

Social innovation at the grassroots: pathways towards social inclusion through music for disaffected youth and those at risk

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Abstract

This paper documents the ways in which music-based activities and music-based arts programs have been used to offer positive pathways to disaffected young people at risk or in detention in Australia, Britain and the US. Drawing on ethnographic research from 'Playing for Life', an Australian Research Council funded longitudinal comparative project, I outline the ways in which opportunities for social engagement through everyday music activities have been developed in the broader community and even in correctional institutions in Adelaide, South Australia; London; Berlin; Boston, Massachusetts; and Providence, Rhode Island. Documenting examples of how these programs appear to have been effective in facilitating youth agency, I outline how engaging disaffected and disadvantaged youth, especially at-risk and incarcerated youth, in music activities and workshops can lead to opportunities for employment and the development of social capital and of socioeconomic inclusion.