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Funkin' Cultural Boundaries

Popular Music and Socio-Spatial Change

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree

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Abstract

In recent decades retheorised perspectives have transformed geographical studies of music. Human geographers have examined issues of music, place and identity in a range of empirical settings, theoretical frameworks and policy contexts. As a cultural sphere in which identities are created and challenged, music is a medium through which boundaries are established and transgressed, and in which difference is marked out and challenged. For marginalised or oppressed groups music provides a medium through which to create spaces to represent themselves and their aspirations. With contemporary cultural and economic processes having eroded senses of spatial distance, spaces of identity express complex fusions between the global and the local. Music is no longer integrally tied to specific ethnic groups; music results from numerous stylistic practices and transnational human musical interactions.

The music of the hip hop group the Black Eyed Peas exemplifies the boundary-challenging aesthetic of hybrid music. Evidence collected through face-to-face interviews and participant observation highlights the ways in which the Black Eyed Peas employ their music to unsettle existing economic and social conditions. Discussion of how the Black Eyed Peas transgress economic barriers, challenge musical expectations, and expose the experiences of ‘others’ reveals the power relations that manifest in boundary creation and maintenance. Comments from members of the Black Eyed Peas and their associates expose the contradictions and compromises implicit in efforts to relocate social boundaries. Conflict between transgressive intentions is exhibited in the fundraising activities of the Peapod Foundation, a charitable organisation managed by the Black Eyed Peas.

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To everyone who assisted me in both Canada and Los Angeles, associated with the Black Eyed Peas - thank you for welcoming in a green, naïve New Zealander with rose tinted glasses and no idea about the realities of the music industry! I continue to learn as I go..... I only hope I have represented you all fairly and accurately in my work. Thank you to Ben Gross for your approachability and

being so open to contribute. To Christine Hansen, thank you so much for your honest and insightful comments. To Zaid Gayle and Shawn Jackson, I loved the opportunity to observe the progress and change being made.

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Thanks to all my friends for your tolerance. My fixation with my topic, BEP, hip hop and music television over the past few years must have been rather annoying for you all. Chur chur. Many thanks to Alison Barclay, my proof-reading extraordinaire.

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And of course to the Black Eyed Peas - I never could have imagined that hearing 'Where is the Love?' on the radio for the first time in 2003 could have lead to this document and all the experiences I have learnt from it as a result. I continue to admire, respect and enjoy your music and innovation. Keep up the good vibe.

Peace out.

Preface

I have a vivid memory of listening to a mainstream Aotearoa/New Zealand radio station while preparing dinner one evening in the winter of 2003. The radio presenter announced that the next song to be played was a new song by the Black Eyed Peas. I remember thinking “that’s rather bizarre that the Black Eyed Peas are getting mainstream radio time”. At that stage I was familiar with the Black Eyed Peas after being introduced to their *Bridging the Gap* album by a good friend on a road trip to a rowing regatta. As the new single ‘Where is the Love?’ played on the radio that evening, I clearly remember hearing the first few bars of the track and thinking - “this can’t be the Black Eyed Peas, it doesn’t sound anything like their music.” Confused, I thought it must be another artist and the Black Eyed Peas song was yet to be played. Once I heard the MCing of will.i.am I realised that it must be a Black Eyed Peas song that I was listening to and I was immediately struck by the lyrics. The opening line “What’s wrong with the world mamma?” gripped me. As the song continued I was in total disbelief at the lyrics I was hearing! Initially I thought, “I can’t believe they are saying this on the radio!” and then I remember feeling a sense of total awe and relief that the subject matter addressed throughout the song was being communicated and voiced via the radio. As the song progressed I became more and more transfixed by the content of the lyrics. At the time I was a young 20 year old Political Science and Social Geography student. With a long time interest in social issues and a concern for the current political situation, I felt an instant connection with the lyrics and the song. In hindsight, this incident was the seed from which this document grew.

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Chapter One

I'm not your average MC / I do more than MC, that's what suckers envy /
And every movement contains concepts that ain't nobody doin' . . . The
whole globe's gonna feel the effect of the movement . . . Build my
enterprise connection projects / Cover all angles and higher aspects / Break
more barriers and new concepts . . . We gonna keep your party jumpin'
while your heart is steady thumpin' to the movement . . . Taking over land,
and we takin' over nation . . . We bring the movement of Black Eyed Peas-
ilation ('Movement', *Behind the Front*).¹

“The funk phenomenon”: An introduction to the geographies of the Black Eyed Peas

(‘Smells Like Funk’, *Elephunk*)

Drawing on contemporary debates in geography, this research explores the way in which popular music and associated artists challenge the construction and maintenance of cultural boundaries in order to create social change. In examining cultural boundaries I explore the way in which music is linked to cultural, ethnic and geographical elements of identity. This research concentrates on music produced by marginalised racial groups. There has been much work done within the field of geography concerned with marginalised, disempowered and excluded groups. The cultural politics of race, space and identity are well documented in scholarly work, but the link between these issues and the production of music has been neglected. I have recognised that the music made by marginalised people is most relevant to the geographies of exclusion. Music can act as a vehicle for communication that transcends real and imagined spaces and boundaries. As such,

¹ Details for all albums mentioned can be found in the Discography.

I argue that musicians are very effective in expressing and contributing to understandings of geographies of exclusion.

Music becomes socially significant “largely because it provides meaning by which people recognise identities and place, and the boundaries which separate them” (Stokes, 1994, 5). Using the multi-ethnic hip hop group the Black Eyed Peas as a case study, I seek to understand how musical artists and art contest dominant boundary positionings. My research uncovers the ways in which artists employ their creative outputs and use their profile within popular culture - via music, performance, and ‘style’ (clothing, speech, movement) - to simultaneously disrupt and modify ‘expected norms’ in society. Furthermore, by researching the music of a rap group I am modifying ‘norms’ within geography - while music has developed an increasingly significant profile within human geography, few authors have explored music geographies through rap (see Chapter Three). Beyond a handful of authors who make references to rap (see for example Connell and Gibson, 2003; Jackson, 1999; Paterson, 1991), Smith (1997) is the only geographer to explore in any detail the geographies of rap.

Drawing on my own positionality as a researcher I have adopted an autobiographical approach to this work. As a ‘white girl’² from Aotearoa/New Zealand³ with a long-standing interest in social inequalities, racial prejudice and popular music, I welcomed the opportunity to explore the ‘geographies of hip hop’. I have always been surrounded by music, a result of parental, sibling and

² I use the term ‘white’ in reference to the “broad division of humankind covering peoples” that are “white-skinned” and “of European origin” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2007).

³ Aotearoa is the Māori term for the country known in English as New Zealand. Māori identifies the indigenous peoples (or *tangata whenua*, ‘people of the land’) in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Spoonley, 1993). Since 1987, with the passing of the Māori Language Act, Māori has been an official language and the term Aotearoa has been used increasingly by individuals and institutions (Berg and Kearns, 1996). I use the term Aotearoa/New Zealand to acknowledge Māori as an official language of the country.

peer influence, and music is extremely important to me as a source of pleasure and identity. Hip hop is a form of music to which I have enjoyed listening for many years and its acknowledged role as a vehicle for the expression of diverse cultural identities made it an appropriate focus for my research. By initiating an encounter with Bobby Grant, a member of the Black Eyed Peas entourage, I gained access to the Black Eyed Peas and associated agencies and individuals. Mr Grant is the Road Manager for the Black Eyed Peas' live band, Bucky Jonson, and is involved in overall tour management of the Black Eyed Peas.

1.1 Music as text

As a written document, this thesis is “designed to be read rather than listened to” (Smith, 1997, 504). It therefore detaches and transforms the sensory experience of music listening into a formal mode of text. I recognise that “[w]e simply don’t have words to transpose the alchemy of sound” (Back, 2003, 277), meaning writing about music cannot capture the pleasures of music listening (Brennan, 1994). Indeed, Scott (2006) argues that “writing about music is like dancing about architecture”. “Music conveys meaning through rhythm, melody and harmony. . . so music has to be heard to be understood” (Smith, 1997, 504). Thus, Kelly explains that rap is “first and foremost music . . . You simply can’t just read about it; it has to be heard, volume pumping, bass in full effect” (quoted in Brennan, 1994, 674). In addition, sound generates feelings and human emotions.⁴ Therefore, sound itself can “communicate what cannot be spoken” or written (Smith, 1997, 517). With these aural aspects in mind, I have followed Smith

⁴ As is noted in Chapter Three, geographers have given consideration to music, emotion and affect. More broadly, increasing attention is being given to emotional geographies across the discipline of geography as a whole (see for example Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson, Bondi and Smith, 2005; Davidson and Milligan, 2004).

(1997, 540) by including a number of musical references throughout the work, enabling “parts of the text to be listened to as well as read.”

1.2 Academic boundaries

Kong (1995a) suggests multidisciplinary approaches allow insight as to how popular music can perpetuate, sustain, or challenge dominant ideological values. Historically, however, crossing boundaries within academia has been discouraged as academic hierarchy is focused on specialisation (hooks, 1994). hooks (1994) explains how cultural studies has been a discipline that has allowed her to transgress boundaries and link the life outside the classroom to the workings inside the classroom (see also Lamont and Molnár, 2002; Newman and Paasi, 1998; Ryks, 1998). As with the work of hooks (1994) and Kong (1995a), this research will use a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on material from within a number of social science disciplines.

1.3 The location of music in society

This research examines how the cultural politics of race, space and identity are teased out within the realm of popular culture through music. Connell and Gibson (2003) explain that cultural geographers have tended to focus on elite culture, with popular culture and knowledge traditionally being neglected, devalued and ignored by geographers. This ‘ignorance’ was a reflection of an understanding that popular cultural forms were superficial and unworthy of scholarly attention (Burgess and Gold, 1985), being “regarded with disdain as ‘mere entertainment’, trivial and ephemeral” (Kong, 1995a, 183). In recent years the hegemony of elitist culture has been challenged with a growing appreciation for the role of popular culture role in the development of a popular consciousness (Kong, 1995a). hooks (1994, 4) emphasises the responsibility that academics have to take popular

culture seriously, as “talking critically about popular culture [is] a powerful way to share knowledge, in and outside the academy, across differences, in an oppositional and subversive way”.

Connell and Gibson (2003) argue that music is by its nature geographical; music shapes spaces by filling it with sound, and sound is a crucial element in the world people construct for themselves. Every society incorporates music (Kong, 1995a; *New Internationalist*, 2003), with the pervasiveness of music evident in its prevalence in all facets of the human experience.

Music can exist as a cultural event or product (concert, street performance, private singing and playing records, tapes, compact disc, digital audio tape, and so on); serve as the content focus for another medium (radio, music video, some movies); or contribute to the overall aesthetics and meaning of another content display (background music for televisions and film, accompaniment for rituals such as church services, weddings, funeral ceremonies, sporting events, and so on). It is the soundtrack for shopping, driving, studying, and partying, among other activities. Music is sometimes accompanied by extreme physical movement (for instance, dance, aerobics) and is often experienced in pensive, inactive moments (Lull, 1987, 141-142).

Matless (1996) and Kong (1995a) emphasize how, through lyrics, melody and instrumentation, the sensory impact of music both reproduces and transgresses notions of space and place. As a form of sound, music is mobile; it disperses with movements of people and ideas, and introduces influences from all spatial scales. Music and space are closely related as music can alter spaces and peoples' interaction with them; “hearing a particular piece of music can invoke a vivid memory . . . each piece of music associated with a particular time and place” (Back, 2003, 272).

1.4 Music and identity

While subjective musical consumption facilitates individual autonomy through self expression (Frith, 1996), shared musical taste leads to a collective sense of identity in the form of ‘imagined communities’ (Kong, 1995a). As such, music provides a “medium for cultural exchange in even the most rigidly divided societies” (Smith, 1997, 522; see also Kloosterman and Quispel, 1990). Understanding the construction of place-based senses of identity is a key focus in contemporary cultural geography; “[i]dentities are multidimensional, constantly being renegotiated, but never divorced from space” (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 281). The role of music as a forum for cultural expression and contestation underpins its ability to symbolise group experiences and inform subjective identities over a range of scales (Bennett, 2000). Marking difference across different spaces and places (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Smith, 1997), musical forms and practices originate within, and interact with, the physical, social, political and economic factors with which they are surrounded (Connell and Gibson, 2003; Frith, 1996; Stokes, 1994).

1.5 Rap music

Bektas Turhan, a member of the Turkish rap group Cartel, identifies the way in which rap can transgress social and spatial boundaries, contributing to identity formation amongst those spatially distant from an immediate audience:

Influence is that moment when you are in the public eye, you know? . . .
Influence is when you are standing on a stage, and the people rap your texts with you. You sat in your room, you had your feelings, your thoughts, and what you had thoughts about you wrote down in a rough way; you rapped it, and 3,000 kilometres away someone learned it by ear and raps it with you

during concerts, you know? That's when you see . . . people look up to you
(quoted in Diessel, 2001, 169- 170).

Rap music is one component of the cultural youth mass movement known as hip hop, a “form of street culture” that emerged in the South Bronx, New York, in the 1970s (Bennett, 1999, 78). Expressing a range of cultural and aesthetic identities and expressions, leading commentators (see for example Forman, 2002a; Forman and Neal, 2004; George, 1998; Keyes, 2002; McLeod, 1999; Rose, 1994) agree that hip hop culture encompasses four identifiable elements: graffiti (aerosol art (Castleman, 1982)); break dancing, or b-boying and b-girling (a style of street dancing that is competitive, acrobatic and pantomimic (Banes, 1985)); turntablism and DJing (a process of collaging sections of records using two turntables (McLeod, 1999)); and, rapping or MCing (a technique of “making music by speaking over records” (Samuels, 1991, 25), where rappers pay close attention to the beat of the words (Rosenthal, 2006)).⁵ Rap music uses the voice as an expressive instrument for “rhymed storytelling” (Rose, 1994, 2), drawing on African derived polyrhythms and musical traditions such as griots⁶, and call and response practice (Jones, 2001; Karon, 2000; Lusane, 1993; McBride, 2007; Rosenthal, 2006).⁷

During the early stages of hip hop culture “stylistic continuities were sustained by internal cross-fertilization between rapping, break dancing, and graffiti writing” (Rose, 1994, 35). Over time, however, rap emerged as the most prominent and lucrative element of the culture. The predominance of rap within hip hop stemmed from the ease with which it could be commodified, publicised, and marketed

⁵ MC and DJ are acronyms for ‘master of ceremonies’ or ‘microphone controller’ and ‘disc jockey’ respectively (Urban Dictionary, 2007).

⁶ A griot is the “story teller or oral historian” in “traditional African societies” (Karon, 2000).

⁷ See Keyes (2002) for an investigation into the African origins of hip hop.

(Bennett, 1999; Bennett, 2002; Forman, 2002a; Rose, 1994). Differences between hip hop (culture) and rap (music) may be acknowledged by ‘experts’, but common understandings tend to collapse these terms and forms. Thus, while esteemed rapper KRS-One explains that “rap is something you do, hip hop is something you live” (see for example Bennett, 2002, 18), critics and casual listeners often do not differentiate between hip hop culture and rap music (Ramsey, 2003).⁸

1.6 Black Eyed Peas

will.i.am came up with the name ‘Black Eyed Peas’, choosing it because of the central role of the black eyed pea in ‘soul food’ (Music Television, 2007c). Narrowly defined as black⁹ cuisine, ‘soul food’ is more broadly employed as a metaphor for; any food associated with happiness, food which fuels creativity, and food which expresses love. Relying on traditional or indigenous ingredients, soul food traditionally provided sustenance and comfort in times of difficulty (Witt, 2004). For will.i.am, a key difficulty for contemporary society is a lack of awareness of the meaning and value of spirituality: “We don’t know anything about it, and that’s what’s wrong . . . The reason why people don’t have any idea what spirituality is, . . . is that barricade” (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006). This research investigates how the group Black Eyed Peas use their music (soul food) to negotiate ‘that barricade’ - the social boundaries that restrict the social processes that “enlighten us and set us free” (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006).

⁸ Given my interest in ‘taking scholarly debates “out of the academy and into the streets” (hooks, 1994, 4; see also Chapter Four), I follow ‘common parlance’ and collapse the terms hip hop and rap. Thus, throughout this thesis ‘hip hop’ and ‘rap’ are used interchangeably.

⁹ In this thesis I use the term ‘black’ to refer to the ethnic group comprised of Americans of African descent. ‘African American’ and ‘Afro-American’ are other terms commonly used in reference to this ethnic group (Oxford Dictionaries, 2007).

This research uses the artistically-expressed world-views of the members of the globally popular hip hop group the Black Eyed Peas to expose musical negotiations of cultural boundaries.¹⁰ This research explores the way the multi-ethnic group the Black Eyed Peas challenge dominant patterns of social and spatial marginalisation. Through investigating the philanthropic endeavours of the group, this work also explores the potential of popular music in facilitating social change through celebrity charitable organisations.

The Black Eyed Peas are a four-person hip hop group from Los Angeles (LA), California, United States of America (U.S.A.). William (Will) Adams, more commonly known as will.i.am, was born to black parents in Los Angeles, California.¹¹ will.i.am is one of the original members of band. Allan Pineda, known as apl.de.ap (Apl), is a childhood friend of will.i.am and co-founder of the Black Eyed Peas.¹² apl.de.ap was born to a Filipino mother and a black father near Angeles City, Philippines. Jamie Gomez, the third co-founder of the Black Eyed Peas, is a native of Los Angeles, California. Known to his fans and peers as Taboo, Gomez is of Mexican and Shoshone (Native American) descent. Stacey Ferguson, or Fergie, is from Hacienda Heights in Los Angeles County, California. Born to 'white' parents, Ferguson joined the Black Eyed Peas as an 'official' fourth member around the time the *Elephunk* album was being recorded (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also Ali, 2005; Blender, 2006; DeRogatis, 2006; Johnson and Mooallem, 2006; Spicer, 2005).

¹⁰ In interviews and lyrics the members of the Black Eyed Peas often refer to their group as 'BEP' and 'the Peas'. In this thesis I employ similar abbreviations.

¹¹ 'will.i.am' is Adams' MC name; his peers commonly refer to him as Will.

¹² Pineda and his peers commonly abbreviate apl.de.ap to 'Apl'.

Originally formed in 1995, the Black Eyed Peas have released four albums - *Behind The Front*, 1998; *Bridging The Gap*, 2000; *Elephunk*, 2003; *Monkey Business*, 2005. Signed to Interscope Records (Rosen and Sexton, 2004), the Black Eyed Peas have sold over 18 million copies of their¹³ dance-infected hip hop albums worldwide, making them the most popular hip hop group in the world (Spicer, 2005).¹⁴ The Black Eyed Peas have been nominated for ten Grammy Awards, winning three (will-i-am.com, 2007).¹⁵

The first Grammy nominations for the Black Eyed Peas came in 2004 for the song ‘Where is the Love?’, a track off the *Elephunk* album. ‘Where is the Love?’, the first single released from the album, was an enormous commercial success. On the strength of sales of this song, and the album from which it came, the Peas became a ‘household name’. Further single releases from *Elephunk* - ‘Hey Mama’, ‘Let’s Get Retarded’ and ‘Shut Up’ - also became international hits (Rosen and Sexton, 2004; Spicer, 2005). *Elephunk* sold 7.5 million albums worldwide (Rosen and Sexton, 2004). The Black Eyed Peas’ fourth album release *Monkey Business* also had a number of extremely successful singles, selling over 10 million copies worldwide (Faber, 2006; The Recording Academy, 2007; see Table 2 in

¹³ I am aware groups, such as the Black Eyed Peas, are single entities and should formally be referred to as ‘it’. Popular music writing and common usage, however, employs the collective ‘them’ and ‘they’ to refer to music groups (Shuker, 1998). Members of the Black Eyed Peas also refer to the group through collective terms. In order to facilitate understanding amongst readers, throughout this thesis I follow common convention and refer to the Black Eyed Peas as a collective.

¹⁴ In the United States of America the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) awards certification based on sale numbers for albums and singles. Five-hundred-thousand units sold are awarded as a Gold Certification, one million units sold are awarded as a Platinum Certification, and two million units sold are awarded as a Multi-Platinum Certification (Recording Industry Association of America, 2007). Since awards for sales certifications were first awarded in 1942, only 59 groups or solo artists have sold more than 20 million copies of an individual album worldwide (Wikipedia, 2007).

¹⁵ “The recording industry’s most prestigious award, the Grammy, is presented annually by The Recording Academy” (The Recording Academy, 2007). The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences is an American organisation consisting of professionals from the recording industry. A Grammy is “awarded by The Recording Academy’s voting membership to honour excellence in the recording arts and sciences” (The Recording Academy, 2007).

Appendix One for the Recording Industry Association of America Certification of Black Eyed Peas album and single sales).

1.7 Charitable organisations associated with the Black Eyed Peas

The Black Eyed Peas have established a reputation both within the music industry and amongst many fans as a ‘socially conscious’ hip hop group. Baca (2003, F. 01) describes the group as an example of a “respected artist stepping in to the mainstream spotlight with socially progressive, conscious hip-hop”. To do more than highlight social issues in their music, in 1998 the Black Eyed Peas established the Peapod Foundation. Instigated by will.i.am and Polo Molina, a manager of the Black Eyed Peas, the Peapod Foundation seeks to raise funds to achieve the goal of encouraging “social change by uniting people, especially children, through universal language of music” (Peapod Foundation, 2005). Fund raising activities undertaken by the Peapod Foundation include hosting a benefit concert for the victims of the 2004 South East Asian Tsunami and promoting music participation via a free concert in 2006 to 40, 000 people living in rural South Africa (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007; see also Peapod Foundation, 2007a).

The architect of the Peapod Foundation, Christine Hansen, established the organisation as a Charitable Service Fund and a 501c(3) of the Entertainment Industry Foundation (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007).¹⁶ The Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF) is a 65-year-old charitable organisation that acts as a “conduit between celebrities creating their own philanthropic organisations and major sponsorship” (Ben Gross, interview, 25 September 2006).

¹⁶ A 501c(3) is a tax law provision granting exemption from federal income tax to non-profit organisations (Entertainment Industry Foundation, 2007).

The EIF administers Charitable Services Funds which provide “customized giving opportunities” for entertainment industry celebrity donations through the EIF’s network of corporate and foundation sponsors, individual donors, and reputable charities (Entertainment Industry Foundation, 2007).

In partnership with the EIF, the Peapod Foundation is administered by Ben Gross at Grassroots Productions. Grassroots Productions is the production management arm of the Black Eyed Peas administration. Founded by Polo Molina in 1992, Grassroots Productions caters for tour management as well as overseeing such group projects as merchandising and the Peapod Foundation (Ben Gross, interview, 25 September 2006). Grassroots Productions, with Polo Molina as Chief Executive Officer, is also responsible for day-to-day personal management for members of the Black Eyed Peas (Ben Gross, interview, 25 September 2006; see also Rosen and Sexton, 2004).

The most recent fundraising focus of the Peapod Foundation is the Black Eyed Peas Peapod Music and Arts Academy. Currently under construction at the Roy W. Roberts II – Watts/Willowbrook Boys and Girls Club (WWBGC) in the Los Angeles suburb of Watts, the Peapod Music and Arts Academy is designed to foster self-worth through music creativity. The academy is administered via a “community partnership” between Peace4Kids and WWBGC (Zaid Gayle, interview, 12 May 2007). Peace4Kids a non-profit organisation which seeks to “provide foster children and youth . . . with a safe, nurturing environment through which they learn cooperation, conflict resolution, and build self-esteem . . . and the skills needed to become successful and self-sufficient adults” (Peace4Kids, 2007). The WWBGC serves young people from disadvantaged circumstances

from the south Los Angeles communities of Watts, Willowbrook and Compton (Watts/Willowbrook Boys and Girls Club, 2007). These districts were “severely paralyzed by the post-industrial economic redistribution” in the late 1980s, and they fostered the key figures who originated the “West Coast style of rap that narrates experiences and fantasies specific to life as a poor young, black, male subject in Los Angeles” (Rose, 1994, 59).

1.8 Thesis organisation

This thesis is divided into eight chapters, including this introduction. Chapter Two provides the context for this research. This chapter covers the spatial and temporal ‘locating’ of rap within popular music, outlining the origins of the music genre, the commercialisation of rap, and raps’ role as a vehicle for cultural expression. The chapter positions rap music as a potent cultural force within contemporary society, having diffused from impoverished localities in the United States of America to being adopted by oppressed populations the world over.¹⁷

Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework for this thesis. The chapter situates music within the discipline of geography. It addresses the connection between music and cultural boundaries, focusing on the conceptualisation, construction and maintenance of cultural boundaries in society. The geographical concepts of socially constructed identities and globalisation are used to detail the formation of hybrid identities and the role of music in this process.

¹⁷ While the term ‘America’ can be used in reference to the geographical regions of North, South, or Central America, in this work ‘America’ will be employed solely as an abbreviation of the ‘United States of America’. Such an abbreviation reflects a widely employed convention (Oxford Dictionaries, 2007).

Chapter Four outlines the methodology adopted for this study. The chapter illustrates the role of spontaneity and happenstance during the course of my data collection. Drawing on my own positionality and incorporating autobiography, the chapter covers the strategies I used to access the Black Eyed Peas and associates while negotiating my role as a researcher within the music industry. The adopted qualitative methods are analysed, followed by the techniques used to interpret the data.

Chapter Five presents my empirical findings on the Black Eyed Peas. The chapter illustrates the way music is employed by marginalised ‘others’ to gain a ‘voice’ and overcome oppression and deprivation, addressing how this process of socio-economic transformation can destabilise cultural boundaries.

Chapter Six presents an illustration of the methods used by the Black Eyed Peas to conduct philanthropic projects. The chapter explains the evolution of the Black Eyed Peas’ Peapod Foundation, outlining how the projects undertaken by the Foundation are affecting the day to day lives of the foster children it seeks to assist. The chapter then addresses the contradictions that can emerge when celebrities are allied to charity initiatives.

Chapter Seven concludes the research, revisiting the complex connections between popular music and social change. Drawing on my own personal relationship with the Black Eyed Peas and their music, I detail the functional qualities which constitute music as an art form capable of generating social change.

Chapter Two

[H]ip-hop is urban folk art, period. And that urban folk art is all about the lives of a very unique group of people, of how they made something out of nothing, and how that nothing has come to define an entire era in many ways, be it our language, our fashion, our attitudes, our art, the way we make music, and the way we do and do not communicate across, race, gender, geography, and cultures (Kevin Powell quoted in Karon, 2000).

Hip hop planet: The sociocultural context of rap music

This chapter investigates the sociocultural context of rap music through four main areas of inquiry. Firstly, the chapter investigates how rap music originated as a hybrid cultural product, instigated in urban localities suffering economic derivation. Secondly, the chapter examines how rap shifted from a locally based public performance to a global commercial commodity. Drawing on the sub-genre ‘gangsta rap’, the chapter then illustrates how rap has become popular among audiences from the ‘white majority’; leading to controversy over the music’s cultural influence, and the impact of corporate business agendas in rap production. Finally, the chapter details how rap has provided a symbolic connection between social groups distant across space.

Drawing on the ideas of McClary (1991) and Attali (1985), Rose (1994, 71) suggests that “every musical code is rooted in the social formations and technologies of its age.” In a similar vein, Powell argues that “you can always tell where a people are at by the music they make” (quoted in Karon, 2000). The spatial and temporal ‘locating’ identified by Rose and Powell is clearly evident in

rap, a form of music that emerged out of the post-industrial urban landscapes of late 1970s America. As an expression of “submerged and repressed voices from the inner post-industrial city” (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 75), rap may be understood as a form of ‘sonorial graffiti’ (Chambers, 1985) in which urban influence is central (Bryne, 2001, 134). The economic restructuring and socio-spatial fragmentation that characterised post-industrial urban change (Pacione, 2001) shaped the “cultural terrain, access to space, materials, and education” of hip-hop’s earliest innovators (Rose, 1994, 34). Or, as defined by Smith (1997, 520), rap is an “interface between ideas about race and the struggle for space.”

2.1 The origins of hip hop culture

Rap, like other forms of black music, emerged from “the margins of an oppressive white society” (Smith, 1997, 518). “From slave town to Motown, from Bebop to Hip Hop, black music has been shaped by the material conditions of black life” (Lusane, 1993, 42). Quincy Jones, one of the most successful and respected black American musicians of the twentieth century, develops this argument further:

Black music has always had to invent its own society, a subculture to help the disenfranchised survive, psychologically, spiritually, and creatively. We come up with our own slang, body language, sensibility, ideology, and lifestyle to go with the music (Jones, 2001, 285).

Drawing on these ideas of survival, Buchanan (1993) and Grasse (2004) regard rap as being aural confirmation of the failure of integration policies and civil rights legislation for the emancipation black Americans. As such, rap follows as part of a ‘critical’ black music history that includes such forms as blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, funk, soul, disco and gospel (see for example Brooks, 2004; George, 1989; Grasse, 2004; Schloss, 2004; Wondrich, 2003). Given the

importance of socio-spatial context to the emergence of rap, Forman (2002b, xvii) argues that the music provides a

unique set of contexts for the analyses of public discourses pertaining to youth, race and space . . . Foremost among these are the intensely articulated emphasis on space, place, and identity, which are rooted in wider circulating discourses of contemporary urban cultures and the complex geographies of the postmodern or global city.

Rose (1994) details how ‘the urban’ influence shaped the creative development and cultural terrain of a musical form that combines black cultural traditions with contemporary technology.

2.1.1 Rap histories

Many authors have documented the history of rap, describing the development of the music following its ‘creation’ in the late 1970s. While different authors provide different emphases in their work, key details relating to the emergence and development of rap remain constant. Rather than reciting what has been published elsewhere (see for example Chang, 2005 and 2006; Dyson, 2007; Forman and Neal, 2004; George, 1993 and 1998; Jasper and Womack, 2007; Toop, 1984; Watkins, 2005) I have sought to provide a ‘spatially sensitive’ overview of the progression of rap from local musical form to global cultural commodity. In providing this overview I have focused on the work of those authors recognised by their peers as being key contributors to understandings of rap.

The most valuable resource in this regard is *Black Noise* (Rose, 1994). One of the first and most widely cited treatments of rap, Rose’s (1994) work is considered to

be “perhaps the most important study of rap music” published (Rosenthal, 2006, 662; see also Diessel, 2001; Gilman and Fenn, 2006; Harrison, 2006; McLeod, 1999; Miller, 2004; Stephens, 2005). Significantly for my research, Rose (1994) provides what is “among the most in-depth examinations of hip-hop’s geographical origins” (Forman, 2002b, 40), giving a comprehensive spatial analysis of the genre (Forman, 2000). Forman (2002b) provides a more contemporary account of the ‘cultural geographies’ of hip hop, incorporating forms of rap not present when Rose (1994) was writing. Other aspects of rap have also been the focus of nuanced academic scholarship; for example, Kitwana (2005) and Tanz (2007) have explored ‘why white kids love hip hop’, Mitchell (2001) and Maxwell (2003) have considered the global appeal of rap music, and Pough (2004) and Watkins (2005) have identified links between rap and female identity.

2.1.2 Rap as *Black Noise*

Characterised by “heavy bass and percussion, the repetition of certain rhythmic elements”, rap has been dismissed for being simple and repetitive (West-Durand, 2004, 8).¹⁸

The malaise of modern life has become embedded not just in lyrics . . . but in the very form and fabric of the music. A music that has surrendered melody to beats is a music that trusts the body more than the mind . . . A music that speaks in fractured, elliptical gasps instead of telling a story with a beginning, a middle and an end is a music that implies there is no future (Holden, 1994, 1).

¹⁸ Such criticism has come from both white and black commentators (see for example Adler and Foote, 1990; Coates, 2005).

Some commentators also question whether rap is ‘really’ music, a position which exhibits prejudice about “what music is supposed to be” and denotes hip hop as an inferior cultural form (Schloss, 2004, 23); for example, Sobran (1992, 26) dismisses rap as “art for those who lack artistic taste and talent”. Walser (1995, 195) argues that while arguments of definitions of music may seem “pedantic and trivial” they are significant in shaping notions of cultural prestige, understanding which have implications for the allocation of societal resources.

If we regard a group of people as possessing ‘music’ or, more broadly, ‘culture’, we are more likely to see them as human beings like ourselves and think them worthy of respect and fair treatment. At issue is the power to define and represent, upon which most social contestation hinges. Widespread debates over rap’s status as music thus circumscribe a consequential set of issues (Walser, 1995, 195).

2.1.3 Hip hop as hybrid sounds

There exists a “generalised popular perception that rap and hip-hop are the invention solely of urban black youth” (Forman, 2002b, 41); for example, Potter (1995, 53) describes rap as “a product of African-American urban cultures”, while Rose (1994, 2) defines hip hop as a cultural form that “prioritises black cultural voices from the margins of urban America” (Rose, 1994, 2). This prevailing assumption, however, that hip hop is “African American created, owned, controlled and consumed” (George, 1998, 57), is a myth. Since its origins hip hop has always been multicultural (Sullivan, 2003), emerging as a community orientated activity in public spaces. Linked to the “music-making practices of the African-Caribbean diaspora” (Dimitriadis, 2004, 17), the culture was a product of the “flow and dynamic interrelations of diverse ethnic and racial groups” in inner city areas (Forman, 2002b, 40; see also Connell and Gibson, 2003; Forman,

2000; Rose, 1994). Latino youth comprised one of these inner-city groups, with their interests and expectations being integral to hip hop's evolution (see for example Forman, 2002b; George, 1993 and 1998; Hebdidge, 1987; Karon, 2000; Keyes, 2002; Toop, 1984; Wheeler, 1991). Furthermore, Walser (1995, 197) notes that "it would be a mistake to regard rap as simply a natural outgrowth of African American musical traditions, for it is deeply technological and it embodies the specificity of its historical and political context."

Indeed, the originators of rap have acknowledged the influence of a diverse range of cultures and traditions on rap; for example, DJ Kool Herc, the artist widely credited with originating the 'prototype for modern-day rap', was born in Jamaica and was influenced by New York's Puerto Rican community (Boyd, 2002; Hebdidge, 1987). DJ Kool Herc would play music to neighbourhood friends, focusing on playing the 'beats' of a record:

Hip-Hop, the whole chemistry of that came from Jamaica, cause I'm West Indian. I was born in Jamaica. I was listening to American music in Jamaica and my favourite artist was James Brown.¹⁹ That's who inspired me. A lot of the records I played were by James Brown. When I came over here I just had to put it in the American style and a drum and bass. So what I did here was go right to the "yoke". I cut off all anticipation and played the beats. I'd find out where the break in the record was at and prolong it and people would love it. So I was giving them their own taste and beat percussion wise. Cause my music is all about heavy bass (DJ Kool Herc quoted in Davey D, 1989).

¹⁹ James Brown is widely referred to as the 'Godfather of Soul' for his contribution to soul music and is credited as inventing funk music (Rolling Stone, 2007).

Over this bass-heavy music Herc would call out to, or hail, his friends, developing a pattern of rhymes that mimicked the ‘toasting’ practised by DJs in Jamaica.²⁰ In addition to playing at established music venues, DJ Kool Herc employed a public address, or sound, system to broadcast on street corners and in public parks (Bennett, 1999; Demers, 2003; Forman, 2002b). Via such public performance otherwise “derelict or degraded urban spaces were transformed into places of pleasure and expression” (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 183).

Hip hop music materialised from people rhyming poems and phrases to motivate crowds at parties (Mel, 2001). As “dance or party music, as a music realised in situated performance” (Dimitriadis, 2004, 18), hip hop originated as a musical form ‘designed’ for public consumption (Connell and Gibson, 2003). Live performances required an ‘alive’ atmosphere (Keyes, 2002); “moving the crowd”, “rocking the streets” (Allinson, 1992, 447) and “rocking a party” (Forman, 2002a, 114) were, and remain, a primary objective for many rappers, with MCs evaluated on their ability to “rock the microphone” (Keyes, 2002, 126) and “whip up a crowd” (West-Durand, 2004, 8).

2.1.4 The ‘Projects’

Forums for experiencing pleasure, or having fun, were much in demand in inner-city New York during the 1970s, a decade characterised by economic recession and urban renewal programmes. The urban renewal programmes introduced in cities across America in the 1970s neglected social dilemmas, focusing instead on physical solutions to urban problems (Von Hoffman, 2003). The public housing ‘projects’ built via urban renewal programmes were supposed to “rescue people

²⁰ Toasting is a style of “calling out catch-phrases to the crowd through a microphone over the top of the record” (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 182).

from the inner city” but ended up being stigmatised as a “kind of welfare housing” (Bright, 2001, 115). As increasing numbers of “problem families” were located in housing projects, and incidences of delinquency and violence increased, these inner-city areas became “social and economic disaster areas” (Von Hoffman, 2003, 11).

The realities of inner-city living provided the “context for creative development among hip hop’s earliest innovators” (Rose, 1994, 34).²¹ In such environments, music played a crucial role in providing respite from rising unemployment and declining living conditions. Hip hop pioneer Melle Mel (2001, 279-283) explains the motivation behind his music:

At the time I was a teenager looking at the rest of my life, knowing that I wasn’t spending any time in high school, getting into trouble, burglarising houses . . . I did it for opportunity. I did it to humanise my neighbourhood, the part of America that’s in my heart, the part that the world never sees.

The emergence of hip hop was centred on those cities that suffered most from the economic restructuring that shaped America in the 1970s. Rap quickly spread from the Bronx to other ‘disadvantaged’ suburbs of New York (Allinson, 1992; Karon, 2000; Lusane, 1993). Outside New York the music was embraced by residents in other American cities with “large minority youth populations” (Lusane, 1993, 43), including Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Houston, Oakland, Chicago, and Boston (Lusane, 1993; Samuels, 1991).

²¹ Schloss (2004) suggests there is an endemic tendency amongst scholars to link oppression to black creativity. Thus, black popular culture is understood as a creative coping mechanism to deal with racism and poverty. Kelley (1997, 16-17) argues that such reductionism ignores what cultural forms mean to practitioners: “While some aspects of black expressive cultures certainly help inner-city residents deal with and even resist ghetto conditions . . . Few scholars acknowledge that what might also be at stake here are aesthetics, style, and pleasure.”

2.2 The commodification of rap: Going mobile

The spread of rap throughout America was facilitated by its positioning as a distinctive ‘genre’ within the music industry. The release of the Sugar Hill Gang’s ‘Rapper’s Delight’ single in 1979 marked the initial shift of rap from an organic cultural expression to a cultural commodity (Dimitriadis, 2004; Dyson, 1993).

On the one hand, rap is the voice of alienated, frustrated and rebellious black youth who recognise their vulnerability and marginality in post-industrial America. On the other hand, rap is the packaging and marketing of social discontent by some of the most skilled ad agencies and largest record producers in the world (Lusane, 1993, 41).

‘Rapper’s Delight’ exemplifies the role of rap as commercial product - the song was performed by three vocalists and several studio musicians who were assembled into a group by Sugar Hill record label owner Sylvia Robinson. In creating the Sugar Hill Gang and ‘borrowing’ lyrics from Grandmaster Caz of The Cold Crush Brothers, Robinson was “seeking to cash in on the emerging live hip hop scene” (Heard, 2004).

Black-owned independent record labels such as Sugar Hill cultivated the production of hip hop between 1979 and 1981 (George, 1998). Post-1981 hip hop migrated from its black and Latino roots, increasingly becoming a cultural commodity nurtured by “white small-businesspeople” (George, 1998, 57; see also Samuels, 1991). Indeed, such was the influence of ‘white businesspeople’ that George (1998, 57) argues: “without white entrepreneurial involvement hip hop culture wouldn’t have survived”. From an initial economic interest, ‘white businesspeople’ came to dominate the rap industry as record producers,

executives, publicists and advertising agents. Such domination suggests to Negus (1999) that ‘white businesses’ have cultural ownership of rap.

The transition of rap into a commodity changed its parameters, moving the music from “place-dependent art to a more mobile one” (Dimitriadis, 2004, 21). Furthermore, as rap was established as an industry genre its production and distribution changed (Forman and Neal, 2004). Thus, artists and their images were crafted and developed in certain ways, while music industry representatives and in-studio producers began to dominate the form and content of rap. The dynamic of hip hop music changed from being face-to-face to being a

commodity form and a commodity culture . . . Rap texts became available to anyone, anywhere, to be put to multiple - virtually endless - uses . . . deployed moment-to-moment in multiple contexts of use, by often intensely disaffected young people (Farley, 1999, 3).

In addition, the role of the MC became more complex (Schloss, 2004), with the importance of the artist in performing and “moving the crowd” being replaced by the meaning of recorded lyrics (Dimitriadis, 2004, 17). As the record, not the party, became the focus of rap, musicians embraced storytelling narratives where characters, plots, and messages could be developed (Dimitriadis, 2004). The ‘stories’ told in rap were often related to the author, with such autobiographical writing being delivered in the first person. Drawing on black American vernacular, and the language and knowledge of street life (Rose, 1994; Rosenthal, 2006), rap lyrics tended to be loaded with “innuendo, sarcasm and wit” (Demers, 2003, 41; see also Wheeler, 1991).

2.2.1 The ‘Street’: hoods and posses

While rap was altered by its transformation into commercial construction, ‘the street’ continued to provide the immediate environment where the rapper developed their skills and reputation (Miller, 2004). Notions of community and identity in rap are intricately linked to ‘the street’ and the local neighbourhood from which the music is produced (Boyd, 2002). As such, the “cultural role of rap” can only be understood via reference to the local settings in which it is “appropriated and reworked as a mode of collective expression” (Bennett, 1999, 78).

The hood, or neighbourhood, is significant as a spatial trope delimiting an “arena of experience” (Forman, 2002b, 62). Rather than connoting negative images, as associated with the term ‘ghetto’, the hood enables a revised representation of space. In addition to referring inwardly to local spaces and specific places, the hood stands as a site of empowerment, contrasting sharply with distant national and international processes and people (Forman, 2002b). Furthermore, in offering an immediate frame of reference and relevance, the hood is the site in which posses are located. Posses, in the context of the hood, refers to a peer group or team. Drawing on notions of lawlessness associated with both the frontier justice of the American west and the gang culture of the Jamaican posse system, rap posses are a “fraternal organisation that provides coherent or unified group identity” (Tate, 1992, 134).²² In some cases several recording acts align themselves in a “linked posse structure, sharing labels and producers, appearing

²² Chuck D from Public Enemy argues that capitalism “stomps upon those” that do not adhere to the mould of competitive and exploitative capitalist systems. The only way to survive being ‘stomped’ is to form a posse: “And the only way you can exist within that mould is that you have to put together a ‘posse’, or a team to be able to penetrate that [capitalist] structure, that block, that strong as steel structure that no individual can break” (quoted in Walser, 1995, 213; see also Negus, 1999).

on each other's recordings, and touring together" (Forman, 2002b, 177). Such working relationships often extend beyond immediate associations, providing connections across "different musical entities: cliques, collectives, affiliations and group and label identities that connect together different 'bands' and individual performers" (Negus, 1999, 93).

In providing support networks and a local source of social status, posse affiliations foster rivalry and competition (Toop, 1991).

Since its inception in the mid-to-late 1970s, hip hop culture has always maintained fiercely defended local ties and an in-built element of competition waged through hip hop's cultural forms of rap, breakdancing and graffiti. This competition [is] staged within geographical boundaries that demarcate turf and territory among various crews, cliques, and posses (Forman, 2000, 68).

As posses competed for prestige and profile they developed new musical styles, expressed through regional variations in the art form (Forman, 2000; Miller, 2004).

Rap music exhibits musical variations, both in rhythm and lyrics, which usually emphasise local themes. In the United States this became a slower, more sung form in 'laid back' California, as opposed to the harsher sounds of South Central Los Angeles, the fast and varied rhythms of the Cleveland sound, or the softer beats and choruses of Atlanta rap . . . Ultimately rap produced a series of related yet distinctively localised sounds (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 115; see also Dimitriadis, 2004; Forman, 2000; Krims, 2000).

Lyrically, rappers have “structured their home territory into titles and lyrics, constructing a new and internally meaningful hip-hop cartography” (Forman, 2002b, 179).

Whereas blues, rock and R & B have traditionally cited regions or cities . . . contemporary rap is even more specific, with explicit references to particular streets, boulevards and neighbourhoods, telephone area codes, postal service zip codes, or other sociospatial information. Rap artists draw inspiration from their regional affiliations as well as from a keen sense of what I call the *extreme local*, upon which they base their constructions of spatial imagery (Forman, 2002b, xvii; emphasis in original).

Miller (2004, 176-177) characterises the music as “the production and consumption of place-based identities, to the extent that ‘representing’ one’s home town or neighbourhood has become a defining element of the genre”. Many names of hip hop groups, albums and songs incorporate spatial elements, while it is common for an MC to include the names of their city, or neighbourhood or posse in song lyrics (Forman, 2002b; Keyes, 2002; Rose, 1994); for example, the canon of rap groups includes Compton’s Most Wanted (Los Angeles, California), Detroit’s Most Wanted, the Fifth Ward Boyz (Houston, Texas), and the Dayton Family (Flint, Michigan). The use of place-names and local landmarks identified in rap lyrics is commonplace, with numerous rappers giving ‘shout-outs’ to their hoods and posses; for example, N.W.A.²³ tells listeners they are “Straight Outta Compton”, Ice-T describes a car journey through streets of Los Angeles (“We boned down Vernon / Right on Normandie / Left on Florence”), and Nas gives a

²³ N.W.A. is an abbreviation of ‘Niggaz With Attitude’.

‘shout-out’ to members of his posse (“My man Cormega, Laki the Kid / Can’t forget Drawers, the Hillbillies / My man Slate, Wallethead / Black Jay, Big Oogi”).²⁴

2.2.2 Sampling: the construction of rap music

Rap lyrics are accompanied by music that is based on the “reconfiguration of previously recorded material” (Harrison, 2006, 297). This process of sampling involves the “digital recording and manipulation of sound” (Schloss, 2004, 79), with existing rhythms, melodies and voices being combined into an original musical score (Dyson, 1993). In the early years of rap, producers and DJs sampled mainly from blues, jazz, soul, funk, and rhythm and blues recordings (Buchanan, 1993; Connell and Gibson, 2003; Demers, 2003). Such sampling linked rap to older black musical traditions, a connection with reaffirmed cultural identities and informed contemporary youth consumers of black music history (Demers, 2003). Thus, as Rose (1994) explains, the style and organisation of rap is intertextual, with sounds organised to affirm histories and narratives. Over time producers and rappers expanded their sampling sources so that contemporary rap samples a vast range of styles, “ranging from heavy metal to country” (Demers, 2003, 41). The significance of sampling is such that the use of live instrumentation in hip hop is regarded by some rap fans as being ‘inauthentic’, a judgement highlighting the importance of DJing to rap (Schloss, 2004).

2.2.3 Going mainstream

As the commercial and artistic appeal of rap spread, the original dance and event-oriented practices of hip hop were eclipsed by “commercial and (popular

²⁴ See Forman (2002b) for detailed examples of place-based lyrics.

American) cultural imperatives” (Dimitriadis, 2004, 25). Popular rap hits became “overwhelmingly dance-orientated with upbeat lyrics and catchy, simple choruses” (George, 1998, 64). McAdams (1991, R-3) suggests the simplicity of rap related to the ability of mainstream consumer to ‘digest’ rap:

Like an infant who must be fed [the infant cereal] pabulum before it can graduate to solid food, the mainstream audience had to be slowly introduced to a strained and diluted version of rap music first before it could graduate to the harder, full-strength stuff.

By the mid-1980s rap had spread from being produced within inner-city communities for local residents to being created in state-of-the-art recording studios for consumption by distant suburban populations (Neal, 1997). Indeed, Samuels (1991, 25) argues that rap was the “most influential pop music of the 1980s”. Furthermore, Rose (1994, 17) argues the exposure of rap was such that rappers emerged as “trendsetters for popular music in the U.S. and around the world. Rap’s musical and visual style have had a profound impact on all contemporary popular music.”

2.2.4 Hip hop promotion: Music video and radio

The popularity of hip hop music stemmed, in part, from the promotional role of music video (Dimitriadis, 2004; Rose, 1994). Indeed, George (1998, 97) argues that of “everything that has affected the evolution of hip hop - cash, corporations, crack, sampling, crime, violence - nothing is more important than music video”. Such was the (potential) appeal of rap music video that in 1988 the American cable Music Television (MTV) network debuted *Yo! MTV Raps*, a programme dedicated to showcasing hip hop music (George, 1998; McLeod, 1999; Samuels, 1991). *Yo! MTV Raps* was a key agent in adding sight to sound, with the videos

being screened animating “hip hop cultural style and aesthetics” and facilitating “a cross-neighbourhood, cross-country (transnational?) dialogue in a social environment that is highly segregated by class and race” (Rose, 1994, 9).

The power of music video and *Yo! MTV Raps* was such that a rap star could be created without a grassroots following, a process which had long been a feature of pop music but remained obsolete in rap until the uptake of music video (George, 1998). While providing a promotional avenue for rappers, MTV also acted as a gatekeeper, regulating and censoring music videos to fit an ‘approved corporate format’ - “MTV and the media access it affords is a complex and ever-changing facet of mass-mediated and corporation-controlled communication and culture” (Rose, 1994, 16).

Prior to *Yo! MTV Raps* the only videos by black artists or “white black-sounding performers” broadcast on MTV were of acts which had topped the pop charts (Sanjek, 1996, 640). Such ‘rock racism’ also applied in American radio; mainstream stations adhered to a ‘colour line’ drawn in the early 1980s (Sanjek, 1996).²⁵ It was not until the mid-1980s that rap began to be broadcast on American radio, with low-wattage campus and community stations regularly programming rap. As sales of rap recordings increased, and as exposure via MTV increased audience awareness, mainstream urban radio stations began scheduling rap (Tanz, 2007). As such, by the early 1990s key urban stations and many ‘Top 40’ stations included steady playlisting of rap (Boyd, 2002). During the 1990s

²⁵ Sanjek (1996) also includes information on the ‘colour line’ drawn under the chart categories employed within the music industry. While rap music is currently categorised within the ‘R&B/ Hip Hop’ music chart, during the twentieth century black music was variously categorised as ‘Urban Contemporary’, ‘Soul’, ‘Rhythm & Blues’, and ‘Race’ (for descriptions of changing ‘racial’ categories employed in music charts see Douglas, 2004; Garofalo, 2007; George, 1989; Ramsey, 2003; Sanjek, 1988).

commercial and black radio networks continued to embrace rap, limiting their playlists to music that was not derogatory, did not contain sexually explicit lyrics, and that did not express violent themes. The ‘hardcore’ rap ‘excluded’ by commercial radio was broadcast by college and community radio stations (Forman, 2002b).

2.3 The voice of the ‘other’

Commercial exposure via television and radio was not limited to dance-orientated raps; rappers who commented on social, economic and political factors affecting communities were not ignored by broadcasters. These concerns were most evident in the socially and politically progressive sub-genre of ‘conscious rap’ (Hendricks, 1997). The origins of rap in post-industrial urban America was reflected in musical articulation of being young and marginalised (Sullivan, 2003). The music revised negative stereotypes of oppression and used them to reclaim spaces for representation (Buchanan, 1993; Connell and Gibson, 2003; Rose, 1994), with rappers displaying an unwillingness to remain either silent or fit within the expectations of the majority (Allinson, 1992). As such, rap facilitated both the examination and explanation of spatial segregation of race and the experiences of being ‘othered’ (Forman, 2000). The process of being ‘othered’ was recognised by rappers. Thus, Ice Cube, ranked by MTV as one of ‘The Greatest MCs of All Time’ (Music Television, 2006), explains:

It’s hard to be black in America. Look at all the images that run across us, from television, school, just everything in general . . . because all these images of white TV [television], that’s the only thing we see. So when we look in the mirror, we changin’ our hair, we changin’ our eyes, try to change our features, try not to be black. We got to reverse that . . . It seems to me

that one of our crisis is that no matter what we do at home, we send these children out into a world that does not value them, does not value blackness (quoted in hooks, 1994, 127-128).

For many, rap provides an alternative to ‘white media’; Chuck D, vocalist and lyricist with the ‘conscious rap’ group Public Enemy believes that rap is “black America’s TV station. It gives a whole perspective of what exists and what black life is about. And black life doesn’t get the total spectrum of information through anything else” (Chuck D quoted in Decker, 1993). Rap is praised for the attention it brings to problems of economic and racial oppression (Rose, 1994), providing musical expression of issues more commonly discussed in universities (Harmanci, 2007). By turning the ghetto into a space of identity, pride, and aspiration, the music sanctioned a rebellion against the stigma of poverty and marginality (Connell and Gibson, 2003; Forman, 2000; Smith, 1997; Zemke-White, 2001).

Rap may frequently portray the nation’s gritty urban underside, but its creators also communicate the value of places and the people that build community within them. In this interpretation, an insistent emphasis on support, nurture, and community coexists with the grim representations that generally cohere in the images and discourses of ghetto life (Forman, 2002b, 181).

2.3.1 Gangsta rap

The grimmest representations of ghetto life were expressed in the sub-genre of ‘gangsta rap’. Although hip hop has always been used for diverse expressions and experimentations, encompassing all sorts of different styles, tastes and sounds (Dyson and Powell, 2007; George, 1993), the sub-genre of gangsta rap provides the most widely publicised, controversial, extreme and overt example of hip hop music. As such, analysis of gangsta rap provides valuable insight into the

contextual characteristics underpinning all rap music. Originating in the late 1980s, gangsta rap depicted gang culture through a focus on gun violence, drugs, regressive gender politics, misogyny, and police brutality (Boyd, 2004; Forman, 2000; Lusane, 1993; Watts, 1997); for example, Cocks (1991, 78) stated that the gangsta rap of the group N.W.A. is “nasty and righteous”, with the group’s *Efil4zaggin* album being “a rap mural of ghetto life, spray-painted with blood.”²⁶ A threatening, aggressive tone is at the core of gangsta rap, yet the style incorporates a range of topics and forms:

Gangster rappers write rhymes about inner-city violence, sometimes as cautionary tales, sometimes as fantasies and sometimes as chronicles without comment. The genre also calls for a detailed put-down (with threats of violence) of anyone the rappers dislike, and at least a song or two per album about sexual exploits. With its jumble of brilliance and stupidity, of conscience and crassness, of vivid storytelling and unexamined conventions, gangster rap is as profoundly mixed as any pulp genre in American culture (Pareles, 1990, 29; see also Armstrong, 2004; Baldwin, 1999; Light, 1992; Swedenburg, 1992; Watts, 1997).

Just as gangsta rap extends from brilliance to stupidity, so responses to the music extend from scorn to reverence; for example, following riots in Los Angeles in 1992, Shocked and Bull (2004, 6) wrote that events in the city “bear little resemblance to the cartoon landscape – the Zip Coon Toon Town – of gangster rap”. In contrast, leading rap acts, such as Public Enemy, Ice Cube and N.W.A., were not surprised by events in the city; these artists noted they had been predicting such violent action through their music for several years (McAdams, 1992, 25).

²⁶ *Efil4zaggin* is ‘Niggaz 4 Life’ spelt backwards.

Rather than being an ‘authentic’ expression of socially marginalised black Americans, gangsta rap was, like all rap, created within the “circuits of the market” (Baldwin, 1999, 140). Allinson (1992, 448) argues gangsta rap was a product of the music industry, with record companies packaging rappers as “violent black criminals” in order to improve sales (see also Marks, 1995). Mainstream media have also been credited with promoting the ‘commodification of the ghetto’. Harrison (2006, 287), for example, argues that gangsta rap reflects mainstream media’s “representations of violent criminality and wealth accumulation.”

Without denying the underlying realism of much gangsta rap, evidence shows that rap artists were cognisant of the commercial possibilities of violent, brutal rap music; for example, in response to market research conducted by their record company the Houston-based Geto Boys sang graphic descriptions of mutilation, rape and violence (Pareles, 1990). Similarly, Dr Dre, an originator of gangsta rap, admitted his rationale for singing about violence was financial: “I’m no gangsta; I’m here to make money” (quoted in Delaney, 1995, 69).

2.3.2 Hip hop in white America

Much of the money rappers and their record companies have made has been obtained from white consumers (Neal, 1997). Urban black culture, as expressed in music, slang, and fashion, has become the style “of choice in the white suburbs of middle America” (Samuels, 1991, 28; see also Keyes, 2002; Safire, 1995); for example, Cocks (1991) notes that in June 1991 the N.W.A. album *Elif4zaggin* became the best-selling pop album in America. This success occurred without the help of a hit single, without a music video, and without significant radio play: “A

major, and perhaps deciding, factor in the album's startling success was the appeal it has for . . . white middle-class teenage males" (Cocks, 1991, 78).

Various explanations have been postulated to explain the appeal of gangsta rap to white audiences; for example, MC Ren of N.W.A. believes that this music appeals because it is 'real': "It's the truth. White kids have been seeing so many negative images of blacks in the media for most of their lives. Now they have a chance to see something real. White kids got hip" (quoted in Cocks, 1991, 78). Other commentators suggest that the attraction of gangsta rap for white teenagers is 'danger at a safe distance': "What attracts white kids to this music is life on the other side of the tracks, its 'cool' or illicit factor, which black Americans, like it or not, are always perceived to possess" (McBride, 2007, 114). Black artists provide entertainment, as well as edginess and rebelliousness (Karon, 2000; Swedenburg, 1992), which white consumers "failed to find in those cultural traditions closer to home" (Allinson, 1992, 439).

The appropriation of rap by white audiences does not necessarily signify a deep-seated engagement with black culture. Drawing on historical evidence of white appropriation of black musical forms, such as jazz and rock'n'roll, George (1998, 66) argues that the white rebellion expressed through rap consumption is "often superficial, not politically astute, and can be highly hypocritical - but it sells a lot of records". As such, hip hop has provided a form of "cultural tourism" where racism can be "reduced to fashion" (Samuels, 1991, 28-29). Furthermore, the glorified violence and explicit sexualised content of rap has appealed to the white audiences 'age-old' perception of blackness (Allinson, 1992).

Alternatively, Neal (1997, 130) argues that white teenagers and black rappers shared a disgust with contemporary American life:

[T]he children of Yuppie America embraced Hip-Hop as a measurement of their own disgust with contemporary American life. This was particularly compelling when poor white youth were allowed to build class alliances with ‘ghetto’ black youth in the form of Gangsta Rap critiques of police brutality. Considering police brutality as an equal-opportunity offence, narratives like the NWA anthem ‘Fuck tha Police’ would resonate amongst trailer-park youth in the Midwest.

The widespread popularity of hip hop amongst white consumers is evident in the cover stories published in *Time* magazine. In 1999, *Time* featured the black rapper/singer/actress Lauryn Hill and reported that “70% of hip hop albums are purchased by white consumers” (Farley, 1999, 55). In mid-2005 *Time*’s cover story focused on Kanye West, a black rapper who is “striking a chord with fans of all stripes” (Tyrangiel, 2005, 54). Informing readers that statistics “consistently show that 70% of hip-hop” is purchased by young white audiences (Tyrangiel, 2005, 56), *Time* named West as one of the ‘People Who Mattered’ in 2005 (*Time*, 2005).

Statistics highlighting white purchase of rap recordings do little to clarify the nature of rap consumption or circulation. Thus, drawing on Rose (1994), Negus (1999, 92) identifies the complex ways in which rap is appreciated, used, and re-used:

Young males in the white suburbs may have the disposable income to purchase a recording that will sit on a shelf looking cool, while, in contrast, black urban youth may circulate recordings and listen to them repeatedly, record them, mix them - there may be a much higher ‘pass-along-rate’.

2.3.3 Raps' bad rap

As suggested by Negus (1999), the bulk of white teenagers purchasing rap are male. This gender-bias mirrors the make-up of the rap genre, where most rappers are male and most songs are male-oriented (George, 1998; Pough, 2004). Thus, Armstrong (2004, 338) explains that rap is “male-dominated, misogynistic, and homophobic.” As within the creation and production of other forms of popular music, men have set the standards as to what is acceptable in rap music (Concepcion, 2007; Dimitriadis, 2004; Lucas, 2006; Schloss, 2004; Stephens, 2005). These standards have informed themes of lyrics, styles of delivery, and types of imagery and presentation. George (1998) argues that rappers have always bragged about their music and sexual abilities, with such aggressiveness and arrogance being an expression of ‘hyper-masculinity’. This ‘hyper-masculine’ environment has proved extremely difficult for women to infiltrate; for example, “the Recording Industry did away with the best female rap artist category in 2004, two years after its inception, due to a lack of eligible entries” (Concepcion, 2007, 24).²⁷ On the rare occasion a female rapper is ‘legitimised’ in the industry it tends to be because she is linked to a ‘valid’ male rapper, for example via a relationship or a musical collaboration (Concepcion, 2007; Lucas, 2006).

Rap has been criticised for promoting violence towards, and the denigration of, women while simultaneously degrading gay and lesbian people (Armstrong, 2001 and 2004); for example, Stephens (2005, 33) argues that the rapper Eminem “blends misogyny and homophobia”. This position is shared by Turkish (2001, 15) who writes of Eminem’s “fag-bashing, women-hating rants.” The sexism and

²⁷ The ‘best female rap artist’ was awarded at the Grammy Awards (The Recording Academy, 2007).

machismo of rap lyrics is made visual via “pornographic music videos” (Dyson and Powell, 2007, 61) featuring “under-dressed young women in various poses of seduction and submission” (Forman, 2002a, 123). Indeed, rap music videos are “notorious for featuring half-clothed young Black women gyrating obscenely and functioning as backdrops, props and objects of lust for rap artists who sometimes behave as predators” (Cole, 2007, 94).

Explanations, or justifications, for the misogynistic and homophobic character of much rap, encompasses both cultural and economic considerations. In cultural terms, the sexist tone of rap is understood as a reflection of the “deep-seated sexism that pervades the structure of American culture” (Rose, 1994, 15). Thus, Kopano (2002) explains that just as society is misogynistic, so is rap music. Others, however, argue that the ‘offensive’ lyrics of rap are simply a form of role-playing or joking (Tyler, 2001), a style Rosen and Marks (1999) refer to as ‘parodic signifying’ and ‘humourous poetic contrivances’. Some authors have suggested that rap’s violent and phobic lyrics are misunderstood, having been taken out of context (Potter, 1995) or subjected to shallow readings (Kitwana, 1994). Economic considerations of the prominence of hyper-masculine rap songs focus on music industry input. Watts (1997, 42), for example, argues that gangsta rap is an “example of a smart, expert market procedure.” Or, as Tyler (2001, 14) puts it, “it’s about money: putting a hip spin on hate lyrics to defend corporate profits.”

2.3.4 Financial rewards and the ‘sell out’ debate

Defending corporate profits is not something that is of concern to all rappers. Indeed, the celebration of wealth and success is an integral part of hip hop culture

(McBride, 2007; Tanz, 2007); ‘showing off’ cars, homes, clothes, money and lifestyle represent upward mobility “in spite of overwhelming obstacles” (Boyd, 2002, 77). Moreover, this upward mobility is predicated on musical criticisms of dominant institutions and social norms.

[O]n the streets of the ‘United States Ghetto’ rap artistry is celebrated as the profit-making industry that it most assuredly is and hailed for allowing brothers and sisters in the ‘hood’ to share in the dissing of society’s repressive institutions and leadership. In short, many hip hop enthusiasts are so because they get a chance to make something out of nothing, to participate in the transposition of poverty into profit by ‘punking out’ America (Watts, 1997, 51).²⁸

The valuation of commercial success, therefore, is an integral component of ‘authentic’ hip hop; for example, Boyd (2002, 21) explains that some rappers “see the pursuit of capital as the only true means to authentic existence in America”, with “the accumulation of wealth and material possessions” being significant in articulating identity. Similarly, Hess (2005, 299) maintains that “the act of selling music is framed as a criminal act well within the bounds of rap’s ghetto origins.”²⁹ Such origins, as found in inner-city New York, were never fully outside or in opposition to commodities; original hip hop creators sought financial compensation for their creativity (Rose, 1994).

The celebration of success could also be considered a rectification of past injustices experienced by successful black musicians. In addition to being an outlet for “social and political discourse”, hip hop is an “economic opportunity”

²⁸ ‘Dissing’ is a slang approximation of ‘disrespecting’. ‘Punking out’ refers to the process of backing down due to intimidation or being too afraid to act (Urban Dictionary, 2007).

²⁹ Boyd (2002, 97) argues that previous experience with commerce benefited many rap artists: “Many people in hip hop have had extensive dealings in the dope world, thus their knowledge of ownership rights and money management . . . is quite sophisticated.”

(Lusane, 1993, 43). There exists a long history of black musicians who did not receive financial rewards appropriate for the number of records they may have sold, or the critical acclaim deserved by artists who were often musical innovators. Hip hop is possibly the first opportunity black artists have had to challenge such 'injustices' (Swedenburg, 1992).

In overcoming the 'economic injustices' of their musical ancestors, rappers have embraced a range of financial opportunities; for example, the 1986 song 'My Adidas' by Run DMC, a recording that "celebrates hip hop style and street attitude" (Rose, 1991, 277), was the first of many rap songs to include lyrical endorsements to specific products (Negus, 1999; Quinn, 1996; Tanz, 2007). Throughout the 1990s rap became increasingly evident in films, television and advertising (Quinn, 1996). Fashion and clothing also emerged as a significant component of hip hop, with rap artists endorsing established clothing lines or creating their own fashion labels (Negus, 1999). Many artists have started their own record labels in order to have more creative control over their careers and influence up-and-coming artists. These 'rap-artists-turned-mogul' have also expanded their role as entertainers, moving from the music industry into the film and television industries (Forman, 2000; Keyes, 2002; Lusane, 1993; Roberts, 1995).

Even politically progressive 'conscious' rappers were aware of the financial possibilities of their music; for example, when asked about the revolutionary potential of Public Enemy's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* album, lead singer Chuck D responded: "We had a recording contract and we were making a record. I mean, come on now" (quoted in Tanz, 2007, 113). Such

economic conditions raise questions as to the validity of Boyd's (2002) belief that notions of authenticity in rap music are defined in terms of a duplicity between conscious rappers and rappers who pursue capital. According to Boyd (2002, 2), conscious rappers are "hip hop purists" who "regard the celebration of wealth and material goods to be counter to hip hop's overall objective, which is to make music for the margins, as opposed to the mainstream."

While the duality of creativity and commerce does not stand-up to academic critique, it remains important for hip hop practitioners.

From the knowing perspective of academic theory, commerce versus creativity may be a clichéd argument, but from the perspective of participants of music scenes these ideas are part of the way in which they make sense of what is happening to them (Negus, 1996, 48).

Accusations of 'selling out', 'crossing over', and not 'keeping it real', as directed at rappers by fans and by other rappers, depend on understandings of connections to the history and traditions of hip hop culture (McLeod, 1999).³⁰ Thus, artists understood to have diverged from their 'underground roots' or connection to 'the streets' to focus on profit-making and commercial success are regarded as being inauthentic and are thus 'selling out' (Armstrong, 2004; Forman, 2000; Hess, 2005; Keyes, 2002; Solomon, 2005).³¹ However, mainstream acceptance, and associated economic gain, does not necessarily negate notions of authenticity within rap. Those artists that achieved financial success while 'keeping it real' are accepted as being authentic; for example, Armstrong (2004) explains that rapper Eminem claims authenticity because he uses his music to acknowledge the truth

³⁰ 'Crossing over' refers to an artist who becomes commercially successful (Forman, 2000). 'Keeping it real' means to "not be fake" or not "pretend you are something you are not" (Urban Dictionary, 2007; see also McLeod, 1999; Solomon, 2005).

³¹ 'Underground' is a term used to describe artists that retain a popular following without acquiring mainstream commercial success (Urban Dictionary, 2007).

about himself (that he is white), he has an underclass background (having spent much of his childhood living with his welfare-dependent mother in an almost all-black housing project in Detroit), and he has the support of the rapper and producer Dr Dre (one of the originators of gangsta rap, Dre remains one of the most powerful and popular people in rap).

Furthermore, Hess (2005, 299) advocates that a rap artists 'realness' can be defined "through their skill in performing live, through their skill in selling albums, or through some combination of the two." In a similar vein, Swedenburg (1992) suggests that conscious rappers can never 'sell out' because their strategy is to publicise political messages to the widest audiences possible, while George (1998, 155) argues that all rappers have a commercial focus:

Hip hop's major problem as a political movement is that MCs are not social activists by training or inclination. They are entertainers whose visibility and effectiveness as messengers are subject to the whims of the marketplace.

2.4 The global takeover of hip hop: "The most important youth culture on the planet"

The 'visibility' and 'effectiveness' of hip hop as entertainment and communication is undeniable. Powell believes hip hop has become "the most important youth culture on the planet, bar none" (Kevin Powell in Karon, 2000). Evidence for Powell's belief is found in the rap strongholds that exist all around the world (Sinclair, 1992); "the rules of hip-hop are African American, but one need not be African American to understand or follow them" (Schloss, 2004, 10).

Not only white folks throughout the Western world but folks in Zimbabwe; British kids of Pakistani descent in England; of Algerian descent in Marseilles; Native Americans, Japanese, the list goes on; all these folk find a limitless fund of oppositional meaning and just plain old meaning in rap music. Clearly rap is able to mean all kinds of things to all kinds of people, beyond the very specific context of its creation. Its power seeps through to many a dislocated h(ear)t (Allinson, 1992, 446).

Rap music reinforces “a symbolic connection between values and lifestyles of social groups distant in space” (Buchanan, 1993, 27), emerging as “the language, culture and soundtrack for a milieu of urbanised youth from ‘detribalised’ origins” (Hager, 2006, 11).

Evidence of the significance of ‘global rap’ can be found in the range of topics and countries considered by academics (George, 1998; Mitchell, 2001); for example, Diessel (2001) details Turkish Gastarbeiter rap in Germany; Gilman and Fenn (2006) document dance-oriented rap in Malawi; Solomon (2005) examines the hip hop community in Istanbul; Grasse (2004) looks at the rap scene in Brazil; West-Durán (2004) examines rap in Cuban society; Wright (2000) and Mitchell (1996) write about rap in Italy; Krims (2000) focuses on rap as created by Cree populations of Canada and youth in the Netherlands; Maxwell (2003) provides an ethnographic approach to Australia’s hip hop scene; Giovannetti (2003) looks at rap music in Puerto Rico; Watkins (2001) examines hip hop in South Africa; and, several authors have discussed the use of hip hop by European, Maori and Polynesian youth in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Bennett, 2002; Buchanan, 1993; Crosbie, 1993; Mitchell, 1996 and 2001; Wall, 2000; Zemke-White, 2001).

2.5 Conclusion: Hip hop is dead?³²

Rap continues to account for 10% of all album sales in the United States of America, despite having experienced recent sales decline (Christman, Crosley and Mitchell, 2007). This decline, as well as the general downturn across sales of all recorded music, is commonly blamed on the digital distribution of music through ringtones, illegal downloads and internet file sharing, and pay-per-song websites (Christman, Crosley and Mitchell, 2007). Despite this sales decline, in 2006, American consumers bought 59.5 million rap albums (Christman, Crosley and Mitchell, 2007; Concepcion, 2007) and new rappers and styles of rap continue to emerge (Philadelphia, 2005).

Ongoing debates over the current direction of hip hop music continue on the streets, in lyrics, and in the media. Rap continues to court controversy, with media commentators and scholars continuing to question the validity of the music and the value of the lyrics (see for example Crosley, 2007; Garrity, 2007). Many critics believe that the “foundational values and traditions” of hip hop are being eroded “due to intensified corporate meddling and enhanced commercial dividends for artists” (Forman, 2002a, 103). Some consider the current lyrical content responsible for the recent drop in hip hop sales, calling for a return to “socially conscious roots” (Mitchell, 2007, 61).

The corporate takeover of hip-hop has taken away much of the creativity and genius, except for the underground stuff, and that rare album where an artist is allowed to grow and shine rather than been forced to follow a formula (Kevin Powell quoted in Karon, 2000).

³² Venerated rapper Nas’ most recent album release is entitled *Hip Hop is Dead*.

Dyson and Powell (2007, 60) contend that politically progressive and conscious hip hop artists are virtually invisible on radio and music television, while the ‘mass population’ is drawn to hip hop “producers of the lowest quality product while the makers of superior art suffer by comparison”.

The state of contemporary hip hop is extremely complex. Watts (1997) recognises that the situation cannot be addressed by simply assuming: music is just entertainment, art can imitate life, and rappers speak the truth. Furthermore, the prolific output of rap artists has created a ‘research field’ that cannot easily be understood.

One of the things I find troubling in debates about rap is that I don’t think anyone knows what the totality of its hypercreativity looks like . . . I can’t keep up with the volume of hip-hop product anymore. I don’t know if anyone can. There is simply too much of it to be assimilated, and the kinds of judgements we make have to take that volume into account. It’s a flood – it’s not a flow, it’s a flood actually – and bobbing up and down in the water is not enough (Gilroy, 1992, 309).

Aside from controversy over whether hip hop is ‘valid’ or if commercial hip hop is an ‘inferior’ form of the art, what is undeniable is that hip hop is *everywhere*. Extending far beyond the realm of music listening practices, rap influences our lives in multi-faceted modes; for example, via ‘black vernacular’ and ‘street fashion’ rap has changed the way we speak and dress. Rap has changed the way we shop, with corporations using hip hop culture to ensure their marketing is ‘cool’. In relation to this research, rap’s most important contribution has been the way the music has changed the way we think about race and culture. Rap has always been the product of cultural hybrids, providing a space to negotiate sociocultural identities, most notably for black Americans. The edgy and

rebellious qualities present in the music make it fashionable among audiences from the 'white majority', while simultaneously appealing to oppressed minority populations drawn to rap's self-expressive characteristics and themes of survival and self-determination. As such, rap music is undeniably one of the most important cultural forms present in contemporary society.

Theory: Boundaries, hybridity and globalisation

This chapter explains the theoretical basis for this study. It positions music within the discipline of geography, providing an overview of the work carried out in ‘music geography’. The chapter engages with the concept of identity, a significant area of debate within contemporary cultural geography. Discussing identity in relation to place and music, the chapter considers the way in which geographers have sought to understand material and social boundaries. Moving to a focus on social boundaries, consideration is given to meanings of ethnicity and the potential role of music in transgressing social borders. The chapter ends with an examination of globalisation and the creation of hybrid identities.

3.1 Music geography

Music geography first emerged as a subfield of cultural geography in the early 1970s. In the following quarter-century a number of geographers presented research into the spatial dimensions of music via conference presentations and journal articles (Nash and Carney, 1996). This pre-1990s research tended to reflect interests derived from the Berkeley School of cultural geography.³³ Kong (1995a, 185-186) argues this early work in music geography focused on five themes: the spatial distribution of musical forms, activities and personalities

33 Between the 1920s and the 1980s, American cultural geography was dominated by staff and students in the Department of Geography, University of California at Berkeley. Chaired by Carl Sauer, personnel at Berkeley geography relied on a coherent set of interests and approaches to research (the diffusion of cultural traits, the identification of culture regions, and cultural ecology). The ‘Berkeley School’ was coined as a term to encompass the influence of staff and the coherency of their research ideas (Jackson, 1992).

(Carney, 1987; Crowley, 1987); musical hearths and diffusion (Ford, 1971; Horsley, 1987); culture areas, as defined by particular musical traits (Curtis, 1976; Marsh, 1977); place identity, as expressed via lyrics, melody and instrumentation (Curtis and Rose, 1983; Ford and Henderson, 1974); and, environmental themes, as expressed in music (Jarvis, 1985; West and Kearsley, 1991).

These music studies were neither “theoretically or methodologically sophisticated” (Kong, 1995a, 185), an aspect resolved through the inclusion of music in “retheorised perspectives on cultural geography” (Nash and Carney, 1996, 70). Thus, in moving away from “rather rudimentary” examinations of the geographical dimensions of music (Zelinsky, 1999, 420), recent contributions to the subfield of music geography have built on developments associated with the ‘cultural turn’ in human geography (Kong, 1996; McLeay, 1999; Smith, 1997).³⁴ The ‘cultural turn’ was an “intellectual shift which . . . brought questions of culture to the forefront of contemporary debates in both human geography and the sciences more generally” (Crang, 2000, 141). It “firmly established the nexus between the social, cultural, economic and political in musical analysis” (Kong, 1996, 273).

The growing attention to the role of music by human geographers in recent years chimes nicely with a number of broader shifts in emphasis and themes in human geography, which it has both reflected and helped produce (Hudson, 2006, 626).

³⁴ Scepticism remains as to the relevance and applicability of ‘the cultural turn’ (Barnett, 1998 and 2004). Given debates as to the scope of ‘cultural geography’ and the meaning of ‘culture’ (Cosgrove, 1993 and 1996; Duncan, 1993; Duncan and Duncan, 1996; Jackson, 1993 and 1996; Mitchell, 1995; Price and Lewis, 1993), I accept Crang’s (2000) position that rather than describing an absolute change in direction and destination for geographical inquiry, the ‘cultural turn’ may best be viewed as a complex and varied set of changes within geography.

The study of music within geography has “undergone something of a transformation” since the mid-1990s, with geographers employing music to address “the very issues which have recently engaged social and cultural geographers” (Anderson, Morton and Revill, 2005, 639). Researchers have sought to challenge the visual bias of cultural geography by establishing a distinct research agenda for the spatial study of music and sound (Pocock, 1989; Smith, 1994; Wood, 2002).

The effectiveness of efforts to enlarge and enrich social and cultural geography through the inclusion of music may be determined by the recent proliferation of ‘music geography’ studies. Beyond edited books (Carney, 1995; Leyshon, Matless and Revill, 1998) and special issue journal collections (Anderson, Morton and Revill, 2005; Leyshon, Matless and Revill, 1995; McKendrick, 2000; Waterman, 2006a), cultural geographers have published topic-specific books (Connell and Gibson, 2003; Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004; Gibson and Connell, 2005; Knight, 2006a; Kruse, 2006) and numerous articles in international and national journals. In engaging with issues of relevance in contemporary cultural geography, recent music publications express some of the complexity of contemporary (cultural) geography (Anderson, Morton and Revill, 2005).

An overview of recent articles written by geographers or published in geography journals gives a sense of the scope of contemporary music geographies. Following the example of other authors who have provided themed research lists or categories (Duffy, 2005; Kong, 1995a; Nash and Carney, 1996), I have classified recent music geography publications according to twelve topics: senses of place

maintained by music communities and ‘scenes’ (Bell, 1998; Carroll and Connell, 2000; Halfacree and Kitchen, 1996; Ingham, Purvis and Clarke, 1999); emotion, affect, and associations of memory (Anderson, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005 and 2006; Daniels, 2006; Jones, 2005; Wood, 2002; Wood and Smith, 2004); embodiment, as expressed through musical practice and performance (Johnston, 2006; Kneafsey, 2002; Leonard, 2005; Morton, 2005; Revill, 2004); festivals as sites of place-making, identity creation, and community belonging (De Bres and Davies, 2001; Duffy, 2000; Duffy, 2005; Gibson, 2007; Quinn, 2005; Waterman, 1998a and 1998b); the cultural economy of festivals and performance (Brennan-Horley, Connell and Gibson, 2007; Gibson *et al.*, 2004; Gibson and Davidson, 2004); tourism, as a source of income and identity (Connell and Gibson, 2004a; Dunbar-Hall, 2003; Gibson and Connell, 2003 and 2007; Kruse, 2005a); music industry structures and processes (Leyshon, 2001; Power and Hallencreutz, 2002; Power and Jansson, 2004; Sadler, 1997; Scott, 1999); cultural policies, especially as negotiated between local actors and global processes (Brown, O'Connor and Cohen, 2000; Kong, 1995b, 1996 and 1997; McLeay, 1997a and 2006; Revill, 2000); cultural industries and cultural economies (Gibson, 2002 and 2003; Gibson and Kong, 2005; Hudson, 1995); place imagery and the construction of spatial identity (Cohen, 1995; Covington and Brunn, 2006; Kruse, 2003 and 2005b); the role of sound and music in shaping, and being shaped by, space and place (Bull, 2004; Duffy, Waitt and Gibson, 2007; Gibson, 2005; Jazeel, 2005; Knight, 2006b); and, the role of technology in shaping both music communities and music production (Gibson, 1999; Leyshon, 2003).

While providing a general classification of recent publications, this themed overview obscures the particulars of each publication. Borrowing from Anderson, Morton and Revill (2005, 643), each of the papers cited above provide evidence that

making sonic experience a central problematic in social and cultural geography enables a politics sensitive to geographical complexity . . . [There] is always so much more at stake in sonic practices than simply sound itself and the immediate experience of that sound.

Despite embracing a variety of concepts and approaches, the majority of music geography publications share a focus on “western musical pasts and presents” (Connell and Gibson, 2004b, 343).³⁵ While encompassing a range of western music styles or genres, from folk (Gold and Revill, 2006; Thompson, 2006) to classical (Lowenthal, 2006) to ‘grunge’ (Bell, 1998), few authors have sought to explore music outside a ‘white Western canon’ (Lehr, Bartlett and Tabvahtah, 2006). Although there have been some important contributions that employed non-western music (see for example Connell and Gibson, 2004b; Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004), geographers have yet to emulate anthropologists, folklorist and ethnomusicologists by examining in detail the spaces and places of music made by people from indigenous and ‘ethnic’ minority groups (Connell and Gibson, 2003).

³⁵ Western music encompasses genres of music originating in Europe and its former colonies, (including the North American continent) (Randel, 2003). As noted in Chapter One, in reference to Europe, the geographical region is occupied predominantly by those from the ethnic group labeled ‘white’.

3.2 Music, place and identity

In addition to a sonic connection, many recent music geography publications are linked through a concern with place and identity: “[I]n recent years a range of human geographers have become increasingly interested in issues of music, place and identity in a range of empirical settings, theoretical frameworks and policy contexts” (Hudson, 2006, 626). This interest in place and identity is expressed through work that explores the formation of hybrid identities (Connell and Gibson, 2004b; Revill, 2005), the shaping of national identities (McLeay, 1997b; Megoran, 2005), and the construction of ethnic and gender identities (Saldanha, 2005; Valentine, 1995; Waterman, 2006b). The importance of identity to music geography is recognised by Matless (1996, 384): “Matters of place and identity are central to the emerging body of work on geography and music.” Similarly, Connell and Gibson (2003, 117) argue that music “remains an important cultural sphere in which identities are affirmed, challenged, taken apart and reconstructed.”

[T]he construction and reinforcement of identities are made possible through the musical texts (the rhythm, lyrics and distinctive styles), the intertexts (such as posters, video clips, T-shirts and other paraphernalia; style of dressing), as well as from local activities (Kong, 1995a, 192).

Indeed, music not only provides entertainment and aesthetic satisfaction, it acts as a medium for communication and provides a space in which to create identities (Bennett, 2002; Frith, 1996; Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). These identities are formed on both personal and collective levels (Connell and Gibson, 2003). Frith (1996), for example, argues that music consumption is a form of autonomous self expression that facilitates individual identity formation while, simultaneously, linking individuals to group listening and shared identity.

Discussion of identity has emerged as a significant area of debate within contemporary cultural geography. Mitchell (2000, 62) explains, for example, that “the study of the necessary spatiality of identity itself has become an issue of deep concern within cultural geography.” This concern with identity is evident in studies of cultural resistance (Cresswell, 1996; Pile and Keith, 1997; Sibley, 1995) and the ‘performance of identity’ (Matless, 1995). Moving beyond language and discursive processes (Somers, 1994), geographers working on performativity have embraced the idea that identities are practiced and articulated through bodies, language, dress, actions and space (Panelli, 2004, 143). This research exposes the conditions that underwrite the performance of sexual, gender, racial, class and national identity (Bell and Valentine, 1995).

Understandings of the performance of identity highlight that the expression of identity is “not simply a matter of choice or free will, but is rather a negotiation between what one has to work with and where one takes it from there” (Gonzalez and Habel-Pallan, 1994, 82). The ways in which identities are ‘taken up’ and negotiated are symptomatic of the ways in which people negotiate power relations. Thus, Panelli (2004, 156) explains that the performance of identity is underpinned by “culturally and historically specific power relations”, with these relations limiting possible identity choices.

3.3 The social construction of identity

Underpinning debates surrounding the ways in which identities are actively constructed and performed is an awareness that identities are social constructions,

defined in relation to social understandings of difference and sameness (Penrose and Jackson, 1993).

Identity is . . . associated with processes of self-recognition, belonging and identification with others. Identity is also a way whereby we create forms of distinction between ourselves and those who we see as being like us and those who we see as different. We generally do this by creating divisions between those with whom we identify and those with whom we do not. Identity, therefore, is how we do membership and how we include or exclude others from membership of a particular identification (Hetherington, 2000, 92).

‘Identity divisions’ are defined by boundaries that define ‘self’ while simultaneously creating distance from ‘others’ (Featherstone, 1995; Wall, 2000). Social boundaries “constitute lines of separation or contact . . . The point of contact or separation usually creates an ‘us’ and an ‘Other’ identity, and this takes place on a variety of sociospatial scales” (Newman and Paasi, 1998, 191). Thus, cultural boundaries divide the social world into ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, with the ‘sense of otherness’ expressed through boundaries being crucial to identity maintenance (Harrison, 1999). The significance of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status has been highlighted by work by (feminist) geographers on binaries (Cloke and Johnston, 2005; McDowell, 1999).

3.4 Cultural geography and the construction of social boundaries

Ryks (1998, 40) argues that contemporary understandings of boundaries requires that further consideration be “given to the ‘/’ that is drawn through such binary categories as public/private, female/male, nature/culture, local/global and space/place.” Drawing on a similar sentiment, Laurie *et al.* (1997, 112) explain how binary categories “depend on the drawing of sharp lines between the two

halves within the binary category. These lines are like boundaries . . . they are put up between the two sides that comprise the boundary category.” Boundary construction is inherently spatial, with space being implicated in identity construction and the formation of exclusionary boundaries.

[W]e make, and constantly remake, the spaces and places and identities through which we live our lives. This applies to the ways . . . we construct our personal and communal identities . . . and how we negotiate the power relations and the boundaries which exist between them (Massey, 1999, 291).

Spaces of boundary construction and maintenance have become increasingly important to debates in contemporary cultural geography (Brace, 2002; Johnston, 1997; Keith and Pile, 1993; Yaeger, 1996). Ryks (1998, 53) notes, for example, that long-established ideas of boundaries of difference and boundary transgression are being revitalised through analysis of lines of social constructionism and “the connection to dominance and resistance.” “The hegemonic and counter narratives regarding the boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender, class and nation have been key topics in social and cultural sciences” (Newman and Paasi, 1998, 48). This growing body of work, which Sibley (1995) terms ‘geographies of exclusion’, explores “senses of belonging, exclusion, history and geography” (Matless, 1996, 385). In order to expose multiple meanings of exclusion geographers have sought to express the world views of marginalised ‘others’ (Sibley, 1998). An appreciation of ‘other world-views’ has exposed the complex web of power relations that exist between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, and the way in which these relations are expressed spatially.

3.4.1 A departure from territorial boundaries within cultural studies

“In recent social and cultural theory, the idea of the boundary refers increasingly to the social construction of boundaries between social collectivities rather than state boundaries” (Newman and Paasi, 1998, 48). Contemporary interest in social boundaries reflects a shift away from traditional approaches, a legacy dominated by the concern of political geographers with “the physical and highly visible lines of separation” between political and economic territories (Newman, 2006, 144). These boundaries include international borders, land boundaries, and concepts such as states and sovereignty (Newman and Paasi, 1998). Due to their materiality, territorial boundaries tend to be privileged within everyday society, yet they are no less socially constructed than are boundaries between ‘social collectivities’ (Conversi, 1997). Ryks (1998) argues that, until recently, geographers have tended to detach boundaries from human subjectivity, attributing to boundaries a material existence of authority and certainty.

The (historical) prevalence of arguments about such “physical demarcations” as “the mapped boundaries of nations, states, public agency jurisdictions and private landholdings” (Brunson, 1998, 65) do not account for constructed and situated knowledge (Gregson and Rose, 1997). In problematising the construction of material boundaries, Ryks (1998, 42) concludes that political and physical boundaries are “themselves social boundaries because they reflect human defined categorisation.” Lewis and Ozaki (2006, 101) express a similar sentiment, noting that boundaries “are expressions of cultural codes and are the most basic forms of social structure.” Referring to their structural integrity, Lamont and Molnár (2002, 168) describe boundaries as “objectified forms of social difference” which influence access to, and the distribution of, resources and social opportunities.

3.5 The role of boundaries in social change

Rather than being an esoteric academic pursuit, understandings of the position of boundaries are crucial in facilitating societal change. Indeed, Nederveen Pieterse (2001, 224) cites examples of ‘ethnic cleansing’ to highlight the ways in which “boundaries and borders can be matters of life and death”. The location of social boundaries influences the ways in which people of different identities engage with society, negotiate relations with existing communities, and gain access to communal or governmental resources (Dunn, 2003a, 2003b). Therefore, in shaping daily interactions and relationships, social boundaries “restrict and regulate the interactions of people and the use of spaces” (Lewis and Ozaki, 2006, 92).

3.5.1 Boundary crossing

Situated between categories, boundaries may unify as much as they separate - boundaries “not only separate groups and communities from each other but also mediate contacts between them” (Newman and Paasi, 1998, 194). Boundary crossing “enables both the sharing of resources and the production of a culture of communalism and mutuality” (hooks, 1994, 6). In setting the “rules of exchange” of people, goods and information, boundaries provide conditions through which oppositional groups may communicate with each other (Newman and Paasi, 1998, 194). As such, boundaries may emerge as “liminal spaces” of “transformation, transgression and possibility” (Howitt, 2001, 240). The ‘sharp lines’ between two groups may be transgressed in accordance with shared understandings of the nature of a boundary. Furthermore, boundaries may provide the only link between disparate groups and, as such, provide a space of transition where conflict may be

replaced with understanding (Minghi, 1991). As Rose (2002, 258) notes, social boundaries “unite as much as they divide.”

In spite of potential for positive communication, boundaries may exacerbate long-held understandings. Given the deep symbolic, cultural, historical and religious meanings boundaries may hold it is not uncommon for cross-boundary communication to create anxiety and discomfort (Newman and Paasi, 1998).

The experience of meeting the ‘other’ for the first-time, especially after long periods of fear, suspicion and distrust, can in some cases heighten the mutual feelings of animosity. The first-time meeting place is transformed into a place of one-upmanship, where each side berates the other and justifies the self. The point of meeting becomes a place where the animosity and dislike for the other which, in the past, may have been based on invisibility and lack of knowledge, now takes on a concrete form through the act of meeting (Newman, 2006, 152).

Wilton (1998, 183) suggests that such anxiety can be overcome through time and proximity: “proximity can and does promote acceptance [of ‘outsiders’] because it forces a reconceptualisation of the self/social to incorporate a more nuanced understanding of ‘difference’.”

3.5.2 Ethnic boundaries

As an expression of human categorisation, social boundaries express the cultural norms of a society at a point in time - a change in societal norms will produce a change in boundary location. Nagel (1994, 153), for example, explains that the “location and meaning of . . . ethnic boundaries are continuously negotiated, revised, and revitalised, both by ethnic group members themselves as well as by outside observers.” Negotiation of ethnic boundaries is evident in ongoing

debates as to the meaning of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’.³⁶ Academics, politicians, and talk-show hosts are amongst those ‘outside observers’ who contribute to the positioning of ethnic boundaries; debates published in academic texts, policies supported by government ministers, and views expressed by talk-back hosts and callers contribute to expectations of racial and ethnic identity and expression (Spinner, 1994; Waldron, 1992).

Academics within the social sciences have, for example, maintained ongoing debates as to the role of colonial ideology in shaping the meaning of ‘race’ and of the power of ‘ethnicity’ to invoke ideas of biological differences (Zemke-White, 2001). Thus, Spencer (2006) argues that the establishment of racial boundaries through reference to biological differences was an integral feature of colonial policies. Biological ‘lessons’ proved that if racial boundaries were not maintained society would suffer through racial dilution and associated societal decay (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001). According to Sibley (1995), the purity of white society would be diluted and polluted through the transgression of racial boundaries by black people, a ‘racial group’ associated with dirt and decay.

The potency of white as a marker of the boundary between purified and polluted spaces has not, however, halted the defiled in their efforts to challenge the domination (of space) by the majority. Sibley (1990, 483; emphasis in original) explains that “it cannot be argued that the location and economic status of

³⁶ “The arbitrary distinctions and usage of notions of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are problematic . . . as the terms stem from a colonial past, and invoke fictitious biological differences. However, racial and ethnic-based terms are widely utilised by major agencies (such as the police, the government, and the media) and provide a basis for explaining the world and mediating relations between groups that are said to be different. Ethnicity can be defined as the shared cultural experiences and feelings of a group and can be based on links of kin, diet, language, religion, dress or political affiliation” (Zemke-White, 2001, 242). For one approach to defining ‘race’, see the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (1996).

minorities is generally *determined* by the dominant forces of society” as this “*neglects* the agency of minority populations.” Actions of minority or marginalised groups in challenging dominant conceptions has produced change, with boundary shifts facilitating the inclusion of those previously ‘othered’: “[T]he labels which signal rejection are challenged and . . . the humanity of the rejected will be recognised and the images of defilement discarded” (Sibley, 1995, 69).

3.5.3 Music and boundaries

Music is one form of cultural expression through which the ‘dominant forces of society’ can be challenged (Barney, 2004). Smith (1997, 502) explains, for example, that art is “a medium through which boundaries are established and transgressed, and in which difference is marked out and challenged”. Similarly, Lipsitz (1994) explains that by creating an ‘emotional conversation’ music can be used as a unifier, a message carrier, and a vehicle for social change (see also Barrett, 1996; Carney, 1990; Jameson, 1991; McLeay, 1995; Stokes, 1994). By using “their license as performers and their standing as celebrities” musicians are able to “advance their interests as citizens and subjects” (Lipsitz, 1994, 138). These interests may include ideas and narratives that challenge societal norms. As such, popular music allows for the creation and transmission of potential oppositional themes and ideas (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Zemke-White, 2001).

Music is one cultural form which provides for the expression of marginalised voices. Music provides a way for subordinate groups to express opposition to dominant meaning systems, verbalise feelings, and create rebellion narratives (Kong, 1995a).

Oppressed people use language, dance, and music to mock those in power, express rage, and produce fantasies of subversion . . . these dances, languages and musics produce communal bases of knowledge about social conditions, communal interpretations of them and quite often serve as the cultural glue that fosters communal resistance (Rose, 1994, 99-100).

These oppositional expressions can lead to shared understandings of problematic social conditions and the possibility of active communal resistance (Rose, 1994). Thus, Stokes (1994) explains that music has been appropriated by marginalised groups to construct, challenge and articulate alternate readings of race and ethnicity. Music has provided a compelling voice for oppressed people globally, notably racialised minorities.

[A]n appreciation of the place of music can strengthen our ideas about resistance, transgression and social transformation . . . sound penetrates forbidden spaces, expresses the unspeakable and offers a style of communication quite different from the written or spoken word, it might be a useful - even indispensable - route into an appreciation of the geographies of racism, resistance and ethnic identification (Smith, 1997, 515).

For Smith (1997, 516), the spaces marginalised groups inhabit are key to understanding musical expression of opposition: “Music flourishes in the spaces of oppression precisely because it is the one resource the powerless can mobilise to enhance their lives and challenge their marginality.” The benefits of the collective identity and creativity shared within ‘spaces of oppression’ are balanced

by a lack of influence and profile. Without cultural or economic power, oppressed groups struggle to have their music heard outside the boundaries of their immediate community (Sibley, 1998).

While it may be a struggle, Smith (1997, 517) identifies five ways in which music is employed by marginalised ‘others’ to gain a ‘voice,’ thereby “wresting power from the hands of oppression and deprivation”. First, by telling stories of the way lives are lived “music is a way of articulating the conditions of existence” (Smith, 1997, 517). Second, music enables the communication of what cannot be spoken. In circumstances where words are inadequate or speaking is prohibited, music facilitates the expression of emotion and the sharing of experience. Third, by subverting existing musical conventions and creating their own musical forms marginalised musicians are able to “open up a space to represent themselves and their aspirations” (Smith, 1997, 517). Fourth, music may be employed to create sounds and styles that cannot be appropriated by others. Jazz and rap, for example, rely on an intimate knowledge of black cultural forms not easily copied by others (Rose, 1994). Finally, music may be harnessed as an economic force, with income from concerts and recordings providing a route out of economic marginality (Smith, 1997, 518).

3.6 Globalisation

Understandings of relations between the construction of spaces, the creation of identities, and the position of social boundaries have been made more complex through the impact of processes of globalisation; the ‘global’ translates into the local through “the politics of identity” (Hetherington, 1998, 7). While processes of globalisation have facilitated links between events and actors operating over a

range of spatial scales, these processes have also heightened awareness of local distinctiveness (Harrison, 1999; Massey and Jess, 1995). Although national and regional audiences are exposed to the same global flow of images, information and commodities; these are interpreted depending on local knowledges (Bennett, 2000; Solomon, 2005). This is because, despite processes of globalisation, places continue to give meaning to peoples lives.

Cultural globalisation produces contradictory outcomes. Global flows, such as international migration or a new music product or genre, represents a diffusion of culture. But these flows also give rise to change, inspiration and diversity around the world. These changes to ways of life are everywhere different. In this globalising world the local remains important (Waitt *et al.*, 2000, 532).

It is a 'paradox of globalisation' that; as flows of people, goods, money and information have become increasingly 'global', so attention has been drawn to the importance of local cultural expression (Bennett, 1999; Harvey, 1989). As processes of globalisation have increased interactions between peoples from different cultures, these same processes have simultaneously exposed the value people bestow on cultural identity. Thus, as we are exposed to wider cultural influences we tend to place greater value on the uniqueness of our own cultural identity (Bird *et al.*, 1993; Featherstone, 1995).

One outcome of this paradox, where a 'rediscovery' of local cultures has surfaced from the emergence of increased avenues for cultural interaction, has been greater recognition of multiculturalism (Jackson, 1992). Massey (1991), for example, argues that contemporary global transformations have eroded the sense of spatial distance which previously separated and insulated people. Furthermore, rather

than contributing to, and expressing, codes maintained in a particular 'place', local culture is relational. It arises from a web of interdependencies between people operating at a range of spatial scales, from local to global.

This 'web of interdependencies' between people across space is acknowledged by Cox (2005), who comments that the local/global binary obscures the ways in which the local and the global are always and everywhere mutually constitutive.

All cultures are hybrid, but the mix of global and local is always different so that the distinctiveness of local places is a product of their particular global connections. In this way, the local is never destroyed by the global but can actually be produced through it. All global flows have local geographies (Valentine, 2001, 320).

3.7 Hybrid identities

Contemporary 'hybrid' cultural identities express complex blends and fusions between the global and the local (Bird *et al.*, 1993; Featherstone, 1995; Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Massey, 1993). Nederveen Pieterse (2001, 222) identifies "contemporary accelerated globalisation" as being the key major structural change in recent cultural mixing. As a process that involves the "recombination of existing combinations", hybridity is important because it "problematizes boundaries" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, 220). Furthermore, hybridity and boundaries are intrinsically linked - without a prior assumption of the existence of boundaries "the point of hybridity would be moot" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, 226). The 'problematizing' of boundaries occurs through questioning assumptions of difference and fixed boundaries.

Mixing cultural elements across places and identities has always been part of the human experience; the illegal movement of goods (smuggling, piracy), the un-sanctioned dispersal of people (migration, travel, diaspora, pilgrimage), and the social expression of political relations (inter-tribal, inter-ethnic, inter-national marriages and births). While cultural mixing is intrinsic to cultural evolution, contemporary mixing differs in scale and scope from what has occurred previously (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001).

[C]ultures have been overflowing boundaries all along and . . . boundaries have been provisional . . . A distinctive feature of contemporary times is that they are times of *accelerated mixing*. Thus, it is not mixing that is new but the scope and spread of mixing (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, 231; emphasis in original)

The scope and scale of mixing has created conditions within which hybridity and boundary transgression is the norm. As the location and meanings of boundaries have become more fluid, people from the world over have come to accept boundary transgression as a common experience.

[W]e are all mixing cultural elements and traces across places and identities. This is not simply an issue of classification or of elite cosmopolitan experience; rather the point is that this has become an ordinary experience. A Greek restaurant called ‘Ipanema’ serving Italian food in Brighton: these crossovers are now common in all spheres of life (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, 237; emphasis in original).

3.7.1 Hybridity via music

Hybridity is inescapable when considering popular music (Connell and Gibson, 2003). Hesmondhalgh and Negus (2002, 8) acknowledge “that popular music forms are no longer integrally tied to specific ethnic groups . . . Instead, musical

forms are increasingly being theorised as the result of a series of transforming stylistic practices and transnational human musical interactions.”

It would be elegant if the ‘local’ could be equated with the ‘authentic’ and globalisation with the inauthentic, but it is abundantly clear that such simplistic distinctions have no bearing on the complexity of the migration, the fusion and hybridity of contemporary musical forms, their credibility or their enjoyability (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 279).

3.8 Conclusion

The theoretical framework linking popular music to the construction and maintenance of cultural boundaries is very complex. As cultural boundaries are constructed and maintained via the negotiation of identities, this chapter has endeavoured to position cultural boundaries through the discussion of identity. Identities exist in relation to social understandings of difference and sameness. The “lines of separation or contact” between who we consider ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of an identity grouping determines the location of a sociospatial cultural boundary (Newman and Paasi, 1998, 191). ‘Race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are some of the most widely used classifications to explain and mediate relations between groups that are said to be different. By challenging dominant social forces, minority or marginalised (ethnic) groups may modify social boundaries. This tendency locates these ‘othered’ groups as an appropriate focus for this research into sociospatial change.

The understandings of the position of boundaries are crucial in facilitating societal change. Boundaries are dynamic - shaped by daily interactions and relationships, and unifying and separating groups of people and communities. Daily interactions and relationships are influenced over a range of spatial scales by contemporary

processes of globalisation. The mixing of cultural elements across cultural boundaries, an integral component of the human experience, is currently occurring on a scale and scope far greater than ever before. This accelerated interaction of cultural modes and codes occurs through the interface between ‘global’ and ‘local’, and ‘us’ and ‘them’, leading to hybrid identities. Producing a “recombination of existing combinations” (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, 220), hybrid identities reorganise the lines of separation between cultural groups.

Music is a cultural form that has much relevance to the discussion of cultural boundaries, identities and hybridity.

Many examples of musical identities are spatial, as they relate to physical sites and the movements of culture, commodities and people across territory. Yet music is also audible, and the public spaces where musical identities are constructed (and new evasions of control figured out) are both physical (as in the performance spaces of music) and virtual (as in the spaces of public broadcast). New hybrid identities are created by the spread of musical sounds (as with the global distribution of reggae or country and western), while musical sub-cultures and sites can be politicised and subject to scrutiny as part of struggles for local spaces (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 16).

In contemporary society, where hybridity and boundary transgression are being normalised, geography provides an appropriate vehicle through which to investigate the way popular music challenges cultural boundaries.

Methodology: Deep listening

This chapter explains the methodology employed for this study. It explains my use of multiple and non-traditional sources of data to research the Black Eyed Peas. The chapter highlights the importance of my personal background, individuality, and positionality in my data collection. The role of spontaneity and happenstance during the course of my primary data collection is outlined, along with the strategies I used to access the Black Eyed Peas and associates. Discussion of my use of interviews and participant observation methods is followed by consideration of the value of secondary data and the methods used for data analysis.

Back (2003, 274) uses the term ‘deep listening’ to describe a process that involves investigating and interpreting music by: considering music and sound as a serious academic subject, engaging with both those who produce and consume the music, and participating “in the spaces where music is made, felt and enjoyed”. This chapter illustrates how I undertook such a process of ‘deep listening’ in my research.

In order to establish the ways in which popular song is employed to disrupt established boundary construction and maintenance I used a range of research methods. In her seminal study of hip hop, Rose (1994, xii) explains how she looked outside traditional theoretical tools to merge “multiple ways of knowing,

of understanding, of interpreting culture and practice.” Indeed, like “hip hop itself”, Rose (1994, xiv) drew on “a wide range of sources, ways of reading texts, and experiences.” Rose (1994, xii) argued this polyvocal approach would likely encourage

other students of culture to deal head-on with the deeply contradictory and multilayered voices and themes expressed in popular culture; to use theoretical ideas in enabling and creative ways; and to try and occupy as many subject positions as possible.

In drawing on multiple tools and concepts, my method emulates Solomon’s (2005, 2) fieldwork in the hip hop community in Istanbul:

I draw on a number of sources, including participant observation at hip-hop parties and concerts; formal interviews; informal conversations and private e-mail exchanges . . . published journalism, fanzines and websites . . . I thus combine more traditionally ethnographic approach - on-site observation and direct contact with participant in the community - with a more distanced approach typical of cultural studies, analysing the materials of hip-hop public culture.

Wary of merely commentating on secondary sources, I sought to immerse and familiarise myself in my subject matter, welcoming any opportunity for personal exposure to hip hop culture and the Black Eyed Peas. Kong (1995a, 194) emphasises the importance of “participant observation at musical events and activities and qualitative research interviews” in making “inroads into the analysis of music”. I collected primary data via participant observation and interviews when I travelled to Canada in September 2006 and the United States of America in May 2007. My engagement with my research topic and my familiarity with the Black Eyed Peas was facilitated by; attending Black Eyed Peas concerts (in

Aotearoa/New Zealand and Canada), experiencing touring with the Black Eyed Peas (Canada), meeting with staff of the Peapod Foundation (Los Angeles), and attending a youth workshop at the Black Eyed Peas' Peapod Music and Arts Academy (Watts, Los Angeles).

4.1 Autobiography and positionality

In my investigation of the ways in which popular song disrupts established boundary construction and maintenance I found myself on a journey of both academic and personal discovery. Like Banks (2003, 88), I found that by “choosing to research issues that affect my life” I not only contributed to geographical knowledge but also discovered that “my research findings lead to new ways of making sense of my surroundings”.

As the result of my experience, the writing of this thesis is somewhat autobiographical; my personal experience provides an important context within which the acquisition and analysis of data takes place (Banks, 2003). Indeed, as noted by Cook (2007), “the only thing that connected the multiple localities of my research - was ‘me’ (whoever and whatever that might be).” While not widely accepted as a standard method of geographic research, autobiographical writing is becoming increasingly prominent within the social sciences and humanities (see for example Gray, 1997; Kruse, 2003; Liepins and Monk, 2000; Moss, 2001a; Valentine, 1998). Autobiography enables researchers to draw on their “own experience as a resource” while also “thinking more analytically” about how autobiography can be included within research projects (Gray, 1997, 101-102). Gray (1997) recognises that it is our own positionality that gives us our unique way of knowing the world, producing an epistemology of situated knowledge

based on our own standpoint. In other words, “[u]nless we turn our gaze upon ourselves we cannot realize the reconstruction of the societies in which we live” (Phillips, 1973, xii). In concluding that information “gathered beyond the fieldwork stage” is influential “even if it was in subconscious ways”, Maxey (1999, 203) provides insight into the ways in which my research has been moulded by personal experiences and relationships. The blending of personal and professional may contribute to furthering critical geographical analysis and the construction of geographical knowledge (Moss, 2001b).

It is widely accepted amongst postcolonial and feminist scholars that it is a ‘mythical aim’ for the researcher to achieve objectivity (May, 2001); for example, Back (2003) emphasises that an academic’s passion for the music of their study can potentially blind their critical judgement, a condition Maxwell (2002) calls the ‘the curse of fandom’ (see also Hills, 2002). Moreover, detachment from research subjects is undesirable; personal experience should be valued because of the “myriad of ways in which the researcher is affected by the context of the research or the people who are part of it” (May, 2001, 21); for example, Monk gives a personal account of how “circumstances have contributed to the positionality of my work” (Liepins and Monk, 2000, 346). She outlines how her sense of ‘not quite fitting in’ when growing up shaped her understanding of difference, and subsequently, the direction of her research (Liepins and Monk, 2000).

4.1.1 Growing up in Gisborne

Similarly, my experiences growing up in Gisborne, Aotearoa/New Zealand, immersed in a bicultural society comprising Māori and Pakeha, shaped my

research interests.³⁷ When I left Gisborne to attend university I became aware that aspects of my cultural identity, such as the words I used and the way I spoke, were considered by some of my Pakeha friends to be indicative of Māori culture. These Pakeha friends were surprised to find that a white-skinned person such as myself engaged and expressed Māori cultural traits. I also became aware of the racist remarks made by university peers targeting ethnic minorities. These criticisms heightened my awareness of the significance of cultural difference, pushing me towards critical engagement with debates around identity, ethnicity, and notions of difference.

While customary ‘boundaries’ of ethnicity or religion never restricted or deterred my personal interests, my university experiences provided a catalyst for growing conscious awareness of cultural divisions and differences. Furthermore, the criticisms and derogatory comments amongst my peers were the catalyst for me to reflect on my experiences with ‘different’ cultures. In addition to having encountered a bicultural population while at school and while living in Gisborne, I was raised in a household free from cultural prejudice.³⁸ I have memories, for example, of being exposed to music and food from a range of different cultures. Thus, growing up in a household where jazz and house were parental favourites meant I was exposed to a lot of ‘non-white’ music. Music can influence understandings of ‘race’ (Allinson, 1992), and the ‘race’ of musicians can shape listening habits (Wall, 2000). As such, I have been aware of my position as a

³⁷ Pakeha is the Māori word for people born in Aotearoa/New Zealand of European descent. ‘Pakeha’ is a standard term of classification of ethnicity used in the New Zealand Census (Bonnett, 1997; King, 1999; Spoonley, 1995).

³⁸ In 1996, my first year at secondary school, the Gisborne region had a population of 45,780. Of this population, 44.9% identified as Māori. In 1996, more people in Gisborne identified with the Māori ethnic group than in any other region in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 1999).

white, female Aotearoa/New Zealander studying a musical culture occupied predominantly by black males from America (Rose, 1994).

4.1.2 Studying the ‘other’

In the long tradition of observing black culture many white scholars have been dismissive of what they have experienced, failing to show respect for the experiences and histories of the ‘other’ (Allinson, 1992). Recognising the limitations of such racial bias, Back (2003) admits that observation of black music may be viewed as a “form of academic voyeurism” in which marginalised subjects are “treated as ‘exotic others’” (Valentine, 1997, 113). In seeking to avoid such ‘othering’ I ‘interrogated’ myself and my motivations, fostering an “attitude of vigilance” towards my position and my relation to my research (hooks, 1989, 164). I consider myself to hold nothing but respect and admiration for the musicians and the music explored in this research. Indeed, my engagement in my research mirrors that of Back (2003, 276), who emphasises his “deep love for [soul] music” as the primary motivator for his investigation. As a white woman researching ethnic minorities there is clear potential for the subject of my research, the Black Eyed Peas, to be ‘othered’. Wanting to minimise such exoticism I have sought to embody Smith’s (2003) observation that difference is everywhere and is an integral part of social interaction. As such, any differences between myself and my research subjects are understood as a commonplace facet of daily life where interactions with those different from myself are the norm.³⁹

³⁹ McDowell (1992) explains that ‘signs’ of difference are multiple, meaning that all people are different from ourselves. What is crucial is the way in which such ‘difference’ is defined and understood.

4.1.3 Self reflection

Moreover, in working to avoid overt processes of ‘othering’ I reminded myself that as a researcher “it is important to reflect on who you are and how your own identity will shape the interactions that you have with others” (Valentine, 1997, 113). There is much to be learnt through scrutinising yourself as a researcher and geographers have recognised the importance of such positionality (see England, 1994; Laurie *et al.*, 1999; Limb and Dwyer, 2001; Madge *et al.*, 1997; Smith, 2003; Sparke, 1996). As an individual, I value honesty and authenticity. Thus, throughout my research, I was true to myself and my ideals.

I think my honesty and openness were beneficial to my research, with my unfeigned enthusiasm and unfettered curiosity ‘rubbing off’ on those with whom I interacted. For example, both Ben Gross and Bobby Grant expressed surprise and amusement at the lengths I went to during my fieldwork to obtain interviews and participant observation opportunities. In hindsight I think my enthusiasm for first-hand exposure to my subject matter earned me a degree of respect among the associates of the Black Eyed Peas; for example, when an employee of Grassroots Productions insisted I accept a signed poster of the Black Eyed Peas, Mr Gross declined on my behalf, telling the worker to “leave it for a seven year old girl” (Field notes, Los Angeles, 7 May 2007).

My time at Grassroots Productions with Mr Gross also made me realise how uninformed I was about the music industry.

During our interview Ben explained how he had been in A&R. God knows what Ben was thinking when I asked him what A&R was! Although this is damn embarrassing, I cracked up when I got home to New Zealand and I

found out that A&R is a seriously common and central role in the music industry! How naïve am I! Whoops (Field notes, Cambridge, 30 May 2007).

Although university training in social issues had made me familiar with the subject of my research, I was completely unfamiliar with music industry places and processes. Laurier (2003) recognises that reading about research techniques is no substitute for going out and undertaking a study on your own terms. Although I was aware of my music industry inexperience, it did not stop me plunging ahead with my research. My approach in the field adhered to the position that “we get to know other people by making ourselves known to them” (Kisliuk, 1997, 27). In getting known by the Black Eyed Peas and associates I made every effort not to be intimidated by the environment of glamour and fame in which they operate. I was, however, aware of the importance of making some concessions in deportment and dress to being able to ‘fit in’ with the people I was observing and interviewing.

Indeed, just as within the music industry, dress and image are important components of research - appearance will influence the rapport a researcher has with an interviewee (Kitchen and Tate, 2000; Valentine, 1997). Kearns (2000, 115) explains that it is easier to dress ‘down’ than ‘up’, a reason participant observation favours the study of people less powerful than the researcher. Furthermore, Kearns (2000) explains that having appropriate attire is not always a possibility - as a student researcher Kearns (2000, 115) had “place-appropriate clothes” to study impoverished people but not such social elites as lawyers or politicians. The spontaneity of planning for my trip to Canada meant I was not sartorially prepared for the ‘celebrity style’ of the Black Eyed Peas. In the three months prior to arriving in Canada I had been touring Europe in an elite sporting

environment where luggage is kept to essentials. Furthermore, I was not in a financial position to ‘glamourise’ my clothing and image.

I was totally out of my league - I was the only female in the joint with flat shoes on - who brings stilettos on a rowing tour? I’ve been living in lycra and running shoes for the last three months! (Field notes, Toronto, 10 September 2006).

Underpinning the glamour of music performance and presentation is an industry that is male dominated and which encourages sexist practices (Davies, 2001; Shuker, 1998). Women have been marginalised, stereotyped and discouraged as both performers and participants in the music industry. The reason for the absence of women as performers is “entirely social” (Bayton, 1997, 39). Cohen’s (1991 and 1997) research into the Liverpool rock scene found that women were not only absent, but were actively excluded by dominant males. As such, the portrayal of women in contemporary popular music is largely determined by men (Negus, 1992; Shuker, 1998).⁴⁰ As music industry employees, women face “patriarchal and masculinist structures and assumptions” (Shuker, 1998, 122). Conventions of behaviour and thought are defended by men who seek to maintain traditional ‘boys club’ managerial structures (Conniff, 2005a; Negus, 1992; Sly, 1993). In addition, stereotypical constructions of femininity are observed (Mahon, 2004), with Sly (1993, 33) explaining that women are “treated as abnormalities unless they’re wearing the tightest pair of black trousers, [and] thigh-high boots”.

⁴⁰ Much has been written about sexuality and masculinity in popular music (see for example Bradby and Laing, 2001; Press and Reynolds, 1995; Schwichtenberg, 1993).

Women are excluded and subordinate in all facets of the industry, and female roles are generally restricted to stereotypically ‘feminine’ roles in low-ranking administrative positions. While the “process of change for women in this industry is a long, slow, drawnout business” (Sly, 1993, 33), an increasing number of women are ‘breaking the glass ceiling’ and entering the music business (Conniff, 2005b; Negus, 1992; Sly, 1993). For example, Conniff (2005a and 2006) details the experiences of women who are ‘power players’ in the music industry. Some of the executives profiled are active members of the Women in Music National Network, an organisation established in 1993 to “promote the development, advancement and recognition of women in the music industry” (Women in Music National Network, 2007). Throughout my research I was conscious that, as a woman, I was operating under the ‘glass ceiling’ of the industry. Furthermore, Skegg’s (1994) point that sexual harassment can be component of the research process heightened my awareness that I was a female associating with predominantly male personnel in an industry of ‘sex, drugs and rock’n’roll’. Despite these concerns, I was never aware of any discrimination in response to my gender.

While my gender was significant in my research positionality in relation to my research, my origins in Aotearoa/New Zealand were also recognised as part of my identity. Virtually everyone, with whom I spoke, either formally or informally, knew something about Aotearoa/New Zealand, with most people making positive comments about the country. Indeed, an initial introduction relating to my origins in Aotearoa/New Zealand often provided a catalyst for further, research related, conversation. Moreover, on hearing me speak, people became aware my accent

differed from that of ‘locals’ in Canada and Los Angeles. This ‘difference’ contributed to my position as an outsider, someone who had travelled a long way to an unfamiliar place to complete research (Kitchen and Tate, 2000; May, 2001).

4.1.4 My position as an ‘academic’

My geographical origins and verbal status, in conjunction with my role as an academic researcher, combined to position me as being ‘outside’ the Black Eyes Peas’ organisation. In contrast, in light of the intimate settings in which I interacted with the Black Eyed Peas, such as on a tour bus and in a passenger van, I felt I had been accepted ‘inside’ the Black Eyed Peas’ entourage. This feeling of being accepted was strengthened by the friendships I developed with some of the people whom I met. The (unresolved) conflict I experienced as both an outsider and an insider reflects the experiences of others undertaking field research:

The questions raised by conducting fieldwork in human geography at once invoke boundaries and blur borders. Where are the boundaries between ‘the research’ and everyday life; between ‘the fieldwork’ and doing fieldwork; between ‘the field’ and not; between the ‘the scholar’ and the subject? (Katz, 1994, 67).

Keyes (2002) explains her identity as a music industry outsider was at times extremely beneficial in obtaining access to her subjects. Often she was able to obtain interviews because she was a research student and not a journalist. In my experience, everybody I dealt with expressed willingness to take part in my research. The frantic schedules of my subjects and the often unexpected changes in planned activities caused problems in scheduling interviews (Keyes, 2002), yet as far as accepting my requests everyone involved was very enthusiastic. This participatory willingness, I believe, stemmed, in part, from my ability to get on

well with those involved and shared interests. This positive rapport contributed to the access I had to original participants and the open responses obtained from respondents. Indeed, as suggested by Dunn (2000) and May (2001), the development of such a rapport and of trusting relationships were a critical aspect of my research. The way in which I was included in various conversations and activities, such as participants providing me with information ‘off the record’, being taken on a tour of Grassroots Productions, and being welcomed into Bobby Grant’s home, suggests I was recognised as a ‘legitimate’ participant in the ‘world’ of the Black Eyed Peas.

My willingness to contact the Black Eyed Peas stemmed from the importance of engaging with the community under scrutiny. Thus, like hooks (1994, 4), I understood the value of moving intellectuals “out of the academy and into the streets”.

The thing I hate about academia is that it often seems too easy for intelligent people and bright minds to get out of touch with what’s truly playing out in society. I often think that it is dangerous to get stuck in an office and analyse and write about things without any real first hand experience. This is the very reason why I was so keen to hunt down the Peas in person. I didn’t want to analyse/write about something from the outside (Field notes, Gisborne, 20 September 2006).

Furthermore, my direct engagement with the Black Eyed Peas sought to balance the assertion that “[m]ost of the scholars who have studied hip-hop have not sought or have not gained access to that community” (Schloss, 2004, 20). Wanting to move outside the academy, while being wary of appropriating the voices of ‘others’ and representing myself as an expert in their lives (Valentine, 1997), I was extremely persistent in my attempt to place myself “within the work”

(Maxey, 1999, 199). Thus, like Griffiths (2003, 271), “I became aware that in order to write about a particular group of people” I had to go ‘out there’ and immerse myself into that group.

It was actually like walking onto a set of a movie or jumping into a hip hop track on my iPod.⁴¹ At home in New Zealand we get so much exposure to hip hop culture that to be actually present in Los Angeles and Watts was actually quite surreal. Every morning in LA I would go for a run, and occasionally a rap track would come on my iPod that had lyrics featuring LA and it was totally weird to think I was actually there and not reading about it or watching something on TV. When I was in Watts I felt like I had to pinch myself to check it was real as I was surrounded by clothing, hairstyles, jewellery, and modes of speech etc that I always see in various media but never in my real environment. In one particular experience in Watts, I was talking to a local young man and he was using words like ‘crib’⁴² and it was quite bizarre to hear it in the real context, because at home if someone uses hip hop language you know they aren’t being completely serious, or even if they are being serious it ain’t authentic (Field notes, Los Angeles, 13 May 2007).

An additional reason to make direct contact with the Black Eyed Peas was the lack of relevant published data. The members of the Black Eyed Peas have a significant media profile, with the band or individual band members regularly appearing in specialist music magazines as well as popular ‘gossip’ magazines and newspapers. As such, there is much written about the group and its actions. The majority of this material is tailored towards promotion and marketing which means it provides a limited resource when exploring notions of boundary construction and societal change. Given the paucity of directly relevant published material, and in light of the value of being ‘immersed’ in my research

⁴¹ An iPod is a portable media player (Apple, 2007).

⁴² Crib is slang for a place of residence (Urban Dictionary, 2007).

environment, I endeavoured to contact the members of the Black Eyed Peas and relevant associates. I sought to experience personally as much as possible of the content about which I was reading and writing.⁴³

4.2 Qualitative data collection: Spontaneity and happenstance

In late 2005 I attended one of several concerts the Black Eyed Peas gave in Aotearoa/New Zealand to promote the newly released *Monkey Business* album. I was familiar with the music of Black Eyed Peas, having listened to their older albums and having attended a previous Aotearoa/New Zealand concert. The support act during the 2005 tour was John Legend, an artist who joined with the Black Eyed Peas in an outstanding performance:

John Legend was first – and I adore his music so I was in heaven from the start. Then when BEP were set to start, their band came on and said because it was the second show of the night, and the last show of the tour, they were gonna do something a little different. And what unfolded was nothing short of sensational! John came out first up and did the first song with the BEP's then John and his band went up into the little booths to the side and danced, grooved, sang, yelled to the crowd all night . . . It was just amazing!!!!!! Everyone was just on fire!!!! I can't even describe how cool it was and how cool they were and I was flipping out over all the extremely talented, funky, groovy people on that small stage. After it was all over I decided I had to met them and include them in my thesis. I just had one of my gut instincts that I had to stalk them down and went on a mission! (Field notes, Cambridge, 11 October 2005).

⁴³ In conjunction with attending Black Eyed Peas' concerts I went to as many hip hop concerts as possible to immerse myself in the genre. I was fortunate that throughout my research period some of the most popular hip hop acts in the world performed in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I witnessed live performances by Snoop Dogg, Kanye West, Common, and Jurassic 5.

My decision to ‘stalk them down’ was influenced by geographic references made by the Black Eyed Peas, with notions of identity, culture and politics being mentioned during the performance. While such geography was important, it was the emotional response that I had from the live show that fuelled my desire to engage with the band. I experienced what Schloss (2004, 24) explains as his love for “the feel of bass in my chest”, the “intensity of a crowded dance floor”, and the sensation of songs that never fail “to send chills down my spine.” These intangible emotions and affects are often dismissed by academics, yet such emotional responses are crucial to the meaning and power of music (Juslin and Sloboda, 2001). Indeed, for Schloss (2004, 24) such affectivity was crucial to his research: “These chills that are often lost in academic discussion . . . [yet] it is these chills that have drawn me to produce the following study.”

After the concert I approached a member of the Black Eyed Peas’ crew to see if I could make contact with members of the group, thus initiating my primary data collection.⁴⁴ The person I spoke with introduced himself as Bobby Grant.

I told him what my thesis was on and asked if I could speak to the band. He said it wasn’t appropriate because they had just finished two shows in a row, but he gave me his email address and we started chatting about what we had both studied at uni - he had done much the same as me. He said he was “digging it” and “feeling me” oh yeah oh yeah. He told me to email him in the next few days and he was keen to sort something out!!!! - this is some good shit!!! (Field notes, Cambridge, 11 October 2005).

The initial rapport I established with Mr Grant, as based around shared interest in culture and music, did much to convince me of the value of engaging with the

⁴⁴ I recognised this man from the stage show where he had been assisting members of the Black Eyed Peas during their performance.

Black Eyed Peas. Furthermore, my engagement with Mr Grant confirmed that it is “easier to build a rapport with your research participants and conduct interviews if . . . you are interviewing people you have something in common with” (Valentine, 1997, 133). During a subsequent discussion Mr Grant explained how I was able to capture his attention:

I was keen to find out why he had been so willing to give me his details and he was like - “you wouldn’t believe some of the crazy shit you have to deal with backstage, you get chicks screaming ‘I wanna meet Fergie’ and all sorts of other crap” and he explained that for me to rock up and say that I had an unusual request and start speaking about my research was upfront, interesting and unexpected (Field notes, Los Angeles, 13 May 2007).

Mr Grant also told me his willingness to help was partly due to his study of sociology at a tertiary institution and his understanding of the student experience. Mr Grant’s interest in my research was a crucial factor underpinning his decision to help me gain access to the Black Eyed Peas.

It was because of my encounter with Mr Grant that my research proceeded in the way it did. The importance of this initial introduction cannot be over-emphasised; it was the catalyst for the course of my thesis and provided the foundation for all my dealings with the Black Eyed Peas’ staff. The means of acquiring access to a research community is often dependant on ‘gatekeepers’ (Cook, 1997; Dunn, 2000; Kearns, 2000). Given his involvement in the overall tour management of Black Eyed Peas, and his responsibility for the Black Eyed Pea’s band, Mr Grant had excellent ‘gatekeeping’ credentials. Mr Grant, and later Ben Gross, became my gatekeepers with the ability to “grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research” (Valentine, 1997, 115).

Having obtained Bobby Grant's contact details and established common interests, I set about conducting preliminary research on the Black Eyed Peas. Cognisant of the usefulness of being knowledgeable about potential research participants (May, 2001; Valentine, 1997), I conducted initial lyrical analysis and began collecting biographical data. While conducting an internet search I discovered the official Peapod Foundation website and the on-line video *Peapod Foundation On A Global Mission*. This video stated that the 'Mission' of the Peapod Foundation, as appeared on the on-line video is to "encourage social change by uniting people with the universal language of music" (Peapod Foundation, 2005). The 'Vision' of the Peapod Foundation is to "bridge cultural boundaries and help children in need", to "join together local and global communities", and to "make a difference in our world" (Peapod Foundation, 2005). The mission and vision of Peapod struck a chord with me; the statements were an ideal fit with the geographical concepts I was looking to explore with my research.

4.2.1 Contacting informants in the music industry

Having some knowledge about potential research participants is useful when preparing interview schedules and questions. Background information and contextual data are important in informing decisions as to the relevance of potential interviewees and the type of information that may be obtained from an interview. As such, initial data collection provides a valuable framework when seeking to establish an interview schedule.

Whenever you are approaching people for interview it is important to set out clearly in writing the aims of your research, who you would like to talk to,

the issues you wish to discuss, and estimation of how long the interview is likely to take, and when and where you would ideally like to conduct it (Valentine, 1997, 117).

Adhering to Valentine's (1997) research agenda was my intention, but spontaneity and happenstance quickly emerged as 'the norm'. Maxey (1999, 205) notes that "research involves a certain degree of spontaneity, as the researcher is forced to make some decisions on the hoof." The course of my project highlights the significant role 'spontaneity' and 'happenstance' may play in research (Law, 2004). Selecting the Black Eyed Peas as a case study, and subsequent research on the group, was dependant on what McDowell (1998, 2135) has described as "luck and chance, connections and networks, and the particular circumstances at the time". On reflection, it is clear that my fieldwork experience emulates that of Cook (1997, 132), who describes his experience of "simply turning up at a place and trying to wing your access on the spot". While this 'spontaneous' approach has a tendency to result in "days or weeks of doubt and frustration" about research eventualities, it is often the case that "things somehow start to work out, often better than could ever have been planned" (Cook, 1997, 132).

Part of my research spontaneity was forced upon me as I sought to engage with personnel who have limited experience with academic researchers (Breen, 1999; Negus, 1999). Back (2003) draws on his own experiences as both an academic and music journalist to illustrate how members of the music industry are likely to be far more receptive and approachable if contact may result in a media feature. McLeay (1998) explains that due to their limited promotional potential, musicians will often decline requests from academics for interviews; the influences of scholarly publications over record buyers is almost non-existent, particularly

when compared to specialist music magazines. Furthermore, successful singers and musicians do not experience any ‘thrill’ or ‘sense of importance’ at being interviewed; compared to someone who is never interviewed about their work or ideas may be ‘excited’ about being part of an academic research interview (McLeay, 1998).

As I was not able to simply ‘replace’ one participant with another I was committed to engaging with the Black Eyed Peas. In contrast to other forms of research where one expert may be substituted for another, there were no substitutes for the expert knowledge and experiences of the Black Eyed Peas and associates. Also, the music industry is one where personal communication, ‘word of mouth’ and ‘who you know’ is critical (Negus, 1992). I found that written communication, as via email, was ignored more often than not. Thus, while I received some e-mail replies from Bobby Grant, there were many e-mails which remained unanswered. I discovered the most successful means to contact respondents was to send an initial email outlining my interests and then follow this communication with a phone call.

Despite the immediacy of telephone communication and the widespread ownership of cellular phones, the telephone was not a foolproof method of contacting Mr Grant. Given the international travel schedule of Mr Grant, I was never quite sure where Mr Grant would be, what he would be doing, or what the time of day was in his location when I telephoned. Difficulties in making contact included Mr Grant not answering his phone, having an answer phone that was full, being asleep when I phoned, or being unable to talk due to where he was and what he was doing at the time. Examples of unsuitable situations for conversation

included Mr Grant being in a police escort to an airport, travelling through airport customs, or being involved in studio recording sessions. In order to maximise my chance of getting through to Mr Grant, and minimise intrusion on him, I would guess where in the world he was by reading the tour schedules of the Black Eyed Peas on their official website (Blackeyedpeas.com, 2007). If there was no tour listed for a given date I would assume Mr Grant was in Los Angeles, the city in which the Black Eyed Peas are based and Mr Grant has a house. I was always extremely aware that my phone calls were sporadic and I was anxious of poor timing. In the later stages of my research I used texting to avoid this dilemma. Texting is less obtrusive than a phone call yet more immediate than email.

After my initial introduction in October 2005 I maintained irregular telephone and email communication with Mr Grant. During one conversation Mr Grant hinted that if I “could be in the same place at the same time” as the Black Eyed Peas then a face-to-face interview “may be possible”. The general tone of this telephone conversation was that *if* I could ‘chase’ the Black Eyed Peas to wherever they were touring at the time then Mr Grant *might* be able to arrange an interview (Field notes, Cambridge, 21 March 2007).

In June 2006 I flew to Europe with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Rowing Team. Immediately prior to leaving Aotearoa/New Zealand I emailed and rang Mr Grant in an attempt to arrange a meeting with him and the Black Eyed Peas. At that stage the Black Eyed Peas’ tour had not, however, been finalised. This meant that when I left Aotearoa/New Zealand I could not be sure that I could be ‘in the same place at the same time’ as the Black Eyed Peas. During July 2006 the official Black Eyed Peas website posted the tour dates for the U.S.A. Fall Tour 06. I

established that the end of my rowing programme coincided with Black Eyed Peas' concerts in Canada. At this time I was rowing in Belgium and the Black Eyed Peas were on tour in South East Asia; our respective locations and activities made contact difficult. After sending several emails and making repeated attempts to contact Mr Grant by telephone, I eventually spoke to him on 2 August 2006. During that telephone conversation he confirmed that the Black Eyed Peas would be touring Canada in September 2006. He also commended me on my ambition to meet up with the group, emphasising that he understood how important a face-to-face interview would be for data collection.

Despite his willingness to help, Mr Grant advised me that I had "chosen one of the hardest bands in the world to tie down" and their schedule was "about to turn to total madness" (Field notes, Hazewinkel, 4 August 2006). Mr Grant explained that if I could make it to Canada he would see what he could do about organising an interview. After this conversation I exhausted much time and money changing travel schedules so that I would travel from Europe to Aotearoa/New Zealand via Canada. I arrived in Canada on 9 September 2006 and spent six days pursuing the Black Eyed Peas in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

4.3 Gaining access to the 'BEP Empire'

The lyrics to the song 'BEP Empire' describe the musical abilities of will.i.am, Taboo and apl.de.ap, the three members of the 'BEP Empire' when the song was released on the *Bridging the Gap* album in 2000. Since that song appeared the 'BEP Empire' has grown significantly, an expansion that occurred in concert with transformation of the band from relative obscurity to global recognition. The current size and scope of the BEP Empire is such that any attempt to understand

the processes and purposes of the band must be flexible, incorporating methods that suit the analysis of a range of people operating across a range of spaces. In order to maximise my first-hand exposure to the BEP Empire, I employed two key methods - interviews and participant observation.

4.3.1 Interviews

In Canada I conducted a 20 minute semi-structured interview with will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas. This was the first of several interviews with key informants (see Table 1). Kong (1995a, 194) explains the importance of interviewing the producers of music, including songwriters, lyricists, record company staff and image-makers, as “only then can insights be obtained into questions such as the motivations for and contexts of production, and the meaning and the effects intended”. This avoids the danger of academics exercising an interpretive standpoint and assuming what the music means for the producer and consumer (Kong, 1995a). My interview sought to obtain in-depth information about the views, experiences and social processes involved in the construction of the Black Eyed Peas’ identity, their music, and their philanthropic projects.

Table 1. Interviews conducted

Interviewee	Date	Type	Location
William Adams	13 September 2006	Face-to-face	John Lennon Mobile Recording Studio, Ottawa, Canada.
Ben Gross	25 September 2006	Telephone	Between Grassroots Productions, Los Angeles, U.S.A. and my accommodation in Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand.
Ben Gross	7 May 2007	Face-to-face	Grassroots Productions, Los Angeles, U.S.A.
Christine Hansen	11 May 2007	Telephone	Between 33 Productions, Los Angeles, U.S.A. and my accommodation in Los Angeles, U.S.A.
Zaid Gayle & Shawn Jackson	12 May 2007	Face-to-face	Watts/Willowbrook Boys and Girls Club, Los Angeles, U.S.A.

Interviews are widely recognised by geographers for their value in obtaining information regarding motivations, expectations and attitudes (Kitchen and Tate, 2000; Longhurst, 2003). Interviews are valuable for tapping into self-conscious practices, knowledges and beliefs (Shumer-Smith, 2002). The aim of an interview is to “understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives” (Valentine, 1997, 11). As a sensitive and people-orientated conversation with a purpose, an interview allows for a wide-ranging discussion to explore issues thoroughly. Furthermore, interviews give the interviewee a chance to describe and explain experiences, feelings and opinions in their own words (Dunn, 2000; Kitchen and Tate, 2000; Valentine, 1997). As such, interviews can lead to insight beyond the initial consideration of the researcher (Hoggart, Lees and Davies, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews are one of the most common qualitative interview methods employed by geographers (see for example Dunn, 2000; Flowerdew and Martin, 1997; Kitchen and Tate, 2000; Longhurst, 2003; May, 2001; Shumer-Smith, 2002). Valentine (1997, 111) describes a semi-structured interview as a method that takes on a “conversational, fluid form . . . varying according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees. They are dialogue rather than an interrogation.” The semi-structured approach uses specified questions, yet allows for clarification, elaboration and probing beyond answers in order to enter more detailed dialogue (May, 2001). Although the interviewer relies on predetermined questions, the interaction is conversational in manner and allows for flexibility in discussion (Dunn, 2000; Longhurst, 2003).

I conducted every interview in the interviewees' own 'territory', a spatial consideration which assists in producing a "more relaxed conversation" (Valentine, 1997, 117). It also allows the researcher to learn more about the interviewee by observing them "in their own environment" (Valentine, 1997, 117). All interviews were conducted in accordance with the University of Waikato policy on ethical conduct in research (University of Waikato, 2001). Written consent was provided when possible. At all phases of the research I made it clear to participants that their participation was voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time and to decline to answer any individual questions. If after participating in my research the participants changed their minds and decided they would rather not be involved they had the right to request the erasure of any materials they did not wish to be used.

The unfamiliarity of my respondents with academic research, and the 'informal' environments in which interviews were conducted, convinced me that my research would benefit from the use of "less formal research methods" and the associated employment of "less explicit" consent procedures (University of Waikato, 2001, 9). Furthermore, given the seemingly chaotic activities of popular professional performers and their associates it seemed sensible to adopt an informal interview process. Indeed, given the lack of contact between academics and musicians my sense was that any overt effort to gain "the formality of written consent" may well have violated "the research context or [the] nature of the relationship between researcher and participant" (Bouma, 2000, 197). This lack of contact created a situation that, understandably, generated caution on behalf of both myself and, I

suspect, my respondents (Negus, 1999). As noted previously, my research had no substitutes, so I was reluctant to do anything that may have left me with no interview opportunities.

The dynamics of power relations between the researcher and the researched influenced the way I approached my interview process (Katz, 1992; Longhurst, 2003; Schoenberger, 1992; Sidaway, 1992). It is often assumed that the academic is the dominant figure in the interview process, however, when interviewing elites, it is they who control the access to knowledge and information (Dunn, 2000; Herz and Luber, 1995). In regard to my interview with will.i.am, I was aware he had been interviewed many times by non-academic reporters but not often, if at all, by an academic researcher (Breen, 1999). This experience with the media has potential positives and negatives. On the positive side, the unfamiliar nature of my questions may have elicited considered responses from will.i.am. On the negative side, familiarity with interviews may have ‘lulled’ will.i.am into giving predetermined answers. It is my belief, given several post-interview reviews of our discussion, that will.i.am provided reflective answers to my questions.

When face-to-face interviews are not feasible, a phone interview is a recommended alternative (Kitchen and Tate, 2000; see Table 1). I did not record the phone interviews I conducted, relying instead on annotations. All of my face-to-face interviews were recorded by way of a digital Dictaphone, allowing me to concentrate on what was being said rather than being preoccupied with writing what was being said. Providing an accurate record of dialogue, interview recordings can be listened to at the researcher’s leisure. By using interview

recordings I was able to reflect on the manner and tone of the speaker, with vocal traits such as humour and sarcasm being important when deciphering intent. The Dictaphone was also valuable for recording post-interview observations; thus, once I had left an interview and had ‘private time’ I recorded comments relating to the tone of the interview, my observations of events relating to the interview, and my feelings about the content of the interview (Dunn, 2000; Kitchen and Tate, 2000; Longhurst, 2003).

It is possible for a recording device to create a boundary between the interviewer and the interviewee - faced with the verbatim recording of responses, the interviewee may ‘modify’ their answers so as to not commit any ‘controversial’ comments to tape (Dunn, 2000; Kitchen and Tate, 2000). I did not see this ‘boundary’ as a problem while interviewing will.i.am - as a high profile professional musician, he is well accustomed to being recorded for interviews - while other interviewees expressed no objection to being recorded. During all interviews informants responded to the questions asked and, in many cases, provided information additional to the scope and intent of my original question.

4.3.2 Organising interviews

My opportunity to introduce myself to will.i.am occurred at the This Is London nightclub, the venue for the VIP After Party held immediately following the Black Eyed Peas’ concert in Toronto.⁴⁵ This setting presented many challenges. It was my first night in Canada and the only person I knew was Bobby Grant. Those present at the party were there to socialise and relax. The music was extremely loud which made conversation very difficult. I attempted to explain my presence

⁴⁵ A VIP After Party is a social event held after the ‘main event’, such as a music concert or an awards event. Commonly held in nightclubs, VIP After Parties are generally in designated areas accessed only by special invitation.

and my requirements to both apl.de.ap and Taboo at different points in the evening. However, without a personal introduction from Mr Grant, combined with loud music and what appeared to be the influence of alcohol, this communication failed. apl.de.ap and Taboo either misunderstood me or where uninterested in what I said.

After the lack of interest from apl.de.ap and Taboo, it was fortunate Mr Grant introduced me to will.i.am. Although the loud music, crowded environment and the nature of the setting made communication difficult, I was able to outline my research to will.i.am.

So we had about a five minute conversation where I explained what I was there for, and how my thesis deals with the same goal as his Peapod and I asked if he would like to speak to me. He said he'd love to. Are you sure? Yes. Thank you so much. You are welcome. It seemed sincere, Will seemed cool and it sounded as though he was keen to help me out. Phew! (Field notes, Toronto, 10 September 2006).

Having attempted to speak with all the members of Black Eyed Peas, it became evident from their reactions, and the comments of Mr Grant and will.i.am, that speaking to will.i.am alone would be most beneficial for my research.

Having established with will.i.am that he was willing to be part of my research, I set about confirming a time in which to conduct an interview. Prior to leaving the Toronto VIP After Party I asked Mr Grant when would be a suitable time to meet with will.i.am. Mr Grant explained that upon leaving the party the Black Eyed Peas were flying to America. They would be back in Montreal later that same day, 10 September. We planned to use a break in the schedule (10-11 September) in Montreal to do the interview. This did not eventuate as the crew were busy

celebrating a musician's birthday on 11 September, while plans to conduct the interview after Montreal show on 12 September also failed to eventuate. Despite calling Mr Grant's cellular phone at least once a day, it was not until the band and myself were in Ottawa that a window of interview opportunity opened - Mr Grant told me I could possibly interview will.i.am backstage after the Ottawa concert on the evening of 13 September.

Such was the precariousness of the interview opportunity that even as Mr Grant and I walked backstage to meet will.i.am he commented that he could not

promise anything because Will is all over the place; he was late to the show because he was writing a song, and it's all a bit chaotic. I was taken backstage and instructed to wait outside while Mr Grant entered and spoke to Will about the situation (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006).

Mr Grant later informed me that upon explaining my presence to will.i.am, and the nature of my research, he had responded: "Alright, bring her in" (Field notes, Los Angeles, 13 May 2007).

The next thing I remember was that there was a huge stereo blasting music and a wall of mirrors. I remember Will standing there looking at me as he buttoned up his shirt, put on his hat, checked himself in the mirror etc. I was totally unsure as to how to act at this point, and I think I kept glancing to Bobby for help as to how to approach the whole thing . . . Will seemed rather content to carry on with what he was doing and looked at me blankly as if to say that it was up to me to take action. I can't remember exactly but I think I might have asked him if he would mind answering some questions and he didn't respond. The feeling that I got from Bobby was that this was typical and to be expected for him to behave this way. I patiently waited rather intrigued at the whole display. At some stage Bobby said to just go ahead (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006).

My first question was successful in obtaining will.i.am's interest. He responded "can we go somewhere quiet" (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006) and after a further few minutes of waiting for him to finish socialising he lead Mr Grant and myself outside of the venue and onto a mobile recording studio bus. I had no indication of how long I had to conduct the interview. will.i.am sat at the studio desk. Mr Grant occasionally contributed to the issues being discussed.

We were at the back of the bus . . . Will was preoccupied at the computer desk, working on a song, so I took the time to set up my Dictaphone, microphone and get out the questions while I was trying to absorb the environment around me. I was currently in a bit of a state of disbelief. Extremely excited to be in the environment I found myself in and trying to familiarise myself as quickly as possible. Will was making some adjustments to the song, and I was more than happy to just sit there and absorb the whole experience. I listened to the lyrics and it was a song directly relevant to my topic and social issues (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006).

The interview was both a fascinating and slightly intimidating experience, a contrast made evident in my post-interview field notes:

At the time my mind was in overdrive. I had control over what I was asking, but it was all happening extremely quickly and I had no idea how long I had so I felt a real sense of urgency and pressure to get it all right. I didn't find it a relaxed environment because of the time frame. The entire experience felt like it was on fast forward. I was a little bit on edge because I was trying to take in everything he was saying. I felt somewhat overcome by the whole situation and a little stunned that my plan had actually worked and was actually occurring! I had no idea how long I had with Will so I tried to churn

through as many topics as I could and once he signalled to me that he was finished I would immediately try to move on to another issue (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006).

Alongside interviewing willi.i.am, I sought information from various organisations related to the Black Eyed Peas. These Los Angeles-based organisations included the Peapod Foundation, Grassroots Productions, the Entertainment Industry Foundation, and Peace4Kids. Prior to leaving Aotearoa/New Zealand for Europe and Canada in 2006 I obtained relevant phone numbers and email addresses from the Peapod Foundation website. Between June and July 2006 I sent a number of emails to Polo Molina, Christine Hansen and Ben Gross requesting information on the Peapod Foundation.⁴⁶ As these emails remained unanswered, in late July 2006 I telephoned the Peapod office and spoke to Ben Gross.⁴⁷ During this conversation Mr Gross accepted my reason for calling and said I should contact him again if he could help in the future. A further opportunity to accept Mr Gross' offer of help came via Mr Grant introducing me to Polo Molina when I was in Canada. At this time I had a very brief conversation with Mr Molina, during which I outlined my research and obtained contact details from Mr Molina. In late September 2006, having returned to Aotearoa/New Zealand, I phoned Mr Molina to follow-up on our initial face-to-face conversation. Mr Molina was not in a position to help me and suggested I speak to Mr Gross. Following Mr Molina's advice I telephoned Mr Gross and spoke with him about the activities of the Peapod Foundation (see Table 1). Due to a prior

⁴⁶ I have reason to believe the email addresses obtained from the Peapod Foundation website were unreliable. I am inclined to think this because the email address Ben Gross gave me in conversation, and Polo Molina gave me on his business card, were different to the email addresses listed on the website. Furthermore, Mr Gross mentioned he had never received the email I sent him during the June-July 2006 period.

⁴⁷ Christine Hansen resigned from the Peapod Foundation in June 2006 and Ben Gross became the Foundation's administrator.

commitment Mr Gross ended our conversation after 15 minutes, suggesting I email him with further requests.

In early 2007 I discovered I was to travel to America for a rowing regatta in Seattle in the first week of May. On 15 March I emailed Mr Gross, Mr Grant and Mr Molina to ask about the likelihood of interviews should I extend my stay in America to visit Los Angeles. I never received replies from Mr Molina or Mr Gross, while Mr Grant replied explaining that he was uncertain if he would be in Los Angeles at the time. On 23 March 2007 I telephoned Mr Gross at Grassroots Production to propose my Los Angeles stop over. He requested that I email an outline of my visit and what I wanted to achieve. On 29 March 2007 I confirmed an appointment time with Mr Gross via telephone and email. Given this arrangement I changed my travel plans so as to return to Aotearoa/New Zealand via Los Angeles.

Although I had arranged for an interview with Mr Gross on my first day in Los Angeles nothing else in my trip had been prearranged (see Table 1). The methodology I employed during my visit in Los Angeles was equally as impromptu as that used while I was in Canada, with spontaneity being determined by schedule changes of potential interviewees. My contact with Mr Gross created a snowball effect, enabling me to build up “layers of contacts” (Valentine, 1997, 116). Valentine (1997, 116) explains snowballing as “using one contact to help you recruit another contact, who in turn can put you in touch with someone else”. Mr Gross was able to direct me to the appropriate contacts at Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF) and Peace4Kids. Snowballing can help gain the trust of the interviewee, which is a major obstacle in interviewee recruitment (Valentine,

1997). I experienced this during my stay in Los Angeles; when I explained to assistants at EIF, and Zaid Gayle at Peace4Kids, that I had been referred from Mr Gross at Grassroots they were very helpful. Every day during my week-long stay I made phone calls and sent emails to individuals at EIF, Peace4Kids, and associated Black Eyed Peas agencies to check the schedules and availability of potential respondents.

During a post-interview telephone conversation with Mr Gross he gave me contact details for relevant EIF staff. Using these details I made repeated attempts to contact the EIF for an interview. I spoke to the assistants of both Lisa Polsen (Vice President of the EIF) and Cathy James (Special Events Manager of the EIF) and received a number of phone calls from an associate of Lisa Polsen. While I remained in contact with EIF staff throughout the week, I was not able to organise an interview. The short notice they had to talk to me, in conjunction with the EIF being in the final stages of organising an event, conspired against a face-to-face meeting.

Before I left Aotearoa/New Zealand for Seattle I telephoned Mr Grant to discuss my visit to Los Angeles. Mr Grant explained that rehearsals for Fergie's solo tour were scheduled for early May 2007, meaning we would both be in Los Angeles at the same time.⁴⁸ During our phone conversation I inquired about the likelihood of obtaining an interview with Polo Molina while in Los Angeles. Mr Grant made it clear Mr Molina had an extremely busy schedule, so an interview was extremely unlikely. Within 24 hours of arriving in Los Angeles in early May I phoned Mr

⁴⁸ On 19 September 2006 Fergie released her debut solo album *The Dutchess*. Her solo career remains a side project and she remains a member of the Black Eyed Peas. Fergie's first solo tour, the Verizon VIP Tour began in May 2007 (Blackeyedpeas.com, 2007).

Grant to confirm our prior arrangements to meet. From Mr Grant's comments during this call it was obvious his schedule had changed and, as such, he would not be in Los Angeles until later than expected.

During subsequent phone communication with Mr Grant he expressed his willingness to take part in an interview. Given his involvement with Fergie's concert rehearsals, it was not until my sixth day in Los Angeles that I was able to meet with Mr Grant. This meeting was however, in a social setting which was inappropriate for conducting a formal interview. The dialogue instead resembled an informal conversational interview where the questions "emerge from the immediate context of the conversation and are asked in the natural course of discussion" (Kitchen and Tate, 2000, 214).

Given I was in Los Angeles I decided it might be profitable to contact Christine Hansen. Having obtained her contact details from her company's website, I phoned Miss Hansen. She suggested I email her an explanation of my reasons for an interview and telephone her the following morning.⁴⁹ I telephoned Miss Hansen as instructed and conducted a phone interview with her (see Table 1).

While in Los Angeles I also tried to organise a follow-up interview with will.i.am. On my arrival in Los Angeles Mr Grant informed me that will.i.am was currently 'in-town', so I contacted Mr Gross about the possibility of an interview. Mr Gross notified me that will.i.am was tied up with deadlines the entire time I would be in Los Angeles. During subsequent communication with Mr Gross during my week

⁴⁹ During a telephone conversation with Mr Grant that evening I discovered that Miss Hansen had contacted him to find out some background information on my agenda. Mr Grant was able to explain my research, also giving a positive report on my previous involvement with the Black Eyed Peas and their associates. This communication further highlights the importance of personal contact and snowballing for my research.

long stay in Los Angeles I asked if will.i.am's schedule had changed enough to enable me to conduct an interview; Mr Gross' response did not change. I asked Mr Gross if he was willing to 'replace' will.i.am and answer some specific follow-up questions I had, but he said he was unavailable.

4.3.3 Participant observation

In addition to obtaining interviews with key informants, my time in Canada and Los Angeles offered opportunities to undertake participant observation in a range of settings. In Canada these settings included concerts (as a member of the audience, attending three shows on VIP tickets: 9 September in Toronto, 12 September in Montreal, 13 September in Ottawa); back-stage (post-concert in Ottawa); in night-clubs (post-concert VIP After Parties in Toronto and Ottawa); in a mobile recording studio (post-concert Ottawa); on a tour bus (post-concert in Ottawa); and, in a mini-van (post-concert in Ottawa). Access to these sites of participant observation came via Mr Grant; he provided me with tickets for concerts, guest passes for access to VIP parties and backstage areas, and personally invited me into the Black Eyed Peas' tour bus and mini-van. In some situations I was able to explain my research to individuals with whom I was socialising, while Mr Grant had informed members of the Black Eyed Peas as to the reason for my presence. That is, the members of the Black Eyed Peas and its entourage were aware I was present for research purposes.

Participant observation is about engaging in a social scene, experiencing it and seeking to understand and explain it . . . Participant observation is not an easy method to perform or to analyse . . . if performed well, [participant observation] greatly assists in understanding human actions and brings with it new ways of viewing the social world (May, 2001, 174).

May (2001, 148) explains that participant observation “encourages researchers to immerse themselves in the day-to-day activities of the people whom they are attempting to understand” (see also Cook, 1997; Laurier, 2003). Participant observation allows the researcher to move beyond formal interactions such as interviews and observe the ‘flow’ and spontaneity “of everyday life in both time and space” (Kearns, 2000, 108). As a method based on trusting relationships (Kitchen and Tate, 2000), participant observation requires a degree of acceptance into a given community (May, 2001).

For researchers, participant observation it is arguably “the most personally demanding and analytically difficult method of social research to undertake” (May, 2001, 153). This ‘difficulty’ stems from the way in which participant observation requires researchers to “spend a great deal of time in surroundings with which they may not be familiar; [and] to secure and maintain relationships with people with whom they may have little personal affinity” (May, 2001, 153). I was definitely unfamiliar with the sites of my field experience, having never visited Canada previously and certainly having never experienced life with a globally recognised music group and music industry employees. Furthermore, as discussed later in relation to my field work in Los Angeles, I had no previous experience with the city, charity coordinators or local people from a predominantly ‘black area’ with a reputation for violence, gangs and poverty. As such, I was completely unsure as to what opportunities would be available or presented to me during my periods of participant observation.

Kearns (2000) notes that researchers cannot blend in unless they participate socially, a facet made difficult for me as Mr Grant was the only person I knew in the Black Eyed Peas' entourage. Furthermore, prior to arriving in Canada, having met Mr Grant once in a single and brief face-to-face encounter I did not know him very well. For example, at the VIP After Party in Toronto I was wary of simple 'tagging along' behind Mr Grant. This situation highlights the 'balancing act' a researcher has to negotiate between participating and observing (Keyes, 2002).

I could have been a lot more confident and asked a lot more questions throughout the experience, but at the time I was in a completely foreign environment that I was not totally relaxed in because everything was so new (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006).

My field notes record that my personality also shaped my engagement in environments and with people during participant observation.

It is not in my nature to make small talk for the sake of it. So even though when I touched down in Canada I made a commitment to myself that I was going to have to be more outgoing than I might usually be in foreign social situations, I didn't see the point in trying to be someone I was not. So through the entire experience I tried to just act as honestly as possible, and take risks in order to achieve my goals when necessary (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006).

Each of my sites of participant observation provided for the viewing of different events and interactions; for example, when attending concerts I was able to embrace and reflect on the temporary bond of solidarity, unity and equality that existed between myself, other concert goers, and performers (Frith, 1992; Smith, 1994). During live shows I monitored crowd make-up and behaviour, crowd

interaction, crowd response, the musical content of the show, the behaviour of the Black Eyed Peas' members, and research relevant references made during the live performance. While attending post-concert VIP After Parties I was present within restricted areas of larger nightclubs, with 'bouncers' approving access to an environment dominated by extremely loud music. In observing social interaction amongst party-goers, I paid particular attention to the ways in which people responded to the members of the Black Eyed Peas.

As with the VIP After Parties, the backstage areas of the Black Eyed Peas' concerts were alive with numerous people (and loud music). I did not move throughout the backstage area and, as such, my observation was limited to those people interacting in my immediate environment. Despite being defined by a smaller space than concert halls, night-clubs or backstage areas, the touring bus was the site of much activity amongst the crew of the Black Eyed Peas. The tour bus was not accessible to as many people as the other spaces in which I undertook participant observation. Rather, it provided a site for more intimate social interaction amongst musicians and crew. As such, while seated in a corner of the main lounge of the bus I observed a constant flow of people moving in and out. From what I could ascertain the flow of people onto and out-of the tour bus included management personnel, musicians, stage crew members, friends, and partners. As a participant in conversations and activities occurring on the tour bus my observations focused on who had access to the bus, which people were interacting with which others, and the nature of the socialisation.

On the days I conducted participant observation I would record recall notes on what had occurred on my Dictaphone. Kitchen and Tate (2000) identify the value in recording post-observation diaries, while Kearns (2000) advises that observations be recorded at end of the day or after the observation session. Furthermore, Kearns (2000) explains that ‘delayed’ recording is beneficial as the use of recording equipment or notes during observation may disrupt the nature of the interaction. My electronic field diary (Cook, 1997) included “thoughts, feelings and reactions” (Banks, 2003, 89) regarding the observations I had made, the people with whom I had interacted, the nature of the interaction, and the place in which interaction occurred. Cook (1997) suggests the use of a camera to illustrate arguments. At many locations during my observations on tour in Canada cameras were not allowed. I was also wary of asking for photos as I did not want to be positioned as a fan.

While in Los Angeles I was eager to visit the site of the Black Eyed Peas Peapod Music and Arts Academy at the Watts/Willowbrook Boys and Girls Club (WWBGC). My visit to the WWBGC, and subsequent interviews with Zaid Gayle and Shawn Jackson (see Table 1), were initiated when I suggested the idea to Mr Gross. Although Mr Gross was supportive of my interest in visiting the Academy he was concerned for my safety, as a white female travelling alone into an area which has a high crime rate and a significant gang presence (Wells, 2006). Given this concern, Mr Gross gave me the contact details for Zaid Gayle, the Executive Director and Cofounder of Peace4Kids, and forwarded my emailed research outline to Mr Gayle. When I phoned Mr Gayle he was responsive to my idea of visiting Watts. He put me in touch with Marni Otway (Cofounder and Programme

Director of Peace4Kids) who organised a Peace4Kids volunteer to drive me to the WWBGC.

I spent the morning of 12 May 2007 at the WWBGC participating in a ‘creative education class’ run by Peace4Kids. During this visit I helped official volunteers with tasks and activities, such as constructing equipment and organising the youth when they arrived at the venue. I observed two meetings – the first meeting was for staff volunteers, the second was for youth participants. I sat in on an activity based lesson for the ‘teenage group’ and I participated in the ‘music group’s’ goal setting task.⁵⁰ Following this, I was taken on a tour of the Peapod Music and Arts Academy, which was under construction, and I joined a number of the teenagers from the music group in the Academy recording studio. I then conducted a semi-structured interview with Zaid Gayle and Shawn Jackson (see Table 1).

Laurier (2003) notes the possible benefit of taking notes while present in the observation setting; note taking identifies the role as a researcher, meaning you ‘will be taken seriously’. This is an approach I adopted in Watts, the only observation experience where I deemed it appropriate. Following Cook’s (1997) suggested value of camera use, when I asked if I could take photos at the WWBGC I received no objections.

4.3.4 Secondary sources

In order to comprehend the way in which popular music can alter cultural boundaries, this research combines primary and secondary data. When interviews

⁵⁰ The Peace4Kids programme is split into three groups: early education, ages 5-7; creative education, ages 8-13; and the teenage group, ages 14-18 (Zaid Gayle, interview, 12 May 2007). During my visit the teenage group was split into three different groups: digital media, film, music and poetry (Field notes, Los Angeles, 12 May 2007).

and personnel were unavailable, I resorted to secondary sources (Keyes, 2002).⁵¹ Secondary data is publicly available “information which has already been collected by someone else” (Clark, 1997, 57). Secondary data was gathered from such ‘formal’ published sources as scholarly books, journals, and newspaper articles. Given the way in which music, and music-related information, is presented and discussed in a range of ‘informal’ multi-media sources, I collected secondary data from music magazines (for example, *Billboard* and *The Source*), and Internet sites. Internet sites provided videos of such things as concert performances and interviews (for example, www.youtube.com and www.blackeyedpeas.com), along with lyrics to Black Eyed Peas songs. The internet also provided information on the activities of the Peapod Foundation.

While lyrical analysis may be important in understanding the meanings intended by the composer (Lull, 1987), words are only part of a song (Kong, 1995a). For example, Griffith’s (2003) study of the consumption of music lyrics by 15-16 year old teenagers found that lyrics did not influence the listener’s behaviour. The teenagers were “most interested in music listening to the melody and those dancing to it preferring strong beats” (Griffiths, 2003, 270). One interviewee stated that “[a]dults look into his [the rapper Eminem] music far too much. They actually listen to it and analyse the words . . . when kids might just listen because they like it!” (Griffiths, 2003, 271; see also Wall, 2000). Given these findings, although I examined the lyrics of Black Eyed Peas’ music, I was also careful to not let them distract me from the overall impact of the music as a whole. Visual

⁵¹ Much has been written about media bias (see for example Bennett, 2001; Bozell and Baker, 1990; Davis, 2007; Grossberg, 2006; Hammersley, 2006; Niven, 2002; Radford, 2003; Starkey, 2007). As an elite athlete who has been interviewed for both print and broadcast media I have had first hand experience with the subjectivity that exists in journalism. As such, I acknowledge the media reports I used on the Black Eyed Peas were possibly subject to the influence of media bias.

characteristics were analysed with respect to the Black Eyed Peas with music videos and clothing for their use in communicating meanings of the musicians' identity (Kong, 1995a).

4.4 Data Analysis: Triangulation

Primary and secondary data was analysed through established (geographic) methods to explore the ways in which the Black Eyed Peas negotiate cultural boundaries. Thus, the validity of secondary data was confirmed via triangulation, with comparison made between information acquired from different published sources. Triangulated inquiry allows for a comparison of data (Fielding and Fielding, 1986; Jick, 1979; May, 2001; Whyte, 1984). Validated secondary data was also used to clarify meanings expressed in primary data. The analysis of information obtained from face-to-face interviews was based on a 'universal approach', a mode of analysis "which can be applied to study all types of qualitative data" (Kitchen and Tate, 2000, 229). In enabling deeper understanding of qualitative data, the 'universal approach' combines processes of categorisation and connection. Thus, interpretive categorisation occurred through identification of common themes, with my existing knowledge of the topic under analysis employed to identify key aspects of analysis. Identified themes were considered in terms of relevant associations, with connections identified via identifiable interactions and (knowledge-based) intuitive understanding of what is being said, why it is being said, and the context of delivery.

4.5 Conclusion

Drawing on academic recognition that all research is subjective, personal motivations were extremely influential to the methodology I employed for this

research. I was determined to obtain as much exposure to the ‘world’ of the Black Eyed Peas as possible. As the Black Eyed Peas are one of the most famous music groups in the world, and considering research the music industry presents many challenges, I was dependant on “luck and chance, connections and networks, and the particular circumstances at the time” for the success of my research (McDowell, 1998, 2135). Although I was in completely foreign environments during my research, both in terms of my lack of prior exposure to the music industry and my never having been to Canada or Los Angeles in the past, by ‘being myself’ and expressing unfettered enthusiasm and passion I was able to access the ‘BEP Empire’. Developing rapport with Bobby Grant and Ben Gross positioned these men as ‘gatekeepers’, enabling me to conduct interviews and participant observation in Canada and Los Angeles. As will be illustrated in the following chapter, the combining of primary data with information from secondary sources enabled a detailed investigation into the geographies of the Black Eyed Peas.

Chapter Five

I'm doing this [career] because at one point in time I was in my bedroom dreaming about doing it. So here I am doing it, and I don't wanna stop doing it, because I remember what it felt like, dreaming in the Projects, looking out the bathroom window (will.i.am quoted in Artisan News Service, 2006).

Black Eyed Peas: Soul food

5.1 'Where is the Love?'

(*Elephunk*)

'Where is the Love?' was the Black Eyed Peas' first successful mainstream crossover song, selling over one million copies in America and emerging as "one of the biggest records of all time in terms of its radio spins" (Ron Fair in Moss, 2004). As explained previously, 'Where is the Love?' marks the beginning of my personal journey with this topic (see Preface). The success of 'Where is the Love?', and sales of the *Elephunk* album from which the song came, signalled a change in direction for the Black Eyed Peas. This change, which was accompanied by the addition of Fergie to the group, occurred as the group moved from being a critically-acclaimed hip hop act with a small but devoted fan base to being the most popular hip hop act in the world (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also NYKHouston43, 2006; Spicer, 2005). Printz Board, band member with Bucky Jonson, believes the crossover success of the Black Eyed Peas was

all based around the 9/11⁵² thing. That's when me and will.i.am sat down and wrote "Where Is The Love?" It wasn't really about being more innovative. Fergie came into the picture almost after the album was done. It

⁵² 9/11 refers to a series of coordinated terrorist suicide attacks upon the United States of America on 11 September 2001.

wasn't like, "We're gonna put her in the group and now we're the United Colors of Benetton."⁵³ It was just a natural evolution in where we were going based on where the world was going (Airpushers, 2006; Allhiphop.com, 2006).

Deeper reading into the situation, however, reveals that Black Eyed Peas' rise to stardom is far more complex than 'natural evolution'. While 'Where is the Love?' was inspired by the terrorist attack of 9/11, the group had been working on a collection of songs focused on such hip hop clichés as partying and boasting. As with many other people, members of the Black Eyed Peas were shocked by the events of 9/11. Responding through music, the Black Eyed Peas dismissed their musical clichés in favour of a song that expressed their understanding of, and their emotions in response to, the state of the world (Blender, 2006; Johnson and Mooallem, 2006).

Media reports indicate will.i.am never expected 'Where is the Love?' to get radio airplay, with the singer stating that if he was seeking airplay he "wouldn't have written that line calling the CIA terrorists" (Blender, 2006; see Appendix Two for 'Where is the Love?' lyrics). Making a lie of will.i.am's comments is evidence of musical manipulations designed to ensure commercial success for 'Where is the Love?'. The Black Eyed Peas began work on *Elephunk* under the guidance of Ron Fair, president of the A&M record company (Endelman, 2005; Moss, 2004; Rosen and Sexton, 2004). According to Fair, the high-profile and popular singer Justin Timberlake was invited to sing the chorus on 'Where is the Love?' in an orchestrated move to generate a commercially successful cross-over song (Moss, 2004). While the writing of 'Where is the Love?' was initiated in response to

⁵³ United Colors of Benetton is a style of casual clothing manufactured by the global clothing company Benetton. These casual clothes come in a variety (colourful) colours (United Colors of Benetton, 2007).

9/11, Fair edited existing vocals, added additional vocals, rearranged verses, and added instruments to make the song as appealing as possible (Moss, 2004). The alterations undertaken by Fair meant the final version of the song was a ‘watered down’ compromise between the original Black Eyed Peas recording and the commercial ‘vision’ of their record company (Baca, 2003).

Despite a commercial sound, the song did contain lyrical content that was avant-garde for mainstream music (see Appendix Two): “The world needs this song right now. There’s no song like that in urban music, pop music. We’re saying some pretty deep stuff, some conscious stuff” (will.i.am quoted in Moss, 2004). Mainstream audiences responded to the plea for peace, love and understanding present in the lyrics:

It was a very powerful song for a lot of people around the world because it just reflected a feeling . . . it was just a song, but the fact is that’s what makes music so beautiful, you know it gets in there [motioning to his heart] and it affects people (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also NYKHouston43, 2006).

Ignoring the financial returns generated through touring in support of a successful album and single, will.i.am positions the Peas’ decision to perform in Vietnam as being symbolic of the band

being on right path . . . To go back to a place that was once bombarded by bombs. We are going in the name of peace and communication and guidance through the song ‘Where’s the Love?’ . . . it lets me know that I’m doing the right thing (airbornedonzi, 2006).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The Black Eyed Peas were one of the first American groups to return to Vietnam after the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War began in 1959 and ended in 1975. The war was fought between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), with support from the United States of America (Karnow, 1997).

5.2 Rising above oppression

Consideration of ‘Where is the Love?’ introduces the key components employed in this chapter to investigate of the ways in which the Black Eyed Peas and their music disrupts established boundary construction and maintenance. This chapter draws on Smith (1997) in identifying the ways in which music is employed by marginalised ‘others’ to gain a ‘voice’ and overcome oppression and deprivation (see Chapter Three). First, I will employ Smith’s (1997) point that music may be harnessed as an economic force to provide a route out of economic marginality. Second, I investigate how marginalised ‘others’ subvert existing musical conventions and create their own musical forms to “open up a space to represent themselves and their aspirations” (Smith, 1997, 517). Finally, I examine how music is employed by marginalised musicians to tell stories and articulate their “conditions of existence” (Smith, 1997, 517).

5.3 will.i.am

This investigation into the Black Eyed Peas’ disruption of cultural boundaries relies on the music and commentaries of will.i.am. In addition to being the “frontman” (will-i-am.com, 2007) and “chief producer and songwriter” (Timeless, 2006) for the Black Eyed Peas, will.i.am is the lead spokesperson for the Black Eyed Peas. Thus, in media interviews, such as those that appear in print media and those aired on television, will.i.am answers more questions than other band members. This leadership role, combined with his work as the driving philanthropic force within the band, positions him as the appropriate the focus for this study: “He is very much a person that is always trying to break boundaries, not just musically but socially” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

will.i.am is also one of the music industry's most sort-after producers and songwriters (Blender, 2006). "Will is no longer just a guy from the Black Eyed Peas; he is now a super producer that works with all sorts of people" (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). He has now worked with an extremely diverse and reputable group of artists, receiving multiple Grammy nominations for his work (see Blender, 2006; DeRogatis, 2006; Endelman, 2005; Faber, 2006; Moss, 2005a; will-i-am.com, 2007).⁵⁵

5.4 Behind the [socio-economic] Front and Bridging the [socio-economic] Gap

Smith (1997) outlines how, through the attainment of financial security, music provides an avenue to challenge marginal socio-economic status. In seeking economic gain artists must negotiate existing conditions and boundaries in music markets and the music industry. The positioning of music industry boundaries tends to be determined by white males, executives who have significant influence over the careers of musicians. Furthermore, as is noted in Chapter Two, male domination of the music industry extends to decisions over the nature of music made available for consumption. Such control is evident in the influence of Ron Fair on the production of 'Where is the Love?'.

⁵⁵ For example, will.i.am has either remixed or produced for Carlos Santana, Earth Wind and Fire, Bob Marley, the Isley Brothers, Sly and the Family Stone, the Rolling Stones. He has worked with Pink, Justin Timberlake, Nas, Kelis, Aretha Franklin, Sergio Mendes, Busta Rhymes, Ciara, Micheal Jackson, Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston, The Pussycat Dolls, James Brown, The Game, Too Short, Macy Gray, John Legend, Diddy, Sting, Kelly Rowland, Rihanna, Snoop Dogg. Macy Gray's album *Big* and Fergie's *The Dutchess* were both released of will.i.am's record label (Blender, 2006; DeRogatis, 2006; Endelman, 2005; Faber, 2006; Moss, 2005c; will-i-am.com, 2007). For details on the credentials of these artists see Rolling Stone (2007).

Fundamentally, therefore, music creation and distribution is ‘bound’ by corporate conventions that may be implicated in the position of musical boundaries. As will.i.am explains, the music industry’s promotion of a particular style of rap does not necessarily mean such songs reflect audience sentiment:

If there are whole lot of songs on the radio about booty⁵⁶ and sex it does not necessarily mean that the consciousness of the community and the people on the planet is of that. That means that there is a *barrier* being put (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006; emphasis in original).

Moreover, will.i.am suggests that, from his position as an ‘industry insider’, boundaries exist that limit the exposure of songs that do not fit with corporate expectations. will.i.am emphasises that there are many song writers who are focusing on the “problems of the world”, who are

purposely being barricaded but there’s no way to know that. You just have to be of the know to know it, and fortunately I’m in the know to know that people are writing about issues . . . There are a lot of songs that are being written right now about some shit that actually is heavy as far as the subject matter and the context of the content that they are writing its being *blocked*. . . and the stuff that’s on the radio is specific - that’s being propelled (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006; emphasis in original).

According to will.i.am the reason for this ‘blocking’ are music industry boundaries that determine what will get exposure and what will remain ‘underground’. These barricades are

no different to songs that are played on the radio for a certain purpose to numb us and dumb us. And certain songs to enlighten us and set us free are barricaded and blocked (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006).

⁵⁶ ‘Booty’ is slang for buttocks (Urban Dictionary, 2007).

will.i.am's experience within the music industry adds weight to these comments. Prior to the creation of the Black Eyed Peas, will.i.am, along with apl.de.ap, Mookie Mook and Dante Santiago, were members of a group called Atban Klann. This group recorded an album for Ruthless Records, a company owned and operated by Eazy-E, a former member of the gangsta rap group N.W.A. (see Chapter Two). Atban Klann's album was never released as Eazy-E and executives at Ruthless Records' partner label, Capitol, did not consider the social themes contained in the album to be marketable to the audience of the label (Ali, 2005; apldeap.com, 2007; Baca, 2003; Barry, 2005; Blender, 2006; dantesantiago.com, 2007; NYKHouston43, 2006; Spicer, 2005). With the death of Eazy-E in 1995, and the subsequent end to their record deal, Atban Klann disbanded.

The 'barriers' faced by will.i.am during his time in Atban Klann, and identified in recent comments, are maintained by "them, those and they" (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006). Bobby Grant explained that this phrase is used by BEP to describe 'big business', notably corporations who 'own the music'. The influence of 'them, those and they' is evident in the way in which music industry staff control who is "gonna see [videos], with the politics and all" (will.i.am quoted in Moss, 2005b). The Peas' record company Interscope Records would not fund, for example, a video for 'Bebot' (*Monkey Buisness*), a song rapped by apl.de.ap in the Philippine language of Tagalog, as executives at the company believed they would not get a financial return on their investment. That is, they did not believe there was a large enough audience of record buyers for 'Bebot' to make a video commercially viable (Little Manila, 2007). BEP eventually independently funded the recording of two videos for 'Bebot', an investment that

circumvented corporate barriers. Thus, video director Patricio Ginelsa explained that “[i]ts really a market thing . . . right now, our [Filipino] community has never been established as a market that can make a lot of money. It’s a game of people’s agendas” (La O, 2006).

5.4.1 Creative compromise

The music business is really that - music and business - and when you mix the two together, creativity is always subject to compromise (Baca, 2003, F. 01).

As a commodity, music is subject to creative compromise. Analysis of music creation provides valuable insight into the way musicians negotiate and challenge the conventions of the music industry. For the Black Eyed Peas, challenging corporate conventions involves forging an identity that balances being a socially aware group with being commercially viable (Ali, 2005). Given the commercial success of the Peas, it is clear they have successfully crossed the boundary from being “a conscious minded hip hop group . . . eating out of the same can of black eyed peas” to being able to eat “with their gold spoon if they want” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

The group’s socially conscious lyrics, deft MCing and dance skills, vibrant live shows, and unconventional use of a live band, attracted a sizeable local following in their home-town of Los Angeles. Despite this audience and widespread critical acclaim, the Black Eyed Peas struggled to generate a profile necessary to generate significant world-wide sales of their albums, *Behind the Front* and *Bridging the Gap* (Endelman, 2005; Rosen and Sexton, 2004; thedaughter, 2007). David Sonenberg, founder of the company that manages the Black Eyed Peas, explains that “[n]obody would adopt them because they were pretty eclectic” (quoted in

Rosen and Sexton, 2004, 18). Lack of widespread appeal was of concern to will.i.am:

After those first two records, I was thinking, We sold out the House of Blues, we have a cool fan base, but how do we get [holds his hand above his head] there? (Endelman, 2005).⁵⁷

After disappointing sales from their first two albums, Ron Fair describes the Black Eyed Peas as “very despondent” and on the verge of abandoning their career (Moss, 2004). If their third album did not sell, the group was at risk of being dropped by their label, something apl.de.ap admits they definitely had in mind during the recording of *Elephunk* (Endelman, 2005; Johnson and Mooallem, 2006). While will.i.am argues that in recording *Elephunk* he was “just thinking of good songs, good music” (Net Music Countdown, 2007), evidence suggests that record label pressure was a factor in the style of the album. Thus, despite Fergie’s claims that the sound of *Elephunk* “wasn’t pre-meditated like people think” (quoted in Barry, 2005), pressure from Interscope Records did influence musical outcomes.

[The Black Eyed Peas] weren’t the main urban type of music, but there wasn’t really a pop element, either, so they would sell a couple hundred thousand and just sort of stop . . . I said to them, ‘If you have the courage to dabble in pop, it may just work’ (Endelman, 2005, 46-47).

A jump in record sales from 200,000 for their second album to over seven million for their third album, *Elephunk*, suggests the Black Eyed Peas were successful in embracing a ‘pop element’. Such was the success of this stylistic move that rather

⁵⁷ House of Blues is a chain of music halls and restaurants. With venues throughout America, the House of Blues provides “live music and southern-inspired cuisine in an environment celebrating the African American cultural contributions of blues music and folk art” (House of Blues, 2007).

than being nominated for Grammy Awards in the rap category, as was the case in 2004 and 2005, the band and *Elephunk* were nominated in the pop category (Grammy.com, 2007).

5.4.2 “Fergie Ferg is in the house”

(‘Like That’, *Monkey Business*)

“When Fergie joined the group it added a whole other dimension”, it helped the Black Eyed Peas “rocket into stardom” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). Nearing the completion of recording *Elephunk*, the group required a vocalist for the song ‘Shut Up’. A mutual friend suggested Fergie would be a good choice to sing on the track.⁵⁸ After recording ‘Shut Up’, Interscope Records Chief Executive Officer Jimmy Iovine suggested that as the group “always had a girl singing the hooks” Fergie should become a full-time member (Blender, 2006).⁵⁹

will.i.am had reservations about the idea of including Fergie as a full-time member of the group: “I thought, ‘Fergie doesn’t really come from our world, so how are the [fans] gonna take it? It’ll make a lot of our fans pissed off’” (Barry, 2005). will.i.am was so impressed with Fergie’s talent, however, that he agreed to her becoming part of the Black Eyed Peas: “So what’s more important - appeasing somebody else, or surrounding ourselves with talented motherfuckers? We all knew the answer to that one” (Ali, 2005, 67).

⁵⁸ Prior to joining the group, Fergie was familiar with the Black Eyed Peas having being a fan of their music and having attended their live shows while in an all-girl vocal group Wild Orchid. Fergie had also approached will.i.am for assistance with a solo career she was hoping to pursue (Blender, 2006; Johnson and Mooallem, 2006; Net Music Countdown, 2007; NYKHouston43, 2006; Rosen and Sexton, 2004; Spicer, 2005).

⁵⁹ A ‘hook’ is a type of ‘musical passage’ in a song that is generally melodic or rhythmic (Jones, 2001).

Although these comments by will.i.am suggest Fergie's inclusion was based on musical ability, the role of Jimmy Iovine points to record company influence. Evidence of corporate pressure is manifest in the experience of Kim Hill. The Black Eyed Peas had used female vocalist Hill between 1995 and 2000, she featured on several songs on both *Behind the Front* and *Bridging the Gap*. Hill maintains that she left the group in 2000 because she refused to comply with record label pressure to go mainstream or 'sex up' her image. She considered pressure from the record company to be a form of "legal prostitution": "Based on what the band has become . . . I couldn't see myself singing 'My Humps' . . . and I knew that was the direction it was going" (thedaugther, 2007).⁶⁰

Several commentators have acknowledged that Fergie has been a significant influence in the success of the group (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also thedaugther, 2007). As "the eye candy of the Peas" (Patricio Ginelsa quoted in La O, 2006),⁶¹ Fergie provides a female voice, a personality and sex appeal (Rosen and Sexton, 2004). She has become an idol for young girls (Spicer, 2005), appearing regularly on the covers of such teenage magazines as *Cosmopolitan*, and *Seventeen*. Fergie is also a sex symbol for male fans, having appeared on the cover of such mens' magazines as *Complex* (Blackeyedpeas.com, 2007; see Appendix Three for images of the band). Given an observed aim of the Black Eyed Peas is to 'break boundaries', it is somewhat contradictory that the role of Fergie adheres to well-established music industry expectations of female performers (see Chapter Two).

⁶⁰ will.i.am states we "would never have originally sung that" (Faber, 2006), terming it "candy" (Music Television, 2007a). This 'candy' is reflected in the lyrics: "They say I'm really sexy / The boys they wanna sex me / They always standing next to me / Always dancing next to me / Tryin' a feel my hump, hump / Lookin' at my lump, lump. . . My lovely lady lumps / In the back and in the front" ('My Humps', *Monkey Business*, 2005).

⁶¹ Patricio Ginelsa directed videos for 'The Apl Song' (*Elephunk*) and 'Bebot' (*Monkey Business*).

5.4.3 Thirteen years olds and their mothers: Popularity within the mainstream

As reflected in will.i.am's uncertainty over including Fergie in the group, the Black Eyed Peas were wary 'going commercial' would distance them from their original fan base. Moreover, the further they moved from their original fans the less credibility they would have as an 'authentic' hip hop group (Moss, 2004). On considering options, will.i.am decided that credibility could be acquired anytime while career could not: "At one point I thought, 'Career or local-MC respect: Which one do I want?' I could always go back and get respect. My thing was career dude. Career. Career. Career" (Endelman, 2005, 45). Ben Gross explains that the 'career' solution for BEP was to "find the people who do buy records" (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

During the Black Eyed Peas live show I attended in Montreal, Canada, will.i.am spoke about the progression of the band from local icons to global celebrities:

He mentioned how the group had been together for 11 years and at one stage they were living off people's couches. They would tell others they were a group called the Black Eyed Peas, only to be mocked in return and not taken seriously. He made further reference to how far they have come as a group (Field notes, Montreal, 13 September 2006).

Over the course of the Black Eyed Peas' career, as the group has become increasingly successful, the composition of their audience has changed drastically. "We went from performing in front of tastemakers and people with the same thought processes as my own to audiences of 13-year-olds with their mothers"

(Spicer, 2005, 37).⁶² The huge crossover success of ‘Where is the Love?’ and *Elephunk* transformed the Black Eyed Peas’ fan base - originally confined largely to Los Angeles hip hop enthusiasts, BEP’s fanbase is now predominantly a ‘white pop audience’ (Baca, 2003; Endelman, 2005; Spicer, 2005).

According to Bobby Grant, Canada is a “primary demographic” for the Black Eyed Peas (Field notes, Hazewinkel, 4 August, 2007). As such, it may be suggested the fans with whom I interacted at concerts in Canada in 2006 during the U.S.A. Fall Tour 06 were ‘typical’ of BEP’s current audience.

Not a hip hop crowd at all. Definitely a pop audience. Predominantly mainstream, white, and middle class - families, children, teenage girls. A group of cheerleaders arrived at the ticket booth while I was waiting for my ticket, with their team cheer leading suitcases on wheels. The girls I befriended on the walk to the show - tarted up, lots of hair spray, lots of makeup. Also a diverse mix amongst crowd. I had a guy in front of me: mid-30’s, seriously conservative looking, white, balding, glasses and looked like he’d come straight from the corporate office block with what I assumed to be his Indian partner (Field notes, Toronto, 10 September, 2007).

5.4.4 “Black Eyed Peas represent selling out” (‘Like That’, *Monkey Business*)

In contrast to their early work, such as the socially conscious focus of Atblan Klann, the members Black Eyed Peas now aim to be “as accessible as possible . . . a lot of our music and the way our albums are shaped are built that way, and that’s the same with a lot of artists” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). Reflecting concerns of the members of BEP about the impact of commercialisation on their credibility, many fans considered that the group’s commercial direction

⁶² A tastemakers is someone who sets the standards of what is currently popular or stylish (Urban Dictionary, 2007).

compromised their integrity (Baca, 2003). will.i.am admits, “I used to rap about those kind of [commercial] groups. I understand” (Blender, 2006); “The pile that’s only designed for pop charts . . . Money is a drug and MC’s is on it (‘Bringing it Back’, *Bridging the Gap*).

The credibility versus compromise dynamic faced by the Black Eyed Peas is representative of a larger issue. With a more commercial direction a group may gain new fans at the expense of losing members of an original audience. As some (original) fans turn away, critical of the band for ‘selling out’ their ‘indie’⁶³ ideals in order to become more popular, the group benefits from exposure to a large audience. In addition to increasing record sales, a larger audience provides more opportunities for the band to express and expose their views of the world (Baca, 2003). Thus, in response to criticisms of having ‘sold out’ will.i.am explains that “hip-hop is supposed to be popular” (will.i.am quoted in Baca, 2003, F. 01).

The funny thing is that I’ll run into DJ Premiere or these [other hip hop pioneers] that we all look up to - the De La Souls, the Tribe Called Quests - and they all congratulate me and appreciate how far we took hip-hop. They don’t see it as not being hip-hop; they see it as, “Yo, you guys are keeping it alive.” The fan always has a different perspective than the architects (DeRogatis, 2006).

Taboo has also defended the commercial approach of the band, explaining that a conscious message had always been a feature of the band. With the success of ‘Where is the Love?’, a mass audience was able to discover the social messages of the group (Johnson and Mooallem, 2006).

⁶³ ‘Indie’ is an abbreviation for ‘independent’. It is a term to describe music that is regarded to be independent of mainstream trends (Shuker, 1998).

I don't wanna be living at home with my mom and free styling in the backyard 'cause I wanna be a purist. Forget that shit. I'm selling out? I'm selling out *arenas*, motherfucker! (Blender, 2006; emphasis in original).

According to Baca (2003) the Black Eyed Peas' audience responded in three different ways to the increased 'accessibility' of the band: new fans loved the new music the band was recording, having never been exposed to the Peas' via radio play or video exposure; some (original) fans thought they were building on their original sound and taking it to a new level; and, some (original) fans despised their new pop sound believing the group had lost that for which they stood. The fans that turned away from the Black Eyed Peas accused the group of 'selling out' (Ali, 2005; Barry, 2005).

Despite widespread understandings amongst fans of what it means when a group 'sells out', this concept does not stand-up to academic critique. As explained in Chapter Two, a hip hop artists' 'realness' is relative to either their skill as a live performer, record sales, or a combination of the two. Furthermore, conscious rappers can never 'sell out' because their goal is to publicise political messages to the widest possible audience.

Rappers, like other artists, are producing music because they enjoy the art form. They are also, however, seeking economic gain - music is their job.

People say 'sellout.' That's one thing I don't get. That's some dumb shit, because it's like we ain't frontin'⁶⁴. I ain't got crazy gold [jewellery] or being something that I'm not . . . The reality is the only thing they can say

⁶⁴ 'Fronting' is slang for "appearing one way, but really acting another. Misrepresenting yourself" (Urban Dictionary, 2007).

about the Black Eyed Peas is ‘Those dudes is all over the place,’ and that all relates to the fact that we work hard. So if we’re criminals for working hard, then lock me up (Moss, 2005c).

5.4.5 Corporate sponsorship

The decision of the Black Eyed Peas’ to engage with corporate sponsorship may be understood via reference to commercial gain. During live performances in Canada will.i.am was wearing Nike sneakers while singing ‘Gone Going’ (*Monkey Business*), a song criticising materialism. Certain items of clothing worn by the Black Eyed Peas during the show were also branded with Nike. Questioned about what appeared to be endorsement of Nike clothing, will.i.am explained that he likes “doing sponsorship, ya know, like we do a lot of corporate sponsorship” (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006). By embracing corporate sponsorship the Peas’ may be understood as aligning themselves with ‘them, those and they’, the ‘big businesses’ that monitor boundaries and ‘control the music’. will.i.am denies his willingness to accept corporate sponsorship contradicts his criticism of ‘them, those and they’:

At some point, you’ve just gotta cover your ears and not listen to the he-said/she-said and the commentaries about the moves you make when you have to make those moves to survive in a business that’s sinking.⁶⁵ It has nothing to do with getting paid - it’s about reaching new listeners through this new form (DeRogatis, 2006).

will.i.am’s argument about corporate sponsorship helping ‘spread the music’ is undermined by his admission that, like music video, corporate sponsorship acts as a form of advertising for the Black Eyed Peas and their music. Prior to the release of *Elephunk*, BEP had a deal with Cadbury Schweppes to promote the Dr Pepper

⁶⁵ Chapter Two explains the changing nature of music buying practices and the impact of music piracy on music sales.

carbonated soft drink and an agreement with Levi Strauss to promote the Silvertab line of youth-oriented clothing (MacArthur, 2004; Rosen and Sexton, 2004). After the release of *Elephunk* the group began to use ‘commercial opportunities’ far more aggressively to market their music (Blender, 2006). Examples include the song ‘Let’s Get it Started’ (*Elephunk*) being employed as the theme song for the National Basketball Association of America playoffs and finals; the song ‘Hey Mama’ (*Elephunk*) being a central component of an advertising campaign for Apple iPod portable media players; and, the inclusion of the song ‘Shut Up’ (*Elephunk*) in a commercial for the digital subscription radio service XM Satellite Radio (Apple, 2007; National Basketball Association, 2007; XM Satellite Radio, 2007). It is now possible to brush your teeth to the Black Eyed Peas with Toothtunes, a toothbrush that plays pop songs for children (Neff, 2006). Alongside licensing music for additional exposure and income (Rosen and Sexton, 2004), the Peas endorse product sponsorship. The Honda Motor Company, for example, sponsored the 2006 Black Eyed Peas Honda Civic Tour of America. A Honda Civic car also featured as ‘product placement’ in the video for the song ‘Pump It’ (*Monkey Business*) (Honda Civic Tour, 2006).

In order to “combat” the inherent contradiction of corporate sponsorship for a group that claims to be socially progressive, will.i.am highlighted the “momentum that can be begotten from those [corporate] relationships” (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006). The Black Blue and You World Tour, for example, will see the Black Eyed Peas performing in countries not commonly toured by international music groups. Beginning in September 2007, this tour is part of the ‘Pepsi More!’ promotional campaign. Initiated by the multi-national

soft-drink company PepsiCo, this campaign provides opportunities for fans to participate with BEP through song writing and art design (pepsimore.com, 2007).

5.5 ‘Get Original’

(Bridging the Gap)

The Black Eyed Peas’ song ‘Get Original’ (*Bridging the Gap*) provides evidence in support of Smith’s (1997, 517) notion that marginalised ‘others’ create their own musical forms to “represent themselves and their aspirations”. Chapter Three details how processes of globalisation, such as international migration and the dispersal of music genres, have ‘normalised’ processes and engagements that give rise to diversity and hybrid identities. In relation to popular music, such ‘normalcy’ means that music genres and styles are no longer tied to specific ethnic groups.

Subscribing to the idea that hybrid identities are now the norm, the Black Eyed Peas draw on their hybrid ‘ethnic’ composition to create their own space within the hip hop genre. In relation to the notion that global flows of cultural forms are interpreted depending on local knowledges, the Black Eyed Peas possess a unique identity within hip hop and popular culture. Positioned within a global network of information and commodity exchange, the Black Eyed Peas have never tired of “trying to push boundaries” (Moss, 2005c).

Music corporations [are] only putting out a certain type of hip hop because it sells the most and neglecting another side, when hip hop is hip hop. Poetry is poetry. . . As a whole hip hop is just art . . . we are just saying there are other sides of the hip hop world (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006; see also Designer Magazine, 2001).

Although Black Eyed Peas' music is subject to market pressure, the 'other side of the hip hop world' created by the Peas has broken though industry norms. When questioned on the role of BEP in pop culture, Ben Gross answered: "I see them as leaders, breaking musical boundaries, breaking cultural boundaries" (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

5.5.1 "We about mass appeal no segregation / Got black to Asian and Caucasian"

(*'Joints and Jam', Behind the Front*)

As a medium for exchange across social boundaries, music may be a catalyst for the emergence of hybrid identities (see Chapter Three). Indeed, rap is a music genre that is founded on hybrid identities - it emerged as an expression of the lives of members of multicultural communities living in marginalised urban spaces (see Chapter Two). Social boundary transgression and hybridisation resonate through the origins and emergence of the Black Eyed Peas, starting with the friendship between will.i.am and apl.de.ap (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also Spicer, 2005). apl.de.ap was born in the Philippines and was supported by a Californian lawyer, Joe Ben Hudgens, through a foundation that assisted the "illegitimate children of black American military overseas" (Spicer, 2005, 39). In 1989, at age 14, Apl travelled to America to receive treatment for a congenital eye disorder. While in America he was formally adopted by Hudgens, whose roommate was will.i.am's uncle (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also Blender, 2006; highrollerstudios, 2007; Spicer, 2005; xylophonistic, 2006). Despite Apl having limited command of English, he developed a friendship with will.i.am.

This friendship, along with an association with Taboo, was based around a love for hip hop culture. Indeed, by the time they met, all three band members had been immersed in hip hop for several years. Apl had started break dancing as a nine-year-old in the Philippines (Johnson and Mooallem, 2006). will.i.am started rapping in his Mexican neighbourhood when he was about 13 years old (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; Designer Magazine, 2001); “I’m a battle MC, don’t forget it . . . My roots are as a backpack parking-lot rapper” (Moss, 2005c). Taboo started break dancing when he was 14-years-of-age. As a Mexican, living in a Mexican neighbourhood, Taboo was belittled and laughed at for his hip hop dress style (Blender, 2006; Johnson and Mooallem, 2006) and for “dancing like a black dude” (Blender, 2006). Music and dancing provided apl.de.ap, will.i.am and Taboo with a ‘buffer’ against the violence and gang life that was prevalent in the ‘projects’ of East Los Angeles where they grew-up (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

In 1995 the trio formed the Black Eyed Peas (Field notes, Montreal, 13 September 2006). The Black Eyed Peas’ unique form of hip hop is rooted in their diverse backgrounds - the Peas forged an identity from confidence about

who we are as individuals and what we represent from the hip hop era that we come from, to the style of dress, just to our whole personality . . . it’s just this is who we are as friends, this is who we’ve been since we met in 1993 (Taboo quoted in psjardim, 2007).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ “I see you try to diss our function by stating that we can’t rap / Is it cause we don’t wear Tommy Hilfiger or baseball caps?” (‘Fallin’ Up’, *Behind the Front*) (Tommy Hilfiger is an American fashion label that became popular street wear for hip hop enthusiasts (Tommy Hilfiger, 2007)). Black Eyed Peas’ unique and unusual image has been described as a “laidback, boho hip-hop image” (Barry, 2005) with “long hair, natural fabrics and eyeglasses” (Blender, 2006), unlike conventional hip hop artists who tend to sport street-wear and jewellery (Airpushers, 2006; Moss, 2005b). See Appendix Three for images of the Black Eyed Peas.

We started our friendship not because we were different but because we liked the same music, we were musicians and break dancers who appreciated music . . . We've always been the hip-hop group . . . who are able to go to the Philippines, Mexico and utilise our heritage - because we are very diverse in our background - to captivate different people of different creeds and colours (Taboo quoted in Balie, 2004; Blackeyedpeas.com, 2004).

I wouldn't say we make an attempt to be different, it's just how we are as individuals. I don't get up every morning and say "Fuck!!! I gotta do some different shit" - it just comes out that way" (will.i.am quoted in Designer Magazine, 2001).

The ethnic diversity of the Black Eyed Peas is a fundamental component of their identity and music:

That's what our camp really embraces: the fact that we are all of these things, we are black, we are white, we are Latino, we are Asian, we are Mexican but we are all artists and we are all human and that's the goal of our music (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

During their concerts the Black Eyed Peas do much to celebrate the ethnicity of each band member. The stage-wear of Taboo, for example, comprises a 'Mexico' tracksuit top worn over the top of a 'Mexico' t-shirt. In response to a question about his on-stage apparel Taboo explained: "I just want to represent my culture, and for people to see that this Mexican kid from East LA can make it" (Spicer, 2005, 41). In addition to clothing choices, band members use the opportunities provided by concert performances, such as the solo spot each band member is 'allocated' during performances, to express the importance of ethnicity to their identity.

During Taboo's solo live performance in the U.S.A. Fall Tour 06, his first song stopped abruptly with the simultaneous appearance of the Mexican flag adorning the three large backing screens. At the end of Taboo's solo he introduced Apl onto the stage as "the King of the Philippines". As Apl walked on stage, the screens changed to the flag of the Philippines. Apl began his solo performance telling the crowd he is from the Philippines. His solo performance was a combination of his two Black Eyed Peas songs sung in Tagalog, his native Filipino language (Field notes, Montreal, 12 September 2006).

5.5.2 Cultural 'Union' through music (*Monkey Business*)

Collaboration amongst musicians, regardless of the music genre in which they are involved, is extremely common. The Black Eyed Peas, for example, have collaborated with a number of musicians from a range of backgrounds. Rather than being an outcome of formal arrangements, most of the Peas' collaborations stem from informal meetings: "We meet these people on the road and we build relationships to the point where if we wanna work it's a natural progression . . . We become friends first" (Taboo quoted in Palathingal, 2004; see also Designer Magazine, 2001). As the group's music has expanded outside the 'conscious' hip hop sub-genre so has the collection of collaborations in which they have engaged. *Bridging the Gap*, for example, featured guest artists Chali 2na, De La Soul, Mos Def, Wyclef Jean and Macy Gray. Aside from Macy Gray, who is an R&B artist, all the collaborators noted are critically acclaimed 'conscious' rappers (Rolling Stone, 2007).

Monkey Business, however, includes contributions from an extremely diverse collection of artists. In addition the contributions made by the rappers Q-Tip, Talib Kweli, Cee-Lo and John Legend, the album features collaborations with a

number of artists from outside the hip hop community. These artists include James Brown, the ‘Godfather of Soul’; Sting, an English musician who has recorded songs in a range of styles, from jazz to rock; Jack Johnson, an contemporary folk singer; and, the ‘pop superstar’ Justin Timberlake (Jack Johnson Music, 2007; justintimberlake.com; The Police, 2007).

Ben Gross argues that musical collaborations have been central to the hybrid music created by the Black Eyed Peas, adding that the Peas’ music represents a transgression of existing musical boundaries (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). An excellent example of such musical hybridity is the song ‘Mas Que Nada’ (*Timeless*). Written and produced in collaboration with the Brazilian musical icon Sergio Mendes for inclusion on Mendes’ *Timeless* album, ‘Mas Que Nada’ was a “really big song . . . breaking boundaries and bringing us to another level” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). By combining the Brazilian musics of bossa nova and samba with the hip hop of urban America ‘Mas Que Nada’ broke musical boundaries (Timeless, 2006; see also Lechner, 2006; psjardim, 2007; Tecson and Moss, 2005).

Rhythmically we massage ya / with hip hop mixed up with samba . . . heavy rotation played by every kind of / radio station blessing every mind / we crossing boundaries like everyday . . . / we took a old samba song and remixed it (‘Mas Que Nada’, *Timeless*).

‘Mas Que Nada’ also transgressed generational boundaries, with the combination of an ‘old’ song and new styles appealing to an audience not well represented amongst traditional consumers of samba and bossa nova.

When I first cut that song 40 years ago, there was a naiveté and a freshness to it. Now there's a young kid [will.i.am] from LA who puts down a contemporary beat on it and starts rapping on top . . . The kids of today would never go back and hear tunes from 40 years ago, but if you give them the same song in a different version - a version where they can go to a nightclub and dance to it - then the melody is going to stay in their minds (Mendes quoted in Lechner, 2006, 69).

While I was already familiar with 'Mas Que Nada', having listened to the song while in high school, *Timeless* did 'introduce' me to Mendes' other work:

I was at home working on my laptop, listening to the newly released *Timeless*. My mum arrived and as she walked in the door she was like 'what is this fabulous music?' I explained the album to her and its relevance to my topic. She couldn't believe it - she ran out to the car and came back with an album she had just bought from a 'bargain bin' and had been listening to on the car journey - *Classic Sergio Mendes* - music she used to listen to on vinyl back in the day. Talk about cross-generational cultural/music boundary breaking in action! (Field notes, Cambridge, 12 March 2006).

5.6 'Communication' for a social 'Movement' (*Behind the Front*)

Smith (1997) argues that music may be employed by marginalised musicians to articulate the conditions of their existence. Past chapters have revealed how music allows for the creation and transmission of potential oppositional themes and ideas. The changing conditions of the Black Eyed Peas' existence and socio-spatial circumstances can be traced through their music:

I think our album titles tell the story. *Behind the Front* symbolized where we were: We weren't the ones in the front [of the music industry], but we were doing some major planning in the background. *Bridging the Gap* was the plan: "We see a big gap here, and I wanna bridge it." . . . After that bridge was made: *Elephunk*. We rode our elephants over the bridge! Then

when we realized all the politics and how much the elephant weighed, we were like, “Yo, man, this business is kind of wack. This is like *Monkey Business*.” The whole thing was a documentary of our travels (will.i.am quoted in DeRogatis, 2006).

As with other hip hop artists, the Black Eyed Peas use music to express a range of ideas and emotions:

We have the conch, you know, like in *Lord of the Flies*. We are speaking conscious things, we aren’t just promoting spontaneous thought (Spicer, 2005, 36; emphasis on original).⁶⁷

We write about anything. We don’t like to pigeon ourselves into a category. Anything that is bothering us. Anything that is making us feel good about life. Bullshit. Nothin’. Partys (Designer Magazine, 2001).

5.6.1 Using ‘the conch’

As noted previously, during the early years of their careers the Black Eyed Peas wrote many ‘socially minded’ songs: “They were a bunch of b-boys, you know breakers, and MCs and they spoke on the neighbourhood and what they saw around them” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). While members of the group were exposed to violence and gang life, these aspects of their day-to-day experiences were never reflected in their music as they did not subscribe to such behaviour (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also *New Zealand Herald*, 2001):

Every rapper’s talkin’ bout killin’ somebody but they ain’t hip-hop to me . .
. While I’m holding the mic tight, recite livin’ insight / So we can all benefit
from the art form (‘BEP Empire’, *Bridging the Gap*).

⁶⁷ *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel that deals with characteristics of human nature. In the book the conch is a symbol of leadership and authority and, as such, it is used to call meetings (Golding, 1954).

Both Ben Gross and respected hip hop commentator Kevin Powell believe that the music the Black Eyed Peas released on their *Behind the Front* and *Bridging the Gap* albums is comparable to the recordings of A Tribe Called Quest, Mos Def, Common, the Roots, and KRS-One (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; Karon, 2000). These performers are examples of artists who express commitment to the “core values of the socially conscious rappers of early years” (Kevin Powell quoted in Karon, 2000).

I observed the Black Eyed Peas ‘commitment’ to social consciousness during live performances:

In Ottawa Taboo opened his solo performance by referring to a shooting that had occurred on a Montreal campus earlier that day stating, “That is some fucked up shit and one person has been killed which is just awful but we have to be thankful for what we have” . . . A number of times during the three Canadian shows Taboo stated how Canadians are much more open minded than Americans (Field notes, Montreal, 12 September 2006).

In every live BEP show I have experienced will.i.am uses ‘Where is the Love?’ to make a political speech. The content of the speech alters with every situation; for example across three shows in Canada he made statements including criticism of George Bush, a tribute to the soldiers in the Iraq War, recognition of global warming and the environment, a reference to those present that had graduated high school and college, the conflict between Israel and Lebanon, and racial tolerance (Field notes, Ottawa, 14 September 2006).

5.6.2 Environmental ‘Release’ (*Bridging the Gap*)

Hip hop has always been about “environmental release” (will.i.am quoted in Magazine, 2001). *Elephunk* was a product of personal turmoil experienced by

band members and was used by the artists as both a ‘release’ and as a way to document their struggles (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also Blackeyedpeas.com, 2005; Spicer, 2005).

Shackle and chained / My soul feels stained . . . The anxiety / The sane and the insane rivalry / Paranoias brought me to my knees / Lord please please please / Take away my anxiety (‘Anxiety’, *Elephunk*).

In explaining ‘Anxiety’ (*Elephunk*), will.i.am states:

These last couple of years haven't been easy . . . Is it guilt? Stress? Uncertainty over what's going to happen in the next five years? Is it rap? Hip-hop? The fact that everyone is clubbin' and gun totin' and we're thought of as just some fashionable motherfuckers? It's a whole bunch of stuff going on (Net Music Countdown, 2007).

5.6.3 Tour life

The global success of *Elephunk* kept the group touring around the globe for nearly 18 months (Blackeyedpeas.com, 2005). The experience and influence of touring *Elephunk* produced the ‘inspiration’ for the Black Eyed Peas’ fourth album *Monkey Business* (Palathingal, 2004).

Monkey Business is very much about the types of songs we play live. It's about a party. It's layered differently and has energy to it that reflects how we tour - from the beats to the types of instruments we used to how we interact with the audience. It's very much about us and the crowd on this record” (will.i.am quoted in Blackeyedpeas.com, 2005; see also Balie, 2004; Blackeyedpeas.com, 2004).

Monkey Business also reflects aspects of the lifestyle of a touring hip hop group. Having spent time on tour with the Black Eyed Peas I realise how clearly the

songs on *Monkey Business* reflect lived experience. The lifestyle of the Peas' while they are on tour is bizarre and it is extreme. It is itinerant, transient, and disruptive.

I'll tell you what I do everyday. Like now, it's 4.48pm, in Alberta Canada, this is how my day goes. We perform at exactly 9.30 at night, get off the stage at about 10.40pm, then there's the after party at every city. We're at the after party until like 2am. Then we get on the tour bus, drive for about six hours until we get to the next city, get to the hotel, lay down for a couple of hours, do phoners [phone interviews], and my whole day starts all over again (Kara, 2005).

The After Party appears to be a staple feature of this peripatetic lifestyle:

At the end of the show Taboo announced where the After Party was and I was pretty surprised that they announce to the thousands of people where they are heading (Field notes, Toronto, 10 September 2006).

During my time in Canada I went to After Parties where I saw women surrounding the men from the Black Eyed Peas, I saw girls hanging around outside the venues and tour buses after shows, and I saw fans screaming and swarming towards crew vehicles as they arrived at concert venues. The Black Eyed Peas' lyrics reflect these experiences, with songs about clubbing, parties and sex: "Parties and getting naughty is what I'm all about . . . Everyday's a disco club" ('Disco Club', *Monkey Business*).

This is the beat that make you shake your rump . . . Up in the club just do what you want / Get into it baby . . . Girlies on the dance floor wiggle your fronts . . . And if you got boobies baby keep em all plump ('Ba Bump', *Monkey Business*).

Monkey Business has been criticised for being a “succession of cotton-candy raps about chicks, partying and partying with chicks” (Drumming, 2005). Given the musicians’ way of life, however, this subject matter is both inevitable and logical.

5.6.4 “Hit the whole globe simultaneously”

(‘Dum Diddly’, *Monkey Business*)

Responding to my question about the role of Black Eyed Peas in pop culture, Ben Gross said:

I would say they are leaders in the movement at this point, without sounding full of ourselves of whatever . . . in terms of a world wide presence the Black Eyed Peas are up there (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

Having performed 500 shows between 2003 to 2005 across the continents of North America, South America, Asia, Oceania and Europe (Faber, 2006; NYKHouston43, 2006), the Black Eyed Peas are rightly described as “one of the largest touring bands in the world” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). Expanding on his comments as to the influence of the Peas’, Ben Gross explained that the amount of travelling the group has done, the number of different people they have met, and observing the effect they have on people, has

definitely shaped the way they make their albums and the way they make their music. It is what has made them realise how to be more accessible to people . . . The Peas really think on a worldwide basis when they are making their music . . . we make it a point in our music to try to not alienate anybody . . . trying to stay edgy, but at the same time not alienate anybody (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

The group’s original use of the hip hop genre, as characterised by the inclusion of ‘other’ musical styles and collaborations with a diverse selection of artists, has challenged musical boundaries. The ethnic make up of the group and its

commitment to cultural harmony through its music and actions exhibits a challenge to traditional definitions of 'race' and 'ethnicity' present in society.

The nature of the group's music has changed as the lived experience of the group altered with success. Mr Gross compared the career of the group to a

rollercoaster climb, and you're just slowly going up and up and up. They had no reason not to talk about what has put them there. You know, just loving each other, loving the world, speaking on issues and just trying not to be negative (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

A lasting impression I had from my field work was that from being *Behind the Front*, the Peas have created for themselves a 'BEP Empire' (*Bridging the Gap*) within the confines of the music industry. This 'empire' has expanded as the members of the Peas' have emulated the activities of other 'rap (as discussed in Chapter Two). All four members of the Peas are embarking on solo careers as side-projects to the Black Eyed Peas, with each member releasing a solo album. The artists are also diversifying into other mediums. Both will.i.am and apl.de.ap, for example, have their own record labels, while Fergie and Taboo have acted in several motion pictures (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also apldeap.com, 2007; Blender, 2006; Endelman, 2005; Moss, 2005c; will-i-am.com, 2007). Fergie and will.i.am are also involved with fashion, designing accessories and clothes respectively (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; Artisan News Service, 2006; blackeyedpeas.com, 2007; Blue Holdings Inc, 2007; Faber, 2006; i-am Clothing, 2007; Kipling, 2007).

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the Black Eyed Peas have used the universal language of music to challenge marginality and contribute to socio-spatial change. The Black Eyed Peas are “letting people know it doesn’t matter what language” you speak, what culture you come from, or where you live; “music is a universal language” (Araya, 2006). On one single day in Aotearoa/New Zealand during the completion of this research I stumbled upon BEP in a range of forms: I visited my brother and found his flatmate using “chemical gases filling lungs of little ones” (‘Where is the Love’, *Elephunk*) for a university assignment on youth smoking; on television I saw an advertisement for a competition being run by the fast food franchise KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) that could ‘send me’ to Sydney, Australia, for the Black Eyed Peas Black Blue and You Tour; I received a text from Bobby Grant, stating he was living “a dream” on the Black, Blue and You Tour, having just arrived in Sweden from Ethiopia (Field notes, Cambridge, 13 September 2007); I went shopping and heard Fergie’s solo single ‘Big Girls Don’t Cry’ (*The Dutchess*) three times over shop stereos; I went to a nightclub and heard of “apl.de.ap from Philippines / Live and direct, rocking this scene” (‘Pump It’, *Monkey Business*). There is no doubt that the Black Eyed Peas have used music to overcome marginality, and their music has become a universal global language to express the group’s hybrid identities and agendas for socio-spatial change.

Chapter Six

What it signified for me was the things you can do with music. The places you can go that you never dreamed of going. The people you can help that you probably never met. The gift that you have to inspire one to do the same thing (will.i.am quoted in Peapod Foundation, 2006).

Peapod Foundation: Celebrity charity

By using “their license as performers and their standing as celebrities” the Black Eyed Peas continue to “advance their interests as citizens and subjects” (Lipsitz, 1994, 138). At the turn of the century the Black Eyed Peas were little-known outside core hip hop audiences; seven years later the band are internationally-known celebrities. The Peas’ change in standing as celebrities has not diluted their interests as citizens and subjects. Indeed, as ‘global stars’ the band members are in a position to act on their long-held belief that music and musicians have a role in transgressing boundaries and encouraging positive social change. As will be shown in this chapter, through the Peapod Foundation the Black Eyed Peas are ‘giving back’ to those individuals and communities that may benefit from philanthropic input.

The Peapod Foundation was established to “encourage social change by uniting people, especially children, through the universal language of music” (Peapod Foundation, 2006). will.i.am hopes that through this charity BEP can

build awareness to kids in orphanages and hopefully celebrities or people in power can follow that to educate orphans around the world, and not just

cross them off the list to succeed and contribute to the planet (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006).

Orphans were chosen by the Black Eyed Peas because they are “not part of the system”, meaning they are ‘othered’ by society, positioned as the “utmost dejected” sector of the social order (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006). The focus on orphans also has specific relevance to the Black Eyed Peas because of apl.de.ap’s history: “I was brought to America for better opportunities and a better future. I gained success, and we want to do the same thing that was given to me” (Wilson, 2006).

The name ‘Peapod Foundation’ was first employed in 1998 when the first Peapod Children’s Benefit Concert was organised to raise money and toys to benefit foster-home children (highrollerstudios, 2007). Spearheaded by will.i.am and Polo Molina, over the next few years the name ‘Peapod Foundation’ was used when organising fundraising events involving the Black Eyed Peas and their friends (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). The group performed live shows sporadically under the banner of the Peapod Foundation until 2005, the year Christine Hansen established the Peapod Foundation as a charity organisation operating under the auspices of the Entertainment Industry Foundation (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007).

The Peapod Foundation is administrated by Ben Gross on behalf of the Black Eyed Peas. Decision details as to which projects the Peapod Foundation will support are dealt with in the first instance by Mr Gross, who passes his recommendations to Mr Molina. No binding decisions are made until will.i.am has given his approval.

The ideas behind who we give to and what we stand for are individual to the band . . . when it comes to decision making, that's when the band gets to be involved, everything really needs to get cleared through Will. Will and Polo are the main driving creative force behind it (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

In addition to sorting the requests and proposals that are submitted to the Foundation, Mr Gross attends weekly meetings with staff from the EIF. Mr Molina attends the EIF meetings when possible. When Mr Molina is not in Los Angeles he participates in a weekly conference call with staff from the EIF (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

6.1 Peapod revenue

During the years when the Peapod Foundation name was first used by BEP and Mr Molina, funds were raised through various unstructured means, including concert promotions and profits made from recycling cans and bottles post-concert (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). As the profile of the Black Eyed Peas grew, so the fundraising activities of the Peapod Foundation expanded. The Peapod Foundation's "first main large performance with an objective to give to a certain organisation" took place in 2005. This event was a benefit concert held during Grammy week (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).⁶⁸ The objective of the concert was to raise money to fund the rebuilding of homes in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, a city devastated by a tsunami in December 2004. In addition to raising money, the

⁶⁸ 'Grammy week' refers to the week in February during which Grammy Awards are presented. During this week many musicians and celebrities converge on the host city. Since 1974 the awards have been held in either New York or Los Angeles (The Recording Academy, 2007).

Peas travelled to Indonesia in order to oversee the distribution of resources and raise awareness of the problems facing residents of Banda Aceh (Peapod Foundation, 2005).

The success of this event inspired the Black Eyed Peas to make the concert an annual Grammy week event: “Whenever there’s a natural disaster or something going on in the world, we’re gonna utilise our gift of music to raise money and awareness to the situation, whatever that is” (will.i.am quoted in Peapod Foundation, 2006). The mission of these benefit concerts is to “produce an annual event that brings together music legends of the past, present and future to raise awareness and funds for the Peapod Foundation’s children’s charities” (Peapod Foundation, 2007b).

As explained in Chapter Six, the members of Black Eyed Peas have an extremely diverse selection of friends and contacts in the music industry. Performers at the event are “strictly the friends of the Peas. Whoever’s in town, whoever wants to donate their services” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). As the group has “been around for such a long time, especially in Los Angeles, they have a lot of home grown friends” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). ‘Out-of-town friends’ who are in Los Angeles for the Grammy Awards are often invited by BEP to perform (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). Past performers include James Brown, Carlos Santana, Earth Wind and Fire, Herbie Hancock, John Legend, Erykah Badu, Justin Timberlake, India Arie, Wyclef Jean, Macy Gray, Sergio Mendes, John Legend, MC Hammer, and Slash (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also Peapod Foundation, 2006 and 2007b). For details on the credentials of these artists see Rolling Stone (2007).

The annual benefit concert is the main fundraising event for the Peapod Foundation, generating the majority of the organisation's annual budget. Revenue is also collected via donations submitted through the Peapod Foundation website. Corporate donations are also 'pooled' by the Peapod; for example, a partnership exists between the Peapod Foundation and Hard Rock Hotel whereby a percentage of the rental income for the BEP-decorated 'Rock Star Suite' at the Hard Rock Hotel in San Diego goes to the Peapod Foundation. These rental proceeds provide a "constant stream of revenue" for the Peapod Foundation (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007; see also Hard Rock Hotel, 2006; Peapod Foundation, 2007b).

6.2 Turning talent into a 'moving vehicle'

In 2004 the Black Eyed Peas performed a concert in South Africa. Unable to afford tickets, few black citizens attended these concerts. In reaction to this situation, will.i.am told Christine Hansen he wanted BEP to return to South Africa and perform a free concert. This concert would be for those people who could not otherwise afford tickets to a show by a group of the status of the Black Eyed Peas (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007). Speaking about the reasons for BEP giving a free concert in South Africa, will.i.am stated that "the thing we'd like to achieve is inspiration" (Wilson, 2006); there is "so much talent there, [but] not a lot of opportunity to turn their talent into a moving vehicle" (highrollerstudios, 2007);

Instead of sending a tank to effect change that causes destruction, we'd rather send a tour bus and send some musicians and the way it effects people is positive and the spirit is you know jubilant and joyful (highrollerstudios, 2007).

After working with orphans in South Africa and seeing the positive response generated by BEP donated gifts of musical equipment, the group was inspired to utilise the Peapod Foundation to help orphans in their own territory (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

Watts, and East Los Angeles . . . they don't have the utensils. Kids are orphans just like our friends we met in South Africa. So it hit us like wait a second, we need to do the same thing at home (will.i.am quoted in highrollerstudios, 2007).

will.i.am explained to me his plan to use the Peapod Foundation to build an accommodation and education facility for orphans “to allow them to contribute and participate in the world” (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006). The Black Eyed Peas hope to achieve this by creating “Peapod Music and Arts Academies everywhere we can around the world” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

[We want to] have an archetype all ready . . . so we already know exactly what we need, what we got, how much money and everything else, and make it function . . . and now, who knows where the future will lead. It's pretty much, where can we make the most difference (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007).

6.3 The Peapod Music and Arts Academy archetype

The first Peapod Music and Arts Academy ‘archetype’ is currently under construction at the Watts/Willowbrook Boys and Girls Club (WWBGC) in Watts, Los Angeles. “With the Watts/Willowbrook, that's where everyone grew up, it's LA's heart of disenfranchised” (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). After BEP researched various organisations that targeted foster youth in Los Angeles, the group chose Peace4Kids to run the Academy at WWBGC (Zaid Gayle, interview,

12 May 2007). Peace4Kids was co-founded by Zaid Gayle and the organisations music programme is run by Shawn Jackson from the WWBGC. Shawn Jackson explained to me that partnership between Peace4Kids and the Peapod Foundation was an excellent combination, with the local community focus of Peace4Kids balancing the global vision of will.i.am (Shawn Jackson, interview, 12 May 2007). Furthermore, the programmes offered by Peace4Kids were well suited to will.i.am's interest in establishing a 'model academy'.

We do programmes for youth. If it works it should be replicated and taken somewhere else and that's where Peapod kind of really works with us because what we are willing to do is say 'hey we are the pilot programme, we know you wanna do this in other cities, so let us run with it, we have the expertise in working with the youth so we can help design the programme, we can build the blueprint, put the Peapod Foundation name on it - take it to other cities, we really don't care. But we'll let you know what problems we've encountered, how feasible this programme is gonna be in other places, what resources you absolutely need to have in order to do it. So that you can then say this is what it costs to do a programme like this somewhere else and these are the outcomes that you will get. Okay you will get kids who have the opportunity to find and express themselves, you get them understanding some technical aspects, you'll get them getting some very specific skill sets. So at least somebody can look at the programme and it's not for us or it is for us. It can impact our youth and we can make a difference that way (Zaid Gayle, interview, 12 May 2007).

Prior to the intervention of the Peapod Foundation the WWBGC had a basic arts studio that contained recording equipment donated by Shawn Jackson and an \$US88 surround system (Shawn Jackson, interview, 12 May 2007). The Peapod

Foundation is investing \$US400,000 to the academy project, including \$US80,000 'start up' costs to construct the recording studio and \$US100,000 annually for three years to cover operation and maintenance (Shawn Jackson, interview, 12 May 2007).

What's so cool about what Peapod Foundation did was that they gave us a tool so that we can further develop the creative juices of these kids, they have all these ideas but we didn't have resources. We had great people which is even more than half the battle, but . . . the number one contribution is the fact that they have state of the art tools to bring their visions and ideas to fruition (Shawn Jackson, interview, 12 May 2007).

6.4 Peace4Kids: Responding to a community crisis

Peace4Kids are being vigilant in designing a programme that will cater for the foster youth; "you can't just open the doors and let the kids record, it's not that simple" (Zaid Gayle, interview, 12 May 2007). Mr Gayle and Mr Jackson believe that if the Peapod Foundation Academy is to be an effective tool in fostering social change it is necessary to first address the character building needs of youth.

It's about things not being perfect and for a long time - people have wanted to implement business practices into social change but it doesn't work like that because we are human beings. So you look at a bottom-line, you know a bottom-line doesn't mean anything when a human being is going through something (Zaid Gayle, interview, 12 May 2007).

Far from being perfect, Mr Gayle recognises that the 'othering' of orphans in contemporary society is a problem of great significance. Thus, in a statement which reflects will.i.am's description of orphans being 'dejected' in society, Mr Gayle explained how Peace4Kids is

responding to what we consider a critical crisis in this particular community which is foster care and the reality for us is that we believe that every youth deserves the opportunity to self discover what their greatest potential is and to have that gift nurtured by a loving and supportive community. So when you look at foster youth, those are the two things they don't have. They don't have the critical experience to garner something internal like 'This is what I love to do'. . . Foster youth live such transient lifestyles; they never find their thing because they are often responding to what other people put out there for them. They don't get the education because they move schools so often, they don't get the connection to human beings because they move foster homes so often, so then what ends up happening is they become feeders into the prison system, the homeless population, they end up on welfare, so they become like really the dregs of society who don't get the opportunities. So our philosophy was: Let's build community around them, let's help them discover their gifts, let's give them basic life lessons (Zaid Gayle, interview, 12 May 2007).

During my day at the WWBGC in September 2006 I experienced the human-orientated approach explained by Mr Gayle. Thus, there were numerous instances when I witnessed Mr Jackson mentoring youth on how to deal with personal issues. I also observed as Mr Gayle led a lesson with a 'hands-on' activity based game to teach the youth life lessons to the 'teenage group'. The skills learnt included strategy, planning and the importance of goal setting. Mr Gayle used hip hop to explain the relevance of the game. He told the youth they might want to be "the biggest hip hop artist in the world", but they need to consider how they were going to achieve this. He used an example from the game to emphasise that luck does not create sustained success, using the example of a "one hit wonder" in the music industry (Field notes, Los Angeles, 12 May 2007).

During my experience at the WWBGC I observed a goal setting session with the ‘music group’. Mr Jackson initiated the discussion by asking the youth about their music - “Why do you want to do it? What effect do you want to have? Do you want to tell your own stories? Do you want to change the world?” (Field notes, Los Angeles, 12 May 2007). Mr Jackson reiterated the sentiments of Mr Gayle’s lesson by getting participants to decide on the appropriate steps to achieve their goals. These steps included working collectively, sharing ideas and goals, so as to make music together and get it heard by the public. Mr Jackson had a remarkable ability to guide the discussion while simultaneously allowing the youth to come up with their own ideas and conclusions. Mr Jackson made it very clear to the youth that as a group they can “make songs that are just fun and good to dance to” or they can make songs that “are going to change the world” (Field notes, Los Angeles, 12 May 2007).

During the discussion one girl explained how she had always had a desire to write so as to “effect change”. She described how a book she had read “had really influenced her”, providing motivation for her to want to influence others with her writing. The girl used the example of the Tupac Shakur song ‘Brenda’s Got a Baby’ (*2Pacalypse Now*) to emphasise how she wanted to write true stories to which people could relate (Field notes, Los Angeles, 12 May 2007).⁶⁹

6.5 The validity of celebrity charity

After my experience at WWBGC I believe that the Black Eyed Peas, through the work of will.i.am, Polo Molina and the Peapod Foundation, provide an example of

⁶⁹ Tupac Shakur is an American artist renowned for his rap music, movie roles, poetry, and his social activism. ‘Brenda’s Got a Baby’ (*2Pacalypse Now*) discusses the impact of teen pregnancy on young mothers and their families by telling a fictional story about a 12 year old girl named Brenda who lives in an impoverished urban area (Rose, 1994).

celebrities using music as a catalyst for implementing change. My observations at WWBGC, while limited, provided evidence of the effectiveness of the Peace4Kids programme in fostering positive social change. Despite evidence of positive outcomes resulting from the collaboration between WWBGC and the Peapod Foundation, questions remain as to the validity of celebrity charity.

Christine Hansen, the architect and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Peapod Foundation upon start-up, provided some insight into the contradictions that circle around musicians who use their celebrity status to ‘motivate’ corporate sponsors to make donations to charity. Miss Hansen explained charity contradictions stem from the unwillingness of most celebrities to “open their wallets” and make charity donations - many celebrities believe their charity contributions are appropriately limited to obtaining external donations by being seen to promote a particular charity (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007).

The media aspect is very important and very vital, because media doesn’t care, media wants ‘celebrity’ to follow anything, so to have the ability to access a wide audience with a celebrity face on it is really how it goes (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007).

During her tenure as CEO, the Peapod Foundation was funded by corporate donations and benefit concert fundraisers - members of the Black Eyed Peas made no direct financial contributions. Speaking of charity donations, Miss Hansen felt that it was excellent for celebrities to “further the plight of the struggle, but only if they live up to it themselves in their own life . . . If you’re using it to look great it’s a problem” (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007).

In 2006 and 2007 the Black Eyed Peas performed at two benefit concerts, each of which was broadcast live to a worldwide television audience - the *Live 8* concerts promoted the 'Make Poverty History' campaign (Live 8, 2006), and the *Live Earth* concerts supported campaigns to combat climate change and promote environmentally-sustainable living (Live Earth, 2007). It is evident that performing to a worldwide audience is a form of self-promotion, with bands using such opportunities to create "another image angle" (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007). As such, charity concert appearances offer the same benefits as corporate sponsorship - an opportunity to reach new listeners. Despite the conflicted moralities of charity work, self-promotion through charitable efforts can still generate social change. Thus, as Christine Hansen explains, "as long as they walk their talk it's cool; if they're not, it's an issue" (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007).

Ben Gross justified the Peapod Foundation's projects by stating: "We give back and the main point is that you can actually see the tangible results very quickly from our benefits . . . Our values and actions are one and the same." In relation to the Peapod benefit concerts, he explained how it costs a lot of money to put on the event but "you can't make money without spending money". The money raised goes "straight to cause" (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). In relation to the Peapod Foundation, Mr Gross explained that

a lot of people have really good ideas with good intentions but they're not completely thought through in terms of sustainability. Like can we continue this for fifteen years, twenty years, or is it gonna be something for two years and get us some good press but all of a sudden not help anybody? So we really want to make sure it is sustainable (Ben Gross, interview, 25 September 2006).

6.6 Conclusion

Formalising the structure of the Peapod Foundation provided Christine Hansen with an opportunity to implement her belief in the positive potential of music:

I create concerts literally just to become a media centrepiece to spread a message and an awareness campaign and hopefully bring together the profile and capture media. I use music to capture the attention of the world, it is a universal language that communicates and brings people together better than anything else that exists Speaking of music she extends . . . I use it as a catalyst to bring together celebrities and grassroots organisations to hopefully implement change (Christine Hansen, interview, 11 May 2007).

Concerned with making a positive contribution with their ‘gift of music’ and seeking to direct the nature of their charitable contributions, the Black Eyed Peas exercise their status as global celebrities to draw attention to the plight of ‘others’. In response to family backgrounds and lessons learnt during the evolution of the Peapod Foundation, the Peas have centred their philanthropic efforts those they consider to be the most ‘alienated’ members of society, orphans. The tangible product of this vision is a Music and Arts Academy that is currently being developed in the Peas ‘home town’ of East Los Angeles. Through the direction of will.i.am and the work of Peace4Kids, the Black Eyed Peas hope to mobilise a ‘consciousness’ concerned with the betterment of orphans on a global scale.

Chapter Seven

The E.N.D. (Energy Never Dies)⁷⁰

This thesis investigated the potential of popular music to create social change by challenging the construction and maintenance of cultural boundaries. This research explored this aim through an analysis of the music and motivations of the most popular hip hop group in the world in the present day, the Black Eyed Peas. Few geographers have studied hip hop, and none of those who have considered the geographies of rap accessed the ‘worlds’ of their chosen artists. The access I obtained to the Black Eyed Peas enabled me to gather a wealth of primary data, providing a unique contribution to music geography.

This study has shown that explorations into the geographies of popular music can provide insight into the transgression of cultural boundaries in a world of cultural mixing. By providing opportunities for economic returns, a space to create new musical forms, and a means to express lived experience and communicate narratives, music allows for the challenging of established norms and hierarchies controlled by ‘them, those and they’.

The Black Eyed Peas have used the hip hop medium to express their unique identities both as individuals and as a collective. Founded on the friendship of will.i.am, apl.de.ap and Taboo, and expanded through the inclusion of Fergie, the

⁷⁰ will.i.am has stated that the next Black Eyed Peas album is to be called *The E.N.D. (Energy Never Dies)* (Music Television, 2007a).

Black Eyed Peas combine Mexican, black, Asian and white ethnicities through a passion for hip hop. The resulting identity of the Black Eyed Peas is navigated within conventional cultural boundaries and dominant meaning systems, policed by social hierarchies and business agendas. Like hip hop itself, and in relation to music industry conventions, BEP has articulated various musics, blending social commentary alongside ‘candy’ tracks.

The predominance of ‘pop tracks’ in the songs released as singles by the Black Eyed Peas, and the willingness of the group to employ corporate sponsorship, suggest that BEP is now positioned within the confines of popular culture. Despite commercial success, the Black Eyed Peas deny they are conforming to music industry formats, instead claiming to be innovators in the hip hop genre. As popular culture “does not just reflect reality, it helps constitute it” (Lipsitz, 1994, 137), it may be argued that by being situated ‘inside’ popular culture the Black Eyed Peas help shape the ‘widely favoured’ or ‘well-liked’ texts that define popular culture. Drawing on their own talent and creativity to convey their original perspective - the group incorporates a cultural mix of musical genres into their music and each album dedicates a portion of lyrical content to social commentary.

7.1 “Since ‘95 the BEP perfected / The way we get down on the record”

(‘Audio Delite At Low Fidelity’, Monkey Business)

The challenge was how to make feel-good albums with substance, but not come off like we were preaching . . . Nobody wants to be jamming at a party and be preached to. It’s a real fine line between ‘Oh wow! Did you hear that?’ And ‘This guy needs to shut up’ (Ali, 2005, 67; see also Designer Magazine, 2001).

While attending the U.S.A. Fall Tour 06 in Canada I found myself reflecting on my reaction to will.i.am's on-stage comments about social issues –

Even though I agree with him, do I necessarily change my behaviour or act in response to his comments? Does it create anything more than a momentary response on a mass scale? (Field notes, Toronto, 10 September 2006).

After much thought, and subsequent investigation through this research, I believe that the role of a popular musician in social change is to 'plant the seed' of awareness and try and make an issue 'trendy' or 'cool'.

The more appealing the style or delivery of 'message music', the more likely it will secure the attention of recipients. Moreover, to create socio-spatial change "on the ground level" such music must "get in someone's ear" (Ben Gross, interview, 7 May 2007). Music delivered across a range of scales has the potential to 'get in someone's ear' - from audience membership at an outdoor concert to micro-scale listening via portable media players. Indeed, it may be that within a large concert audience a particular message may only reach one set of ears.

If there's like 20,000 people in the audience, the object isn't to talk to 20,000 people when we say those things . . . two out of probably those 20,000 people are gonna be like 'Yeah you know what? That's true' . . . so to go away and think 'Yeah I made an impact to all those 20,000', that's full of boo boo - it's one person in the audience. So you make a sacrifice by saying something like that in front of 20,000 people to hopefully influence *one*. You know? And the same thing with songs . . . some people may think 'Oh stop preaching to me and dance, I wanna hear 'My Humps''. But you just take that risk. You take the window of opportunity that you have at that moment to talk about an issue, even though there's a good chance that it

may be going over their heads because they're just there to have a good time. The fact that they are there to have a good time is doing the job of the preacher anyways . . . by bringing people together from all ethnicities for that single moment in time (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006).

will.i.am believes he has made a positive contribution if at least one person in a crowd may subsequently research a given issue. At a Black Eyed Peas concert in Aotearoa/New Zealand 2005 that one person was me! Stimulated by the imagined community that is generated at music concerts, the effect of will.i.am's comments that evening was the catalyst for the focus of this thesis.

It was not until I started researching and learning about the different sectors of hip hop that I realised virtually my entire rap collection comprises 'socially conscious' or 'message' rap. Prior to this research I had acquired recordings because I was attracted to the sound of the music; it was only after deeper reflection that I connected with the nuances of lyrics. This same process occurs within the Black Eyed Peas audience; many people I spoke to about my topic during the course of my research were unaware that the Black Eyed Peas were actively concerned with social issues.

Conscious audience awareness of the social commentary present within Black Eyed Peas music is not entirely necessary for social change to be achieved. The affect of music manifests as feelings and human emotions, with the intangible 'sensations' stemming from music being central to the power of music to facilitate change. Generating 'good' emotions through music, therefore, helps achieve change. Thus, as will.i.am has explained on several occasions, positive emotions are a central component of efforts to promote social change:

Just making people feel good. About themselves, about life, give them something to smile about. Take their mind off of things. To eventually allow them to free their minds. You know cause we're all shackled (William Adams, interview, 13 September 2006).

We give people the tools to feel better about their lives when shit's all fucked up and you don't know what you're going to do with your life. I want to continue to do that for people (will.i.am quoted in Blender, 2006).

A similar sentiment can be found in the lyrics to the Black Eyed Peas' song 'Union':

I'd change the world if I could change my mind . . . Exchanging unity for all my insecurity / Exchanging laughter for my tears . . . I wish that I could make music as a religion / Then we could harmonise together in this mission ('Union', *Monkey Business*).

7.2 'Bringing it Back' (*Bridging the Gap*)

The Peapod Foundation provides a tangible focus for the philanthropic projects initiated by the Black Eyed Peas. Even if sectors of the BEP audience do not recognise the socially conscious stance expressed in the band's music, mainstream popularity has resulted in a celebrity profile that benefits the Peas' philanthropic undertakings. Following almost a decade of ad-hoc fundraising, the Peapod Foundation is focused on funding an international network of Music and Arts Academies. These institutions are being established to assist orphans in turning their "dreams into reality" (will.i.am quoted in highrollerstudios, 2007). By giving orphans the same opportunities as enjoyed by BEP, the Peapod Foundation will combat the discourses of marginalisation that attach to orphans.

This investigation into the Black Eyed Peas illustrated the potential of music to mobilise ethnic minorities out of socio-economic oppression. In supporting a community partnership between Peace4Kids and the Watts/Willowbrook Boys and Girls Club in Watts, Los Angeles, the Peapod Foundation is enabling ‘at-risk’ youth to emulate the Black Eyed Peas by using music as a way to advance social-spatial standing.

7.3 Research reflections

This thesis has illustrated the complex and dynamic interaction that exists between popular music, the construction and maintenance of cultural boundaries, and social change. Such is the complexity of the topic that some related research topics have not been discussed in detail in this thesis. There is much potential, for example, for geographers to investigate the moral geographies implicated in corporate sponsorship of charity projects. In studying links between corporate organisations and charities, geographers could usefully consider socio-spatial differences in philanthropic arrangements, the economics of artist contributions to charity funds, and the implications of charity for the identity of artists and audiences. Furthermore, geographers could make valuable contributions to understanding links between audience identity and music consumption. Issues relating to gender construction, for example, deserve greater representation within the music geography canon. The use of corporate sponsorship by artists is a further research field worthy of geographical inquiry. Popular musicians often position themselves as trend-setters, challenging existing conditions and establishing new musical and social boundaries. If musicians do establish trends for others to follow, there is much to be gained from more nuanced understandings of the corporate sponsorship of the art of music.

7.4 Conclusion

I have found that by analysing myself during this research, I have become a living testimony to my thesis project. It was because of the more commercial direction of Black Eyed Peas music that I became a BEP fan. Alongside millions of other fans around the world, it was the release of 'Where is the Love?' that lead me to purchase the *Elephunk* album. Since acquiring *Elephunk* the Black Eyed Peas have featured regularly amongst the music to which I listen. Indeed, my fondness for the *Elephunk* album led me to attend a Black Eyed Peas concert.

Although the hybrid identities of the Black Eyed Peas had not been embraced by mainstream audiences with their first two albums, these identities differentiated them from the majority of popular hip hop artists. For me, the BEP combination of multiethnic performers, unusual combinations of music and an energetic performance style was a welcome change from the materialism, violence and misogyny that dominate mainstream hip hop.

The Black Eyed Peas' 'differentiation' from prevailing hip hop conventions produces a relocation of what is considered 'popular hip hop', opening up new lines of communication. If a socially conscious musician shares their thought process and sentiments with their audience, any attempt at initiating change is simply a process of 'preaching to the converted'. The potential for widespread change occurs when a 'critical mass' of people are mobilised, which is why I focused my research on popular culture. To successfully destabilise prevailing cultural conventions you have to 'learn the rules, so you know how to break them properly'. At the completion of this thesis, I am still unsure as to what degree the

Black Eyed Peas, from their location within popular culture, are breaking the barricades that will.i.am understood to be restricting us from being 'set free'. As this is such a subjective issue I consider it impossible to determine. The one thing of which I am certain, however, is that the Peas themselves are living their dreams as entertainers, and in doing so they are making people feel good all over the world. Also, by using their profile to fund philanthropic projects, they are assisting the next generation of youth that are currently positioned in the socio-spatial environment from which the Peas originate:

My faith will never fall / Forever remain myself after all / Gainin' fame,
mass appeal, entertainin' y'all / Never change or conform / We always rock
it raw / I remember when we used to bust at the mall / Ways of expressin'
my love for the art / Now we here to restore these rap laws ('Audio Delite
At Low Fidelity', *Monkey Business*).

Appendix One

Recording Industry Association of America Certification

Table 2. Recording Industry Association of America Certification of Black Eyed Peas album and single sales by date (Adapted from Recording Industry Association of America, 2007).

Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title <i>Elephunk</i>	Certification Date 25/09/2003
Award Description Gold	Format Album	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title <i>Elephunk</i>	Certification Date 15/03/2004
Award Description Platinum	Format Album	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title ‘Where is the Love?’	Certification Date 25/10/2004
Award Description Gold	Format Single	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title ‘Hey Mama’	Certification Date 25/10/2004
Award Description Gold	Format Single	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title <i>Elephunk</i>	Certification Date 03/12/2004
Award Description Multi-Platinum	Format Album	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title ‘Let’s get it Started’	Certification Date 06/01/2005
Award Description Gold	Format Single	Category Group

Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title 'Shut Up'	Certification Date 19/05/2005
Award Description Gold	Format Single	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title 'Don't Phunk with my Heart'	Certification Date 06/06/2005
Award Description Gold	Format Single	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title <i>Monkey Business</i>	Certification Date 14/07/2005
Award Description Gold	Format Album	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title <i>Monkey Business</i>	Certification Date 14/07/2005
Award Description Platinum	Format Album	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title <i>Monkey Business</i>	Certification Date 21/12/2005
Award Description Multi-Platinum	Format Album	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title 'My Humps'	Certification Date 14/06/2006
Award Description Gold	Format Single	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title 'My Humps'	Certification Date 14/06/2006
Award Description Platinum	Format Single	Category Group
Artist Black Eyed Peas	Title 'My Humps'	Certification Date 14/06/2006
Award Description Multi-Platinum	Format Single	Category Group

Appendix Two

‘Where is the Love?’

What’s wrong with the world mama?
People living like ain’t got no mamas
I think the whole worlds addicted to the drama
Only attracted to the things that bring you trauma
Overseas yeah we tryin’ to stop terrorism
But we still got terrorists here livin’
In the U.S.A. the big CIA the Bloods and the Crips and the KKK
But if you only have love for your own race
Then you only leave space to discriminate
And to discriminate only generates hate
And when you hate then you’re bound to get irate
Madness is what you demonstrate
And that’s exactly how anger works and operates
Man you gotta have love just to set it straight
Take control of your mind and meditate
Let your soul gravitate to the love y’all

People killing people dying
Children hurt and you hear them crying
Can you practice what you preach
And would you turn the other cheek?
Father father father help us
Send some guidance from above
Cause people got me got me questioning
Where is the love? (Love)
Where is the love? (The love) x 2
Where is the love? the love, the love

It just ain’t the same all ways have changed
New days are strange is the world insane?
If love and peace so strong
Why are there pieces of love that don’t belong
Nations dropping bombs
Chemical gases filling lungs of little ones
With ongoing suffering
As the youth die young
So ask yourself is the loving really gone?
So I can ask myself really what is going wrong
With this world that we living in?
People keep on giving in
Making wrong decisions
Only visions of them dividends
Not respecting each other

Deny thy brother
A war's going on but the reasons' undercover
The truth is kept secret
It's swept under the rug
If you never know truth
Then you never know love
Where's the love y'all? come on (I don't know)
Where's the truth y'all? come on (I don't know)
Where's the love y'all?

People killing people dying
Children hurt and you hear them crying
Can you practice what you preach
And would you turn the other cheek?
Father father father help us
Send some guidance from above
Cause people got me got me questioning
Where is the love? (Love)
Where is the love? (The love) x 6
Where is the love? the love, the love

I feel the weight of the world on my shoulder
As I'm getting older y'all people get colder
Most of us only care about money making
Selfishness got us following the wrong direction
Wrong information always shown by the media
Negative images is the main criteria
Infecting the young minds faster than bacteria
Kids wanna act like what they see in the cinema
Yo whatever happened to the values of humanity
Whatever happened to the fairness and equality
Instead of spreading love we're spreading animosity
Lack of understanding leading us away from unity
That's the reason why sometimes I'm feeling under
That's the reason why sometimes I'm feeling down
It's no wonder why sometimes I'm feeling under
I gotta keep my faith alive till love is found
And ask yourself

Where is the love? x 4
Father father father help us
Send some guidance from above
Cause people got me got me questioning
Where is the love?

Now sing with me y'all one world one world
We only got one world one world
That's all we got one world one world
And something's wrong with it yeah x 2
And something's wrong with the w-w-world yeah
We only got one world one world
It's all we got one world one world

Images of the Black Eyed Peas



Figure 1. Black Eyed Peas performing on the television show *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, 2005. From left to right: Taboo, apl.de.ap, will.i.am, Fergie (Music Television, 2007b).



Figure 2. Black Eyed Peas at the 46th Annual Grammy Awards, 2004. From left to right: Taboo, will.i.am, Fergie, apl.de.ap (Music Television, 2007b).

Consent Form

I willingly agree to participate in research for the requirements of a *Masters of Social Science* to be completed by Darnelle Timbs of the Department of Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Entitled *Funkin' Cultural Boundaries: Popular music and socio-spatial change*, the purpose of the project (to explore how popular music can contribute to positive social change) has been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this research will include the following issues:

1. Darnelle Timbs will conduct a semi-structured interview with me relating to how I use music to create positive social change. This interview may be recorded directly onto paper or by way of a Dictaphone. Darnelle has advised me this interview will take approximately thirty minutes.
2. I, the participant, have the right to refuse discussion on any particular issue or to refuse the recording of any part or whole of the interview. I have the right to request the erasure of any record with which I am uncomfortable. I have the right to withdraw from the project up until four weeks after the date of the interview.
3. I understand that my name will be used unless I have indicated that a pseudonym is to be used.
4. I acknowledge that Darnelle Timbs will keep all recorded information confidential. Notes and taped information will not be destroyed on completion of this thesis but will be kept confidential and placed in a secure location.
5. The information collected from participants will be used in the completion of a thesis required as partial fulfilment of a Masters of Social Science degree in Geography at the University of Waikato.

I consent to my interview being recorded on a Dictaphone YES / NO

I wish to receive a summary of the research findings YES / NO

I am happy to be identified by name in any report
or publication of this research YES / NO

I wish to see those sections of the thesis that deal with information from my interview so that I may specify any changes or suggest any additions prior to the submission of the thesis

YES / NO

These conditions also apply to any previous interview I conducted with you in relation to this research project

I _____ (full name) hereby consent to take part in this study

Signature of participant and date

Name of researcher

Signature of researcher and date

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, Charlotte Church, email charl@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

Any questions about the content of this interview may be sent to Dr. Colin McLeay, email c.mcleay@waikato.ac.nz, Department of Geography, Tourism and Environmental Planning, The University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240; telephone +64 7 838 4466.

Interview questions

Interview guide for will.i.am

- How do you get members of your concert audiences to ‘take on board’ and consider the social issues you comment on between and within songs?
- How do you negotiate the ‘socially aware’ aspect of the Black Eyed Peas with the corporate links/sponsorship of the group?
- How do you choose your corporate sponsors?
- If music is accepted to reflect the society which produces it, where would you want people to think society as at when they listen to the music of the Black Eyed Peas?
- You once said that ‘Black Eyed Peas are the true defenders of hip-hop’. What did you mean by this?
- How do you decide which social issues the Black Eyed Peas will support (financially and through publicity)?
- Is there one specific struggle or issue that you believe is more significant than other social issues?
- Who orchestrates the barriers and boundaries that control the distribution and airplay of socially conscious music?
- Why is music the ‘international language’ that seems to overcome cultural and ethnic boundaries?
- Why did you decide to establish the Peapod Foundation?
- In terms of raising awareness and funding, why does the Peapod Foundation target orphans?

Interview guide for Ben Gross (phone interview)

- What are the different roles of the Peapod Foundation, Grassroots Productions, and the Entertainment Industry Foundation?
- Does Grassroots Productions present ideas to the Entertainment Industry Foundation as to issues or groups that might be a good ‘target’ for charity work?
- So, are you saying that the relationship between Grassroots Productions and the Entertainment Industry Foundation is two-way?
- What are the differences between Grassroots Productions and the Peapod Foundation?
- What is the organisational structure of the Peapod Foundation?

Interview guide for Christine Hansen

- Does a conflict exist concerning celebrities using their profile on behalf of corporate sponsors for charity?
- When celebrities use their image for charity is it still ‘charity’ or does it become an avenue for self promotion?
- How does the media influence the operation of celebrity charities?

Interview guide for Ben Gross (face-to-face interview)

- How is the Peapod Foundation funded?
- What are the roles of each staff member?
- What are the goals or objectives of the Peapod Foundation?
- How successful has the Peapod Foundation been in achieving stated goals?
- How is the success of Peapod Foundation projects measured?
- By whom is success measured?
- Are the members of the Black Eyed Peas involved in the day-to-day activities of the Peapod Foundation?
- In terms of the relationship between the Entertainment Industry Foundation, Peapod and Grassroots Productions; who makes the decisions regarding a project and how are those decisions made?
- Is the Peapod Foundation more of a tool of ‘public relations’ than it is of community contribution?
- What role do you think the Black Eyed Peas play in pop culture?

Interview guide for Zaid Gayle and Shawn Jackson

- How has the Peapod Foundation contributed to the goals of Peace4Kids?
- How did the Peapod Foundation become involved with Peace4Kids?
- Will the Peapod Foundation continue to financially support Peace4Kids?
- What social change do you see taking place as a result the Black Eyed Peas Peapod Music and Arts Academy?

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