misogynistic mentality, they had not received the wide recognition of Nirvana. The movement from Seattle was given greater exposure for the American audiences than the Minneapolis alternative scene of the 1980s. Even more notable is the observation that Nirvana was the last "biggest band in the world" (Burnett III, 2013), as Zaron Burnett III explains, suggesting that no other band had received (or will receive) such acclaim in the contemporary. The performance and aesthetic visions of Nirvana became a trend; sought after and accepted by mainstream audiences. Not only American mainstream audiences, but also musicians and audiences in Europe. Despite the fact that Europe was recovering from the collapse of the Soviet Union

in 1991, Nirvana expressed an aesthetic, musical and ideological vision which was more appealing than any other European or post-Soviet band. This can be identified in bands such as HIM from Finland, Mando Diao from Sweden or Dzelzs Vilks from Latvia, who have all discussed the importance of Seattle musicians on their art. Mando Diao covered Nirvana's song "Come as You Are" (1991) and wrote their song "Down in the Past"(2004) to be: "as easy like 'Come as You Are' or like a Nirvana song" (Rock Antenne, 2017). Their "Song for Aberdeen"(2007) suggests Kurt Cobain's hometown Aberdeen, Seattle with lyrics such as "rainy days"(Dixgård and Norén, 2007) referencing the rainy climate of Seattle. The song narrates the story of romanticism of a troubling relationship:

"She was an alcoholic artist,  
With too much makeup round her eyes"

(Dixgård and Norén, 2007)

The lyrics are depressive throughout yet create a romanticised and poetic atmosphere. More precisely, they romanticise the alcoholic artist in a way similar to the 1990s heroin chic culture associated with the grunge scene indicating how fashionable and fetishized, in the US and in Europe, such an aesthetic had become within the grunge scene in the media (as discussed in Chapter I).

"Well, its guys like me who get somewhere  
Because everybody pity a fool"

(Dixgård and Norén, 2007)

Other lyrics address the 'fool' label, significant as the Seattle record label *Sub Pop* had celebrated the 'loser' mentality. Bands and artists in the 1990s released songs with titles such as "Loser" (1994) by Beck, "Freak Scene"(1988) by Dinosaur Jr, "Freak"(1997) by Silverchair, "Creep" (1992) by Radiohead, "Creep"(1992) by Stone Temple Pilots, "Freak On A Leash"(1998) by Korn, and "Dumb"(1993) by Nirvana. All of these songs originated from different regions, labels, and scenes and all indicated self-deprecation and a dose of insecurity, a lack of optimism or even self-worth.

"Loser" – the hero of the 1990s, rise of single parent homes and melancholic dissonance.

Ronald Reagan highlighted the importance of being cool through his favouritism of preppy culture in the 1980s, stigmatising and encouraging the loser label to apply to anyone not following prepdom (as discussed in Chapter I). The 1980s hardcore punk scene took on a macho element, advertising it as

cool and contributing to rivalries in the scene, as chapter I noted. Hüsker Dü and The Replacements were marginalised in the hardcore punk community as they took the opposite route. Hüsker Dü's Bob Mould was openly gay and not afraid to criticise the hardcore punk community. The Replacements song "Androgynous" (1984) was performed by Miley Cyrus, Joan Jett and Laura Jane Grace (Against Me!) for Happy Hippie Foundation which supported homeless LGBT youth in 2018. The Replacements were not afraid to make fun of themselves and frontman Paul Westerberg revealed that: "If we would be in a different life we'd still be sort of like the outcast that didn't really fit into the mainstream...I guess everything comes in cycles, we don't use machines, we are not pretty, we are real" (Doug Doug, 2016). The band (himself included), for example, sat with shaved off eyebrows for The Cutting Edge Interview in 1987. However, with grunge this sort of styling really came into fruition. Kurt Danielson from grunge band Tad noted "the loser is the existential hero of the 90s" (Lasky, 2001, p.19). With this noted, 1990s celebrations of the loser label mark a façade in social groups, social constructs, and society, as once someone deemed as a loser in the 1980s (failure, unfashionable) became newly desirable. Joe S. Harrington criticises the 1990s generation, explaining that "literacy rate was declining in schools across America" (Harrington, 2002, p.523). The youth was not disciplined but passed as "pre chewed mush through a garbage disposal" (Harrington, 2002, p.523). The generation described by Harrington contrasts high status preppy culture and fits the characterisations of a paradigmatic loser. Also, the declining literacy rate is stereotypically associated with the working class-lower classes. This suggests that, in the 1990s, not only did grunge aesthetically celebrate the working class by wearing clothing symbolic of such a class but also ideologically through the loser label (as the music suggests). This becomes evident through the rise of idolised figures such as Kurt Cobain, who had not come from an educated background and faced heroin addiction. He achieved financial success, respect, and acclaim without following an established etiquette. He did not hold a music education but received musical acclaim. Cobain became the working-class hero. Instantly, he was relatable and inspirational for working class audiences as everyone could potentially achieve his success as it was not restricted by financial or educational privileges.

This leads to the question of why audiences in different social classes of the United States found enjoyment in Nirvana and, more importantly, melancholic works. One of the conclusions, whether it's The Replacements "The Ledge" (1987) or Soundgarden's "Blow Up the Outside" (1996), is that the aesthetics, performance and presentation of the work, even if the moral of the lyrics appears pessimistic, results in the listening experience to become more emotional than productions with positive messages and optimistic visuals. The fashionable performance or aesthetic presentation make melancholic works more emotionally dynamic, similar to the filmmaking technique of soundtrack dissonance. Such technique highlights the use of musical compositions that juxtapose the visual image

or sentiment of the scene. This is often seen in Hollywood productions. For example, Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) in *American Psycho* (2000) in the infamous axe scene addresses the song "Hip to be square" (1986) by Huey Lewis and The News and explains that: "[the] song's so catchy. Most people probably don't listen to the lyrics, but they should, because it's not just about the pleasures of conformity and the importance of trend it's also a personal statement about the band itself " (*American Psycho*, 2000). As the upbeat tempo of the song makes the scene light-hearted, Patrick murders a person with an axe. The contrast of the music and visuals make such a scene more disturbing thus generating a greater emotional response. Such dissonance fetishizes and undermines the moral wrong, making the consequences of such action non-existent and less significant for the spectator. They are able for a second to look at the murdering scene without experiencing only negative emotions as the contrasts make the scene humorous. Ultimately, dissonance is important and one of the most effective techniques. It provides the listener and spectator a wide emotional range which one-sided optimism or pessimism cannot achieve.

In 1967, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz observed that "great composers often mix dissonance with harmonious chords to stimulate the hearer and to sting him, as it were, so that he becomes concerned about the outcome and it all the most pleased when everything is restored to order" (Anderson and Blayer, 2005, p.139). It is worth highlighting the importance to 'sting' the listener with dissonance as this provokes emotions that in harmonious works would not be experienced as the pleasure from dissonance and the return to order would be lacking thus providing another layer of an emotional experience. The listener is able to experience a variety of emotions when such dissonance is used, however, when it comes to negative emotions, the emotional response is greater. Emery Schubert (2007) explains that "most subjects in his study experienced reactions of greater emotional strength when listening to pieces expressing negative emotions than to other types of music, and that strength of the emotion elicited was a key factor in participants' liking for a piece of music" (Garrido, 2016, p.36). Music can be considered as an anxiolytic, which allows subjects to regulate their emotional states. Such influence naturally influences the subjects' actions and decision making. Schubert's work suggests that melancholic works are perceived as the most rewarding for the listener, and Jared Levinson expresses that such art is the most "rewarding art of all" (Garrido, 2016, p.36).

However, when considering the desire for the subject to listen to melancholic music, Paul Hindemith's work argues against the idea that music evokes new emotions. Rather than "musical passages evoke in the listener merely memories or images of emotions that the listener has experienced in the past...listening to music becomes an occasion for a selective tour of one's gallery of emotional remembrances, with some sonata or symphony functioning as guide" (Robinson, 1997, p.219). Ultimately, subjects utilise music in order to revisit past experiences. As he does not believe in the

effectiveness of music to create new or foreign emotions for the listener, Robinson diminishes the effectiveness of music as just a sonic experience. However, in such a theory, Generation X and its spokesman Kurt Cobain indicate an even more troubled and complex generation indicating that the traumatic and dramatic themes expressed by Seattle musicians are memories of the 1990s American mainstream audience and the selective tour of their gallery of emotional remembrances. If Hindemith's theory is used to justify the popularity of the Seattle scene's music, through his evaluation the mainstream listeners (predominantly Generation X) demand to revisit their gallery of emotional remembrances. The mainstream popularity of the grunge scene, suggestive of troubled upbringings throughout Generation X, reflects psychological rumination which causes distress. Ultimately, Hindemith argues that music evokes only previous memories in the listener. He suggests that all music always resembles previous musical works. As such, raising the question of what the listener experiences when listening to unheard works for the first time, especially if the genre has not been known before to the listener. If music evokes merely memories or images of emotions, nothing can be new to the listener. The listener finds similarities in new music from previously heard music (sound wise or lyrically) and generates the same emotions. Therefore, if music evokes memories, it is relying on individualistic experiences of the listener which may differ between each listener. As such, this questions if music really speaks in plural form, like Theodor W. Adorno suggests. Also, if music does not evoke new emotions, from where do children generate their emotions from and what do they experience emotionally when first exposed to music?

Whilst Schubert's, Adorno's and Hindemith's ideas contrast with each other, if all are used for social analysis of the 1990s scene and Generation X, they indicate that the popular music of the 1990s reflects the emotional wellbeing of society. In this case, from Schubert's theory, the 1990s listeners desired emotional strength. Previously, as discussed, the financial crisis and President Ronald Reagan's Reaganomics had challenged the middle and lower American class systems. However, the promotion of self-indulgence and pleasure, promoting freedom, choice and self-centrism with beneficial outcomes also resulted in negative factors for society. It affected the traditional family structures, like the maintenance of nuclear families, which are important for capitalist structures. This culminated in pessimism. However, it is important not to conclude that Ronald Reagan's policies created the consequences of single parent households. Such problems had been growing throughout the 1970s. Christopher Lasch proposes that "Vietnam War, economic stagnation, and a loss of belief in political leaders led to mass malaise and pessimism in the late 1970s America." (Grassian, 2003, p.34). Reaganomics, challenging the lower and middle classes, served to progress such issues.

Likewise, with the issue of single parent households, the Census Bureau of America in 1982, reported that single parent households increased from "3.3 million to 6.6 million from 1970 to 1981" (Single

Parent Homes on Rise (Published 1982), 1982). The issue of broken families has been a constant grunge theme whether in Pearl Jam's "Alive" (1991) or Nirvana's "Sliver" (1992) or "Breed" (1991). However, youth troubles had not been created by rock musicians as "notably, President Ronald Regan in 1986, "pointed the finger squarely at rock celebrities and the entertainment industry" when asked about troubles of the youth." (Stephens, 2018,p.7). Ronald Reagan stigmatised rock musicians whilst neglecting to reflect on policies which had financially challenged the lower middle class and contributed to their troubles. As discussed in Chapter I, the economic recession had put pressure on lower middle-class households and combined with parental absence, such pressure was strengthened. The Pew Research Centre study between 2010-2018 of "130 countries and territories show that the U.S. has the world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households"(Kramer, 2019), single parent households have continued to increase over the years. If the issue of broken families and success in the grunge scene is considered, such factors are responsible for the music's relatability to many 1990s consumers. With this in mind, Rebecca Jayne Stack and Alex Meredith conclude that single parents are "a stigmatised group in that they are in possession of a set of characteristics that conveys a social identity that is often devalued within society " (Stack and Meredith, 2017), highlighting that those single parents are at a higher risk of dealing with depression when facing financial difficulties. In return, such factors affect and leave an imprint on children, leading to the concepts of broken homes and troubled upbringings. Frequently such concepts leave single parent children feeling stigmatised. This is something that President Bill Clinton addressed and warned with his concept of media as the third parent (this is addressed in chapter III). The issue of identity has been highlighted by Daniel Grassian: "since the 1950s, critics have argued that there exists a growing generational shift in America, signified by homogeneity and passive acceptance of socially mediated identities. (Grassian, 2003, p.34). Identity and identification within a social environment are important, further explaining how stigmatised identities such as single parenthood can develop the feeling of exclusion in society. David Riesman suggests that the "Post World War II generation lacks character and a firm sense of their own individual identity. These new other-directed people 'live in a group milieu and lack the inner-directed person`s capacity to go it alone'"(Grassian, 2003, p.34). Riesman explains that Americans now are preoccupied with being "liked and securely fitting into a social network" (Grassian, 2003, p.34). Something that even Kurt Cobain addressed explaining about himself that "I'd rather be hated for who I am, than loved for who I am not" (Félix-Jäger, 2017, p.133). Cobain also suggests that the grunge movement contrasts with 1980s American mainstream mentalities as he desires to dismantle such ideologies. With the emergence of grunge, which expressed the importance of being true to oneself and positive activism, combined with the romanticism within the music, promoted inclusivity. The attainable, non-offensive and simplistic attire

encouraged the formation of an identity with greater inclusivity without the demand for one to change their own identity to fit into grunge. Krist Novoselic from Nirvana confirms that the grunge revolution was inclusive (Novoseliz, 2004, p.22). In such a manner, grunge was able to spread and gain popularity more successfully than punk. Political activism was encouraged under a recycled, working-class aesthetic with pop melodies. Punk had culminated in undesirable associations in the mainstream in the 1970s and 1980s which had not allowed it to progress into the mainstream in the way that grunge did.

#### Alternative Music and the outsiders in 1980s Punk: Cobain and Westerberg.

All of this means that grunge differs from hardcore punk, especially when considering the importance of not selling out. Kurt Cobain's approach to the issue is closer to The Replacements than any hardcore punk band. Therefore, if the punk identity is only defined in hardcore terms, grunge, especially Nirvana does not fit into the punk categorization and marks an evolution from it. Krist Novoselic explains: "that was the thing with Kurt. He wasn't a doctrinaire punk rock disciple. He had an open mind about things" (Hughes and Larson, 2008, pp.33-34). He explains that, in grunge, "the new guard held the sceptical sensibilities of the subculture along with the inherent rebellion of it all...no longer was punk to be despised-it had landed in the mainstream, albeit neutralised by a clever use of semantics"(Novoselic, 2004, p.21). Novoselic suggests that grunge was intentionally crafted and meaningful. He explains that grunge was a form of rebellion and more inclusive and open minded than punk.

*"We apologise, here they are, The Replacements"*

- Grace Slick (Sonic More Music, 2015)

The same can be observed in The Replacements who had often been categorized in the alternative category despite their punk background in the Minneapolis scene. The Replacements – a band which incorporated more classic rock'n'roll elements and were heavily influenced by Alex Chilton and The Box Tops, were marginalised by the hardcore punk scene. This becomes evident in the distorted sound of their first two albums which resembled the work of Hüsker Dü. Also, they had an anti-conservative attitude. For example, songs such as "Androgynous" (1984) (later covered by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts) addressed homosexuality, yet the band have been neglected from the 1980s punk scene. The Replacements got signed by Warner Bros owned -Sire Records in 1985 before Hüsker Dü, making them the first punk band to be signed by a major label. Bob Mould from Hüsker Dü, referring to the outsider status of the Replacements, concludes that: "maybe the overlords of the existing hardcore scene saw them as poseurs. But those people didn't know shit anyways"(Mehr, 2016,p. 101), Frontman Paul Westerberg believes that: "[They] didn't see us as a punk band, but we embodied more

of what a punk was than they did" (Mehr, 2016,p. 101). Bob Mehr notes that Westerberg was also dubious of the po-faced herd mentality that quickly overtook American hardcore audiences in the early 1980s. "They used to all show up in the same uniform," he recalled: "And it became political and it became serious and it became deathly...it was not the way we wanted to go"(Mehr, 2016,p. 101). The Replacements didn't join the aggressive attacks on Reagan and Westerberg was a cynic about politics, he made it known that: "there's nothing that bores me more than a hardcore band that says, "Reagan sucks, " he said. "that's about as overused and easy and silly as "Let's make love tonight, baby". I mean, yeah, Reagan sucks-so?" (Mehr, 2016, p. 101). However, this does not mean that the band neglected commenting on the issues caused by the Reagan administration, as songs such as "Bastards of Young"(1985) reveal :

"Dreams unfulfilled, graduate unskilled  
It beats pickin' cotton and waitin' to be forgotten....  
Clean your baby womb, trash that baby boom  
Elvis in the ground, no way he'll be here tonight  
Income tax deduction, what a hell of a function  
It beats pickin' cotton or waitin' to be forgotten"

(Westerberg, 1985)

Westerberg comments pessimistically on the baby boom generation, just as the hardcore scene in California had. Such pessimism reflects the 1980s Savings and Loans Crisis. This was a moment when "the deregulation policy implemented between 1980 and 1982, was supposed to bring a solution to losses via the increase in interest rates caps. However, it made the situation even worse"(Ureche-Rangau and Burietz, 2010). The crisis led to bankruptcy of half the savings and loan banks. David R. Francis further observed in 1992, that: "the rich did get a tax break in the 1980s in the United States. The working poor did not"(Francis, 1992). This meant fewer opportunities for lower income households which, in turn, greatly influenced the children of such households. This formed part of the influence on the next generation of suburban punks and ultimately resulted in the Replacements and the Seattle scene taking on an anti-capitalist and anti-right stance.

#### "Can't wait to sell out": Changes in punk.

Nevertheless, when addressing the issue of the punk identity, bands such as the Replacements, who took on a less radical display of their protest and focused on an introspective approach, highlight the limitations of the genre. Just like the Replacements, grunge musicians were signed on major labels, and bands such as Pearl Jam were never signed on an independent label at all. They lacked the DIY approach which contradicts the scene's professed style. Often the hardcore scene criticized the 1970s

punk artists due to their frequent drug use and lack of political involvement. In this sense, the Minneapolis punk scene followed the introspective behaviour of the New York scene. The Replacements were more in favour of the scene, especially Johnny Thunders. The Minneapolis alternative scene would also spark rivalry between the artists, especially between The Replacements and Hüsker Dü. This limited identity in the punk scene and political expectations is one of the reasons why the Seattle scene became a world-wide phenomenon as the identity and expectations were not as limiting. Grunge is closer to the Minneapolis alternative scene as both did not take on the straightedge mentality of the 1980s hardcore punks.. Journalist and pop culture critic Martin Keller asserts that “their impact on rock music was huge. I don't think there would've been the Seattle scene without them and the Hüskers” (Collins, 2017, p 321). Hüsker Dü had paved the way for what the grunge scene in the 1990s would popularize for the mainstream. Originating from the Minneapolis scene- a musical scene which would culminate in attention from major labels and the discovery and success of Hüsker Dü in 1986.

Karl Mueller from Soul Asylum explains that ‘that whole grunge thing started supposedly in Seattle- I mean, think back, the Hüskers were grunge before anybody else was ’’(McMurray, 2011,p.75). Hüsker Dü infused pop melodies with hardcore elements (like Nirvana) and influenced the next generation of musicians including Soundgarden. Ben Shepherd from Soundgarden recalls that the first show he ever saw was Dead Kennedys with Hüsker Dü and “ Hüsker Dü were just totally mind blowing. I went back to school the next day and told everyone” (McMurray, 201, p.83). The element of selling out was embraced by Hüsker Dü, as Mike Madden recalls the frontman Bob Mould saying that he “can 't wait to sell out”(Collins, 217, p.278), challenging the anti-corporatism energy in punk despite having history with the hardcore punk label SST. Singer Bob Mould explained that “the only way modern politics keeps forging ahead is by groups threatening the established order”(Hurchalla, 2016,p.302) Therefore, criticising hardcore punk scenes became a necessity for new political protests.

Hüsker Dü embraced the idea of selling out, something that hardcore punk did not accept and wanted to avoid. Selling out for hardcore punk was a sign of falsity, materialism, and capitalism. Hardcore punk did not accept this and marginalised any musicians who were suspected of such. Hüsker Dü and The Replacements, from a hardcore punk perspective, were bands who could not be credited as punk. This singular factor overpowers their music. Hüsker Dü themselves wanted to be alienated from the punk identity, wanting to be known instead as rock'n'roll band. Singer Bob Mould recalls that there was pressure and demand from punk fanzines to conform to a set identity. They would ask:

“are you into anarchy? What's your politics? Who did you vote for? Did you register for the draft? Do you have a job? Oh, four out of five right-you passed-you

passed the punk test-you're punk''. All the questions would be the same for every band, and if you say "no, I don't think war is a bad idea at all, then fuck, you're fucked. It's a party line. It happens that I'm not into anarchy at all, I think it's a foolish idea" (Hurchalla, 2016, p.297).

This clarified that there was pressure to be like other hardcore punk bands and that punk was about conformity to a set of ideals. Krist Novoselic admitted this issue and explained that "if punk was about freedom, why conform to some kind of moulded identity? If I wanted to wear a uniform, I'd join the military" (Novoselic, 2004, p.24). Mould states that Hüsker Dü aims to talk to "everybody: we're not talking Straight Edge; we're not talking hardcore; we're talking to everybody" (Hurchalla, 2016, p.302). This statement indicates that Hüsker Dü did not agree with the hard-core punk mentality and wanted to be more inclusive. Regarding grunge, the same situation can be identified, not only through musicians as Novoselic suggests but the record labels. Sub Pop, unlike SST or Alternative Tentacles, capitalized on this approach.

Nirvana's "attitude toward the music industry appears to have crystallised early on, as this 1989 Sub Pop press release reproduced at Sub Pop Records' website indicates: NIRVANA sees the underground scene as becoming stagnant and more accessible to big league capitalist pig major record labels. But does NIRVANA feel a moral duty to fight this cancerous evil? NO WAY! We want to cash in and suck up to the big wigs in hopes that we too can GET HIGH AND F...SOON we will need groupie repellent. SOON we will be coming to your town and asking if we can stay over at your house and use the stove. SOON we will do encores of "GLORIA" and "LOUIE LOUIE" at benefit concerts with all our celebrity friends" (Starr, 2006, pp.297-298).

Sub Pop's release of Nirvana differs with Krist Novoselic's explanation of grunge and the band. Krist Novoselic states that it was a politicized movement and from the start even the thrifted clothing that musicians wore represented a protest against capitalism. Despite the importance of political activism, Sub Pop claims that Nirvana wanted to cash in. Just Like Hüsker Dü, Sub Pop and Nirvana did not limit themselves and did not accept the conformity of hardcore punk. This strategy was repeated by major labels. Larry Starr notes that a senior executive for a major record company in the 1980s revealed that: "there's a whole indie section [of our company. That are] ...kids-that will only buy records that are on an indie label...which is why we sometimes concoct labels to try and fool them" (Starr, 2006, p.292). The alternative music phenomenon took over the 1990s with major record labels putting artists such

as Nirvana, Soundgarden, Nine Inch Nails or R.E.M (who greatly differ and come from different backgrounds) in the same alternative rock category.



*Figure 5: Eddie Vedder from Pearl Jam wearing Sub Pop's Loser shirt.*



*Figure 6: Mark Arm from Mudhoney wearing Sub Pop's Loser shirt.*

The Replacements, the melancholic, self-deprecating, self-sabotaging punk band, greatly influenced Kurt Cobain, especially their idea of celebrating losers. The band would popularize the idea of loser-as-cool. For example, their performance of "Talent Show" (1989) on The International Rock Awards (1989) placed the prestige award ceremony with attendees such as Tina Turner, Keith Richards, Loud Reed and David Bowie at a high school/talent show level. Their sarcastic performance made fun of the supposed sophistication of the award ceremony. Westerberg interludes questioning: "What the hell are we doing here?" (Sonic More Music, 2015) alienating themselves from the critically acclaimed and

commercially successful artists. He continues to sing: "We might win this time, I doubt it"(Sonic More Music, 2015) referring back to the loser persona that the band took on which rejected superficiality. This differed from the hardcore punk movement, which took itself very seriously when discussing politics and aiming to disassociate with the stereotype of punk being concerned primarily with drug use. The loser persona would go on to be embodied within the grunge movement and capitalized on. "More, recently, ironically, the very notion of outsider, alternative, or marginal music has itself become a means of promoting music to a -mass audience hungry for novelty, excitement, and a sense of authenticity"(Starr, 2006,p.269). Major record labels appropriate and capitalize on this strategy. Seattle *Sub Pop* records used the same tactics. Their merch proudly allow customers to wear the word 'Loser' on their chest, as seen by Eddie Vedder or Mark Arm (Figure 5 and 6).. Celebrating losers would become one of the characteristics of grunge that The Replacements undoubtedly paved the way for especially when considering The Replacements' focus on adolescence and depression with great scepticism and pessimism presented through melodic and melancholic melodies. This is exemplified in their song "Unsatisfied" (1984) which expresses Paul Westerberg's depression and interest in palmistry (every palm reader deemed him to be unhappy forever) (Mehr, 2016, p. 136). Unhappiness would become not only associated with Nirvana but the whole Seattle aesthetic and art.

#### The Replacements: Start of grunge.

"The Ledge", from the 1987 Replacements album *Pleased to Meet Me*, became one of their most controversial songs. MTV declined to air it, claiming that: "fewer than 5 percent of submitted videos were sent back for editing...it was rare for a video to be flat-out rejected" (Mehr, 2016, p. 267). This one, however, did. MTV's music and talent department manager Rick Krim decided what videos could be played on the channel, alongside Michelle Vonfeld who described herself as: "one-person standards and practices department""(Mehr, 2016,p. 267).The reason for their decision was not due to the video format (which consisted of the band sitting on couches and eating fast food), but to its lyrical content regarding teen suicide. The song addressed the New Jersey Bergenfield suicide (1987) in which 4 teenagers from broken homes committed suicide leaving a note behind with their wish to be buried together. As Miringoff's study in Chapter I indicates, 1987 was marked as the year with the greatest number of teen suicides committed. The song is particularly pertinent when considering the band members' (brothers within the band -Tommy and Bob Stinson) disruptive upbringing. The music of the band indicates a pessimistic stance which would be embodied by the Seattle scene. It "shook the region to its core...It was a phenomenon that had become increasingly common in the eighties following high-profile teen suicides: other kids would take their own lives in imitation or in some strange form of solidarity"(Mehr, 2016,p. 267). Westerberg believes that "MTV feels the lyrics are

detrimental to the youth of America...But for them to play Mötley Crüe and not play our video...it if had bunch of sexist bullshit, they would've played it. But if it's something deeper, if its emotions, then its taboo"(Mehr, 2016,p. 268). This marks the issue of censorship and how limiting MTV was. MTV advertised itself as television for youth, yet was ready to capitalize on sexist content. Quickly, MTV's decision attached a stigma to the song and many radio stations did not play it: "internally, everyone knew that the record was dead"(Mehr, 2016,p. 268).

The band would not neglect to address depression throughout their careers and musical products, constantly sabotaging their own opportunities to make records with famous producers or releasing records for major labels. They also sabotaged their own shows and were banned for life from performing on SNL due to their controversial 1986 "Bastard of Young" performance. This was all in the name of being 'authentic' and Paul Westerberg not wanting to fulfil and live up to the rockstar persona. Yet still such anti-corporation attitude brought interest from Warner Bros. Records culminating in making such approaches in rock music fashionable and marketable. This was also embodied in Seattle musicians as they tried to avoid the clichéd rock star stereotypes of the 1980s as seen through Pearl Jam not doing interviews for a long time or Chris Cornell replying in an MTV interview with Eddie Vedder in 1991, that all he needs is to "buy a house or buy a new skateboard"(PearlJamOnline, 2021). This appeared modest when compared to the luxurious self-indulgent agenda popularised by Ronald Reagan and the 1980s rock scene through bands such as Mötley Crüe and Poison. Famously, Nirvana had sung "Rape Me" at MTV's VMA's in 1992, without the show producer knowing, echoing the same form of protest as Westerberg in the SNL performance. Whilst both singers were excluded from punk, they rebelled against television and the music industry. Both bands integrated the loser persona and label in their identity, but it was grunge which helped to bring the loser label mainstream with the Los Angeles born Beck landing at number one in 1994 with his song "Loser"(1994) on the Billboard Music Chart (Chart History Beck, 2021).

Nirvana did not take on the active radical political display that the hardcore bands embodied. Instead, they examined nihilism and criticism of oneself. Bob Mehr notes that that "Nirvana had picked up the proverbial torch that the Replacements had fumbled away " (Mehr, 2016, p. 404). Even Robert Hilburn of the Los Angeles Times wrote that: "Cobain sings and writes about the romantic complexities and youthful apathy with much of the intensity and insight of...Paul Westerberg...Cobain, indeed, could be the Paul Westerberg of the 90s" (Mehr, 2016, p. 404). Westerberg, however, did not find any similarities and concluded, "I guess I wore a plaid shirt, and yes, I played real loud," he said, "but Nirvana sounds to me like Boston with a hair up its ass" (Mehr, 2016,p. 404). Westerberg released the song "World Class Fad" (1993) which Cobain interpreted as an attack on him. Kurt Cobain didn't vocalise his admiration of The Replacements: "even though people see the title of Nirvana's

album, *Nevermind*, as an homage of sorts to The Replacements song, *Never Mind* " (Golden, 2014). Nirvana's song "Smells like Teen Spirit" (1991) also is lyrically reminiscent of The Replacements song "Never Mind" (1987):

"I found it hard, was hard to find

Oh well, whatever, never mind"

(Cobain, Novoselic and Grohl, 1991)

"The words I thought I brought I left behind

So never mind"

(Westerberg, 1987)

Westerberg vocalized his indifference of Nirvana but has also acknowledged Cobain as a: "major talent" (Golden, 2014). However, for an interview with Jim Derogatis, Westerberg wondered: "if perhaps it took a generation of impostors to show them who meant it and who didn't. The generation that came right after me—Kurt Cobain, et al. —was not embracing what I did, although they certainly were influenced, whether they admitted it or not"(Golden, 2014). Kurt Cobain even denied their influence, as he: " didn't get it and didn't like it that much" (WatchMojo, 2017).However, Tom Hazelmyer (the founder of Amphetamine Reptile Records in Washington and vocalist of Halo of Flies) highlights the influence of the Minneapolis scene on Seattle.

"[If you] have a look at the pictures of those Minneapolis guys from 81, they're dressed like grunge guys- flannel shirts, torn jeans, long hair. I remember the Replacements showing up on television while I was at a party, and the whole room was glued to the set. To me they were just a band from back home, but to a party that hosted many of the future Seattle heavyweights, the 'mets were idols. I've read Cobain citing [replacements singer] Paul Westerberg. There was definitely an influence" (True, 2009, p.94)

Charles Peterson, the photographer for Sub Pop Records has also acknowledged The Replacements, alongside Sonic Youth, Black Flag and Butthole Surfers as the "real thing"(True, 2009,p.94). "Vocalist Paul Westerberg sings from the heart and he knows how to break it...This is mature, diverse rock that could well shoot these regional boys into the national mainstream" (Azerrad, 2001,p.223) concluded Bruce Pavitt, music critic from the *Seattle Rocket* fanzine, who became a co-founder of Sub Pop

records. Cameron Crowe's movie *Singles* (1992) had its soundtrack produced by Paul Westerberg further indicating the Seattle scenes thanks to The Replacements. Whilst Westerberg and Cobain did not see any similarities between them, they both credited Alex Chilton and Big Star as major influences, both fell into the category of alternative rock, and both were excluded from hardcore punk scenes.

### Chapter III: Parents Music Resource Centre, Democrats, and conservative Christians against rock.

“I feel that the people that are most threatened by punk are people that have a lot invested in the way things are. People that want to believe that the world should be run by white people for example, people that want to believe that it's not right for a man to kiss a man...people that think that there's one religion. Whether it is Christianity, or Islam, or Buddhism.”

- Pat Blashill (Brence and Brence, 2021)

This chapter examines not only grunge protests against the politics of the 1980s and 1990s, but also examines criticism and censorship of political organisations. It has a particular focus on the conservative Christians and the Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC). Chapter I addressed Ronald Reagan and republicanism as hardcore punk's main opponent. Chapter II also addressed republicanism in order to understand the social fabric of Generation X, grunge and punk of the 1980s. However, this chapter focuses on Democrats and music. Specifically, the aforementioned Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC) which had been founded by Democrat Party figures such as Tipper Gore. This chapter addresses Bill Clinton and his idea of the media existing as a third parent. It continues ideas from previous chapters in highlighting the importance of music, especially grunge music, for politics. It explores the importance of rock musicians for society. Kirsty Lohman notes that “individual practices of punk are linked with group practices, thereby, suggesting that in order to fully understand the meanings attached to 'punk', it is important to retain a lens on the individual as well as the social” (Lohman, 2017, p.160). The importance of the environment and music being a reflection of the collective is highlighted, similarly, as Theodor Adorno argues. This is also appropriate for the rock genre. Therefore, this chapter addresses criticism faced by rock music before grunge and the 1990s.

When considering the political atmosphere of the 1960s, the Civil Rights movements (1954 – 1968) and Civil Rights Act (1964) divided the society they aimed to unify. Hippie and counterculture movements agitated for peace, human rights and condemned American activities in the Vietnam War (1955-1975). However, the agitation for liberation of minorities, identities and sexuality by youth movements and counterculture musicians, particularly in the rock genre, generated a longstanding backlash.. This was due partly to conservatives, especially conservative Christians, as “Evangelicals made national headlines in 1974 when they protested the use of textbooks they believed contained a liberal agenda to spread ideas such as multiculturalism” (13.1 Conservatism and the “Reagan Revolution”, 2012). The Evangelicals' fear of multiculturalism is one of the elements which contributes to their dislike of rock music. Dr. Julian M. Hayter explains that “a major theme running through the

history of Southern politics has been the fear of a negro take-over of the political and governmental structure” (Hayter, 2015, p.512). This is an especially important observation when considering that rock music was greatly shaped by African American musicians such as Little Richard, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Billie Holiday, Chuck Berry, B.B King and Jimi Hendrix. These musicians founded, created, and shaped the jazz and blues genres further, which then influenced and evolved into the rock'n'roll and its many genres. Taking note of the racial tension prior to and in the 1960s, conservative Christians had found rock music threatening not only because of its multiculturalism but also what this meant in terms of the integration of non-white Christian culture into American society.

The Klansman and White Citizens` Council Leader Asa Carter in 1956 “demonized rock`n`roll as: “sensuous negro music” that was destroying the “entire moral structure of man, of Christianity, of spirituality in Holy marriage...of all the white man has built through his devotion to God” (Stephens, 2018,p.17). The Pentecostal movement has been particularly targeted due to the movement's popularity in African American churches. The Pentecostal movement is significant for rock music as its musical tradition and integration in religious practices have been adapted in rock music. Figures like Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash were greatly influenced by Pentecostalism. Elvis Presley copied the southern gospel singer Jake Hess, for example Therefore, the movement's growing popularity caused ideological challenges when it comes to issues of race. Randall J. Stephens notes that rock'n'roll and Pentecostalism were related “from the earliest days of the genre...In fact, the culture of southern Pentecostalism influenced early rock in startlingly powerful ways and helped to give birth to the new genre. Such dynamic performers and chart toppers as Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Little Richard, B.B King, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Jerry Lee Lewis, and James Brown all were nurtured by close associations with Pentecostal and holiness churches in the South”(Stephens, 2018,p.14). Christian churches criticised the Pentecostal movement for highlighting mystical manifestations like Glossolalia, promising false healings, and appearing anti-intellectual. As Musicians did not alienate themselves from religious beliefs, the demonisation of rock`n`roll music ties partly with multiculturalism and miscegenation. The popularity of music which expresses such ideas or promotes Pentecostalism means that more people are exposed to such ideas. Popular musicians such as Elvis Presley were blamed for the popularity of rap music suggesting that multiculturalism and the integration of black music in rock is to blame for the popularity of rap music. Most prominent example of this thinking, Chief Dennis R. Martin, will be discussed later.

It is also worth discussing how such figures had become more politically interested as their careers progressed. Elvis Presley is a famous example where rock music icons become more conservative. Presley was a figure that initially broke aspects of conservatism in 1950s America for the youth market. He became more conservative in later years if his pro-Vietnam War stance is considered. Contrasting

the Peace Protest stance that John Lennon displayed. Furthermore, Lennon proclaimed that The Beatles were “bigger than Jesus” (Carey, n.d.) in 1966, not only causing controversy with religious groups, but also indicating how influential musicians had become. Whilst Presley’s dislike towards Lennon started from the first time they met, President Richard M. Nixon and Elvis Presley met at the White House on December 21<sup>st</sup> of 1970 to discuss The Beatles. Elvis quickly let Nixon know that the Beatles “were a canter of anti-Americanism” as they slandered America back in England. President Nixon gave Elvis what he desired, ordering the “Bureau of Narcotics to give Elvis a badge” (Williamson and Lewis Shaw, 2015, p.247). Whilst Elvis asked Nixon to keep Lennon out of the United States, “Nixon quickly offered the idea that he thought Elvis could reach young people. Elvis quickly agreed but added that he must work only in his own way” (Williamson and Lewis Shaw, 2015, p.247). Importantly, Elvis, once a symbol of rebellion for the youth movement, had become a political tool indicating that music is politically driven and bound to be integrated and appropriated by politics.

Music as a political tool had been used strategically before. Bush Jones and Sheldon Winkler had both agreed that “World War II was one of the most important periods for American popular music development” (Gordeeva, 2021). As Americans from across the United States listened to the same songs on the radio, their “heterogeneous and conflicting identities harmonised to form what Benedict Anderson labels as an ‘imagined political community’” (Gordeeva, 2021). This demonstrates music’s ability to create a community and unity that political figures valued. Annegret Fauser explains that “no other event in the US history mobilised and instrumentalized culture in general, and music in particular, so totally, so consciously and so unequivocally as WWII” (Gordeeva, 2021). This was achieved by American wartime songs such as “God Bless America” (1938). Written by Irving Berlin during World War I in 1918, with the second World War it was revised:

“God bless America, land that I love.  
Stand beside her and guide her.  
Through the night with the light from above”

(Berlin, 1939)

The song is a tool of unification of American society in World War II. It generates a sense of pride and patriotism in lyrical passages that promotes American Exceptionalism. Whilst the original song in 1918, had the line “To the right with the light from above” but was changed, due to the phrase “to the right” (God Bless America The Story Behind The Song, n.d.). Berlin wanted to make the song for Americans, not divide them politically as “the right” had been associated with conservative politics. The song is the “unofficial anthem of the United States...which hit number one after 9/11 and is constantly played at sports events” (Edmondson, 2013, p.107)

As discussed before, from a sociomusicological perspective, music reflects a collective and for this reason is used strategically by institutions. Music is significant in the formation and stabilisation of American identity. Music is not only an art form or an artistic pleasure, but a psychological tool of control. Throughout American history, the effectiveness of music has been acknowledged and used strategically, not only in wartime efforts, but in organisations such as the US 80s Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC). The mainstream success of grunge, a democratic leaning movement which promoted activism against conservative politics, was addressed by figures such as Bill Clinton in his presidential election campaign (discussed later).

'God Bless America' also highlights the importance of religion for the United States. Not only does this song promote American exceptionalism but religion, specifically Christianity. Whilst Elvis supported political activities and never alienated himself from religion, rock musicians never stopped receiving criticism. In early December of 1980 "one hundred Evangelicals gathered with the minister on a chilly night in Saint Paul, Minnesota, at Zion Christian Life Centre" (Stephens, 2018, p.3); to burn and destroy rock and pop records, especially targeting the Eagles, Donna Summer, Led Zeppelin and the Beach Boys. Youth Ministers especially liked to target KISS, claiming that the band's name "stood for "Knights In the Service of Satan" (Stephens, 2018, p.4). This example showcases Adorno's evaluation of music speaking in the plural. Evangelicals are protesting against their rock fans as well as protesting against the rock community's ideology. They are against the music that the rock community is listening to and this is a confirmation that Evangelicals believe that music has a significant impact on the listener. Christianity in the 1980s, just as in in the 1960s, found rock music threatening. This same occurred in the 1990s with the explosion of grunge.

"{Oregon Extension student] James S., who attended in the late 1990s, recalls a time when the headmaster of his Christian high school publicly shamed a group of students into tearing up and throwing away their tickets to a Pearl Jam concert (and in the 1990s Pearl Jam tickets had huge cultural significance). "He told us that even if we sold the tickets to someone else, we would be guilty of corrupting that person through our moral failure""

(Francis, 2017,p.80)

As discussed in Chapter I, grunge was anti-religious and such a statement indicates how it clashed with the religiously affiliated. The situation indicates pressure from Christianity to not spread or share rock music, specifically Pearl Jam, as liking such music is indicative of one's moral failure. To combat anti-religious messages, Evangelicals and conservative Christians formed Christian rock bands in the late 1960s deciding "that rock music could serve the church and the cause of Evangelism" (Stephens, 2018,

p.13). Evangelicals approached pop music in the same manner, leading to contemporary Christian music “raking almost a billion dollars annually by the late 1990s” (Stephens, 2018, p.25). Not only does this indicate the prominence and importance of Christianity in American audiences (when considering the billion-dollar sales), but it highlights how influential, powerful and threatening music can be for political organisations and figures, especially those who have contributed to and maintained American social systems. This has only increased over the years as celebrities arguably hold an even greater influence on society. Michael Hogan argues that artists such as Frank Zappa “did more to win sympathies for ‘the American way of life’ than any U.S politician or military leader, probably with the exception of John F. Kennedy” (Hogan, 1999, p.491), thus symbolising how important rock musicians are for society.

#### Celebrities as political coordinators.

Synergy between celebrities and politicians has only increased over the years. West and Orman conclude that actor Warren Beatty’s efforts to organise celebrities to support George McGovern for his 1972 presidential election campaign “helped to institutionalise the formal role of celebrity coordinator in election campaigns” (West and Orman, 2003, p. 61). McGovern became the first to tie the notions of a rock concert to a presidential campaign parade. In such tactics, the rock collective and community are targeted in order for McGovern to gain support. From a sociomusicological perspective, if the social fabric is reflected in music, then this change is bound to be reflected in the music.

From April to October of 1972, In Madison Square Garden, Cleveland Arena and Los Angeles Forum Venues artists such as Barbra Streisand, Carole King, Quincy Jones, Joni Mitchell, Paul Simon and Tina Turner performed in support of McGovern. These events were organised by Warren Beatty with the event at Madison Square Garden in October of 27, 1972, organised and supported by actress and activist Shirley MacLaine and former President John F. Kennedy’s daughter Rose Kennedy. (Gorzelay-Mostak, 2012, p.57). Shawn Parry Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles conclude that candidates “still must strive for a presidential image, and they must utilise and associate the myths and images of the presidency with their candidacy. Because of the presence of television and the intimate gazing that this medium invites, candidates must also exhibit their private and intimate selves to voters in order to appear credible and forthcoming” (Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, 2002, p.28). Presidential candidates use promotional tactics which resemble the ones used in the creation of a celebrity. McGovern’s strategic use of rock celebrities aimed to attract more voters from middle and lower households with rock music not associated with more wealthy voters. This signifies that celebrities hold a greater power proportion to politicians and that they are more attractive, trustworthy and significant for

American voters. These strategies were adopted by Democrats and by Republicans especially, through the Reagan presidency.

Event celebrities, legacies, and famed neo politicians are among the most trusted public figures in the country. They are not seen in the mistrusting way that most politicians are viewed by the public. Rather than having spent a lifetime cutting deals with other politicians, they have leapfrogged the political crowd and in the process carved out considerable flexibility for themselves in terms of their personal images.....Prominent individuals have the ability to rise above factors that constrain typical politicians and generate new energy for the system as a whole....What we have done is develop a system where star power is weighted more heavily than traditional political skills such as bargaining, compromise, and experience " (West and Orman, 2003, p. 112).

These celebrity and politician relationships benefit the minority at the top of the economic and class system. This political strategy provides a façade of sincerity and awareness. In 1984 Ronald Reagan, in a campaign speech, concluded that "America's future...rests in a message of hope in the songs of a man so many young Americans admire, New Jersey's own Bruce Springsteen"(Goldberg, 2003,p.86). Inspired by the success of Reagan, "many other conservatives, like young Georgia congressman Newt Gingrich, became highly attuned to popular culture and posed as rebels and outsiders" (Goldberg, 2003, p.86). Such outsidership has not only been used strategically by figures such as the Newt Gingrich, but by Democrats such as Bill Clinton or the contemporary example of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who wore a dress with the political statement 'Tax the Rich' at the MET gala 2021. Such statements aim to bring the characterisation of outsidership and rebellion to the political figure. The celebrity environment places the political figure in a more trustworthy light as they display activism against economic inequality in the American social system. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez joined the alternative American band The Strokes on stage on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 fundraiser for mayoral democratic candidate Maya Wiley at the Irving Plaza. Furthermore, Maya Wiley's TV advert for her mayoral candidacy featured The Strokes song "Starting Again" (2021) whilst the band members showed support for her on their social media platforms.

Music is important for politics as it's a consumer product which speaks in plural for individuals who are not generally interested in politics. From the sociomusicological perspective of Emery Schubert, music can regulate and evoke emotions. This means that for the political advertisement, use of music that has a patriotic or even melancholic sound influences the spectator's emotional state. The music instantly and directly influences the spectator without the need for them to focus on the political

campaign. Through Paul Hindemith's perspective, if the audience has positive emotions and connotations of the music or singer's voice, those emotions are evoked and attached to the new information. In this case, the new political advertisement video for audiences that know The Strokes are presented with a sense of familiarity, making the political figure more trustworthy.

But such activism is a contradiction., The 'Tax the Rich' dress was a custom Brother Vellies creation and not attainable for most Americans. Democrats over the years have used this strategy to play as outsiders yet such contradictions only promote distrust. The same issue can be seen through Bill Clinton. Kurt Cobain had become an idolised and God-like figure to a majority of Generation X and beyond. Even more sensationalised has been his death, which public figures such as CBS News presenter Andy Rooney derided. He criticised the youth by reading a fan's confession regarding Cobain's death and remarking "what's all this nonsense about how terrible life is...it's hard to be a young person nowadays, he helped open people's eyes to our struggles, please wipe the tears from your eyes dear, your breaking my heart, I'd love to relieve the pain you're going through by switching my age for yours" (Pearl Jam Twenty, 2011). President Bill Clinton invited Pearl Jam to the White House after Kurt Cobain's death. Eddie Vedder recalls "I was also asked if I felt okay assisting in an official response to Kurt's suicide" (Pearl Jam LLC and Monkeywrench INC,2011,p.144). Whilst Kelly Curtis (Pearl Jam's manager) recalls Eddie Vedder clearly stating: "I don't think you should address the nation" (Yarm,2011,p.454), as there was a fear of 'copycat' suicides. Research done by D.A. Jobes, A. L. Berman, P. W. O'Carroll, S. Eastgard and S. Knickmeyer in 1996 indicates that the "data obtained from the Seattle King County area suggest that the expected "Werther effect" apparently did not occur, but there was a significant increase in suicide crisis calls following his death"(Knickmeyer et al., 1996). Public figures such as Eddie Vedder had a significant influence over American society, especially when considering President Clinton's invitation. This also indicates the high status that Cobain held. However, this was only considered for political purposes regarding youth voters and ratings. Clinton used Pearl Jam, at the time popular in the mainstream, in order to promote himself as fashionable for youth audiences and younger voters.

Danny Goldberg notes that prior to the 1994 midterm elections, young people "thought Clinton was one of us and it turns out he was one of them" (Goldberg, 2005, p.207). "Democrats have lost the edge they had with younger voters, from a nineteen-point margin in 1992 to zero in 2000" (Goldberg, 2005, p.272). However, it doesn't mean that celebrity endorsement has been minimised. Oprah Winfrey's endorsement of Obama in 2008, as Lisa Idzikowski notes, led to an "estimated overall 1 million additional votes" (Idzikowski, 2020, p.23). This demonstrates how effective celebrity endorsements are for political campaigns and how much celebrity culture is in charge of the US society's political and social preferences.

“People look for meaning in their music and politics”

- Krist Novoselic (Novoselic, 2004, p.24).

In my interview series *Close Focus* (2021), Pat Blashill, photographer and author of *Texas Is the Reason: The Mavericks of Lone Star Punk* (2020) –who had captured the 1980s Texas punk scene and the US alternative movement (including grunge), revealed that: “I don't think it's possible for art to be separate from politics”(Brence and Brence, 2021). He explains that “all of us have a subjective opinion... as a photographer or an artist every choice you make does have some sort of implication. If you chose to photograph white people only-that's political. If you chose to photograph a black person, because you want to show that there's black people at a punk show-that's political” (Brence and Brence, 2021). I would like to consider such an approach when it comes to the Pacific Northwest scene, which has been characterised and overshadowed by negative elements (such as drug use) and negative criticism and portrayal of its artists.

Stone Gossard from Pearl Jam has been sceptical on the significance that the Seattle band Pearl Jam had contributed to, explaining that: “I wouldn't look at it like we've changed the world, I think that we've scratched that itch and we've made some statements that had some weight to them and that caused maybe some changed” (Lendt, 2021). Rock music had become even more threatening to the political figures and those in charge of organisations in the 1990s. Pat Blashill explains that: “grunge is definitely relevant. You know because we see so many people that are 12, 14, 15 wearing these shirts. There's something that they recognize. Especially in Kurt Cobain... People still are excited by those groups, and I think that's something we should listen to, something we should note ” (Brence and Brence, 2021). Grunge is even more significant than other American artistic movements when considering how such issues raised and experienced by the movement are relevant to contemporary generations. Grunge is significant when considering how globalised it became and, from a sociomusicological perspective, it reflects a worldwide community which finds strength in melancholic music.

Before grunge had become appropriated in the mainstream, there was always an idea against it. Nirvana's bassist Krist Novoselic noted that activism was important for grunge. He explains that Kurt Cobain created video montages about popular culture that were 'surreal sociology' (Novoselic, 2004, pp.15-16). Grunge “broke through with sensitive introspection wrapped in aggression and facial hair. The revolution was inclusive, with women musicians a vital component of the scene. Feminist ideals

fit naturally with the new sensibility. Political information booths became common at concerts” (Novoselic, 2004, p.22). The integration of politics in grunge showcases how such a movement had a goal beyond sales, art, and music. It was a political movement that aimed to spread democratic politics. He mentions that Nirvana was keenly interested in the November 1992 election in the United States. Novoselic recalls Cobain “sending \$200 to the Jerry Brown presidential campaign” (Novoselic, 2004, p.24). Nirvana also organised a benefit in 1993 to “bring attention to the women in the Balkan conflicts of the time” (Novoselic, 2004, p.25). This demonstrates how much musicians from Seattle were interested in global conflicts and in progressing the Democrat party's values. Once again, this reflects the interest of a collective and not just the individuals in grunge.

With the great rock revolution, Novoselic recalls censorship issues in the 1990s, such as the legal case of *Soundgarden vs. Eickenberry* which will be discussed later. However, such opposition to the music and an increase in censorship demonstrates how conflicting rock music had become for politicians in the 1990s. The example of the Parents Music Resource Centre signifies US politicians' combat against such issues. Lynxwiler and Gay (2000) argue that popular music in the United States is full of censorship, and “censorship issues built up as a result of the racial blending of musical styles and performers, but musical and political developments in the 1960s exacerbated them ” (Van Zoonen, 2005, p.41). However, unlike previously discussed protests from conservative Christians, group practice against rock music was also committed by political groups. The Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC) became the organisation aiming to combat racial blending of musical styles. The American committee (PMRC) worked with the government in order to protect American children against sexual, violent and drug related content in American music.

#### Republicans and Democrats against grunge: PMRC.

In August of 1985, Tipper Gore and Susan Beker opened the Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC), demanding that record companies label musical albums with 'X' for sexual explicitness, 'V' for Violence, 'D/A' for drug and alcohol references and 'O' for occult content. The organisation was supported by National PTA and the American Medical Association with members of the organisation consisting of wives of prominent politicians, quoting a “ National Council of Churches study that purportedly showed a “direct causal relationship between violence in the media and aggressive behaviour in society” (Goldberg, 2005, p.129). Tipper Gore, the wife of Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee, herself led the charge of a bipartisan group and held ties with “Southern California group that claims the Star of David is a symbol of the devil” (Goldberg, 2005, p.156). Which Danny Goldberg (manager of Nirvana, owner of Gold Village Entertainment, an artist management company) argued made it even more dangerous. With the PMRC senate hearings in 1985, Gore attacked artists such as Van

Halen, Cyndi Lauper and Prince, claiming to protect the American children. Goldberg who took part in the hearings and had organised a group "of managers, agents, PR people, artists and some label execs called The Musical Majority (a reference to the Moral Majority founded by Televangelist Jerry Falwell), which was created in association with the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)" (Cole, 2010), to oppose the ideas by PMRC.

Goldberg recalls Gore being agitated, asking "why do you keep saying we're conservative?...My husband and I are liberal Democrats" (Goldberg, 2005,p.146). Just like Republicans and Democrats had agreed on globalisation, both now agreed on censorship for artists. "It became obvious that Tipper Gore loved being on TV as much as I did. She linked rock with propaganda that had come from right wing Christians like the reverend Jeff Ling" (Goldberg, 2005, p.155). Goldberg argues that PMRC seemed to attempt at the height of Reagan's popularity "to repress popular culture, a culture that reflected an America very differently from the one that ruled in Washington. (Goldberg, 2005, pp.131-132). Famously, Frank Zappa called PMRC "a group of bored housewives" who wanted to "housebreak all composers and performers because of the lyrics of a few" (Goldberg, 2005,p.133). The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) denied the rating system advertised by Gore yet settled on the Parental advisory sticker. However, she attacked Guns'n'Roses even when the group placed the sticker on the cover of their albums. Tipper Gore's raid on rock music, with Bill Clinton's theory about media being the third parent for American children (which will be discussed later), tightened the free speech aspect for artists and strengthened the stigma around rock music, particularly with the implementation of the Parental Advisory sticker (what had become known as the 'Tipper Sticker'). Ronald Reagan's policies and the Moral Majority's conservatism further expanded into the PMRC, criticising, and aiming to censor rock and punk music.

The state of Washington passed the Erotic Sound Statute (1992), banning the sale of music which appeared 'erotic' with the intention of protecting the children of the United States from obscenity. However, in *Soundgarden v. Eikenberry* (1994), such a decision was overthrown. Not only did the statute breach the First Amendment, it indicated a stern, authoritarian approach to music censorship from the US lawmakers. This is especially significant when considering the fact that the bill was reintroduced in 1995 as the Matters Harmful to Minors bill. This was enforced by the House of Representatives of the state of Washington. In conjunction with laws such as the Teen Dance Ordinance (1985-2002) in Seattle, which banned teen dances in the city, unless strict provisions were followed; it hindered the local scene, as most promoters did not want to take the responsibility of the costs. Furthermore, the law targeted concerts as the law did not define 'dance', meaning that concerts qualified in the exemption. Young teens had to go outside of the city, as some bands "[avoid Seattle

because] they can't do an all-ages show" (Vogel, 1999) contributing to Seattle becoming isolated. With the legislature, Krist Novoselic from Nirvana explains that:

"You would have a sticker in 48-point type on your CD or your record saying, "This is harmful to minors." That sticker is basically a stigma. So, we would have to fight that. Like, Nirvana could fight it; we would have to sic the attorneys on it. But there would be a lot of artists who couldn't afford to do so. So, there you have the chilling effect where I can't say certain things. You'd be saying, "it sounds like I'm saying that, but as an artist I'm really saying this, which is very positive" (Hughes and Larson, 2008, pp.48-49).



*Figure 7: Seattle band Coffin Break wearing the 'I buy music for minors' shirt.*



*Figure 8: Eddie Vedder wearing the 'I buy music for minors' shirt.*

In the case of music, the First Amendment did not work, and rock music was stigmatised and censored. The parental advisory sticker itself is a symbol of deterrence and condemnation, which gives the music a negative portrayal. Such was addressed by the Seattle band Coffin Break and Eddie Vedder wearing the shirt with graphic titles 'I buy music for minors', in protest of such censorship (Figure 7 and 8). However, not only rock music but rap music was targeted. One of the most prominent examples is the lyrics of Body Count- "Cop Killer"(1992), which became a target for PMRC and George H.W. Bush in 1993. PMRC, traditionally as before, argued that lyrics in the song would influence young people negatively and put the police force in danger. Soundgarden had highlighted the breached issue of freedom of speech, performing with members of Body Count at Lollapalooza Festival in Summer 1992. Frontman Chris Cornell in the performance explained that: "you are not singing about wanting to kill somebody, you're just singing for your rights" (Soundgarden - Cop Killer/ Soundgarden's Cover of The Body Count Song Cop Killer,2010). Furthermore, signifying how freedom of expression was condemned by political organisations such as PMRC and the President of the United States George H.W. Bush. This also indicates how seriously music had been perceived by political figures. As well as indicating how music as a way to bring awareness and as an information source was disregarded by political figures. PMRC did not consider that the 'the problem isn't the song "Cop Killer." The problem is what's going on in these communities, and there's a bad relationship between law enforcement and the communities. (Hughes and Larson, 2008, p.49). They were more concerned about the music representing rap culture and as previously discussed with the conservative Christians – integration of black culture in the mainstream. From a sociomusicology perspective, Generation X is protesting against such ideas through music, and it is effective as official figures have shown concern.

Chief Dennis R. Martin, the President of the National Association of Chiefs of Police, highlighted the outrage felt by American Police Hall of Fame and Museum due to Body Count's song, indicating in his report that "music has the power both to "soothe the savage beast" and to stir violent emotions in man. Music can create an ambience for gentle romance, or unleash brutal sensuality... Yet the trend in American rock music for the last decade has been to promote ever more vile, deviant, and sociopathic behaviours" (Martin, 1993,p.159). Like the mentioned example of Evangelicals burning rock records, Chief Dennis R. Martin is agreeing with the sociomusicology approach. Both Emery Schubert's and Paul Hindemith's perspectives align with him and the idea that music is effective in the regulation of emotions.

Whilst he praises Christian Churches choral singing and Beethoven, he targets rock'n'roll, explaining that with the explosion of Elvis Presley: "contemporary music did not reflect the values of society but glamorised rebelliousness and adolescent sexuality" (Martin, 1993, p.160) which only intensified throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s heavy rock bands. Notably, Chief Martin states that bands "such as Guns'n'Roses, promote a panoply of anti-social behaviours and attitudes" (Martin, 1993,p.160) . Further, explaining that "rap music is a culmination of the course charted by Elvis Presley"(Martin, 1993,p.160). Insinuating that the cause of violence and rap music is due to rock'n'roll. Such a statement from Chief Dennis R. Martin reflects the anti-police mentality that as previously discussed punk and rock holds.

Nevertheless, the issue of the demonisation of rock'n'roll music has been an agreeable topic between prominent Republicans and Democrats which have sided with PMRC. Previously as mentioned, Chief Martin argued that rock music does not reflect the contemporary society, with this he has sided with the many music critics who have not acknowledged even the best examples of rock music. Radocy and Boyle (1979) concluded that "culture clearly affects musical behaviour [and that] music may influence the culture [in which it is produced]" (Barton, 2018,p.25). Considering Adorno's theory about music reflecting the social fabric (chapter II), PMRC in such a case, disregards music as a reflection of the society and disregards the middle lower population in America. It has the aim to protect the next generation from non-Christian values and prevent political music. Its aim is to maintain an unequal power relation between the American classes and to benefit the upper-class population. As in the context of the music industry, DIY- underground economy or the popularity of musicians that condemn the music industry's practice hinders the economic situation for owners of the record companies.

Despite grunge supporting Democrats it had cultivated a great amount of influence which conflicted both the Republicans and Democrats. Important to mention that Temple of The Dog's (with members

from Pearl Jam and Soundgarden) signature single "Hunger Strike"(1991) was explained as a "somewhat of a political, socialist statement"(Hay, 2005), by frontman Chris Cornell. When considering the Cold War relations and the collapse of the USSR in 1991, "Hunger Strike" (1991) released in 1991, proved that aspects of socialism had been merged into American society. Grunge was against corporatism and capitalism, despite its conformity to it. "Hunger Strike" (1991) exemplifies not only in the lyrical sense its neglect of materialism but in the aesthetic of the video. The music video was filmed on a beach, which is symbolic of nature and simplicity. Even though the music video has high production values, it lacks the complex music video effects, editing and the complex post-production, mise-en-scene or studio set-up. Rather being subtle and cinematic, drawing focuses on the messages of the song. Not relying on visuals to narrate the story. In comparison to Soundgarden "Jesus Christ Pose" (1991) music video, which features heavy editing, intercuts, graphics, multiple colour grades and effects. Which all carry metaphorical references to narrate the lyrics. By doing this, "Hunger Strike" (1991) music video becomes authoritative and doesn't carry fictional references. The accent is on the musical figures. Just like in a political strategy or when it comes to political promotional videos, the subjects are visually crafted in order to evoke trust. The band performing alone and the close-up shots of each of the singers (Chris Cornell and Eddie Vedder) establish them as the spokesmen of grunge and establish the fact that they are the figures singing what Cornell characterises as a political, socialist statement. A statement which is not agreeable or favourable by both American Republicans and Democrats.

It became even more challenging for American politicians as a record was set in Seattle of estimated 3000 people registering to vote in a single day, as Pearl Jam performed a free show in Magnuson Park (1992) and encouraged the 30`000 attendees to vote (Wilson, 2018). Indicating how great influence the Seattle band had and demonstrating that the criticised rock musicians were able to interfere in politics. Nevertheless, of their political beliefs, such a record signifies Seattle musicians' prominence as before, musicians, artists or politicians were unable to break such records in Seattle. Kim Thayil from Soundgarden made it known in an interview that: "everyone's a strong personality and no one's going to take shit from anyone. If the President was here and told us, "I think you should do this..."I'd say, "I'll do that if I feel like it." Everyone in the band has an attitude; it's not an ego thing but hard-headedness" (Blush, 1996). He also explained that: "It's irresponsible for entertainers to take advantage of their influence to encourage a particular belief. What is responsible is to give people the tools to think independently and reach conclusions. You can take any subject and ask us about it and I feel confident our band will present a more intelligent response than any other band" (Blush, 1996). This is significant as Thayil is recognizing the power of music from a sociomusicology perspective and using it strategically. Indicating how individualistic Seattle musicians were and how significant grunge

is as a political movement as it is not simplistically democratic sympathising. Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard concluded that:

"Pearl Jam was a corporation, meaning we are business, collectively make decisions, we have ya know stockholder meetings...In that sense it has some influence, and it can have influence beyond just the music. I've always thought that was an important way a force of some positive evolution...I think we've always sort of had this idea that we wanted to do something different than being a typical rock band and I think that activism was one of the elements that always from the get-go had been sort of built sort of in our DNA" (Lendt, 2021).

And the element of activism has always been present in grunge. The example of Nirvana's bassist Krist Novoselic is important to discuss, as it showcases the significance of politics for grunge musicians. Nirvana's bassist Krist Novoselic had become strongly involved in politics, joining the board of FairVote in 2008, previously named the Centre for Voting and Democracy and becoming the chairman of the Wahkiakum County Democrats. Novoselic explains that: "in the American hardcore music, a lot of it was doctrine too. ... It was just like; you would have the punk rock evangelists and ... there was an ideology. So basically, now the whole pantheon of rock and roll – classic rock – that was a false God, and those who espouse it are false prophets. The new true god is punk rock. That is the new ideology" (Hughes and Larson, 2008, p.33). In the 90s punk music of the 80s was central and had become the new aspiration for rock musicians. Novoselic subscribing to the punk ideology, which was discussed in chapter I, is important to note in the context of grunge. The integration of such ideology in grunge which became a mainstream format, despite the media's appropriation or interpretation of it, remark's that the punk ideology had been integrated in American society in the 90s with grunge.



*Figure 9: Krist Novoselic at the WTO protests in Seattle, November 30, 1999.*

Both the Democrats and Republicans had agreed on global capitalism in the 1990s, so the anti-globalist stance within grunge and its popularity showcases a movement which is separate from both political parties. With the collapse of the USSR, the western world became the main topic of discussion within punk scenes across the world, especially the growing 1990s scenes across third world countries. Raymond A. Patton notes that "punks were among the only voices of anti-globalization protest in the West, joined by ragtag assortment of other marginal groups"(Patton, 2018,p.184). Anti-globalization was present within grunge as events such as the WTO Seattle protest of 1999, supported by Krist Novoselic, demonstrate (Figure 9). Krist Novoselic (Nirvana), Kim Thayil (Soundgarden), Jello Biafra (Dead Kennedy`s) and Gina Mainwal (Sweet 75) created the protest group The No WTO Combo. Releasing an album on Jello Biafra's label Alternative Tentacles.in 1999, they addressed support for the WTO protest promoting the DIY approach to protests against corporatism and globalisation as well as the synergies grunge had with punk artists.

Opposing globalization "didn't make sense in the new era, when both the mainstream Left and the Right agreed on supporting global capitalism. Once again, punk fit poorly with the new political order...In part for this reason, punk had found unprecedented appeal in the Third World since 1989"(Patton, 2018,p.184). West and Orman highlight that the failure of the Communist regime was not due to the economy but due to the "inability of these systems to deliver Big Macs, Levis, and rock music to its young people to keep them entertained and out of the street demonstrations against the regime. Karl Marx in his political theory never anticipated the problem that "I want my MTV" could create for decision makers in socialist countries. (West and Orman, 2003,p. 61). This means that celebrity culture, consumerism, and everything that capitalist structures offered to their people, was sought after by citizens in Soviet societies.

At the same time, MTV as a symbol of capitalism served as a focal point for punk bands. Dead Kennedys, for example, wrote the song "M.T.V- Get Off The Air" (1985):

"And so it was our beloved corporate gods  
Claimed they created rock video  
Allowing it to sink as low in one year  
As commercial TV has in 25"

(Biafra,J., East Bay Ray, Flouride, K., Peligro, D.H., 1985)

Addressing the issue of appropriation of rock music, the song is a protest against corporatism. MTV's youth-oriented programs and 'Rock the Vote' (with the inclusion of Seattle stars such as Eddie Vedder and Chris Cornell) claimed to have increased voter registration among the young with some 400`000 to 500`000 for consecutive elections. Its additional campaigns to encourage actual voting are said to have caused a 20 percent increase in youth turnout in the American presidential elections of 1992 (Van Zoonen, 2005, p.44). Kevin Mattson has been sceptical of the success of the Rock The Vote's ability to increase young people's connection to politics, as "the first problem occurred when its major spokespeople-figures such as Madonna, who went on television draped in a flag to tell young people to vote-were discovered not to be registered to vote themselves. This did little to overcome political cynicism "(Mattson, 2003, p.40). Nevertheless, grunge artists used MTV for political causes. When addressing conservative stances against abortion, Eddie Vedder wrote 'Pro Choice' on his arm and sang: "I could die to make a change for it...I know how I want to dress...I want to live...I want to choose" (*Porch (Live) - MTV Unplugged - Pearl Jam,2014*).. This type of attitude was further embodied by Nirvana on their 1992 compilation album *Incesticide*, which in its liner notes explained that: "If any of

you in any way hate homosexuals, people of different colour, or women, please do this one favour for us: leave us the fuck alone! Don't come to our shows and don't buy our records'' (Kurt Cobain's 1993 Advocate Cover Story: 'I'm Gay in Spirit', 2019). However, these statements gained criticism from journalists. Cobain explained that ''I can't think of another example of any current band that has had more negative articles written about them. A lot of it it's just simple sexism. Courtney is my wife...And because she's such a powerful person and such a threatening person that every sexist within the industry just joined forces and decided to string us up''(T&H - Inspiration & Motivation, 2021). When considering the issue of sexism that was raised by the Seattle movement, Kurt Cobain continuously expressed how lethargic and boring 1980s rock music had become. Addressing Led Zeppelin and Aerosmith, Cobain explained that: ''It gives me a small thrill, to know that I've helped in a small way to get rid of those people or to at least maybe make them think about what they've done for the last 10 years'' (T&H - Inspiration & Motivation, 2021). This is significant as grunge music changed the mainstream ideologies. Considering sociomusicological concepts, such music changed social fabric. Whilst Cobain recognized the influence that he held, 1990s politicians did not agree with the movement's figures. Bill Clinton's assimilation with the youth movement or with Pearl Jam, was not embodied fully in his presidency, especially when considering the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

#### Telecommunications Act of 1996: censorship in alternative music.

One of the biggest hidden censorships of the 1990s occurred with Bill Clinton signing the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Primarily, the act allowed oligopolies in the broadcast industry to obtain further market shares. In contrast to the supporters of the act, DiCola and Thomson's 2002 study concludes that the act has not benefited the public or musicians and has damaged radio as a public resource. ''Radio's oligopolies interact with a five-company recording industry oligopoly, hurting musicians and citizens. Eighty to 100 percent of radio charts are dominated by songs released by the five (previously six) major label conglomerates. This ''twin bottleneck'' makes access to the airwaves even more difficult for musicians – and reduces choice for citizens'' (DiCola and Thomson, 2002). Ultimately, this has hindered the process of underground and local music in reaching mainstream audiences and granted more power and control for radio and music industry oligopolies to set requirements for artists in order to be played on radio platforms. This results in increased censorship and power for music industry oligopolies. They then control what music American audiences are exposed to. With this, diversity weakens not only through radio programmes but the artist's work, as musicians striving for recognition from major labels need to fit the expectations of the radio's oligopolies. Once again, this results in increased censorship as artists need to be ideologically and musically unified and standardised. Whilst understanding the change of consumer

trends and preferences, this policy has partly constituted to the death of the rock genre (and the death of the 1990s Seattle scene). This is not because the genre lacks artistic works, but due to the major companies not broadcasting such material.. The fact that Bill Clinton used Eddie Vedder to boost his trustworthiness within the youth voters and then signed such an act showcases his lack of interest in free radio and underground music. This act hindered underground music progression to radio, maintaining that underground movements such as grunge with contrasting social and political ideas would no longer reach mainstream platforms. This is evident in the lawsuit heard in Detroit Federal Court in May 26,2006 in which the:

“filing argues that the Clear Channel Radio Company and the Live Nation Promotion Company worked in tandem, using their joint ability to control radio airplay and advertising, as well as dominate artists’ exposure on the radio. The two companies are accused of cutting out smaller venues and denying other artists airplay on radio, and only booking artists in venues controlled by the two companies.” (Arnold, 2007, pp 12-13).

Alternative and DIY bands have been marginalised and refused the right of entry. In contrast such companies have shortened the diversity of material played on radio and increased their power beyond means of music. John R. Arnold explains that “local stations in all U.S. markets took in more than \$1.6 billion in revenues from political advertising” ...According to the Washington Post, a single 30-second commercial on broadcast television could cost [politicians] \$100.000. The cost for politicians to get their messages to the citizens via broadcast radio and television clearly contradicts the purpose of the Act to remove barriers of entry”(Arnold, 2007pp.9-10). Therefore, radio, once an outlet for discovery of independent and local artists or underground music has been changed into a mainstream outlet. The same corporation figures controlling the mainstream industry are now in control of the alternative signifying the issue of censorship that hid behind such an act and the fusion of the alternative and the mainstream. John R. Arnold notes that “between the passage of the act and 2006, the average price of concert tickets increased 82%, “far exceeding the rate of inflation”(Arnold, 2007,p.12). The alternative had become appropriated by major corporations. However this issue had not been unfamiliar before the act, as the issue of concert ticket prices became prominent through Pearl Jam's lawsuit against Ticketmaster in 1994, where the band claimed that “Ticketmaster is intending to monopolise the ticket service industry”(Bilodeau, 1995).Whilst Pearl Jam had tried to fight Ticketmaster, grunge as a movement was unable to transform or maintain its isolation from capitalist structures. Capitalism had integrated it and sold it to American society. But the control over musical broadcasts also signifies how much politics sought to control music and the alternative. The issue of rock music and those under eighteen becomes prominent just as throughout the PMRC.

Before, the state legislature passed, Booth Gardner (Democratic Governor of Washington) “proudly identified “his state as the home of Nirvana in a 1993 address to the legislature. By then, Nirvana had become the most successful and influential rock band in the world. A few months later, the state legislature passed a bill making it illegal for kids under eighteen to attend rock shows that included profanity, even when there was no liquor present” (Goldberg, 2005, p.202). Danny Goldberg called on Booth Gardner to veto the bill, as it:

“would effectively end rock concerts in the state of Washington and also signal a terrible disrespect to the music scene in Seattle that he seemingly took pride in. Garden replied, “I'm going to sign it, but it's unconstitutional, so it will never be enacted”. I asked why he was going to sign it if he knew it was unconstitutional. “I think it sends a message,” he responded. I asked just what the message was, the message that he wanted me to give Nirvana. “It sends a message that needs to be sent. I think the message speaks for itself,” the governor concluded, before hastily hanging up ” (Goldberg, 2005,p.203).

Despite protests, Gardner further signed the Explicit Lyrics Bill in 1992 which granted jail terms for any store owner who was selling explicit albums to minors. Gardner explained that the bill was of assistance to parents. He was determined to prevent minors from listening to Seattle rock music. Whilst MTV claimed that it had increased voting numbers of the youth population, Goldberg argues that:

“The only result of demonising pop culture is to drive millions of young people away from politics. In the last Congressional election in 1998, less than 17 percent of eighteen to twenty five year olds voted....I believe that fifteen years of youth culture entertainment bashing in Washington has greatly contributed to alienation and apathy on the part of young people from politics” (Goldberg, 2005,p. 257).

Former Clinton counsel Paul Begala said: “I think the reason young people don't vote is because the issue of government doesn't affect people until they're married and have children” (Goldberg, 2005, p.260). But in order for Democrats to maintain influence when young people start caring about politics Bill Clinton expressed his idea of the media being as a third parent.

“[T]he effects of violent entertainment on poor children with disengaged parents. People from conventional backgrounds, such as those listening to him that afternoon, could easily distinguish between reality and fantasy, he said. But poor,

neglected kids treat the media as a parent and emulate it the way normal kids emulate their parents”(Goldberg, 2005, p.206).

Those who could distinguish between reality and fantasy were the Creative Artists Agency (CAA) and Mike Ovitz, as Goldberg notes “one of the most powerful men in the entertainment industry” (Goldberg, 2005, p.206). Clinton urged others to imagine the effect of programmes on children who view the media as the “third parent (Goldberg, 2005, p.206) as well as demanding the FCC to include V-chip technology on television screens larger than 13 inches, in order for the viewers to “screen out electronically programming that they deem objectionable due to violent or sexual content”(Creech, 2000, p.132). Clinton wanted to increase censorship. Just like PMRC or Booth Gardner, Clinton had become worried about the influence of the alternative and independent, what Ronald Reagan would characterise as the underground economy. Music, from the sociomusicological perspective, can be viewed as the third parent, especially as Emery Schubert argued that music can evoke emotions and melancholic music can generate strength. This strength was sought after by grunge music fans and the American mainstream which signifies the complexity of the American society in the 1990s.

The mentality of alternative and underground music became the mainstream in the 1990s and contrasted the ideology of politicians such as Bill Clinton. As the demand for censorship in the 1990s showcases how threatening and powerful it had become. Clinton signed the Telecommunications Act in 1996 and his idea of the media being the third parent confirms Democratic desire for censorship and control over American youth culture. The concept of the media being the third parent can be applied to high profile individuals resulting in fans of celebrities being persuaded to follow and adopt a certain agenda, identity, or set of beliefs. Due to the likeability of the public figure, they appear more trustworthy and reliable, especially when compared to political figures. Fans compare their community to a family or group alliance making such fan groups more meaningful for members. Victor J. Seidler notes that performative identities and celebrity consumer culture “in which young people are often encouraged by the media to model themselves on celebrities which whom they identify, so adopting their styles and looks as their own....They become convinced that they will become be happy if they can somehow live out this ideal for themselves and so perform these identities as their own” (Seidler, 2010,p.36). Individuals create their own identities as a means of security. However, when considering Booth Gardner, Bill Clinton or PMRC, such figures seem to oppose to freedom of speech in music. This showcases political concern about musicians influencing and reaching greater importance within youth markets and communities. If the youth grow up in a society and with a media that encourages one to model themselves on a celebrity, the celebrity is the greatest opponent for political candidates. Grunge, hardcore punk and rock musicians opposing mainstream values or Democrats, or Republicans hinder trust in politicians or political parties. Voting ratings, candidate

victories and the maintenance of power are harder to achieve as opposing celebrities shape the youth to distrust politicians. Grunge as a movement which had sympathy towards the Democrats, only showcases that alternative, underground music was never in the best interest of Democrats. Ronald Reagan or Republicanism was never the core issue of rock or hardcore punk music. Grunge protested by supporting Democrats, who in return had signed laws and created censorship organisations such as PMRC to minimise their influence and make sure that a movement like grunge never became a mainstream phenomenon ever again.

## Conclusion.

My research contributes to existing literature regarding grunge as it focuses on grunge musicians as reflections of the emotional wellbeing and ideological protests of Generation X. The musicians discussed are spokes figures for Generation X. My research indicates that grunge was a political movement aiming to advertise Democrat politics and policies and a protest against Republicans. I have addressed grunge's popularity through a sociomusicological framework. This has not been done before in grunge literature. In regard to such a framework's contribution to existing material, my research indicates a link between Generation X and melancholic music. The popularity of grunge, which lyrically and musically is depressive, nihilistic, and melancholic, is a representation of the emotional status of Generation X in the 1990s. American society in the 1980s celebrated consumerism and self-indulgence, contrasting in positivity and aspiration. The contrasting departure of this mentality indicates how overemphasised optimism is unsustainable and, how disbalanced the 1980s were. A sociomusicological methodology in such a situation showcases the contrasting relationship between melancholic music and positivity as well as the necessity of dissonance and atonality. Great composers often sting the listener by using dissonance, which provides a pleasure to the listener. In the case of grunge, its depressive factor is the key element of its success alongside the social fabric of the 1980s which allowed it to become mainstream. The fact that fashion houses such as Perry Ellis (1993) released a grunge inspired collection indicates how jaded by optimism American society had become as even the privileged Americans were willing to purchase clothes which were a symbol of pessimism.

My research with the political and economic issues of the 1980s showcases how the musical genre evolved and how the social fabric is responsible for how music works. With this, my work highlights the importance of grunge in American society. It is a hardcore punk influenced movement, however, its ideology has been adapted and constructed in order to be mainstream friendly and accessible for a variety of audiences. My research found limitations to hardcore punk and the punk identity and that these led to the formation of grunge. As such, punk contradicts itself as it accents freedom and free speech yet demands politicised music. It needs to sound musically like a protest against other musical genres and musical traditions. My research, specifically in Chapter I: *Reaganomics & the 1980s West Coast hardcore punk* and chapter II: *Alternative music and social fabric: Cobain and Westerberg*, demonstrates how hardcore punk did not accept bands such as The Replacements and Nirvana despite their punk background. This chapter indicates one of the reasons why the scene in Seattle was categorised as grunge and not punk. Overall, this demonstrates falsity in punk as it is not inclusive.

However, my research has also demonstrated the significance of hardcore punk on grunge. This is evaluated through the evaluation of Seattle, the recession of 1981-1982 and Ronald Reagan's presidency. These aspects marginalised the middle and lower classes in the United States, not only financially but socially. Furthermore, my research finds that financial pressure resulted in lowered psychological wellbeing, providing a sub context of depressive themes in grunge music. My research also finds that young people in the 1980s were greatly affected by the economic situation as "one in five children lived in poverty"(Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007,p.35) and "in 1987, more teen-agers committed suicide than in any other year"(Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007,p.35). This is crucial to note for grunge as it is a youth movement. With this in mind, the popularity of such depressive music indicates its relatability for American audiences and Generation X specifically. This indicates how emotionally unstable American society had become and how neglected children's social health had become in the 1980s. This becomes clearer with the aforementioned Marc Miringoff study which reveals that "in 1970, the index for children's social health reached 68. In 1987, the number plummeted to 37 (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007, p.35).

Putting pressure on already financially desperate households, whilst the President of the United States highlighted the superiority of wealthy Americas, emotionally displaced a large portion of American society. Grunge, as my work finds, is a reaction to such pressure and the elevation of the working-class hero. As well, it is a victory for Democrats like Bill Clinton who, with Eddie Vedder's advertisement, claimed presidential victory in 1993 at the peak of grunge's popularity. Whilst grunge and punk are anti-Republican, my research found censorship issues from Republicans and Democrats. This is one of the strengths of my research, as it evaluates both party approaches to popular and underground music of the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter III: *Parents Music Resource Centre, Democrats, and conservative Christians against rock* identifies censorship issues from Democrats. This is achieved by evaluation of the Parents Music Resource Centre (which was run by Tipper Gore – the wife of Democrat Al Gore who served as the 45th vice president of the United States from 1993 to 2001 under President Bill Clinton). Furthermore, Democrat Booth Gardner and former President Bill Clinton both made efforts to minimise the influence of underground music and grunge as well. President Clinton and Booth Gardner associated themselves with grunge, as chapter III discusses, yet at the same time signed policies which worked against it. President Clinton signing the Telecommunications Act of 1996 marks the end of grunge in the mainstream. The act had effectively killed independent radio as oligopolies in the broadcast industry were allowed to buy further market shares. This resulted in more control by the broadcast industry to control what material was played on radio stations. Underground musicians were faced with greater pressure and less opportunities for radio exposure. The music Industry and broadcast industry worked together to negotiate what material would be played. Not only did this

lead to less diversity but censorship too, as artists had to fit a certain expectation or be signed onto the record label or to gain radio access. My research finds that Democrats preach diversity and freedom of choice but, with this act, confirm music censorship. Besides capitalism, such an act made sure that music expressing alternative values would have a weaker chance of reaching radio audiences. This act aimed to never let another underground movement become the mainstream. From this moment, a trend appears in which the alternative political identity becomes Republican. Extended research on this would benefit academia regarding post-grunge subcultures and underground scenes, specifically punk of the 2000s.

Noam Chomsky was idolised in hardcore punk. and by rock artists of the 1990, such as Rage Against the Machine (which later turned into Audioslave).. Pearl Jam broadcast his lectures through their radio station. All of this signifies how politicised grunge was. When considering Kurt Cobain "sending \$200 to the Jerry Brown presidential campaign" (Novoselic, 2004, p.24) and Pearl Jam supporting President Bill Clinton, it appears as if grunge was a cultural tool for Democrats. Grunge was constantly protesting against Republicans, not only through speech but through music with the example of "Yellow Ledbetter" (1992) indicating this. Grunge, unlike hardcore punk, used poetics, romanticism, and melancholy to advertise their ideals. Chapter II concludes that melancholy music gives the greatest strength to the listener. When considering sociomusicology, the use of politics in grunge songs with the combination of melancholy, gives not only strength to the listener but aims to persuade with the emotional strength to support particular political ideas. If stereotypical patriotic propaganda songs sounded uplifting and victorious, grunge does the opposite. As such, subtly and harmoniously integrating their political beliefs in the listeners' subconsciousness.

Regarding recommendations for future research, as grunge was the first underground movement which transformed into a mainstream format and celebrated the working class, research on the effects of it on contemporary American society would be a significant contribution to the subject's literature. It would be significant to evaluate musical genres and scenes after grunge in order to understand if grunge had any effect beyond music. This would allow a clearer understanding of the longevity of grunge. With this said, when considering Generation X and grunge's ideology, this recommendation for future research would be of value in regard to Millennials and Generation Z. This is because grunge musicians are popular in the present day. For example, Spotify statistics indicate that Nirvana has 24 million monthly listeners on their listening platform in July of 2022. This suggests that Nirvana and the band's ideology is popular with Millennials and Generation Z, as there is no other 1990s U.S band with such ratings.

My research establishes the political nature of grunge, specifically its favouritism of Democrats and political activism and criticism of previous rock culture. It would be significant to examine post-grunge, nu metal, pop punk, emo, post-hardcore and indie rock. Musicians and bands such as My Chemical Romance (2001-2013;2019-present) and The Strokes (1998-present) both from different scenes, have discussed the influence of grunge, specifically Pearl Jam, not only musically but ideologically. As grunge advertised the Democratic Party, it would be of benefit to examine the element of politics in musical scenes after grunge, specifically, a look at political activism, lyrical and musical works of those musicians. This would allow a clearer understanding of whether grunge encouraged and cemented a political responsibility for musicians. Furthermore, the examination of mainstream music and its values in the 2000s would be of value. With this said, it would be beneficial to examine the post-grunge musical movements through a sociomusicological framework. As my work clarifies that social fabric is to be credited for musical works, post-grunge movements reflect the 2000s social fabric. Comparison of grunge and post-grunge musical genres would illuminate similarities, differences, and issues of and between Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Whilst understanding the differences between 1990s and 2000's politics, sociomusicology (as my work has discussed) indicates that music is an important reflection of society, as it speaks in plural. Furthermore, in music therapy song writing provides a "container for feelings" (Myers and Brooke, 2015, p.134) and music "offers a unique means of expression at a time when feelings and emotions may be fragmented, elusive, and inaccessible to language. In the practice of music therapy, music functions as a catalyst for human emotions. Music is able to tap into the deepest of human emotions and provides a release for those feelings that words may not adequately express" (Myers and Brooke, 2015, p.127). This means that music is not only of value as a social reflection but also significant in psychology and therapy. Therefore, as grunge was popular in the 1990s and is popular in the contemporary, it reflects the psychological wellbeing of those time periods. Extended research on depression and depressive music in regard to grunge, would give a clearer understanding of Generation X and the relationship between music and economics. All of these would benefit the subject's existing literature as it would grant a clearer knowledge of grunge's influence.

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