

Cultural Democracy:

A Hip Hop-ological Study

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

School of Performance and Cultural Industries

July 2019

This work was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/L503848/1) through the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities

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Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to my supervisors Alice and Leila for being there to help me every step of the way, for your patience, and for maintaining confidence in my ability to do this. It has meant the world to me. Thank you to the WRoCAH team for making this possible.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to my family, to Idris, mum and dad for their unwavering moral, mental, practical (and baby-sitting related) support and love. I could not have done this without you.

Thank you to all the scholars and artists who have contributed to this research, for sharing their thoughts, ideas and materials with me and for their invaluable feedback on hearing mine.

A special acknowledgement to Anna Upchurch who was part of my original supervisory team. Your teaching helped to inspire this project, your support and belief in my abilities has helped me throughout my academic studies. You continue to be dearly missed. Rest in Power.

Finally, I would like to thank little Leila (Pookie) – my world – for forcing my priorities to stay right.

Glossary

A Hip Hop state of mind – to approach all aspects of life with a Hip Hop sensibility (see also Hip Hop consciousness)

Architect(s) – a term used to refer to individuals who played a significant role in the inception and early development of Hip Hop culture. The phrase ‘respect the architect’ means to respect the original creators of Hip Hop culture.

Bars – rap lyrics

Battle – a competitive rap contest where two opponents deliver rap bars in turn aiming to out-wit, humiliate, and out-perform their opponent

B-Boy/B-Girl – a breakdancer

Boom Bap - a style of hip hop music signified by a hard bass drum and snapping snare, usually c.80-90 beats per minute tempo, first came to popularity in the 1990s

Cipher – rap equivalent of a ‘jamming session’ in which an informal gathering of rappers take it in turns to rap. It can either be a cappella, accompanied to music or with a beatboxer. Lyrics can either be freestyled or pre-written verses (Speers 2014).

Crew – an assemblage of people in a rap group or other element of Hip Hop culture (e.g. Graffiti crew).

Drill – a type of music and culture descended from Hip Hop, originally emerged in Chicago, but more recently a London based iteration has emerged. Usually includes rapping containing dark or violent lyrics. Fast tempo trap influenced beats.

Elements – the group of interrelating practices and values that are commonly termed to constitute Hip Hop culture. The number and composition of the elements are contested, however most commonly they are referred to as DJing, MCing,

Breakdancing (B-Boying), and Graffiti. Knowledge is often positioned as a fifth overarching element.

Flow – The specific way a rapper delivers their rhymes, including intonation, tempo, style and cadence

Freestyle – when a rapper delivers lyrics that are spontaneous and have not been pre-written

Freeze – a type of breakdance move

Getting up – to describe the process of a Graffiti writer or artist developing their reputation by executing acts of writing Graffiti

Grime – a musical style (and culture) descended from Hip Hop, which first developed in London, UK in the 2000s. A faster tempo than Hip Hop (c.140 beats per minute), usually includes rap, draws in elements of speed garage

Handstyle – a term used to denote the unique writing style of a Graffiti artist.

Head/Hip Hop Head – someone who identifies as a knowledgeable lover of Hip Hop music and culture

Hip Hop consciousness – to approach something with a Hip Hop sensibility (see also Hip Hop state of mind)

Hip Hop Generation – the generation of people who have grown up during the time since Hip Hop first emerged in the 1970s.

Hip Hop Nation – a collective term encompassing all the local Hip Hop scenes in countries across the world.

Knowledge – to mean the ‘5th’ element of Hip Hop culture, to mean knowledge of the self and a focus on self education and conscientisation (originally posited by Afrika Bambaata of the Universal Zulu Nation)

‘mersh – slang term to refer to commercial rap music

Mic – microphone

Mic Snatching – the act of taking the mic from a fellow MC or rapper on stage without invitation (usually a mild act of disrespect to demonstrate that the previous rapper’s skills were lacking or that they were failing to engage the audience)

Old Skool – refers to hip hop made between the period of the 1970s to 1980s

Overstanding – to mean the ‘6th’ element of Hip Hop culture, to mean not just an understanding of the world around oneself, but also a contextual understanding of the reasons why things are as they are (originally posited by Afrika Bambaata of the Universal Zulu Nation)

Pioneer generation/Pioneers – the generation of individuals engaged in the production of Hip Hop culture from the point of its emergence (1970s)

Second Wave/Third Wave Generations – to refer to the generations of individuals engaged in Hip Hop culture following the pioneer generation (1980s onwards).

Socially conscious rap – rap that contains an explicit social or political message (sometimes referred to as message rap or conscious rap)

Throw-up – a term used to describe Graffiti drawings or tags designed for speedy execution

Top Rock – a type of breakdance move

Underground – a contested term, but generally used to refer to Hip Hop that is produced and consumed outside of the dominant commercial infrastructure

Abstract

This research explores how the conditions for cultural democracy may be encouraged through Hip Hop as a critically engaged, creative practice. It focuses on the spaces where cultural democracy may be encouraged within the context of Hip Hop as a form of organic, grassroots cultural engagement, as a commercial endeavour, and, specifically, as an externally commissioned, socially engaged arts practice. Hip Hop studies theory, cultural advocacy ideology theory and accounts from Hip Hop artists working in communities are brought into multilogue to investigate what is happening to Hip Hop when it is transposed into these contexts and what its resulting relationship is to notions of empowerment, agency and cultural freedom. This thesis provides a UK based Hip Hop perspective on the growing academic discourse around cultural democracy, and begins a critical academic discussion on the subject of Hip Hop as 'community arts work' in the UK.

This thesis argues that spaces within Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged practice do exist for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. It is also suggested that there is a current deficit within Hip Hop 'community arts' in the UK where practitioners are forced to negotiate the parameters of their practice within very thin boundaries that are challenged by the systemic and institutional conditions that surround their work. At times this constriction can result in a diminution of the very things that are originally claimed to make Hip Hop a suitable vehicle for social and critical engagement in the first place. Whilst a Hip Hop consciousness often permeates the work that practitioners undertake in this context there is space for its application as a methodology to be made more explicit, for artists to engage in a greater degree of self-reflexivity to fortify the approach they take to their work in order to work towards an enhanced methodological conceptualisation and to further explore the scope of Hip Hop's conceptual tactical 'tools' to create space for encouraging agency and critical engagement.

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1. Introduction

OPEN THE MIC SHOW

LET THE WORDS AND THE RHYMES FLOW,

FIND TIME TO DIVE IN WELCOME ALL TO MY MIND'S HOME

LET'S BEGIN, IN THIS SCRIPT I TYPE BOLD

I INVITE YOU TO THINK, PAUSE, AND UNFOLD THE SIDE NOTES

LET'S SPEAK ON POWER ON PEOPLE AND CHOICE

AND EXPRESSING YOURSELF THROUGH CREATING A VOICE

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GIRLS AND BOYS

LET'S GET BUSY MAKING A NOISE.

As a lover of Hip Hop¹ – a ‘head’ in the UK – as an MC, and as an audio-production lyricist I have always held a fascination with the power of Hip Hop and with the contested debates that surround it; its emancipatory potential and its capacity for empowerment, debates about the impact of mass-marketisation on the art form, the question of authenticity in the culture, and arguments about misogyny, racism and violence. This fascination provided the initial catalyst for this research project.

¹ Throughout this thesis the subject of study is spelled as ‘Hip Hop’ rather than hip-hop, hiphop or hip hop. Whilst it is acknowledged that debate endures as to the ‘correct’ spelling of Hip Hop dependent on the context of its use and/or whether one is speaking about Hip Hop as culture or hip-hop as musical product according to KRS One (2009), and because this thesis deals with Hip Hop as a culture of practice and often refers to the foundational characteristics of the Hip Hop movement in its analysis, and also for the sake of consistency, a two-word, capitalised, non-hyphenated spelling has been selected. The same approach has been adopted when referring to other music and Hip Hop cultures including Grime, Drill and Graffiti.

Indeed, from negotiating ethnographic observation as a participant to summarising research findings through writing bars (positioned at the start of each chapter to serve as a tool for the reader to introduce the chapter and, for both the reader and myself as a researcher, to catalyse consideration of the key messages arising from its content) I have attempted to create the following thesis in the spirit of Hip Hop culture.

After being introduced to the concept of ‘cultural democracy’ through academic writing on cultural policy ideology in the UK and the definition of cultural democracy as a cultural freedom focussed on grassroots empowerment, cultural pluralism, and autonomous cultural agency (Evrard 1997, Graves 2005, Mulcahy 2006), I became interested in exploring the resonances between Hip Hop as a lived culture of practice and form of creative expression, and how this definition of Hip Hop resonates with that of cultural democracy.

This research comes at a time of growing interest in cultural democracy and whether people are inherently creative (Hadley and Belfiore 2018). Between 2012-2017 the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded the ‘Understanding Everyday Participation’ study, which found that large numbers of the public do not engage in the sorts of cultural activities that have traditionally been used as a basis for evaluating public engagement in the arts (for example attending the theatre or ballet). The study concluded that people do in fact participate regularly in numerous types of creative and artistic activities located in the realm of the ‘everyday’ and on this basis proposed an expanded conceptualisation of ‘cultural value’ and ‘cultural engagement’. Many individuals engage in Hip Hop outside of the context of publicly funded or commercially funded arts (Morgan 2008) and yet Hip Hop also occupies a significant space within the context of the commercial realm and increasingly also as a vehicle through which social engagement is encouraged via externally

commissioned, publicly funded practice (Forman 2013). The contrasting, and sometimes incompatible value systems operative within these different Hip Hop contexts continue to produce contested debates around what Hip Hop 'is' within each of these realms. The emancipatory potential of Hip Hop (Speers 2014: 64), its role as a vehicle for empowerment (e.g. Rose 1994, Perry 2004, Haupt 2003) and its historical status as a subcultural, grassroots practice are by definition challenged within its use in the contexts of commercialisation and appropriation by public funding bodies for social engagement.

According to Graves (2005), Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen (2000), Kelly (1984) and Bennett (2017) achieving the conditions for cultural democracy in the absolute, utopian sense would require vast shifts towards more participatory forms of democratic engagement and the social and cultural relations of power at a national level. For Hope (2011) however there is value in considering what can be done to encourage the conditions for cultural democracy in the present moment within the scope of the existing cultural infrastructure that exists today. This thesis questions in real terms how creative practice may encourage the conditions for cultural democracy. It identifies and explores the cultural practice of Hip Hop as a potential vehicle for this. This research explores tactics and strategies for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy through Hip Hop within the scope of existing cultural infrastructure in various contexts. Hip Hop's appropriation within different contexts makes it critical to explore how its values are being challenged by the various realms that Hip Hop finds itself operating within today.

This thesis first explores the concept of the term 'cultural democracy' in the UK. It identifies and critically interrogates the tensions and issues present in defining such an approach to cultural expression and in so doing aims to bring further analytical

rigour to a definition of the concept. The research methodology used to explore the research questions is then outlined before going on to explore how the conditions for cultural democracy may be encouraged. This writing then turns attention to alternative ways that the conditions for cultural democracy may be encouraged through critically engaged creative practice – in this case - Hip Hop.

According to Higgins (2012:173) cultural democracy remains the most pressing political attribute of community music in general. This research hypothesises that Hip Hop processes of practice can be positioned as a contemporary medium to encourage the conditions for cultural democracy through tactics that pertain to creating decentred, critical and creative spaces for engaged and alternative social discourses as well as retaining focus on grassroots and DIY modes of producing art and Hip Hop's explicit negotiation between commercial and 'conscious', and mainstream and marginalised realms. This study explores the potentiality of applying Hip Hop as a methodological framework to encourage cultural empowerment and engaged cultural citizenship.

The rationale for bringing Hip Hop practice to bear on an exploration of cultural democracy lies in Hip Hop being an art-form located both on the margins of society and within the mainstream of music culture. It endures a tumultuous relationship with notions of grass roots radicalism and rampant mass commercialism (See Rose 2008). This relationship has resulted in both the empowerment and the oppression of its artists and participants in the culture. At its best Hip Hop can function as a space for decentred hegemonic critique and progressive, dissenting dialogue through the articulation of democratic and autonomous impulses (Chang 2006, Perkins 1996, Rose 1994) whilst at the same time it remains consistently vulnerable to co-option (Asante Jnr 2008, Rose 2008). For some (e.g. Lipsitz 1997) its processes of working

through mainstream infrastructure as a practice of protest exist as one of its unique characteristics. This thesis argues that Hip Hop practices, the ongoing challenges faced by Hip Hop and the tactics it has developed in response (successfully or unsuccessfully) exist as a potential framework for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy, and that Hip Hop can function as a politicised cultural space for the articulation of democratic citizenship.

The methodological framework formulated in this study could be applied to explore other creative practices with the same objective – to consider the potentiality of their processes in relation to the idea of cultural democracy – and undoubtedly there is scope for future research in this regard. However Hip Hop, with its existing, explicit focus on engaged social critique, its processual reclamation of public space and its ongoing claim to subcultural territory amidst mass commercialisation presents itself as an appropriate example with which to commence such an exploration. The ways in which engagement in Hip Hop culture speaks to notions of cultural democracy is explored here through ethnographic observation of Hip Hop activity and conversations with Hip Hop artists working in community and public arts contexts.

This thesis attempts to avoid the fetishization of Hip Hop culture as a perfect solution to disenfranchisement and disempowerment, a critique that has been levelled at a number of scholarly writings on the subject of Hip Hop (e.g. McWhorter 2008). Its aim is to demonstrate the need for further discussion and exploration of its potential (and drawbacks) in relation to encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy and to begin a critical discussion on the application of Hip Hop as socially engaged, externally commissioned arts work in the UK. Questions about agency and participation are raised in considering the practice of Hip Hop as ‘community arts work’ or as a socially engaged practice, whether externally facilitated or internally

and organically developed. Whether we are dealing with a crew of Graffiti writers painting a train in the early hours of the morning, an MC rapping on commercial radio about their relationship with the police, or a youth worker delivering a breakdancing workshop to nine year olds, the breadth of operative contexts and the potential differences in terms of intention, ideology, application and output present a need to stimulate discussion and critique of what exactly is occurring in those scenarios in relation to creative empowerment or disempowerment.

The chapters that follow examine literature on cultural democracy, its definitions, histories and principles before going on to critically explore how Hip Hop culture relates to such theories with reference to the growing body of literature in hip hop studies. This exploration is followed by a chapter outlining the methodology employed to answer my research questions. Discussion and analysis of findings from my own research into hip hop drawn both from my own practice and interviews with other practitioners then follows. This will be structured around the following themes; agency, resistance, and critical engagement, to address the overarching research inquiry; what is the relationship between Hip Hop and cultural democracy? Where do the spaces for cultural democracy reside (if at all) in Hip Hop practice within different contexts and in what ways might Hip Hop demonstrate the potential for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy? before finally concluding the thesis.

2. Literature Review

LET ME BLAM UP A CANVAS TO OUTLINE SOME THOUGHTS
TO SPRAY PAINT A PICTURE OF WHAT'S GONE BEFORE
WE'LL GET DOWN TO BUSINESS WE'LL MOVE TO THE CHORUS
BUT FIRST SHOUT TO THE BROTHERS WHO'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE US
SISTERS WHO'VE SPOKEN OUT ON THIS SUBJECT
GET COMFY SIT DOWN, MAYBE GET A BUD LIT

2.1 Introduction

This literature review initially seeks to present a rigorous definition of cultural democracy as a concept. Cultural democracy as a term appears most frequently today in the UK within the rhetoric of policy recommendation papers and academic writing on cultural policy studies. However, it is more important in the name of fully exploring cultural democracy to begin by tracing its emergence through the development of broader, antecedent theoretical debates on definitions of culture – as it pertains to art and creativity - and cultural value. As such this literature review begins by tracing the history of cultural value, consensus and pluralism as it relates to cultural democracy before moving on to consider definitions of cultural democracy in the present day.

The first part of this literature review, *The origins of cultural democracy* will therefore examine key theoretical contextual debates about cultural consensus and pluralism that provide the context for the historical emergence of cultural democracy in the UK as an ideological stand point. It examines key historical shifts in thinking about 'culture' (and 'Culture') to understand the ideological principles and socio-

temporal context that informed the development of the cultural democracy concept. It traces a brief history of changing notions of 'culture as civilisation' (Eagleton 2000) and universal humanism during the Enlightenment through to the cultural shifts of the 1960s and emergent mid-20th century theories of popular culture, cultural populism and postmodern identity politics (e.g. Williams 1988, McGuigan 1992), which set the scene for the development of the cultural democracy paradigm. This discussion of different meanings of culture outline the social, historical context from which the term cultural democracy first emerges and fully establishes itself during the 1960-70s in the UK (Langsted in Graves 2005:11) and serves to highlight the development and growing importance of pluralist views on culture moving into the latter part of the 20th century.

The second part of this discussion *Cultural democracy today* shifts from literature review to critical exploration to conceptualise cultural democracy in the present day. It takes into account existing literature from cultural studies, social theory and cultural policy theorists - and in doing so draws out for critical discussion the key characteristics that constitute the concept. This exercise serves to expand on the notion of cultural democracy as a pluralist cultural advocacy ideology by deconstructing some of the key characteristics that constitute the concept.

Having outlined relevant definitions, existing critiques and refreshed modes of understanding the cultural democracy ideology the third and final part of this discussion *Cultural democracy and Hip Hop* then moves on to rationalise the use of Hip Hop in this study. It does so by demonstrating the relationship between cultural democracy and the place of Hip Hop as a creative subculture. It engages with subcultural and post-subcultural studies as a way of understanding why the study of Hip Hop may be useful for exploring how the conditions for cultural democracy may

be encouraged. The importance of dissent, resistance and critical engagement in relation to this question are introduced in the context of cultural democracy to establish why this thesis posits Hip Hop as a potential means of encouraging these conditions. The chapter also offers a potted history of Hip Hop culture introducing key relevant debates from the field of Hip Hop studies.

There is a wealth of academic and practitioner-theorist writing on the subject of cultural democracy at a conceptual and a revolutionary level both from its emergence and development as a concept from the 1960s onwards (e.g. Kelly 1984, Eagleton 2000, Graves 2005, Trend 1997, Hadley and Belfiore 2018, Kawashima 2006, Wilson et al 2017) and also more recently as the term reclaims capital in recent years in response to attempts to articulate cultural value in the present day (e.g. Hadley and Belfiore 2018). There is a small but growing amount of theorisation about how cultural democracy may be encouraged in the present moment through creative practice within the bounds of the existing systems of cultural infrastructure (e.g. Hope 2011, 64 Million Artists 2018, Wilson et al 2017). There is also a critical mass of writing from the field of Hip Hop studies that centres on exploring the potential and critiquing the limits of Hip Hop as a vehicle for empowerment, agency and critical engagement (e.g. Haupt 2003, 2009, Samy Alim 2006). In the context of the literary landscape that supports this thesis however there exists a lack of theoretical insight that brings these two nomenclatures into *explicit* dialogue (with a small number of notable exceptions including Trend 1997, Willis 1990, Smith 2013, Looseley 2005) that suggest Hip Hop to be a potentially fruitful example of how the conditions for cultural democracy may be encouraged through creative, engaged practice. The meta-aim of this review is therefore to fill this gap by drawing together theories of cultural

democracy and Hip Hop as vehicle for empowerment to explicitly explore resonances between them.

2.2 The origins of cultural democracy

2.2.1 Culture as consensus

Raymond Williams famously wrote that ‘culture’ was one of the most complicated words in the English language (1988). Indeed, the meaning of the word ‘culture’ has remained a contested and mutable term for centuries. Western definitions of the term ‘culture’ from the 17th-19th century largely equated the meaning of the word with ‘civility’ or ‘being civilised’ (Eagleton 2000). From the Enlightenment era onwards and specifically during the 18th century the idea of culture reflected a universal humanism which recognised it as a means of creating social unity. This definition of culture echoes the pervading German, French and English early Modernist Romantic philosophical thought of the Age of Reason, entrenched as it was in Kantian ideas of Rationality, Reason and the ‘ideal man’ (Gregor 1996) as a means of ordering a harmony within ‘civil society’ in the Hegelian (Wood 1991) sense of the term.

British Romanticist Matthew Arnold, in *Culture and Anarchy*, equated culture with the achievement of proper spiritual disposition. Arnold famously situated culture as the very best that has been said or thought in the world (in Garnett 2009). For Arnold culture was “an ideal of absolute perfection and the imperfect historical process which labours to that end” (in Eagleton 2000:19). This definition of culture also denoted an absolute kind of consensus in terms of the perceived qualities and principles that characterise humanity. It is important to outline this early Romanticist

meaning of culture as being the very cornerstone of a consensus-based meaning of culture.

In the 19th Century expanded conceptualisations of culture came to encompass peoples beyond the realm of the pre-industrial Western middle class (Eagleton 2000) and then later the consideration of the plurality and value of other 'cultures' both in other places and within Western industrialised society (albeit still firmly rooted in the Western Imperialist gaze). Within 19th century definitions of culture we begin to see the introduction of a type of pluralism into what the term represents, with much of the thinking about culture during this era beginning to focus on the lifestyles and rituals of groups of peoples in other countries (specifically 'tribal' cultures) (Eagleton 2000). Thus, culture at once came to signify both universalism and consensus, and also the non-Western 'other' as an object of study; the study of 'tribal' and 'primitive' cultures characterise this definition of culture and incorporate a sense that the agrarian way of life experienced by these 'other' tribal peoples possessed a sort of purity.

Within this view of culture civilisation exists as a corruptive force. This meaning of culture also functioned as a means by which the European middle classes could know themselves by looking upon the cultures of other groups and as such 'culture' remained a way to recognise and reaffirm the notion and importance of civility though the term itself was no longer the equivalence of civilisation. The meaning of culture has therefore represented both consensus and plurality for centuries. However, the idea of culture as consensus maintained primacy in relation to any hierarchy of cultural value, which continued to be the case until much later, in the 20th century, when the diffusion of national identity and huge shifts in modes of cultural production played a key role in necessarily eroding any universal assumption about cultural value (McGuigan 1992).

2.2.2 From shared culture to cultural pluralism

A truly pluralist perspective on culture gained slow traction during the mid-19th century but began to establish itself properly in the 20th century (Eagleton 2000:13). It is helpful from the outset in support of the exploration of pluralism and consensus in culture to explicitly reference the distinction between pluralism in culture/meanings of culture, and pluralism in cultural value/regimes of cultural value. Both are traced throughout this chapter. Pluralism in cultures, as outlined above, has been around since Johann Gottfried von Herder's (1778) first theorisation of the idea that more than one universal culture exists and continues to proliferate throughout the following centuries as changes in society and way of life occur. The 19th century tension between culture as civilisation and cultures as ways of life co-exist but both are founded on valuing some cultures over others. Then in the 20th century theorists began to question these value systems (Eagleton 2000), the pluralisation of cultural *value* became a consideration. That is to say that challenges were presented to what had been the previously accepted notion of 'good culture' as being an identified and validated canon of traditional arts participated in and consumed by civil society, forcing the consideration that engagement in other types of cultural and creative activities may also be of value.

With the growth of large-scale industrialisation and urbanisation, and the invention of mass production techniques, mass media and film making that emerged in the early 20th century in the UK; mass culture and its products flowed into society (Strinati 1995). This in turn forced another addition to the established categorisations of meanings of culture. 'Mass culture' is a Marxist term that was coined by Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the 1930s who, in response to their experiences of Nazi propaganda and their subsequent exposure to American consumer ideology,

argued that “mass media in a capitalist democracy manipulates the masses by lulling them into the pleasures of conformity, consumption and consumer ideology” (Jenkins et al. 2002). The emergence of mass culture contributed to the further development of the ‘high’ versus ‘low’ culture binary established in the 19th century (McGuigan 2014), a rhetorical familiarity that continues today despite the polarity of these terms being increasingly eroded and their signifying characteristics blurred².

The endurance of this ‘high/low’ culture binary is significant. For Pierre Bourdieu the distinction between high and low culture exists as part of the very apparatus of producing and reproducing social inequality (2010). Eagleton agrees, concurring that it is not necessarily the content of high or low culture that bears the problem, but rather its function (2000:52). That high culture has been appropriated as the property of a particular social class and group possessing ‘specific skills’ is the root injustice of the high/low culture classification for Bourdieu (2010) (in addition to the value judgement implied by the term ‘low’). The ‘high/low’ culture binary has therefore played a significant role over the last four centuries in impacting notions of cultural value.

Following the emergence of mass culture, in the early half of the 20th century it began to endure extended critique by scholars (specifically Theodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer and associated members of the Frankfurt School of Economics) for what they claimed was its homogenising and pacifying influence on people (Harrington and Bielby 2001: 8). In other words, people who became the recipients of mass

² For an in-depth discussion of the various ways that ‘high culture’, ‘low culture’ and ‘popular culture’ are defined today see Inglis (2005: Chapter 3).

culture were merely consumers, and mass culture was little more than products imposed from above by the social elite to reproduce a dominant cultural hegemony. This equation of participation in mass culture with passive consumption and conversely of power with the production of culture left little room for theories of agency in relation to consumption or participation. Over the last half century however this perspective has increasingly been challenged by theorisations about the relationship between consumption, production and participation that posit a far more complex and nuanced account of the role of agency and empowerment in how we interrelate with the process and products of culture (Throsby 1994).

Writing in 1992 Richard Hoggart reflects on the massive shifts in cultural value that began in the 1950s as the post-war consensus began to diffuse. Hoggart references a new sort of progressive consensus that came to establish itself fully in the 1960s, which centred on a regime of cultural value focussed on “deploying the rhetoric of meritocracy and technological modernisation”, which sought to supersede the deferential consensus of earlier decades (in Hewison 1995: 123). This meritocratic regime of cultural value functioned as the precursor to the extended proliferation of cultural identity(s) that led to the consideration of pluralist versions of culture that emerged over the following two decades.

An about-facing critical resistance against the trajectory of mass culture that developed during the period of cultural value reassessment that Hewison speaks of can be located in ‘popular culture’ and ‘cultural populism’ that emerged in the 1960s. Although for a time the ‘mass culture critique’ was also applied to popular culture by some scholars (Harrington and Bielby 2001). ‘Popular culture’ as we now know it (i.e. in the context of considerations of multiple systems of cultural value) began to be theorised as a serious field of study in Britain in the 1960s with the opening of the

Birmingham based Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) by Richard Hoggart, E. P. Thompson, and Stuart Hall in 1964 (Turner 2002). Popular culture as in culture-that-is-popular has of course been the subject of academic and public debate for at least the last 300 years (Burke in Jenkins et al 2002, Juncker and Balling 2016).

As Jenkins, MacPherson and Shattuc (2002) explain, the concept of popular culture evades a unified or simple definition by being difficult not only to classify but also by cross-cutting associated debates about 'good' and 'bad' in culture (p.27). As such any attempt at a single definition finds itself to be lacking. One thing that most theorists seem to agree upon however is that the term 'popular culture' has always been a theoretical construct formulated by middle class intellectuals to maintain ideological authority through the preservation of the right to define 'good' and 'bad' culture (Williams 1988, Jenkins et al. 2002:27, McGuigan 1992:10). Though many theories of popular culture now exist that contend popular culture merely as being commercial culture the tensions within the relationship between the two, and associated debates around the value of popular culture and its homogenising 'threat' to other types of culture continue (e.g. Gans 1974, Harrington and Bielby 2001, Edgar and Sedgewick 1999).

Raymond Williams (1988:237) suggests four different meanings for the term popular culture; 'well liked by many people', 'inferior kinds of work', 'work deliberately produced to win favour with the people' and 'culture actually made by the people for themselves'. These contrasting meanings immediately highlight the complexity and tensions present in attempting to define the term popular culture. Williams' first and third meanings of popular culture can be equated to what is commonly thought of as mass culture, meaning the production of popular culture *for* people via the means of

mass-scale technological production by hegemonic institutions and groups, and then disseminated to the public as a marketed profitable product. Williams' second (and to a lesser extent third) definition of popular culture stands in contrast to his fourth meaning of popular culture as 'culture actually made by the people for themselves', a definition which implies a far greater sense of cultural empowerment and authenticity and is the definition that speaks directly to the idea of cultural democracy.

Scholars from within the field of cultural studies and popular culture studies have provided various alternative terms to elaborate on a definition of popular culture influenced by Williams' four categories (e.g. McGuigan 1992, Bennett 1980).

Competition between these meanings remains a key critical component of present-day debates about popular culture, and there is a significant body of scholarly work that argues for the primacy of one or another of these meanings in attempting to characterise and define the term (e.g. Storey 2008, McGuigan 1992, Strinati 1995, Bennett 1980). It is recognised that any definition of popular culture is entrenched in a complex web of contradictions regarding class and power (Jenkins et al. 2002).

Cultural studies tends to "assert that popular culture is neither totally imposed from above, nor something that emerges spontaneously from below, but rather is the ongoing interplay between the process of consumption and production" (Storey 1993: 13). For Gramscians this "terrain of struggle" (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis 2005) characterises popular culture, and for Dimitriadis (2009) something unique to Hip Hop can be observed in relation to this theorisation; artists themselves "having this discussion – struggling over the meaning of 'popular'" (p.50).

Taking Williams' strand of popular culture as meaning 'culture actually made by the people for the people' opposes the homogenising impact on mass culture. Though Bennett's (1980) critique of this definition points out that this definition of popular

culture “conceives of mass culture as wholly meretricious and, most erroneously, it has an essentialist conception of ‘the people’ as a fixed entity...” (McGuigan 1992:65) Bennett does recognise that this definition is the one with the greatest amount of potential for “serious political engagement on the terrain of popular culture” (p.65). It is therefore this distinction that is of particular interest to this analysis because it is out of this desire for popular culture to be defined in terms of latitudinarian, critically engaged public cultural agency and autonomy that the concept of cultural democracy – the focal point of this thesis - emerges.

It is important to note that mass culture did not replace elite culture and popular culture did not replace mass culture, instead the surrounding debates about culture evolved to suggest that these are porous categorisations whose boundaries intersect in multiple places (Harrington and Bielby 2005) and cause much friction in the process. Of course, now ‘high’ culture today is also marketised and mass culture does not necessarily preclude radicalisation (Eagleton 2000:51). It is not just possible but common to recognise cultural products and activities as sitting in more than one of these categories from the 20th century onwards, a diffusion of versions of culture that only added to the complexity for anyone trying to retain consensus-based meaning of culture or a distinct regime of consensus based cultural value. This is the case if we consider a cultural practice such as Hip Hop that is at once commercial, popular as well as sometimes radical. The commercial pervasion of Hip Hop music, fashion and style within Western mainstream media attests to its place in popular culture, whilst its authoritarian disregard, capacity for alternative discourse formulation and social critique as well as its roots in the Black civil rights movement of the mid-20th century signify some of its more radical aspects. As such this writing progresses with the understanding of popular culture as heterogeneous and multifaceted, and understands

– as in Bennett’s (1980) and Eagleton’s (2000) definitions - the above categories as permeable and interrelated rather than as binary opposites. Ultimately it accepts that cultural value is no longer a consensus-based sort of universalism.

The primacy of monolithic cultural rituals, attitudes and institutions of the pre-war and pre-industrial society became diminished through the critique of traditional acceptance of cultural value brought about by new technologies of production. The early products of mass culture resulting from such industrialisation and mass-scale production and their consequent homogeneity and challenge to traditional standards of class and value in high art forced a reconsideration of traditional cultural hierarchies of taste (Macdonald 1953). As discussed in turn the homogeneity of mass culture became the subject of critique from the 1960s onwards in acknowledging the power imbalances in the production and dissemination of mass cultural products to the public and the lack of scope for public agency in the production of culture.

Walter Benjamin’s 1936 theory of mass-produced culture as ‘democratising’ (because mass reproduction of artworks erodes the social control and ‘aura’ of authenticity and reverence surrounding ‘original’ works of art) does provide something in the way of a defense against the accusation levelled at mass culture that it only reinforces existing social power relations. This is excepting consideration of who owns and controls the means of said reproduction (Benjamin 2008). In the wake of the rising challenge to traditional hierarchies of cultural value that amassed momentum during the mid-20th century the requirement for expanded conceptualisations of cultural value that possessed scope for greater cultural diversity and public agency increased. It is from this crisis of cultural ideology that the concept of cultural democracy first established itself as a response to the implicit challenge to traditional culture hierarchies that accompanies the pluralism of cultural value, and as a call to social action.

The cultural shift experienced in post-war Britain during the 1960s and the emergence of popular culture as a subject of study (Turner 2002) was characterised by a radical reappraisal of attitudes towards the value of culture and the critique of the cultural continuity that had existed throughout earlier decades. The social revolution and subsequent rise of counter- and subcultures in the 1960s demanded space to fight for their own rights and developed multifarious kinds of identities through participation in non-dominant forms of culture. This beckoned the recognition of the intrinsically social nature of subjectivity and the pluralist mantle was firmly established as a means of achieving a greater diversity of cultural value. As Hewison (1995) explains; genuinely new forms of politics such as the existence of CND (which gave rise to the New Left), coupled with the emergence of a new wave of poets, dramatists and artists ready to question the post-war identity consensus of the previous decades, the increasing multi-racial identity of Britain and movements for various forms of civil rights leading to mass social unrest all contributed towards a breakdown of the existing cultural consensus that had been reaffirmed in Britain in the years immediately following the Second World War. The era of Postmodernity and post-structuralist thought brought with it a questioning of the traditional value judgements placed upon 'high and low art'. Consequentially since the Postmodern period the term culture has increasingly been employed to refer to the pluralisation of self-identity (Eagleton 2000:13-15). The term comes to connote the diversity of a way of life in a reflection of the Williams-esque (1958) definition of culture as 'ordinary'. In responding to traditional meanings of culture and cultural value ingrained in imperialist and elitist sentiment, and an exclusionary class system, the pluralisation of meanings of culture and later of hierarchies of cultural value is located as progressive and inclusive. It is inaccurate however to suggest that cultural pluralism is without its

problems and this is an appropriate stage in the historical mapping of cultural pluralism to outline some of these. Pluralism more generally has motivated liberal thinkers from Kant (Hill 1992) to Mouffe (2013) in different ways. It signifies promoting heterogeneity over and above homogeneity and difference over consensus. The idea in a political theory context grew, as a critical response and successor to classic liberalism, from the work of Communitarian thinkers and is also present in Habermasian discourse ethics (Edgar and Sedgewick 1999).

In the context of postmodern self-awareness, deconstructionism and phenomenology the indiscriminate promotion of difference over consensus (or in the arts, populism over elitism) can result in what Eagleton describes as a “pluralized conformism” (2000:42) where multiple cultures of difference unwittingly reproduce “localized versions of the very universalism they arraign”. By this Eagleton refers to the ways that pluralised cultures and subcultures are necessarily exclusivist and through their fragmentation function to reaffirm the righteousness of their own particular set of cultural value regimes in much the same way as elitist ‘high culture’. Trend (1997) suggests the opposite can also be true in the relationship between elite and populist culture, that is to say populist or mainstream culture can in fact become exclusionary through its devaluation of diversity in favour of striving for consensus it ends up discounting most of the people in society. By attempting to naturalise social hierarchies and positioning any group of special interest as antithetical to the mainstream it thus produces an elitism all of its own (p.10).

Elsewhere Eagleton (2000) outlines another problem of the pluralisation of culture and cultural value. He explains the impassive ambivalence that can result from the adoption of this perspective. Valuing difference above all else precludes the formation of strong opinions in favour of one or another cause or subject instead

forcing the pluralist to concede the value in all sides and positions. In other words, if difference is *ipso facto* a good thing, then where is the scope to suggest something is of high quality or low quality. It is good purely because it is different. There are also more generalised criticisms to be made of cultural pluralism in opposition to a consensus based or elitist notion of 'high culture'. For example, Arnold's (in Garnett 2009) argument is that a consensus around questions of quality in culture and the arts serves to strengthen a sense of national identity and in turn of social unity, which is also seen in Bourdieu's theorisation of social and cultural capital (1985). It is perhaps that to focus on expanding civil freedoms and alternative conceptions of cultural value is to diminish scope for the construction of a national identity and thus compromises social harmony and even national security as a result of potential civil unrest. Nevertheless, cultural diversity is a fact of contemporary British liberal society and therefore finding ways of multiplying and recognising new approaches towards regimes of cultural value(s) is a meaningful and necessary endeavour. Trend (1997) comments of the public's dissatisfaction with mainstream cultural institutions and the need to acknowledge the primacy of cultural difference in the name of cultural democracy; "Diverse communities seem willing as never before to reach for new answers to old problems" (p.2).

In the post-war society, working class people earned "a fuller form of citizenship than had been granted them in more stratified and static pre-war societies. Now it was necessary to attempt to integrate into the heart of national cultural life a positive regard for the needs and aspirations of whole classes" (Adams and Goldbard 1995). Amidst this social context popular cultural movements and alternative 'counter'-cultural movements proliferated. How to 'officially' accommodate pluralism in

cultural value debates became for the first time an issue that was loudly demanding to be tackled by a range of voices now demanding to be heard.

2.2.3 The rise of cultural democracy

The social context from which the cultural democracy perspective emerged in the 1960s was one primed for the creation of space, the use of culture as social action, and negotiation of value in counter-cultural and subcultural movements including New Age living and Hippies as well as subcultures of music, fashion and lifestyle. Counter-cultures (or contra-cultures) are defined as those that advocate an alternative way of living and reject dominant culture (see Rozak 1969, Yinger 1960), whereas subcultures represent groups that create separate space to operate within the framework of the dominant existing culture (see Hebdidge 1979, McRobbie 1994, Clarke 1982, Willis 1990). Both of these types of cultural movement are characterised by some form of resistance against the dominant culture (Edgar and Sedgwick 1999). This suffices as a definition for now, however we shall see later on in this thesis through a more in-depth discussion of 'subculture' in relation to Hip Hop some of the dangers highlighted through the reductive association of 'subculture' with resistance/radicalisation. Such an association can come at the cost of either fetishizing or romanticising elements of subcultures or disregarding conformist or mundane aspects of subcultures (Jenkins et al 2002).

These cultures arose in the wake of the social revolution that engulfed the 1960s and therefore new approaches to the question of pluralism, not just in terms of culture(s) but also in relation to hierarchies and regimes of cultural value, were necessitated. This challenge of previously established hierarchies of cultural value regimes gave

rise to new cultural value paradigms such as ‘cultural democracy’³ (Adams and Goldbard 1995). The cultural democracy perspective on popular culture was a movement that emerged fully in the 1960-70s as part of what McGuigan explains was the “populism against mass-culture trajectory” (1992: 56) and existed as a form of radical populism advocating cultural diversity, cultural participation and cultural life as subject to democratic control (Adams and Goldbard 1995).

In this theoretical context cultural democracy emerges as a cultural ideology that advocates the spread of democratic engagement feared by traditional cultural elites (see Q.D. Leavis 1932) and sets out a post-colonial, pluralist concept of cultural value that aims to prevent the delineation of an ‘official culture’ but where multiple cultural values can co-exist and are the result of decisions made by all rather than by a small group of traditional culture elites. Within the reconsideration of regimes of cultural value and pluralisation of identity brought about by social and cultural shifts in the 1960s, cultural democracy emerges as an ideological framework within which these values could be organised.

As its name indicates, cultural democracy is the intended product of support and access to engagement in cultural activity that the people democratically validate as important to them (Lane 1974, Gattinger 2011). Within this model the public exist as the nucleus of decision-making indicating a less hierarchical and elitist structural composition, or what Kevin Mulcahy terms a ‘latitudinarian’ composition (broadly accessible and aesthetically inclusive) (2006:325). The cultural democracy paradigm

³ It is accurate to say that the idea of cultural democracy properly established itself during this time period, however it is often cited that the ‘cultural democracy’ concept was first developed and referenced in 1943 by American Educational Theorist Rachel DuBois (Graves 2005:10).

therefore exists as a principle imbricated within a wider social agenda for cultural diversity and value as well as an evolving critique of other current cultural policy objectives.

For James Bau Graves cultural democracy calls for the representation of the widest range of cultural voices, ground-up public decision-making and the achievement of cultural freedom (2005). This, he argues, makes cultural democracy '*the social agenda*' (p.206). This is because its achievement would reflect a much-needed shift in the values of community, governance and 'ethical social conduct' (p.197) resulting in a necessary call to revolt against the current homogenisation of cultural activity caused by globalisation and the development of mass communication tools. Graves' call for cultural democracy as a revolutionary demand echoes that of Kelly (1984) and is echoed by Bennett (2017) who both attest to the requirement for seismic shifts in the wider structures of democracy in order to move towards a cultural democracy.

So, we observe the seismic shift across three centuries from a consensus based, universalism in what 'culture' is, towards a pluralist, post-colonial diffusion of identity and emergent multiculturalism that takes hold from the mid-20th century onwards. This shift towards cultural pluralism and the ascendance of the cultural democracy framework is also reflected in arts movements of the era as well as in responses to those art movements and in policy recommendations of that period. For example, The UNESCO Arc-et-Senans Declaration of 1972 was one such key example of this shift in thinking about cultural value that was picked up by UNESCO. In fact, Duelund (2008) points out that around this time cultural democracy became a significant concept in European politics and a specific tool for action. Around this time the phrase also filtered into the cultural policy recommendation mechanisms of

the UK but was not seized upon by policy decision makers in the same way as at a European policy level.

The Arc-et-Senans declaration was the product of a colloquium on cultural development held in France 1972. The liberal humanist perspective of the Arc-et-Senans proposes a ‘new approach’ to arts and cultural support claiming “It is not enough...to be content with cultural democratisation aiming merely at dissemination and consumption of the arts” (p.19). The document offers up the idea of cultural democracy as the way forward, stating that a radical and new approach to culture is required to respond to the ‘cultural crisis’ perceived as then pervading post-war Europe (p.20).

Similarly, the Beaford Declaration (a policy recommendation), the result of a conference of arts centre directors in the UK in 1973 claims “the idea that arts activities should begin with the human experience of the sixty-odd million inhabitants of this Island – has not become part of the Art Council’s interpretation of its charter” (p.1). The paper goes on to suggest that all creative activity important to individuals deserves to be validated in terms of quality and support placing communities at the heart of cultural activity and highlighting the requirement for grass-roots development and more fluid, transparent dialogue between council, artists and communities. J. Simpson’s *Towards Cultural Democracy* (1976) exists as another foundational text that filtered into the realm of cultural policy recommendation, during this period and is referenced within a number of internal Arts Council of Great Britain papers from that time period, albeit that these papers did not significantly impact the course of cultural policy or mainstream practice in the UK.

Most notably the Community Arts movement of the 1960s in Britain championed the cultural democracy approach (Braden 1978). The movement was centred around a

common philosophy of cultural democracy (Higgins 2012:33) with the community artists of the 1960s proposing a new way of working that aimed to empower communities to create their own artwork. The community arts movement can be positioned as a key example of a countercultural movement that was originally based on the premise of encouraging cultural democracy. A number of theorists and practitioners claim this movement became hijacked by dominant cultural institutions as it grew and was challenged with negotiating a relationship with such institutions (Jeffers and Moriarty 2017, Matarasso 2013, Kelly 1984). The community art movement's turbulent relationship with the Arts Council of Great Britain between the 1960s-80s as an institution founded and upon the ideology of the 'democratisation of culture' (Shaw 1987:132), which stands in many ways in opposition to that of cultural democracy (Gattinger 2011, Jancovich 2011). The democratisation of culture perspective emerged from within the context of the Modernist period amidst the development of technological mass re-production capabilities. This objective involves the idea that 'good' art should be accessible to everybody irrespective of social class or economic circumstance (Shaw 1987). This objective concerns the 'aesthetic enlightenment' of the masses (Mulcahy 2006:323) and supports equality of access to established classic art forms and cultural activity. The democratisation of culture paradigm is therefore a useful contrapuntal approach to cultural value for understanding the conditions that cultural democracy, as its critique, aims to challenge.

The Community Arts Movement seized upon the idea of cultural democracy as a framework for its endeavours (Kelly 1984, Braden 1976) and in turn the Arts Council adopted the term, at least in its rhetoric, if not in its actions, (particularly with reference to its interactions with the community artists of the 1970-80s). Its attitude

towards the concept did not always, if ever, echo the populist recalibration of cultural value regimes and public empowerment sentimentalised in policy recommendation papers of that time (e.g. the Arc-et-Senans Treat 1972, the Beaford Declaration 1973). For Matarasso (1986) the adoption of the term 'cultural democracy' in policy rhetoric from the 1970s can be viewed as a co-option of the term. For Hadley and Belfiore (2018a) this manipulation and depoliticisation of cultural democracy by cultural policy continues today. These examples serve to highlight the susceptibility of the term 'cultural democracy' to re-appropriation. According to Matarasso (2013) the 1970s community arts movement's lack of grounding in a robust enough ideological framework eventually resulted in the movement suffering a hegemonic co-option of its processes and re-appropriation of its values. Bilton (1997:5-6) elaborates on this state of affairs arguing that

Behind these assumptions [made by the community arts movement] lies a hybrid of Marxist cultural theory and the cultural idealism of Matthew Arnold. This hybrid brings together two conflicting conceptions of culture. On the one hand 'culture' is used in an expansive, anthropological sense to describe a whole way of life, the shared meanings and values of a community or class; at the same time, 'culture' is also used more narrowly to describe a specialised artistic tradition, at first growing out of the anthropological 'culture' and then gradually recognised as a distinct, autonomous sphere of 'art'...

The community arts movement was therefore, according to Bilton (1997), labouring under two contradictory theorisations of culture and its value. However, the course of the community art movement exists as a useful cautionary legacy for Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged art work, in negotiating the tensions between hierarchical and latitudinarian approaches to cultural engagement. Its historical *modus operandi* also provides a number of useful benchmarks against which the conditions for cultural democracy may be measured (Jeffers and Moriarty 2017) or even taken as inspiration to re-envision and reformulate in an exploration of

cultural democracy in the present day (as in this study). In the same manner as the community arts movement, the trajectory of Hip Hop as a subcultural movement and the negotiation of its relationships with dominant cultural forces and institutions can be explored as a more recent example of the development of a subcultural movement and its mutable relationship to the idea of cultural democracy.

Following the interest in the cultural democracy concept evidenced during the 1960-80s in the UK, the notion of cultural democracy was all but forgotten, at least in terms of cultural policy studies, in the decades following this initial surge in interest according to Kawashima (2006). But for some (e.g. Kelly 2016) the cultural democracy argument continues to resonate today. The discussion that follows inspects in more detail the composition of the cultural democracy framework and deconstruct the meanings of its signifying characteristics with the aim of providing a more thorough definitive understanding of the term beyond that of a pluralist framework for cultural activism or a cultural advocacy ideology of public empowerment

2.3 Cultural democracy today

2.3.1 A resurging interest

This endeavour to provide a rigorous definition of the term cultural democracy is timely. Writing from a cultural policy standpoint Hadley and Belfiore (2018) explain the renewed recent interest in the idea of cultural democracy saying that “cultural democracy has recently acquired new capital via a range of publications, events and research activity operating in, and around the nomenclature” (p.218). Similarly, the recent report produced by the 64 Million Artists project *Cultural Democracy in*

Practice (2018:2) states that “[cultural democracy] is not a new concept, but it’s one that seems to be gaining focus across arts and culture.”

Hadley and Belfiore assert that the renewed interest in cultural democracy arises from its potential as a framework within which to address, actualise and articulate questions about the relationship between democracy and culture that define the current crisis in UK cultural policy (2018: 218). Part of their projection for the potential future of cultural democracy is a revision and reimagining of the theoretical concept of cultural democracy for the present day that whilst being historically informed is necessarily future-oriented. Any such re-visioning undoubtedly necessitates with a critical review of key literature that conceptualises cultural democracy from cultural studies and cultural policy theorists and in doing so draws out for discussion the key characteristics that constitute the concept and the political context within which any current definition finds itself operating. The following section therefore shifts from literature review to critical discussion to expand on the notion of cultural democracy as a pluralist cultural advocacy ideology. It does this by deconstructing some of the key characteristics that are commonly attributed as being critical aspects of its ontology and by grouping together in one place various current definitions and commonly referenced tropes within definitions of cultural democracy.

2.3.2 (Re-)defining and re-imagining cultural democracy today

The concept of cultural democracy today has been, as the *Cultural Democracy in Practice* (64 Million Artists 2018:4) report explains, “debated and defined by many people”. Though the term cultural democracy is being increasingly used within arts projects, academic writing and policy recommendation papers, the very terms that commonly constitute the characteristics that underpin its definition, as with the two

that constitute the term, are almost all themselves highly contested. In fact, for community arts pioneer Francois Matarasso (2018) “Cultural democracy is a fox because it knows many things. It’s permissive and takes many forms. It isn’t easy to recognise, because it is shades of colour, not black or white. Its strength—and its weakness—is its capacity for shape-shifting, which is why many people struggle to understand it and why those who think they do often don’t agree with each other about what it means”.

The previous sub chapters have highlighted the contestation of the term ‘culture’ and ‘cultural value’. For Graves (2005) writing on the subject of cultural democracy, ‘democracy’ is an equally subjective term. Graves makes the implicitly Foucauldian claim that democracy exists as a time and context-specific notion (2005:15). For the purposes of collating and critiquing the numerous definitions and writings on cultural democracy that exist today it is useful to construct a panorama of the landscape of cultural democracy definitions that highlights some important commonalities and differences.

In addressing current definitions of cultural democracy, it is important to acknowledge who is offering the definition, to whom they are addressing that definition, for what purpose and to what end they are defining cultural democracy, as well as what philosophical and theoretical frameworks are underpinning the definition. It is also helpful to distinguish those definitions of cultural democracy that exist as value-statements from the writing on cultural democracy that exists as instructional action-statements about how a cultural democracy might be achieved. This list of questions can act as a critical lens through which to examine current definitions of cultural democracy currently circulating in the fields of cultural

institutions and arts funding bodies, social justice projects, cultural policy studies and academic writing.

There are two tasks that exploring currently used definitions of cultural democracy demands. The first is to extract key themes within which we can group their subsequent common elements and to explore key differences in definitions of cultural democracy. The second is to critically interrogate the contested linguistic terms that comprise them e.g. ‘participation’ to draw out the political and philosophical assumptions that underlie their use. If the idea of cultural democracy is vulnerable to co-option (as has been historically demonstrated by the case of the Community Arts Movement and its relationship with the Arts Council⁴), then arguably a re-visioning of cultural democracy today as advocated for by Hadley and Belfiore (2018) depends on such an interrogation to reinforce its foundations.

2.3.3 (Re-)defining cultural democracy: values and conditions

Statements that position cultural democracy as a set of values or as an ideological standpoint can be thought of as value-focussed definitions. In other words, these are definitions that focus on ‘what cultural democracy is’. For example, Adams and Goldbard’s (1995) definition of cultural democracy as “pluralism, participation, and equity in cultural life and cultural policy” is a value-statement. The Kings College *Towards Cultural Democracy* report (Wilson et al 2017) defines cultural democracy as “the substantive social freedom to co-create versions of culture”. The *Cultural Democracy in Practice* report states that cultural democracy is a term that “describes

⁴ see Kelly 1984, Matarasso 2013, Braden 1976 and Jeffers & Moriarty 2017 for a more in-depth investigation of this historical trajectory.

an approach to arts and culture that actively engages everyone in deciding what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it” and that “we are all artists” (64 Million Artists 2018). The recent Movement for Cultural Democracy group, developed by the Momentum Labour movement in the UK, define cultural democracy within their manifesto as “[culture] as a basic human right, helping to create a world where all people are free to enjoy the benefits of self-expression, access to resources and community” (2018). Holden (2015) defines cultural democracy as “universalism, pluralism, equality, transparency and freedom”, and for Graves (2005) it is that which insists upon equality of access to art and cultural activities as defined by the public. Within this model the community exist as the nucleus of decision-making indicating a less hierarchical and elitist structural composition, or what Mulcahy terms a ‘latitudinarian’ composition (broadly accessible and aesthetically inclusive) (2006:325).

When the above definitions are considered collectively there are a number of reoccurring general values that describe cultural democracy; ‘freedom’, ‘participation’, ‘pluralism’, ‘inherent creativity’, ‘empowerment’, ‘community’ and ‘agency’ for example. These are values that we can ascribe to a definition of cultural democracy if we are to try and accommodate the definitions currently in circulation from a variety of cultural discourses within one place. Despite the contested nature of many of the terms themselves, as we shall now move on to dissect in more detail, these are values that are commonly cited within definitions of cultural democracy. It is therefore important to question as part of the process of defining cultural democracy today what these terms mean in relation to the idea of cultural democracy and how various definitions employ these terms differently.

It is helpful here to begin by contextualising the following dissection of terminology through mapping how the above-mentioned values relate to the idea of cultural democracy. (See also Appendix A 7.1.1 for a working process diagram detailing an expanded conceptualisation of Sherry. R. Arnstein's (1969) widely cited ladder of citizen participation for the purposes of mapping public empowerment and autonomous cultural agency in relation to cultural democracy as per the examples discussed above).

The 'cultural freedom' condition central to Graves' (2005), Mulcahy's (2006), Kelly's (1984), Holden's (2015) and Bennett's (2017) value-statement theorisations of cultural democracy and the commonly cited term 'public empowerment' are actually very vague terms. This is especially true when considered in isolation from the wider discourses that surround arts and culture. Both imply an increased level of cultural autonomy and agency in cultural engagement for the public. As noted in the 1986 Shelton Trust manifesto, cultural democracy fundamentally means that people should be allowed to make culture, not have it made for them. The terms agency and autonomy in this context recur frequently within writings about cultural democracy and are of fundamental importance in defining its conditions. It is therefore necessary at this point to discuss the meaning of these terms in relation to defining cultural democracy. In the context of cultural democracy agency takes a necessarily structure oriented (Barker 2005), and critical realist (Bhaskar 2008) position in referring to the ways and extent to which (dominant social, and in this case political) structures impact a person's capacity for agency. Or in other words how and what are the mechanisms that affect people's ability to exercise power in their freedom of cultural expression? What degree of agency do people have to engage in creative and cultural activities on their own terms?

We can think in the widest Marxist sense of impacting factors such as public access to the resources for artistic production and the dynamics of ownership over the means to produce arts. Bennett (in Jeffers and Moriarty 2017) offers an explicitly Marxist perspective on the definition of cultural democracy equating it with access to the means of cultural production (for the public). Thanks to technological advancements in recent years such as the development of home music production software for example, the technology now exists to allow this and Hip Hop embraces this technology whole-heartedly. Bennett's definition echoes that of the founder of the West London Media Workshop Ken Lynam who, regarding the definition of cultural democracy during the 1970s, stated that 'really what should happen is that people should be able to control the means of communication themselves...community controlled communication networks, that's the long term objective' (cited in Kelly 1984:22). Community art theorist Owen Kelly's 1984 writings correspond with Lynam and Bennett's view noting that;

[Cultural democracy] is an idea which revolves around the notion of plurality, and around equality of access to the means of cultural production and distribution It assumes that cultural production happens within the context of wider social discourses... (1984:101)

Lynam and Kelly's vision has not been realised in the context of much cultural engagement in the UK. However, the nature of Kelly, Lynam and Bennett's definitions offer a basis for raising questions about spaces for the formulation of alternative discourses and ownership of the means of cultural production today.

A Marxist perspective can also be employed to problematise a raft of broader impacting factors that can be considered in relation to creative agency. Such as amount of leisure time available to people, the mechanisms and power structures that impact on the use of that leisure time and the impact of economic bases of power

relative to ideas about empowerment in artistic consumption and production (e.g. global capitalism). The perpetuation of value judgements about artistic products and the established arts canon in the UK, which are bound up with enduring discourses around notions of high and low art, and amateur vs. professional in the art world, also play an implicit role in impacting on public creative agency. These value judgements are propagated via institutions and the bodies that fund their endeavours.

Ultimately then, when referring to ‘agency’ in the context of this study, we are speaking about the dialectic between the capacity of a person to exert power over their creative engagement (agency) and the structural factors that impact on that capacity in their environment (structure) (Barker 2005). The idea that cultural practice can exist in itself as a form of agency provides another dimension to this discussion and is something that will be considered in relation to Hip Hop within the main body of this thesis. Writing about Hip Hop Liane Loots states that cultural practice;

...can become a moment of self-definition and a political act that challenges how, for example, patriarchy and capitalism define us. Cultural production allows social subjects agency - a chance to speak and create new discourse. (2001:10)

As such the question of agency in relation to cultural expression is determinable both as a problematisation of the structures and mechanisms that impact on a person’s capacity for agency in this respect and also a matter for exploration in terms of how this condition for cultural democracy may be encouraged through Hip Hop. Hip Hop theorists Adam Haupt (2003, 2008) and Edgar Pieterse (2010) have written on the potentiality of Hip Hop as a framework of response to marginalisation and lack of agency, which can function as a site of political engagement. This they argue can result in agency and positionality through the production of alternative critical discourse. This insight establishes a useful initial link between a practice such as Hip

Hop and its potential for the encouragement of the conditions for cultural democracy that is explored within this thesis.

Closely related to the concept of agency, the concept of autonomy is equally crucial to the conditions of cultural democracy. To be autonomous is to exercise self-government and to make informed and un-coerced decisions (Dworkin 1988). To be an autonomous agent is to act on one's own motives therefore we are talking about much more than to exercise agency when discussing the conditions for cultural democracy, we are talking about people's capacity to act as autonomous agents.

Whilst a pre-requisite of the freedom of cultural expression is clearly to possess the capacity to act or to engage through action without disadvantage, it is a necessity that a person must possess the freedom to act on their own motives. Or in other words, that a person should have the freedom to dictate the terms on which they are acting in relation to their creative expression and to make meaningful decisions regarding the value of their creative engagement choices.

Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of habitus, capital and field are useful here in deconstructing the nature of autonomy in relation to culture and also aim to reconcile the structure/agency polemic outlined in previous paragraphs. For Bourdieu (1986) the agent is socialized within an evolving set of relationships in a social domain (the field) that impact on their various forms of 'capital'. Within the context of their position in the field, the agent accommodates relationships and expectations for functioning in that particular domain. These habitual expectations and relationships become the agent's 'habitus'. Therefore, for Bourdieu external structures are internalised to form part of the agent's habitus and the actions of the agent externalise interactions in the social domain, so the extent of autonomy is characterised through the negotiation of the conflict between structure and agency. This relationship is

particularly interesting when exploring a creative practice such as Hip Hop within a context such as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work. As we shall see later in the research findings, the ways that the dichotomous relationship between subcultural, resistant creative practice and the 'rules' enforced by coercive dominant institutions exert pressure on the creative practitioner within that context.

It is important here to locate Yosso's (2005) critique of Bourdieu's cultural capital theory in relation to the study of Hip Hop. Whilst Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital retains an important place at the root from which successive debates about cultural capital, worth and value have since grown, Yosso's (2005) 'cultural worth' model is significant here in that she contests Bourdieu's conceptualisation as being based on a deficit model. Yosso contests that Bourdieu's model assumes that in a hierarchical society those of lower and marginalised classes do not possess valuable cultural worth and adopts White, middle class cultural worth as the standard bearer for cultural value (p.76). Yosso challenges traditional interpretations of Bourdieu's theory to propose an alternative asset-based model of 'community cultural worth' (2005:70) where different forms of capital are acknowledged as valuable.

Aspirational capital (the ability to maintain hopes and dreams in the face of adversity), linguistic capital (the intellectual and social skills accumulated through speaking more than one language), navigational capital (the ability to navigate the rules and conditions of institutions), social capital (networks of people and community resources), familial capital (cultural knowledge nurtured through family) and resistant capital (knowledge and skills developed to challenge inequality through resistance) underpin Yosso's model (pp.77-81). Examples of developing resistant capital and aspirational capital (for artists and participants) and navigational capital (for artists) through Hip Hop culture and its intersection with the externally

commissioned, socially engaged arts sphere were evidenced within the data findings. These types of capital speak directly to notions of cultural democracy and the genuine pluralisation of cultural value in that they offer a way to view capital through valuing attributes that shift away from White, middle class values. However, it could be said that Yosso's forms of capital are positioned as additional forms of capital, rather than encouraging a reconsideration of what constitutes the Bourdieusian notion of cultural capital, thus in a way reinforcing Bourdieu's notion as the 'standard'. Therefore, whilst Bourdieusian theory retains an important place throughout this thesis as a way of conceptualising the processes by which cultural value is perceived in society, Yosso's types of capital are also embraced in the findings section of this thesis in relation to the question of empowerment through Hip Hop.

With the adoption of the understanding that the question of cultural agency involves the extent to which external structures impact on a person's capability for cultural freedom - and the understanding that autonomy is in part a dialectic between socialisation and agency - moving forwards this research adopts the terminology 'autonomous cultural agency' as a condition for cultural democracy. It understands that references to 'empowerment' and 'cultural freedom' in the context of defining cultural democracy must refer to autonomous cultural agency.

The term empowerment and how that may be brought about within a cultural democracy is interlinked with another frequently cited condition for cultural democracy – 'participation'. Adams and Goldbard's (1995) three signifying characteristics of cultural democracy; "cultural diversity, participation and that decisions made about cultural life should be subject to democratic control" foreground 'participation' as a key condition for cultural democracy. Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen explain that while ever public institutions and economic sites prevalent

within society do not support an ethos of participation and freedom cultural democracy remains impossible (2000:26). Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen and Adams and Goldbard's use of the term participation as a prerequisite for cultural democracy is reflected in many definitions of the term and is often heralded as one of the ways in which 'empowerment' occurs in matters of culture along with 'engagement'.

Situating participation as a central tenet of cultural democracy is both necessary and problematic in equal measure. If we are to define the conditions for cultural democracy in order to investigate how they may be encouraged, then it is appropriate to deconstruct the implications of delineating 'participation' as one of these. The role of 'participation' as a benchmark for empowerment is considered in further detail in the following paragraphs.

Today the term participation, especially within the discourse of cultural engagement and policy, does not necessarily equate to involvement in the production of art or to meaningful involvement at least, though it is very often used to connote the experience of active production of art or meaningful interactivity with the production of creative processes or outputs. The term participation in an arts context – as with the wider context of citizen engagement – is open to a wide range of interpretations in relation to the level of agency and the meaningfulness of involvement of the individual (Cooke and Kothari 2001). In some instances, cultural participation can refer to a highly egalitarian and co-collaborative process of involvement whereas in other situations it can refer only to involvement in preliminary, cursory consultation processes about the inception of cultural activities (Jeffers and Moriarty 2017). The recent rhetorical move in arts and audience development discourses towards a 'co-creative' participatory approach (Walmsley 2014) aims to reaffirm the empowering nature of 'doing art with the public', to infer a shift in the power dynamic of active

engagement in culture and circumvent some of the critiques of the ‘participation’ perspective and its capacity for interpretation within a wide spectrum of level of agency and meaningfulness for the public.

Existing conceptualisations of participation as deployed in relation to ‘arts engagement’ (and wider citizen participation in cultural matters) do not necessarily endow the individual with the autonomy to decide which creative activities should constitute the range or character of arts on offer for participation. At its worst this could also be said to fail to empower the public with the agency to propagate the processes of their autonomous creative engagement decisions (Cooke and Kothari 2001). As Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty (2017) explain, the questions that must be asked of any work claiming to be socially engaged revolve around; “What is the nature of the participation on offer – is it peripheral, engaged or core? In what ways is the work being co-authored or co-created? Who makes what decisions and to what extent is there shared authority?” (pp.251). These questions speak directly to the degree of agency/autonomy that participants are afforded in decision making. Jeffers and Moriarty (2017) argue that community arts praxis can act, and indeed has acted, as a benchmark measure for answering such questions. I argue through this thesis that an alternative benchmark can be formulated and re-imagined by considering Hip Hop praxis in relation to the questions outlined above.

Stevenson (2016) positions cultural participation and engagement as a construct of dominant cultural institutions as a means of perpetuating their agendas:

Within the discourse of cultural participation, both terms are employed to refer to a particular type of interaction between a subject and an object that is understood to be uniquely valuable for both the individual and society. (p.61)

Stevenson problematises the very issue of cultural non-participation as being;

...constructed as a problem across the discursive planes of politics and professional practice... the manner in which those labelled as non-participants are subjectified obscures their agency and in so doing suppresses their capacity to speak within the field of cultural policy. (p.1)

In Stevenson's thesis the problematisation of mainstream participation by cultural institutions and cultural policy negates the cultural, everyday participation in which each and every person may already be involved, and in which cultural democracy is located, in favour of a constructed set of values around the social import of participating in the cultural activities propagated and subsidised by dominant cultural institutions. Jancovich (2011) and Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue that the concept of the participation objective is susceptible to hijacking and employment by various cultural agents and agencies (in much the same way as the cultural democracy objective as evidenced through the historical trajectory of the relationship between community arts and the Arts Council). The 'hijacking' or tokenistic application of the participation objective can result in re-affirmation of existing power relations instead of any meaningful reconsideration of the artistic agency of individuals or communities. In this regard, whether the flattening of cultural value hierarchies discussed in the previous chapter has actually occurred on any meaningful level is brought into question.

The idea that participation is a condition of cultural democracy juxtaposes Stevenson's analysis of cultural participation as a Foucauldian construct of the dominant structures and institutions related to arts and culture. Indeed, for the 1986, Marxist inspired Shelton Trust manifesto for "cultural democracy offers an analysis of the cultural, political and economic systems that dominate Britain" (p.6). So, if cultural participation serves to reinforce the cultural hegemony then the issue of empowerment, agency and autonomy through cultural democracy becomes something of a paradox. The Marxist-Gramscian notion of hegemony is adopted throughout this

thesis to describe the relations of power in society. Terry Eagleton quotes Frederick Schiller as stating that culture is the very apparatus of hegemony, the means by which the public are re-moulded into un-contentious and agreeable subjects of the current political and societal status quo (2000:8).

The very idea that Hip Hop (or indeed any other creative cultural practice) can create cultural space for the construction of alternative social and political discourse or be conceived of as 'resistant' or 'oppositional' in character (terms that are regularly applied by Hip Hop scholars to describe the potentiality of Hip Hop practice, and which are argued within this study to provide potential productive avenues of approach to the creation of the conditions for cultural democracy) is to attribute a Gramscian model of Hegemony to the power relations within culture and society. In broader terms, to challenge the notion of commonly accepted cultural value and argue for individual cultural agency, the aim of cultural democracy, is to acknowledge that the traditional arts canon perpetuated and made accessible through the work of the Arts Council is the product of the ruling hegemony and thus also presupposes a Gramscian model of societal power relations.

The work of practitioner-theorist Sophie Hope (2011) provides another way of usefully navigating the issue of participation/non-participation as a means to re-present and reproduce exist power relations in the arts and culture as illustrated by Stevenson (2016). Hope's *Participating in the Wrong Way?* (2011) complements Stevenson's argument through questioning the terms by which individuals are expected to 'participate' in arts and cultural activities. Hope explores ways that empowerment through participation in socially engaged and state funded creative activity may still be sought. It is suggested that techniques and tactics of the sort

expounded by Hope can function as a response to the problem that Stevenson's work describes.

Hope argues that empowerment through participation can be encouraged by the creation of space for engaged critique through the rupturing of expected discourses and modes of communication in creative (arts) practice. This position is adopted within the argument for Hip Hop as a means of encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. It offers a way of progressing beyond the problematisation of power relations in terms of 'participation' serving to frame the exploration into how the ways individuals participate in Hip Hop organically at a grass roots level, or in Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged practice can generate spaces to encourage cultural democracy through both opportunities for critical engagement and self-empowerment through production and reception.

If cultural empowerment and freedoms are to be aligned to a definition of cultural democracy then it is with caution that the term 'participation' is employed as one of its conditions. Taking forward Stevenson's (2016) and Hope's (2011) argument the notion of participation in creative and cultural opportunities should be approached critically. Such a critical approach must distinguish between 'participation'/'non-participation' in Arts and Culture as a proponent of the Arts as an institution, and that of participation in culture and creative activities that exist outside of this narrow definition of cultural value in moving towards cultural democracy. Or in other words, in the vein of Ranciere (2009), we must speak in terms of 'emancipated participation'⁵. It must recognise the difference between the problematisation of

⁵ From Ranciere's (2009) concept of the 'emancipated spectator'

cultural participation/non- participation as a discursive construct “upon which the legitimacy of the Arts’ relationship with the state is based” (Stevenson 2016:249) and the idea, championed through cultural democracy, that people are inherently creative and are already engaged in numerous creative and cultural activities.

The term participation in the context of cultural democracy is most usefully applied to signify the need for the encouragement of increased autonomous cultural agency amongst the public and the provision of resources to enable this. Stevenson concludes that there is no problem of cultural participation (2016:248) but rather;

For sustaining the existence of the problem affirms the dividing practices that the discourses of the Arts produce, and in so doing sustains the right of cultural professionals to exercise the most power within the field of cultural policy. Ultimately, this leads to cultural protectionism and cultural participation policies that perform equality, access and inclusion, in order to maintain the dominance of an institution based on inequality, division and exclusion. (2016:249)

This is something also reflected in the findings from the Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values research project (AHRC 2012-2017), which seeks to readdress the notion of cultural value hierarchies in the present day and explore ways of acknowledging, recognising and measuring the type of cultural participation that people are already involved in separately to those imposed and/or encouraged by dominant cultural policies and institutions.

In the context of cultural democracy then, the term ‘participation’ is at the same time one of its key ideological conditions in the form of a structure to promote egalitarian power amongst citizens and a potentially damaging discursive construct deployed to reinforce elitism in the Arts. If we are to refer to participation *at all* within a definition of cultural democracy it is therefore appropriate to refer to everyday creative participation, self-determined or emancipated participation, decision-making or simply ‘doing something creative’ in the context of cultural democracy. It is also

appropriate to acknowledge when ‘non-participation’ refers to a problematisation constructed as a means of oppression rather than to make a point about the need for increased citizen decision-making power.

As with the terms ‘empowerment’ and ‘participation’, another frequently cited and equally problematic term used in definitions of cultural democracy is that of ‘community’. The Movement for Cultural Democracy positions cultural democracy as a state in which “access to community” (2018) is a vital characteristic. For Zuidervaart and Luttikhuis (2000) the history of our community based cultural engagement demonstrates a state of cultural democracy. For Lynam (cited in Kelly 1984:22) “community controlled communication networks” are the long-term objective for achieving cultural democracy, and similarly for Bennett (in Jeffers and Moriarty 2017) the ownership of community-based means of cultural production such as community radio are an important part of achieving cultural democracy. The theorisations of the community arts movement pioneers such as Su Braden (1976) and Owen Kelly (1984, 1985) equate the purpose of cultural democracy with achieving *community* empowerment, social justice and cultural liberation. Similarly, Matarasso (2013) highlights the importance of ‘collective action’ within the community arts movement as a condition for cultural democracy. Graves (2005) states that the “achievement [of cultural democracy] would reflect a much needed shift in the values of *community*, governance and ‘ethical social conduct’” (p.197 emphasis mine). Even where some theorists such as Kelly (1985) acknowledge that cultural democracy can pertain to activities individually undertaken, community still forms the base structure that supports and brings forth such activity. For example Kelly’s (1985) call to critique cultural authority with the aim of replacing existing definitions of ‘art’ with “many localised scales of values, *arising from within*

communities and applied by those communities to activities they individually or collectively undertake” (p.18 emphasis mine).

The above statements position community as an important factor in defining cultural democracy. However, this term is problematic in so much as it implies cultural freedom is a community dependent state. Whilst there is little doubt that individuals engaged in cultural activities often align themselves as part of communities of interest and that community may play a part in facilitating and furthering cultural engagement, the association between community and cultural democracy shifts focus away from the notion that engaging in culture on one’s own terms may not be to engage as part of a community.

It is important at this point to make a clear distinction between community and public/people as a key theme of cultural democracy and also between definitions of cultural democracy that adopt the political perspective of place based social change (as with The Movement for Cultural Democracy and the community arts movement) and those that focus on building individual capacity (e.g. The Kings College *Towards Cultural Democracy* report, Wilson et al 2017). In an effort to acknowledge the contemporary individualistic context within which any present-day definition of cultural democracy exists we must admit that notions of community as encompassed in historical definitions of cultural democracy no longer apply in the same way. This distinction reinforces the culturally populist aspect of cultural democracy as a concept pertaining to individual choice and personal cultural autonomy, which understandably may or may not align with the cultural expressions of a given community. This distinction however is made with a cautious acknowledgement of its critics and it is not intended to disregard the role or importance of community in matters of culture generally. Graves justifies this perspective by proposing that communities create

culture (2005 p. 34). In addition to this argument, if communities were given a meaningful opportunity to choose which cultural activities were supported in their locality, the definition of what constitutes 'community' in relation to 'art' might widen and henceforth gain credence in the minds of those who continue to agree with Williams' statement that 'community' serves as a justification to make 'any arts acceptable' (Williams quoted in Shaw 1987:133).

The tensions present in the association between the term community and that of cultural democracy will be explored in the findings section of this thesis in relation to Hip Hop and its relationship with community. Community as an important part of Hip Hop emerged as a strong theme during interviews with Hip Hop artists. What community means as a part of Hip Hop culture and its enduring import as a commonly referenced term in the context of Hip Hop adds a further layer of complexity to the potential relationship between Hip Hop and cultural democracy. The idea of some Hip Hop as embodying individualism (e.g. Matarasso 2013) sits in stark contrast to the idea of Hip Hop as having the capacity for engendering collective social action (Clay 2012), which will be investigated later.

Having discussed in detail some key terms cited within various value-statement definitions of cultural democracy the complexity and nuance of the language used within such definitions is evident. It is also clear from this exploration that any contemporary definition of cultural democracy must thoroughly interrogate the terminology it uses and be explicit about what exactly it means when using words such as 'cultural freedom' or 'empowerment'. It must also take into account the implications of its terminology as part of a broader cultural discourse in noting where it is perpetuating the dynamics of under-labouring ideologies, or of existing power relations within the institutional mechanisms of public arts engagement.

2.3.4 Cultural democracy as radical social agenda vs. ‘system nudges’

In addition to exploring value-statement definitions of cultural democracy we must also pay heed to those who offer up what can be categorised as ‘action-focussed statements’, i.e. discussions around *how* cultural democracy may be achieved.

Action-focussed statements are those that include a call to action to achieve a cultural democracy. These are statements or ideas that instruct us how the conditions for cultural democracy may be worked toward. Scholars and practitioners have envisioned different conceptualisations for mobilising the cultural democracy framework, which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

For social theorists such as Graves (2005) a complete shift in societal governance and the broader structures of democracy towards social and economic equality is necessary to achieve cultural democracy. In other words, the conditions necessary for cultural democracy depend on achieving a state that creates a levelling of economic and social resources in order to even consider the attainment of genuine cultural freedom – that to collapse existing cultural values hierarchies we first need to flatten social and economic inequalities and that a cultural democracy is not possible without addressing the wider democratic processes and structures within society. Graves however also offers a pragmatic “quartet of nutrients” (p.212) that he argues are the practical changes required to “enrich the soil in which culture grows” (p.212). These nutrients are; access to masters of cultural heritage, a prominent public platform for communities and artists, continuous exposure to other cultures and cultural cross-fertilisation, and comprehensive and secured long term cultural community support (p.207-212).

Policy recommendations such as the *Towards Cultural Democracy* report (Kings College, Wilson et al 2017) advocate narrower shifts within the existing cultural

infrastructure that do not address or challenge broader societal or governance structures for example, shifts in the ways that organisations share knowledge and the ways that new technologies are used to empower the public (the use of technology is also advocated for by Bennett 2017). For Bennett (in Jeffers and Moriarty 2017) public access to the means of production is the answer (specifically the use of community radio as a catalyst, which is also observed in the *Towards Cultural Democracy* report 2017). For Trend (1997) and Lamotte (2014) the need to open up new spaces for the articulation of citizenship through resistance against dominant modes of discourse holds the answer. Whilst according to Kelly (1985) it is a critique of cultural authority with the aim of replacing existing definitions of ‘art’ with “many localised scales of values, arising from within communities and applied by those communities to activities they individually or collectively undertake” (p.18) that cultural democracy demands.

The Movement for Cultural Democracy’s⁶ call to action is to mandate the Arts Council England to secure ringfenced public spaces and to put these into the service of public led arts activities. It is also to encourage the creation of publicly owned assets for cultural production and engagement and propose a range of measures to ensure that every individual has the opportunity to fulfil their “potential innate creativity” (2018) through actions such as endorsing a basic universal income level.

A small number of scholars have argued for the potential of certain creative practices in creating spaces for public empowerment and alternative discourse formulation including; the community arts movement as framework (e.g. Braden 1978, Jeffers

⁶ An organisation emerging from within the membership of the Labour political party in the UK.

and Moriarty 2017), to, more recently, socially funded arts work with the public as a framework (Hope 2011). Trend (1997) even suggests briefly that Hip Hop practices may create the space for articulating new modes of engaged citizenship and empowered participation. Amongst these theorisations creating new spaces for articulating citizenship, the formulation of alternative decentred discourses, and new ways of utilising technologies are found to be recurring themes.

For Graves (2005), Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen (2000), and Bennett (2017) cultural democracy exists as a radical social agenda project stating that the practice of cultural democracy is dependent on the very widest of social conducts. The concept of cultural democracy as social agenda revolves around the idea that cultural democracy depends on the reconsideration of our broader social ethics and hence extends beyond government decisions made about public arts funding to raise larger questions about the distribution of power in our current societal systems (Graves 2005:12). This, Graves argues, results in a necessary call to revolt against the current homogenisation of cultural activity caused by globalisation and the development of mass communication tools. Graves writes from a USA perspective though his comments equally apply to the cultural landscape of the UK. Graves' (2005) theorisation (writing from a social justice perspective) and Mulcahy's (2007) theorisation of cultural democracy (writing from a cultural policy theory perspective) definitions both situate the empowerment of the public in cultural decision making at a grassroots level as key conditions for cultural freedom and in turn cultural democracy.

Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen (2000) supports Graves' social agenda theory in stating that the practice of cultural democracy is dependent on the very widest of social conducts. For Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen this social agenda necessitates a return to

the past. They describe the history of our community-based cultural engagement as holding the key to achieving a successful cultural democracy. They argue cultural democracy is the original state of culture, meaning that the arts and cultural activities were traditionally the product of the public (the community) and the public ultimately decided what was ‘good quality’ and what art was made, as well as being involved in the production of that culture (e.g. folk music in the UK easily serves to fit this definition). Within Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen’s definition cultural democracy therefore also exists as a historical stand point (2000:2).

The changes proposed by the Movement for Cultural Democracy such as the public ownership of cultural production assets support the social agenda theorisation of cultural democracy and position the recognition of individuals inherent creativity as a condition for encouraging a cultural democracy. The inherent creativity condition for cultural democracy attempts to move away from a deficit-based model of cultural participation, something that has dominated the discourse of arts engagement for the last three decades (Hadley and Belfiore 2018).

The recent Towards Cultural Democracy report (2017) produced by Kings College, London (Wilson et al 2017) adopts a ‘cultural capabilities for all’ model (Nussbaum 2011) in defining cultural democracy, which, though also attempting to move away from a participation deficit model, has been criticised for embracing “an essentially liberal” (Pritchard 2018) appropriation of cultural democracy that, according to Dean (2009) fails to consider “the realities of human interdependency; the hegemonic liberal conception of the public realm; and the extent to which capitalism’s global reach is predicated upon exploitative relations of power” (Dean 2009 cited in Pritchard 2018). Ultimately the Towards Cultural Democracy report stands accused of depoliticising the cultural democracy ideal.

Within the different value-statement definitions of cultural democracy and the action-statements attached to them that have been discussed there exists an observable division. There are those who expound the concept as a revolutionary and radical shift in the social agenda (e.g. Graves 2005, Zuidervaart and Luttikhuisen 2000, Kelly 1985) that position the achievement of cultural democracy as requiring large shifts in the social and cultural infrastructures that determine cultural value.

Conversely, there are those whose work addresses the gatekeepers of those infrastructures (e.g. The Kings College 2017 report *Towards Cultural Democracy*, and the ACE funded 64 Million Artists report 2018 *Cultural Democracy in Practice*).

Arguably the only way to achieve the sort of cultural democracy that gives people the cultural freedom to engage in the participation/consumption/production of culture on their own terms would be to put in place the things that would create an environment where people have the time, space and resources to engage in culture on their own terms. It would also be to trust that people are inherently creative, already engaged in cultural activities and do not need the democratisation of culture. It follows then that they will engage in and develop/create the cultural activities as they wish to *if* they have the resources to do so (these include spaces, financial stability, and time first and foremost, with cultural activity specific resources as a secondary need also within this list of requirements). It would also require that the cultural activities that people wish to engage in on their own terms are viewed as being equally important as ‘traditional’ cultural pursuits/elite culture/high arts. The only way that this will be achieved is through a collapsing of existing cultural value hierarchies, which will require the absolute end of democratising culture (and necessarily the end of the Arts Council’s remit in this respect). Both of these conditions require radical changes that can only be made absolute by changes to the existing Governance of arts and cultural

institutions (e.g. Jones 2009) and to the Governance of society more broadly (e.g. in terms of time in the week spent working, living wage, ownership of public spaces) as argued for in Graves (2005).

Conversely, cultural democracy is defined for others as; equity of participation and increased public decision making in matters of culture as frequently defined by cultural organisations and within the context of arts engagement (e.g. *Towards Cultural Democracy*, Kings College, Wilson et al 2017, *64 Million Artists* 2018).

These characteristics denote a very different kind of concept and in turn different changes that would be required for its attainment. These definitions of cultural democracy carve out a space for cultural policy and dominant public institutions and the existing cultural infrastructure to play a part in the specifics of achieving cultural democracy within their current forms (Hadley 2018). They are the things that can be improved or facilitated under current systems and do not address wider, fundamental system changes.

The third mode of action is the place of arts movements and cultural activity as a means of encouraging cultural democracy as per Hope (2011) through grassroots engagement and creating spaces to challenge the status quo of cultural communication and cultural value hierarchies. These different approaches demarcate one of the most significant divisions in definitions of cultural democracy – those that position cultural democracy as a radical social agenda and an absolute state (achievable only through revolution or mass shifts in the structures of democratic governance, social and economic policy), and those less radical shifts that can take place within current cultural institutional and governance infrastructures (often advocated for by the gatekeepers of those institutions and those whose workstreams depend on their support). The role of artistic practice as a critical challenge to existing

cultural infrastructures is somewhat powerful in that it can position itself as an advocate of the idea of cultural democracy as a radical social agenda but exists as a challenge to the existing infrastructure that can function within and through that infrastructure (e.g. Hope 2011).

A simplistic binary categorisation would be to distinguish ‘social justice-oriented theorisations’ in contrast to those that encourage shifts within current systems and infrastructures but do not suggest an overhaul of those systems or challenge the dynamics of the power relations within them. A severe critique of the latter would be to say that these definitions miss the point of cultural democracy as a politicised social justice agenda, de-radicalising and even co-opting the term as a vehicle for reinforcing existing cultural infrastructure and the power relationships it perpetuates between itself and the public. A less critical categorisation would be to term these sorts of definitions ‘system nudges’.

In contrast, one could position the social agenda oriented ‘big shift’ theorisations as idealist purist or even utopian desires and locate the ‘system nudges’ as the more reasonable, practicable first steps towards trajectory of cultural democracy. For Higgins (2012), where community music is concerned it is not an either/or scenario but rather an ongoing negotiation between current fields of forces. Higgins states that community music is both rooted in the principle of cultural democracy and works towards the desire of a cultural democracy to come. Higgins argues against the idea of a cultural democracy to come as a utopian ideal suggesting that it is “constantly readjusting each day in relation to the flux of daily living” (p.173). Whether we are to isolate the perspectives discussed in this section as contradictory camps of thought or allow them to share a claim to being definitions of cultural democracy today by applying the principle of Higgin’s perspective, it is useful to consider both of these

conceptual categories in an attempt to comprehensively chart the topography of the current discourse around cultural democracy.

Within the nuances of these differing definitions of cultural democracy its susceptibility to appropriation becomes apparent. Those who write from a social justice perspective (e.g. Graves 2005, Kelly 1985) advocate for a sustained shift in the wider social structures and cultural infrastructures that determine the way cultural value and cultural engagement are considered, with the aim of increasing the degree of agency and autonomy individuals have in the decisions they make about these things. Those who write on the subject of cultural democracy for arts and cultural institutions and those responsible for funding cultural endeavours use a similar rhetoric in relation to the desired outcomes of a shift towards cultural democracy (i.e. that individuals be empowered to make decisions about cultural engagement, that the notion of what constitutes culture should be broadened). They do not however address the underlying systemic structures and the imbalances of power that impact on such empowerment and agency for individuals. Such writing on cultural democracy tends to focus on the ‘system nudges’ referred to above including suggestions such as ‘organisations working differently together to share information’ (Wilson et al 2017), or ‘employing professional artists to co-create ideas together’ (64 Million Artists 2018).

There are those who remain committed to the revolutionary, radical aspects of cultural democracy as necessary for its achievement, and those who disregard the political ‘art-as-social-action’ elements of its definition in favour of a system-nudge approach advocating for a more democratised version of the existing ways that arts and culture are supported in the UK where public involvement in this process is increased. For Hadley and Belfiore (2018b) the extent to which projects concerning

the latter of these two approaches can be considered a manifestation of cultural democracy is debatable.

The *Cultural Democracy in practice* report (64 Million Artists 2018) argues that cultural democracy is not one fixed thing but rather a “sliding scale of approaches to widening involvement in arts and culture” (p.2). If we are to arrive at a definition of cultural democracy that allows social justice theories of cultural democracy and cultural institution-focussed ‘system nudge’ theories to breath the same air and share any sort of mutual claim to encouraging cultural democracy then I would suggest that there exists a sliding scale. This would however be one that slides *towards* cultural democracy rather than conceding anything done on said scale equals cultural democracy, and one that is based on a spectrum of challenge to current wider system shifts. To reasonably take social justice based definitions into account and consider smaller, more subtle nudges and challenges to the status quo of the country’s cultural infrastructure alongside them, there is perhaps reason to think about cultural democracy as a spectrum. On a constructed spectrum of the conditions for cultural democracy, at the furthest end may be placed the absolute reconsideration of democratic and cultural infrastructure, and toward the near end would be positioned smaller changes such as the ways that organisations share information or the uses of community radio. (See Appendix A 7.1.2 for an imagined process diagram suggesting how such a non-exhaustive spectrum may represent the conditions required for cultural democracy).

The question then becomes is a sliding scale or spectrum valid as a definition of cultural democracy? Is cultural democracy an all or nothing condition or is it a ‘sliding scale’ of the type referenced within *64 Million Artists* (2018)? As much as activities within the left-mid section of the proposed spectrum may play a part in

encouraging cultural democracy, as with policy intervention and well-meaning commissioning from above within current infrastructures, these things arguably do not equate to the achievement of its absolute state. That is not to argue these things are necessarily fruitless or should not be undertaken, they may be an improvement on the status quo, but under this definition the sum total of such actions would not amount to a total cultural democracy and may even be a form of appropriation in order to maintain the status quo without the wider system changes outlined above.

It can be argued that this is why the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy do not have a concurrent place within cultural policy or cultural ideology. As much as in theory the democratisation of culture can co-exist alongside other approaches to supporting culture, cultural democracy cannot co-exist alongside an approach that by definition upholds one particular hierarchy of cultural value. This would be to propagate a cultural value hierarchy that directly contradicts a move towards cultural democracy. For Hadley (2018) this standpoint is reflected in the *Towards Cultural Democracy* report (Wilson et al 2017) as symptomatic of reports that address a definition of cultural democracy *for* dominant cultural institutions by suggesting that

...the current infrastructure for the democratisation of culture should also function as the delivery vehicle for cultural democracy. This lack of a willingness to offend leads the authors to a position reminiscent of 'double-strategy cultural policy' (Langsted, 1990) which argues that both democratisation of culture and cultural democracy be employed simultaneously. Such a position requires...the depoliticisation of the concept of cultural democracy... (2018:53)

Hadley goes on to cite Pritchard (2017) in explaining that this is “an attempt to recuperate cultural democracy – to institutionalise it, to render it safe” (Pritchard 2017 cited in Hadley 2018).” Also, the funding of particular cultural projects would, under the ‘total cultural freedom’ definition need to cease to achieve cultural

democracy since any decision to support a particular project denotes an imposed cultural value hierarchy reflective of what Juncker and Balling (2016) conceptualise as a move from a “model of provision to a model of enabling.” (p.239).

One could respond to this problem by arguing that a degree of democratisation of culture is necessary to enable exposure to a range of cultural activities, which would in turn necessitate decisions about what cultural activities would be chosen to propagate in this way and would therefore hamper, if not preclude a cultural democracy by reinforcing cultural value hierarchies. Though for Hadley and Belfiore (2018b) this risks resulting in a two-tier system in the arts sector whereby there is “‘High art’ for the culturally engaged, and creative participation for the ‘hard to reach’ and reluctant attenders.” The purpose of the above discussion of these tensions is that the issue of a cultural democracy as an absolute state is a complex one, it exists as an ideal and in some senses purely hypothetical state within the context of present-day UK.

We can therefore posit that the ‘system nudges’ on the above spectrum as a step in the direction of cultural democracy, we can also say that there is space for individuals, cultural movements, engaged art practice to chip away at the status quo through challenges to the existing system and existing cultural value hierarchies as suggested by Hope (2011). This thesis focuses on Hip Hop as a creative practice and examples where engagement within this practice can create the space for encouraging cultural democracy.

Here it is appropriate to pick up on the arguments made by Hope (2011), Lamotte (2014) and Trend (1997) to work towards an expanded conceptualisation of Hip Hop as a means to encourage the conditions for cultural democracy through the techniques of rupture, dissent, resistance, new uses of technology and the empowerment of

people as producers and consumers as a way to prepare the ground for rationalising the use of Hip Hop in this study. The usefulness of Sophie Hope's (2011) work has already been mentioned in reference to the problematisation of 'participation' as a condition of cultural democracy. However, Hope's work provides a more central thread adopted by this thesis regarding the encouragement of the conditions for cultural democracy in the context of present-day creative practice. Hope offers an in-road to the analysis of cultural democracy and creative practice in contemporary Britain and in turn a key point of orientation for this analysis. Hope uses the concept of cultural democracy as a tool for critiquing current arts practice. She states;

...it [cultural democracy] opens up a crucial form of critique of a dominant model of art funding based on the democratisation of culture. In its theoretical and practical form it implies more complex, self-directed interruptions that contest predefined parameters and frameworks of commissioned art. As reclaimed emancipated reflections and actions, cultural democracy can offer a space for drawing attention to the inherent problems of an industry that constructs scenarios of empowered participation through 'consensual collaboration' but often leaves power-relations intact. (2011:9).

Hope's thesis takes the view, instrumental in this research exploration, that the conditions for cultural democracy can be created through contemporary externally commissioned, socially engaged arts practice. It centres on exploring the artists' (and participants') role in how this happens through the rupturing of expected discourses and disruption of the mechanisms of participation. Hope argues, in a Habermasian reflection of Tony Bennett's theories regarding the questioning of instruments of social control (1995), that these ruptures create the space for questioning existing power relations. She argues within this space is where the potential for cultural democracy resides.

On the subject of how cultural democracy may be achieved Hope's focus on finding new spaces to articulate new modes of engaged citizenship responds to the assertion

made by various radical democratic theorists such as Chantal Mouffe who argues that the creation of 'new political spaces' outside the definition of Government and civil society are necessary to achieve this (in Trend 1997). That Hip Hop may function as one of these spaces is the contention of this thesis. How Hip Hop may provide an infrastructure for this to happen (in various contexts) is the subject of its exploration. Hope's argument ultimately centres on the same condition as that of this thesis; that new spaces to encourage the conditions for cultural democracy can be created/found through engaged creative practice. While Hope demonstrates the efficacy of her argument through examples drawn from her work as a socially engaged, funded, creative practitioner working with people and communities, this research makes the case for Hip Hop praxis as a well-placed means of encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. Hope constructs a useful theoretical framework with which to approach the term cultural democracy based on notions of critical knowledge, critical pedagogy and de Certeau's concept of 'la perruque' (1984). These concepts will be part of the grounding of this study and will be considered in relation to Hip Hop practice as a medium for creating critical space.

In the same way that Hope's (2011) work brings the concept of rupture and critical knowledge into dialogue with her creative practice to explore where the space for encouraging cultural democracy may be found, this thesis draws other relevant theories of spatial disruption and decentred participation into dialogue with creative Hip Hop practice to further explore its question.

This thesis argues that the conditions for cultural democracy may be encouraged through creative practice – specifically through Hip Hop practice as a mode of creative subcultural engagement that already, ontologically speaking, claims critical knowledge as one of its key elements. It is a practice that lends itself to dealing with

dissent, to negotiating between the commercial and subcultural, to claiming decentred space for the creation of alternative discourses and to communicating through acts of rupture. It is therefore potentially well placed as a subcultural expression with which to formulate a new method of critiquing creative engagement/empowerment and encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy.

Short of claiming that Hip Hop is capable of entirely reforming social democratic structures or completely eradicating inequality, the mid-left to central distribution of conditions on the imagined spectrum of cultural democracy (changes within the current system and challenges to the current system) is where creative Hip Hop practice offers the opportunity to seek out spaces for moving towards cultural democracy. This would be through challenge to the existing cultural infrastructure whilst operating at times (necessarily) within that cultural infrastructure. As such this thesis focuses on the mid-left to central distribution of these conditions. That is to say it focusses on creating and preserving spaces for critique of dominant cultural infrastructures and drawing attention to existing power relations, creating new spaces for the articulation of engaged citizenship, using new technology differently, and citizens as catalysts, owners and co-producers in exploring Hip Hop in relation to cultural democracy.

The following and final part of this discussion begins by developing in full the rationale for bringing Hip Hop to bear on a study of cultural democracy citing the development of subcultural studies as its starting point, before going on to provide a potted history of Hip Hop and the significance of its commercial trajectory and recent 'official sanctioning' as a publicly commissioned art form. It then moves on to explore the resistant characteristics of Hip Hop as culture and practice. This resistance is explored in terms of how these characteristics are deployed to draw

attention to existing power relations, to create new spaces for the articulation of engaged citizenship, how new technology is used differently, and the role of citizens as catalysts, owners and co-producers in Hip Hop.

2.4 Cultural democracy and Hip Hop

2.4.1 Rationalising the use of Hip Hop in this study

The potential usefulness of positioning Hip Hop in particular as a basis of a framework for cultural democracy can be located in the field of subcultural studies and the view that subcultures can function as a resistant form of critically engaged practice (Hebdidge 1978). The study of subcultural identity and expression since the 1970s has provided cultural theorists with a way of examining what Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) subcultures working group referred to as the means by which attention is drawn to the contradictions and power relations of the dominant society/hegemony, and by which they may be subsequently resolved (ibid. in Hewison 1995). This statement on the function of subcultures is foundational within the context of this research. For the CCCS subcultures existed to expose the constructs of hegemonic power and to respond to and resist the contradictions present within these constructs as a form of ideological protest. If this perspective on subcultures is adopted, then it is within the study of these cultures that new ways of challenging social dominance are to be found.

If we are to roll out Hebdidge's oft cited work on subcultural theory as a starting point for the rationalisation of Hip Hop as a subject of study, it is equally important to note that this perspective is not without its critics. At a base level the labelling of subcultures as 'resistant' has been widely argued as inaccurate, especially by

proponents of post-subcultural studies (Woo in Dhoest et al. 2015:9). For example, in the case of pop music culture there is little to be related to ideas about alternative ideology or authoritarian resistance (Eagleton 2000). This is a fairly easy criticism to overcome theoretically; we can distinguish ‘resistant’ subcultures as one category of subculture amongst others.

There is also another, more complex ontological issue pertaining to the resistant characteristic of subcultures. Using the example of Punk and its historical trajectory can help to illuminate this issue. As Hebdidge (1979) observed, the resistant qualities of subcultures are not necessarily enduring. In fact, for Hebdidge the very ontology of the resistant subculture is such that its oppositionality will inevitably become subsumed by the dominant parent culture. Because the set of meanings that Punk appropriated was not of its own creation, Hebdidge argues, it could not be separated from the hegemony to the extent that it was able to resist the ‘recuperative’ tendencies of the dominant culture to re-incorporate the subculture back into itself as merely a tokenistic spectacle (1979). According to Hebdidge’s theory, like a shooting star, the resistant subculture has its ‘moment’ and then fades again becoming unfit for the purpose originally laid out by the CCCS subcultures group. Hebdidge’s 1988 writing posits a different opinion of the subcultural ‘moment’, he argues that “the idea of ‘subculture-as-negation’ grew up alongside Punk, remained inextricably linked to it and died when it died” (p.8).

Whether Hebdidge is accurate or not, there have been subcultural movements since Punk, such as Hip Hop, that could be considered ‘resistant’ and there are subcultural movements that continue to deal in resistance – at least in part. In order to move beyond this, we can adopt the perspective taken by a number of contemporary subcultural theorists (see Dhoest, Malliet, Segaert and Haers 2015) that resistance

continues to exist as key characteristic of many subcultures, but that “resistance...come[s] to the fore in a more nuanced way than in classical subcultural theory” (p.3). It could be that the parameters have altered since the ‘death’ of Punk in the 1980s and that the modes of operation of resistant subcultures have necessarily been recalibrated to navigate the contemporary apparatuses of hegemonic recuperation, but perhaps the means by which present day subcultures deploy resistance and to sustain provides a new focus for the subcultural object of study. This perspective reflects that of Dhoest et al. (2015) whose introduction to text *The Borders of Subculture: Resistance and the Mainstream* opens by stating

While the critical edge and resistant nature of subcultures may have diminished after the 1970s...the urgency of subcultural practices seems to have returned....subcultures have never gone away; they may have changed form, and we may need to adapt our conceptual tools or consider other practices, countries or social groups... (p.1)

The above quote supports in validating the subcultural object of study in the present day. Hip Hop is a subcultural creative practice that emerged during the 1970s in the ‘golden era’ of subcultures that Hebdidge laments, but is one that has continued to flourish in the present day. One could apply Hebdidge’s reasoning to the trajectory of Hip Hop culture and argue that it is now largely a commercial entity, having been re-absorbed by the hegemonic apparatuses of cultural production and therefore no longer exists as in the sense of a resistant subcultural practice. However, as Morgan (2008), Bramwell (2015) and Speers’ (2014, 2017) research points out, people in many countries do continue to engage with conscious and creative ‘underground’ Hip Hop produced outside of mainstream market demands.

Defining the ‘underground’ in Hip Hop is challenging in a contemporary musical landscape. Whereas some Hip Hop scholars (e.g. Perry 2014) define the underground as strictly non-commercial and independent, according to Speers (2014:120) it is

more useful to conceptualise of underground Hip Hop “as based on shared values such as creative control and freedom of expression over commercial success and a high regard for sincerity” rather than something that exists as diametrically opposed to conceptualisations of ‘mainstream’ given the degree of overlap between the two realms in the present day. This suggests that Hip Hop as a cultural practice possesses some qualities of resistance (however nuanced these may be in present day subcultures as Dhoest et al. 2015 suggest).

Importantly, in order to have negotiated space for itself to operate as both a resistant/alternative cultural practice *and* as a commercial dominant mode of cultural production, Hip Hop presents itself as an appropriate example of subcultural study for the present day. That Hip Hop’s artists and its heads⁷ now find themselves operating in the liminal space between these two realms has been the subject of a small number of recent studies (for UK artists see Speers in Hracs, Seman and Virani 2016, for UK heads see Dedman 2017). The existence of these emerging studies signifies the nuanced complexity of contemporary subcultural engagement.

There is a significant body of subcultural studies scholarship that explores the ways Hip Hop can function as a resistant and critically engaged creative practice. This body of scholarship extends to Hip Hop’s use of language as a tool for resistance through codification and deterritorialization (e.g. Samy Alim 2006, Perry 2004, Potter 1995, Pollard 2014), to Hip Hop’s reclamation of space (e.g. Perry 2004) and its capacity for critical engagement and the formulation of alternative discourses (e.g. Haupt

⁷ The term heads to denote those actively and committedly engaging in Hip Hop culture in the UK is preferred here to reflect both the term of self-identification employed by subscribers and to avoid any pejorative connotations implied by the term consumer in relation to being passive or non-critically engaged.

2003, 2008, Chang 2006, Trend 1997). According to Clay (2012) Hip Hop exists as a professed structure through which collective social action, political agency as well as the performance and communication of politicized subjectivities can be invigorated. Other studies have also positioned Hip Hop as a practice with high rates of participation amongst its subscribers (e.g. Trend 1997). Furthermore, it is widely accepted that the processes of practice for Hip Hop – as with Punk - developed from a ‘DIY’ ethos of self-facilitation and this DIY ethic remains an integral element of the Hip Hop spirit within UK scenes today (e.g. Speers 2014). It is widely argued the arts and notions of culture remain entrenched in a discourse of elitism that reinforces established power relations within modes of production and dissemination in the arts and in wider cultures (e.g. McGuigan 2004, Hadley 2018). Jeffers and Moriarty (2017) argue that adopting the position of ‘dissenter’ against the cultural value status quo was a necessary component of the community arts movement. Similarly Matarasso (2013) and Hope (2011) both position steps towards cultural democracy as effecting the need to challenge and critique the existing ways that culture is communicated and how cultural value is considered. Part of this is to critique the conditions and the apparatus of existing cultural infrastructures. It is therefore crucial to engage with places and spaces that are located, at least partially, as sites that question these relations.

As discussed Hip Hop exists as both a marginalised cultural practice and a commercial behemoth within the music, fashion and media industries. Part of what makes Hip Hop an interesting subject of study in relation to cultural democracy is this simultaneous mode of operation as part of the cultural hegemony and as a vehicle for opposition against it. The duality of this relationship is undoubtedly bound up with the intersectionality between race, class and relations of power in the cultural world.

Somewhere in the liminal space between acts of preservation and acts of innovation for resistant purposes Hip Hop is engaged in the process of negotiation within and amongst dominant commercial and cultural hegemonic structures and systems. How this impacts the relationship between Hip Hop and cultural democracy, and what is involved in Hip Hop's negotiation of these tensions is the subject of discussion in the findings of this thesis. To explore this tumultuous occupation of liminal space between hegemony and decentred critical practice is to illuminate on the capacity for Hip Hop as a tool for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. The tension between the official and unofficial prevalent in Hip Hop and the sheer scale and breadth of the culture attest to its continued primacy and relevance as an important subject of social study. To remix the title of Tricia Rose's (1994) pioneering Hip Hop studies text *What we talk about when we talk about Hip Hop and why it matters*, this section has outlined 'why Hip Hop' for this study, the following sections bolster this 'why' by focussing its attention on discussing exactly 'what is meant by Hip Hop' in the context of this study.

2.4.2 A Potted History of Hip Hop

It is crucial to outline what is meant by the terms 'Hip Hop' and 'Hip Hop culture' within the context of this thesis. Of importance to any analysis of Hip Hop culture as a potentially progressive site of cultural difference and alternative political discourse is to understand exactly what is happening when Hip Hop is not representative of these conditions, or when these conditions are not representative of Hip Hop. This is not least because the mass scale commercial propagation of rap music and aggressive marketing of a disproportionately slim categorisation of such music over the past 20

years has eclipsed the likelihood of a unified and easily widely understood categorisation of Hip Hop culture – this is also true in the UK.

In order to progress beyond widely held notions of Hip Hop as exclusively ‘commercial gangster rap’ and as a proponent of black violence, sexism and thuggism (Rose 2008) its creative and economic trajectory must be critically acknowledged.

This is necessary in order to understand the potentiality of Hip Hop culture as a decentred site of cultural articulation and a space for empowered creative, social and political engagement. Practitioner-Theorist Danny Hoch points out that;

Hip-hop art, when it is bad, is often embraced by the mainstream as the entirety of the talent and voice of the Hip-hop generation. When it is good, outsiders and insiders alike misunderstand it for reasons of politics and fear....Good hip-hop art is highly articulate, coded, transcendent, revolutionary, communicative, empowering...[Its aesthetics include:] codification of language...lack of safety, barriers, boundaries...lack of resources and access...reappropriation by hip-hop creators of materials, technology and preserved culture.... (cited in Chang 2006:349-355).

Artistic autonomy and agency in Hip Hop as well as the capacity for decentred and diverse social narrative have been impacted during the commercial trajectory of rap music, and Hip Hop’s increasing use as a vehicle for externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work has resulted in a complex creative landscape in the UK. To explain the present-day topography of this landscape I will begin by charting a brief history of Hip Hop and providing a popular model of Hip Hop that argues its case as a ‘conscious’ and empowered practice. I will then move on to discuss how (and why) this culture of practice is now forced to share its identity with a definition of Hip Hop that exists as a co-opted, hierarchical and at worst oppressive commercial by-product.

Hoch (in Chang 2006) explains that; “Hip-hop’s origins are multifaceted, politically conflicting, constantly debated and highly complicated.” (p.350). Any summative

history of Hip Hop is therefore at risk of oversimplifying the origins of the movement, however there are various characteristics and tropes that are generally commonly agreed upon in terms of Hip-hop's emergence. Hip Hop started in the South Bronx, USA in the 1970s. It began as a localised creative sub-culture amongst working class Black, Latino, White and other ethnic minority youth that developed from the Bronx block parties of that time (Chang 2006) and included forms of music, dancing and Graffiti.

As Danny Hoch points out (in Chang 2006) "the notion that hip-hop is solely an African American art-form is erroneous...It is certainly part of the African continuum, and it were not for African Americans there would be no hip-hop, but hip-hop would not exist if it were not for the polycultural social construct of New York City in the 1970s." (pp.350-351). See also Eure and Spady (1991) for further discussion on the "heterogenous and multivalent" (p.xiii) context from which Hip Hop emerged. Ewan Allinson (1994) conversely positions Hip Hop as a living, breathing expression of Black culture that is firmly closed to White thought and experience and Kitwana (2006) positions Hip Hop as exclusively an African-American art form. Gilroy (1993) provides a critique of this explicit Afro-centrism. Laura Speers' (2014) analysis of rap authenticity in London, UK challenges that the conditions for 'keepin it real' in Hip Hop are spatially and temporally specific. Forman (2010) provides a definition of Hip Hop that encompasses these opposed conceptions stating "despite its contemporary expansion and appeal across racial and cultural sectors, hip-hop is an unambiguously African-American cultural phenomenon that emerges within a complex amalgam of hybrid social influences" [no pagination].

Race, identity and Hip Hop continues to be debated by scholars in relation to the issues of authenticity, appropriation and cultural expression (Harrison 2008). Here it

is appropriate to highlight that any study into Hip Hop, in whatever context, is implicitly one that concerns the intersectionality between race, power and culture. Whilst this research study references the intersections between race, class, Hip Hop and cultural democracy where it was mentioned by the artists I interviewed, the wider intersections between cultural value, race and Hip Hop are not drawn out for discussion as part of its extended analysis of data drawn from artists of a range of ethnicities and their experiences. There is certainly scope for further, future research into the nature of how these factors intersect within the development of Hip Hop in the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop work. Indeed, if this research aims to catalyse a discussion on the development of Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged work in the UK and its relationship to cultural democracy, one of the next logical research directions will be to investigate in more detail the role that other social factors (e.g. race, gender, economic status, age, social group – of both artists and participants) play in the relationship between Hip Hop and cultural democracy.

Historically, Hip Hop culture drew its identity from elements of Jamaican dancehall music and ‘toasting’ on a microphone over beats as well as influences from African music, electro music and disco. DJ Kool Herc (a Jamaican immigrant) is well known for playing a significant role in the development of Hip Hop, mixing samples of existing music using record decks, incorporating percussive breaks and blending this with the practice of toasting at the now infamous Sedgewick Avenue apartment block. This music was pumped out through speakers into the nearby streets and surrounding area. Herc’s parties and other similar block parties provided the foundation for the development of the infancy of the Hip Hop scene in New York.

The inception of the early Hip Hop movement was in part a response to the Black civil rights movement and in turn existed as a form of civil rights activism as Hoch (in Chang 2006) explains. The specific socio-cultural conditions from which the Hip Hop movement sprang were in fact a complex set of circumstances. Below Hoch summarises the profusion of social and political conditions that gave rise to the emergence of the Hip Hop movement;

The end of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s, the turmoil of the militarized political movements...urban blight and the advent of Reaganomics, the digital age, an exploding prison population, the epidemics of crack, guns and AIDS...combined with New York's inner-city demographics – southern Blacks living alongside Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Jamaicans and a handful of working-poor whites, all of whom drew upon both inherited and appropriated cultures in the face of urban decay and accelerated technology.... (Hoch in Chang 2006:350)

In response to this specific mix of social, economic and cultural circumstances, an implicit characteristic of early Hip Hop culture was the development of a sense of community, social justice and empowerment for its subscribers, as well as breaking down racial barriers in that locality at that time.

Afrika Bambaata is often accredited with having 'established' Hip Hop. He did not of course establish the culture or practice but was one of the first people perhaps instinctual enough to theorise a usable taxonomy of Hip Hop culture. Bambaata's (Universal Zulu Nation) theoretical modelling of Hip Hop form offers an understanding of Hip Hop culture that remains a key point of theoretical orientation for any understanding of Hip Hop as culture and the place of rap within that.

Bambaata's model of Hip Hop is outlined below, the accompanying descriptions of the aesthetics of each of its elements are drawn from Danny Hoch's explanation of Hip Hop aesthetics (in Chang 2006). In Bambaata's model Hip Hop culture comprises five elements (the fifth was retrospectively added by Bambaata):

1. Oral (emceeing/beatbox)

(Rap) Aesthetics are: “Toasting, Plena, Rumba, blues, bomba, palo, African American poetry, call-and-response, limericks, urban plight, party animation, corporate demand, exaggeration, and battle.” (Chang 2006: 354)

2. Written (Graffiti)

Aesthetics are: “enforced block letters, reclaiming of public space, codified ownership, train-as-canvas, 1970-80s art supplies (and colors) and criminalization of the form” (Chang 2006:351-352)

3. Physical (B-Boying/breakdance)

Aesthetics are: “Bomba, Rumba, Capoeira, salsa, funk, soul, gang fighting (battling), stylized kung fu, asphalt or concrete dance space, sanitation, and cardboard and linoleum.” (Chang 2006:353)

4. DJing

Aesthetics are: “Jamaican sound system, disco, funk and soul, 1970s and ‘80s electronic musical technology as musical instruments, dancer appeasement, and codification of recorded sounds by sampling” (Chang 2006:352)

5. Knowledge

It is the fifth element, as Hip Hop scholar Murray Forman (2015) points out, that distinguishes Hip Hop as a conscious and progressive practice. Understanding the inclusion of the fifth element and the capacity for social critique intrinsically implied is key to this understanding of Hip Hop. This element of Hip Hop culture signifies an ontological drive to question and to challenge existing modes of knowledge and the status quo of social power relations at its most fundamental level of conception. Though in later chapters the research leads towards a critique of this ‘elements’ model I suggest within the context of this study that initially adopting the ‘knowledge’ model of Hip Hop is crucial and positions it as a practice that reserves itself the right to remain politicised and progressive by responding with challenges to,

and rejections of, attempts to re-appropriate its processes or diminish the scope of its social critique.

To clarify, at points in this thesis I will refer to ‘socially conscious’ Hip Hop or ‘socially conscious’ rappers. This identity construct connotes Hip Hop practice – usually rap - that includes an explicit form of social narrativisation and/or political critique (sometimes explicitly didactic, sometimes observational) and where its practitioners choose to self-identify as ‘conscious’ rappers in order to align themselves with lyrical content of this nature. I have employed these terms, ‘conscious’ rap and ‘conscious’ Hip Hop, as a point of distinction because they are the terms used by these artists to refer to and distinguish their own practice (and the implications of this distinction will be drawn out for further discussion later in this writing). However, as stated above, this research adopts a definition of Hip Hop that positions it as an intrinsically conscious practice. On this subject, in a debate about conscious rappers on popular online Hip Hop channel Jump Off TV UK (2015), DJ/Producer Snips debates the question ‘whether we need more conscious rappers?’;

Snips: I don't believe in conscious rap, I think rap within itself, Hip Hop in itself is a conscious art form...so Kendrick [Lamar] isn't a conscious rapper, basically you've got rappers and you've got ignorant rappers, so Kendrick, he's just a rapper.

Mim Shaikh: so you don't think that it [conscious rap] is a sub-genre? At all?

Snips: ...No, I think that's the root of what the culture is. It's like me saying I'm an athletic footballer. For football you have to be athletic to be a footballer, if you're not you're a shit footballer. If you're a good rapper it's a given that you're conscious, I don't mean conscious by being all preachy for the sake of it, I mean having an awareness of your surroundings and using Hip Hop as a voice to push that out there.

In this exchange Snips asserts the falsity of the binary and the idea of conscious/commercial as genre by adopting a perspective closely aligned with the knowledge model of Hip Hop and in doing so illuminates the complexity of the

notion of ‘consciousness’ in present-day Hip Hop practice described in the previous paragraph.

Bambaata’s ‘elements’ model of Hip Hop is the most commonly presented definition of Hip Hop culture because, apart from there being a lack of other diagrammatic models of Hip Hop culture⁸, it reinforces the knowledge aspect of the culture and demonstrates the breadth of the various physical performative elements that constitute the culture. It is therefore a useful rebuttal to those who assume Hip Hop culture consists solely of rap music. Bambaata’s model however is not without its issues and arguably foregrounds the ‘form’ based elements of Hip Hop (with the exception of knowledge) to the detriment of the innovation and experimentation tenets of Hip Hop so prevalent in Hip Hop’s early days, which have led, as we shall see in later chapters, to something of a formularisation of the art form, which is especially prominent when Hip Hop is considered as an applied arts practice.

Samy Alim (2009: 272) suggests that even with the inclusion of the fifth element ‘knowledge’ and Bambaata’s retrospectively added sixth element ‘overstanding’ in the model of Hip Hop, this, as a model of a culture it is fairly limited in scope.

Overstanding is a term from Hip Hop culture, and specifically implemented by Afrika Bambaata as the sixth element of Hip Hop culture (in Samy Alim 2009: 272) to mean not just the understanding of a situation or thing in and of itself, but also implies a

8 KRS One’s extended thesis *The Gospel of Hip Hop* (2009) could also be positioned as a definition of Hip Hop but unlike Bambaata’s model its length and density preclude easy re-production. Similarly, there are certain tenets that are closely associated with Hip Hop culture (for example Peace, Love, Unity and Having Fun), though whilst these are commonly cited they are rarely theorised or codified taxonomically in the same way as the elements model.

broader, contextual understanding of the systems of power and hegemonic influences that impact upon the ‘thing’ being as it is. A wider consciousness of contextual, social, environmental, political and cultural impacting factors. In this sense overstanding could be positioned as something of a post-structuralist critical lens within Hip Hop’s ontology, though I have yet to come across an example that explicitly aligns it as such.

It is also crucial to note that the 5’ Elements model of Hip Hop remains contested by significant numbers of those involved in the culture. Informal debate endures as to the number of elements, whether practices such as Beatboxing should be included (or are included) as part of the culture as well as reminders that the pioneers of the movement did not refer to the collection of practices as ‘elements’ at all.

In other definitions rapper and activist KRS One is cited as attributing nine elements to the culture of Hip Hop (Bambaata’s five, plus beatboxing, street knowledge, street fashion, street entrepreneurialism and street language), which are expounded in his 2003 track *9 Elements* (Koch). There is also the ‘peace, love, unity and having fun’ definition of the tenets of Hip Hop culture espoused by the movement’s pioneers (Chang and Watkins 2007), which, as we shall see in the discussion section of this thesis continues to play a significant role in artists’ methodological approach to their own practice and the commissioned work they undertake in community settings and for self-fulfilment. The aim of outlining the 5 Elements model in full here is not to position it as an absolute or authoritative definition of Hip Hop – after all artists can and should be able to self-identify as they choose – it is rather to highlight knowledge, self-education and conscientisation as features of the culture.

The history of Hip Hop in the UK has charted a slightly different course to that of the USA but claims the same elements within its form. It began partly as an assimilation

of the Hip Hop style and culture imported from the US in the late 1970s-80s. This is evidenced in early UK rappers' adoption of an American accent and the appropriation of US style Hip Hop beats upon which the first UK Hip Hop tracks were based (see Wood 2009). However, as Wood (2009) points out, the flow of Hip Hop culture into the UK was in fact a more complex system of trading than merely an assimilation of the US style;

The trading of styles between the different points of the Atlantic diaspora has never been one-directional. Although the influences of the Caribbean and the US have been strongly felt within the smaller black communities within Britain, these influences have been translated, re-worked and transmitted back, often in radically different forms, to America and parts of the Caribbean. (2009:178)

Since that time, the UK has continued to develop its own style of Hip Hop culture (see Wood 2009 *'Original London Style: London Posse and the Birth of British Hip Hop'* for an in-depth discussion of the early evolution of Hip Hop in the UK). It is fair to say that US Hip Hop continues to heavily influence Hip Hop in Britain. This is apparent in the commercial success of American rap music within the UK record charts and also Hip Hop style, language and fashion, there are many elements of the culture that continue to reflect those of the US scenes. Having said this, UK rappers have long since abandoned the appropriation of American accents for rapping⁹. Practitioners of all elements of Hip Hop are now active in the UK.

Over the last thirty years UK rap has diversified into a number of different 'scenes'. Here the term scene is used as per Straw's (1991) definition of a music scene as

9 UK Hip Hop crew London Posse are thought to be amongst the first artists to begin rapping in their own London accents (Wood 2009). My Beatbox Reggae Life (1987, Big Life Records) was their first officially released single.

“actualiz[ing] a particular state of relations between various populations and social groups, as these coalesce around specific coalitions of musical style” (1991:379). The politics and identities of these scenes vary. The degree of diversity of their practice reflects Straw’s (1991) theorisations on the lack of uniformity and complexity of the term ‘community’ within local music spaces in general, as well as the complexity of the relationships of such cultural activity to broader patterns of social life within cities (Straw 2004). Certainly, we can think of Hip Hop cultures as having a significant and explicit interplay between cultural activity and the social and institutional foundations of UK cities. This, Straw argues, produces distinctive complexes of knowledge and behaviour.

Space does not permit a review of all UK rap scenes and aspects of Hip Hop culture here. However, the differences between two distinct schools of rap style in the UK are worth drawing attention to, as is the consternation between the much debated concepts of the ‘underground’ and the ‘commercial’ in the UK as this exists as an ongoing cultural tension and a point of discussion in our exploration of cultural democracy. There are those who continue to identify as ‘UK Hip Hop’. A number of artists and heads in the UK identify specifically as being ‘UK Hip Hop’. This term carries with it specific connotative meanings relating to style signifiers and identity construction choices and therefore this term will be employed throughout this thesis when making reference to these individuals or this scene. Where an individual identifies explicitly as being part of a different Hip Hop related genre e.g. Grime, then that term is specified.

UK Hip Hop enjoyed moderate chart success in the late 1990s and early 2000s (for example Roots Manuva’s *Awfully Deep* album reached number 24 in the UK record

charts in 2005)¹⁰. However, UK Hip Hop has suffered a challenging relationship with commercial propagation and wider media recognition throughout its existence despite the continuance of an active ‘underground’ scene. More recently, since the early 2000s, the rap culture of Grime has emerged in the UK (Charles 2016a, 2016b). Its rise in popularity and relative longevity now as a British rap culture demonstrate Grime as a genre that has become firmly established within the canon of Black music culture in the UK. The closeness of its association with Hip Hop culture remains the subject of debate (Bramwell 2015), but certainly it sits as part of Hip Hop’s lineage in the UK. As such it would be irresponsible to disregard its status and to disallow it specific mention within the context of this study. Grime has adopted a British identity of its own (Bramwell 2015) in the development of a specific vibe and particular style of rap flow that is distinct from Hip Hop.

Bramwell positions Grime as the British manifestation of Hip Hop. Whether Grime is *the* British manifestation of Hip Hop or the British manifestation of Hip Hop of a *certain point in time*, (even more recently UK Drill¹¹ has emerged post-Grime as a Black, youth subcultural and hyper-localised - despite its indirect descentance from Chicago Drill in the USA - form of musical expression that sits within the Hip Hop

¹⁰ Source: www.officialcharts.com

¹¹ See Broomfield (2017), Abiade (2018) for further discussion on this recent cultural phenomenon.

lineage in challenge to this claim) Grime's significant commercial success over the past decade situates it as a key genre within UK rap¹².

The historical trajectory of Hip Hop in the UK has therefore varied in some ways from that of the US. However, Hip Hop's emergence in the UK can be said to have functioned as a mode of alternative social and empowered creative engagement for young people as with the USA (see Wood 2009). For example, Wood (2009) highlights the import of two seminal Hip Hop documentaries to UK audiences *Wild Style* (1982) and *Style Wars* (1982), which Wood notes

...brought together the central tenets of Hip Hop culture to British audiences...The notion of "style" in these films, rather than focussing upon fashion or pose, *reflected the need for youths to find their own place in the culture and to develop their own styles and original modes of expression in order to make their mark on the urban environment, despite their recognized lack of real influence or power.* (2009:177 emphasis mine).

This passage serves to position Hip Hop as creative practice through which individuals create cultural agency for themselves and therefore aligns it with the notion of cultural democracy.

Though resonances with matters of social justice, community empowerment and social and political narrative feature prominently in the history of Hip Hop's origins in the USA, many scholars and artists argue that over the past 40 years Hip Hop has endured something of a cultural grey-out (see Rose 2008). It is suggested that Hip Hop culture (and specifically rap music) has been co-opted, fetishised, tokenised and exploited resulting in an evident tension between the idea of Hip Hop as a tool for

¹² In recent years Grime artists such as Wiley, Dizzee Rascal, Stormzy and Tinchy Stryder have all reached the number one position in the official UK singles chart with other prominent UK Grime artists such as Lethal Bizzle attaining top twenty status on multiple occasions (source: www.officialcharts.com)

grassroots empowerment and active participation/producer-ship and as a commercial product filtered and propagated through hegemonic hierarchies to passive consumers.

This is arguably also true of exposure to Hip Hop in the UK. In fact, because the origins of Hip Hop in the UK were somewhat removed from the social and political context which gave rise to the US Hip Hop movement in the 1970s, and because a large amount of Hip Hop music heard via mass media in the UK now arrives filtered through commercial US channels, this propagation has had a correspondingly significant impact on general perceptions of Hip Hop in the UK despite the complexity of the two-way information flow that according to Wood (2009) characterises the relationship between USA and UK Hip Hop. The developmental trajectory of these tensions and their impact is discussed in the following section.

2.4.3 Commercialisation and the 'democratisation of culture' in Hip Hop

The disparities between Hip Hop's socio-cultural roots and original range of expression as described above, and its subsequent dilution (or complete dissolution for M. K. Asante, 2008) are discussed at length in Quinn (2004), Rose (2008) and Asante (2008). Rose and Asante both deconstruct the factors that have impacted Hip Hop's historical trajectory through the lens of Black Studies in the USA. Rose specifically analyses the impact of changing technology and mass corporate consolidation in radio and record label ownership in the 1980s as well as subsequent exploitative and harmful marketing endeavours that have resulted in what she refers to as a dumbing-down of Hip Hop's capacity for social and political narrative and hence the production and re-production of reductive, stereotyped and racially fetishised imagery in the name of Hip Hop.

To use Rose's terms this has included the production of the 'thug brand' and the 'gangster-pimp-ho trinity' (2008). For a short time, the messages of the Hip Hop sphere were freer to permeate the wider public conscious, However, since this economic-marketing intervention Rose and Asante argue that USA commercial rap, a creation that has since grown globally and exponentially, has departed from Hip Hop culture in the most negative of ways. It is important then to understand that not all rap music is necessarily representative of Hip Hop culture or those who identify with it.

The primacy of commercial success in rap music and in some cases the selective appropriation or censorship of its lyrical content by industry decision-makers (Rose 2008) evidences a concerning co-option of this element of Hip Hop culture. In fact, though a number of scholars have expounded the political potentiality of Hip Hop as a vehicle for empowerment (e.g. Kitwana 2002, Rose 1994, Keyes 2004, Dyson 2007, Haupt 2003, 2008) there are a growing number who have drawn attention to the shortcomings of political Hip Hop, 'raptivism' and political Hip Hop organisations illuminating the failure of these organisations and artists (e.g. Asante 2008, McWhorter 2008, Rose 2008) in actually producing any sort of coherent political discourse or culture. McWhorter (2008) goes as far as to argue that "Hip-hop presents nothing useful to forging political change in the real world. It's all about attitude and just that. It's just music. Good music, but just music" (p.12). It is therefore with caution that Hip Hop's potentiality as a vehicle for social change or cultural empowerment is considered, especially when this consideration centres on the context of Hip Hop in the commercial context, or as externally commissioned, socially engaged work, and in turn when considering the impacts that the manipulation of Hip Hop within these realms may have on Hip Hop more generally.

In a 2015 Hip Hop History Month event discussion panel (UZN) Akala and Talib Kweli asserted that their experiences of Hip Hop around the world have reflected a vast number of conscious rappers and Hip Hop culture subscribers. This is however not usually mirrored in the mainstream selection of rap that the wider public is exposed to through mainstream media outlets. Rose's argument is that the agency and even existence of independent outlets is now greatly reduced. At the same (UZN 2015) panel discussion Akala points out that it has been the 'marketability' factor of rap music – that is to say that it is the element of Hip Hop that has historically most readily lent itself to co-option – that has resulted in the mass commercialisation of this element of the culture in comparison with the other features of Hip Hop practice;

There was a time when, and maybe this is me being romantic, when among the commercially popular and visible rappers there was a spread, you understand? So you had your Mobb Deeps, and I love Mobb Deep, you even had your kind of shiny suit party shit, but you also had the Talibs¹³, the Mos Defs, the Commons. What I mean by that is obviously still you have all those people but the visibility.. It was almost as if the corporations hadn't figured out the danger that Hip Hop posed, Public Enemy when I was seven years old was the biggest rap group in the world. (Akala, UZN 2015)

In contrast to the commercial face of Hip Hop discussed above, Marcielina Morgan (2008), Laura Speers (2014, 2017) and Richard Bramwell's (2015) research into the underground Hip Hop scenes in both the UK and the USA agrees that people do continue to engage with conscious and creative Hip Hop, or at least Hip Hop that is produced on the fringes of these mainstream market demands. Together these writings demonstrate the simultaneity and tension within Hip Hop culture as its artists and subscribers negotiate a practice rooted in grassroots radicalism and at the same time as an object of mass commercial propagation.

13 Talib Kweli

In the preceding paragraphs it can be said we are speaking about the interrelation between Hip Hop versus rap music, the latter being viewed as a commercial entity and the former positioned as a creative practice potentially still capable of de-centred critique, dissent, latitudinarian empowerment and the reclamation of decentred public space. The tension between the mainstream and the ‘underground’ or between the commercial and the radical within Hip Hop is constant and omnipresent and in entering into the process of navigating it, Hip Hop has developed practices and tactics that draw attention to it through highlighting the tension explicitly within its processes, narratives and practices. Hip Hop is therefore both pro-actively and re-actively involved in the exercise of resisting against the erosion of its values and subcultural, oppositional status through acts of resistance and reclamation (acts of preservation). To the same end it is constantly involved in seeking to reinvent itself through acts of innovation such as the manipulation of language and of expected modes of participation and communication.

A concurrent, if more recent trajectory in the history of Hip Hop in the UK is the increasing trend of Hip Hop being utilised as a vehicle for externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work or as an applied art. This is noted by Huq (in Hodkinson and Deicke 2007:79) who states Hip Hop “...has broadened in scope from its original remit and is now utilized in numerous ways in public policy contexts spanning education and the youth services”. This trend has no doubt followed the commercial co-option of Hip Hop over the past three decades. Over the last 15 years in the UK the practice of using Hip Hop a medium for youth engagement work and public arts engagement has become increasingly commonplace as part of the arts participation agenda that has pervaded arts funding over the last two decades. This process has resulted in a sort of ‘official recognition’ of Hip Hop as an arts practice that appeals

to young people and ‘disengaged’ individuals and therefore an appropriate medium through which to encourage arts and cultural engagement.

Paradoxically it is Hip Hop’s historical emergence as an organic, social and grassroots practice that positions it as an apt vehicle for social engagement. However, in locating Hip Hop as a medium for such work (which is commonly catalysed and funded through Government and Local Authority means in the UK that sit externally to the Hip Hop community) questions are raised in relation to the relationship between Hip Hop as an organic, grassroots practice and as externally imposed cultural access. In other words, through selecting and sanctioning Hip Hop as a form of externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work dominant cultural institutions are in turn manipulating a scenario where today Hip Hop is seen as part of the canon of arts that institutions such as the Arts Council and Local Government Authorities fund on the basis of increasing access and engagement. *Breakin Outwards* (2015), which was the first *Breakin Convention* tour project to be funded by the Arts Council England, or the *Hip Hop and Englishness* project (2016) funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council exist as examples of this. These projects are in addition to numerous local and regionally funded Hip Hop projects intended to engage (mostly young) people in the art form.

This practice calls back into question the problematisation of participation discussed in previous chapters (Stevenson 2016, Cooke and Kothari 2001). It also raises the question of how Hip Hop and its artists negotiate the relationship between the ‘rules’ imposed upon such work by cultural institutions in relation to the historical values and practices of Hip Hop culture. How do we reconcile the idea of an art form that “doesn’t ask for permission” (Akala 2015) with the idea of a state sanctioned activity? Indeed, what is happening to Hip Hop in this context and how are its artists

navigating the dynamics of this relationship? These are questions that will be considered in the discussion section of this thesis through the findings from interviews carried out with artists working in the field of Hip Hop as commercial endeavour and as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work.

This is not to say that Hip Hop and other popular, shared cultures now make up the main thrust of Arts Council funded arts and culture. In fact, as Hadley (2016) explains, there is an argument for more funding of Hip Hop type culture and less of esoteric, elite cultural activity such as ballet. Hadley says;

If we want to give people new perspectives and a culture which gives them “opportunities... an outlet to express themselves, have their say”, then we might think that rap artist Kendrick Lamar, an artist of considerable social conscience, empathy and who is highly politically articulate, delivers this better than ballet and with a considerably greater scope...In turn, this raises the question of the extent to which the current model of cultural democratisation can retain legitimacy in the face of artistically excellent, socially engaged and politically aware artists operating in the capitalist market. If the purpose of cultural subsidy is personal transformation, do we need more Kendrick Lamar and, well, less ballet or theatre?

Hadley asserts that the funding of more popular culture and shared, social culture that encourages self-expression and personal transformation may be an improvement on the majority funding of cultural activity enjoyed only by a minority of individuals of a certain social class and status. In funding Hip Hop youth work and applied Hip Hop arts practice however, the nature of ‘what Hip Hop *is*’ in this context is impacted. To take a shared, social cultural practice borne out of grassroots community and re-introduce it from above with the aim of increasing access and engagement is a complex and problematic practice. On the one hand it could be ventured that the official sanctioning of the art form leads to increased employment opportunities for artists and increases understanding and acceptance of the culture at large. On the

other hand, it signifies something of a shift in ownership of the nature of the cultural practices.

Whilst Hip Hop is being externally commissioned in schools and communities as a creative-practice-poster-child for arts participation and engagement, there is a need to explore what is happening in these situations. Forman (2013) though writing from a USA perspective on Hip Hop youth work (where the practice is more established than the UK), encapsulates similar tensions to those pervading the professionalisation of socially engaged, commissioned Hip Hop arts work in the UK;

Hood Workers are aware of this curious position that they occupy, working within what some clearly embrace as a “resistant” or counterhegemonic mode while fulfilling various social roles and responsibilities that have been abdicated by government and other supporting bodies under the rationale of neoliberal efficiency. They often articulate a concern that, in professionalizing hip-hop pedagogy or social work, developing sustainable programming, as well as providing reliable metrics about program effectiveness, they are at risk of being recuperated within a larger network of institutional authority against which they inherently agitate. (p.251)

Ultimately, Forman (2013) argues that artists involved in such work find themselves in the unenviable position of “working via hip-hop’s unique practices ... Yet they remain accountable to the philanthropic foundations and corporate or civic funders that are their lifeblood as well as being dependent on the institutional entities within which they conduct much of their work” (Forman 2013: 255). Artists are forced to follow the rules imposed upon them by these institutional entities and in the process become the arbiters of appropriate content in Hip Hop expression.

Forman’s (2013) analysis of ‘hood work’ in the USA sets out the conflict evident between encouraging increased political awareness and civic engagement and the delivery of Hip Hop work within the (il)logical frame of instrumentalism using a dominant discourse of ‘empowerment’ to facilitate and justify the work being done.

Forman’s reference to the context within which such practice finds itself operating is

also a significantly problematic issue for Hip Hop as funded, commissioned work in the UK. The impact this positioning bears upon commissioned, funded Hip Hop arts work is significant and multifaceted. In part the difficulty in evaluating and evidencing socially engaged, commissioned community-based arts interventions (Matarasso 1996, 1997, Merli 2002 and Belfiore 2009) poses a challenge for this type of work. For Rimmer (2009) the need for funded community music participation interventions, which seek to encourage social inclusion, to justify investment (in an instrumental policy context) can become detrimental to their original objectives through their focus on tangible outputs and with this dictate the parameters that delivering practitioners must operate within.

The need to critique the conditions that impact upon the delivery of socially engaged arts commissions through Hip Hop in the UK is therefore long overdue. Furthermore, the growing trend of deploying Hip Hop as a vehicle for externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work in the UK has occurred on something of an ad hoc basis, evidence-based reports and long-term planning underpinning the use of Hip Hop in this context are lacking. There is therefore a need to explore what is happening within this space.

Susan Hadley and George Yancy's book *The Therapeutic Uses of Rap and Hip Hop* (2012) brings together analyses of therapeutic work done with 'at-risk youth' (McWhirter et al. 2012) through the medium of Hip Hop from 28 contributors spanning the United States of America, South Africa, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom indicating a noteworthy level of activity in this growing field of interest. This is representative of a trend in the UK where "over recent years, young people's participation in small-scale, locally-based arts activities has increasingly come to be viewed by policy makers as capable of playing a valuable role in both

reengaging ‘at-risk’ youth with mainstream education and providing a means through which communities might combat social exclusion” (Rimmer 2009: 71).

The term ‘at-risk youth’ in the context of targeted, socially engaged arts work here refers to McWhirter et al’s (2012) definition as “describing many young people whose potential for becoming responsible and productive adults is limited by challenges within the ecology of their lives” (p.xiii). The attribution of a defined set of parameters and conditions within which a young person or adult is determined to be ‘responsible’ or ‘productive’ within this definition implies a level of external authoritative ‘approval’ that makes the term ‘at-risk youth’ in itself problematic. It implies that social participation of a particular pre-authorised kind qualifies individuals as productive and as discussed in the literature review the problematisation of participation is a discourse fraught with highly contested debate. We shall move forward with the understanding that the conceptualisation of ‘at-risk youth’ is problematic but is also commonly used terminology in justifying instrumental funded arts engagement activities aimed at young people within school and community settings and therefore arises frequently within the discourse of externally funded Hip Hop arts work within these settings.

The increase in externally commissioned and funded Hip Hop work in communities evidenced by the numbers of artists now undertaking this type of work has presented myriad challenges to Hip Hop as an originally grassroots, collectivised sub-cultural practice. Doug E Fresh said “[Rap has] always been a form of therapy” (quoted in Hadley and Yancy 2012: xxiii). However, the professionalisation in the applied context of what was originally a social, informal and decentred grassroots language and practice of empowerment raises important questions about the place of cultural democracy in socially engaged, externally commissioned arts engagement; primarily

whether it occupies any space at all in this context, and how we do (if at all possible) this sort of work meaningfully? Whose agenda is being exercised when Hip Hop artists are employed to deliver community arts provision and why is Hip Hop being used to fulfil this agenda? These questions in turn raise further, and perhaps even more crucial, considerations around what makes for meaningful Hip Hop provision in this context; is Hip Hop in this context a tool for empowerment or a sanitisation of a resistant process? What is lost or gained in applying Hip Hop in this context?

The dilution and co-option of Hip Hop culture has imposed upon it a set of conditions that it now works to both resist and to utilise. Whether this exists as one of Hip Hop's values or as a symptom of its appropriation is considered in the discussion sections.

There is a need to investigate how the shift to commissioning Hip Hop artists to deliver Hip Hop arts work in the UK is impacting those who are asked to participate in it and those who are facilitating it. This is especially true if we adopt Rose's (2008) argument that tools for critical assessment of Hip Hop's journey need to be honed, and also Sophie Hope's (2011) suggestion that we might utilise cultural democracy as a lens to critique the externally commissioned, socially engaged arts project. If the commercial realm of Hip Hop can be linked to the process of the democratisation of culture, and grassroots Hip Hop engagement to cultural democracy, then there is a question mark over where externally commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop sits. The use of Hip Hop in this context is therefore the main focus of analysis within this study.

It is easy to understand why Hip Hop presented itself as an appealing medium through which to publicly commission arts participation projects given the focus on social inclusion that accompanies its cultural cache and subcultural roots as the 'voice of the disenfranchised' and 'marginalised' (Stover 1999). Hip Hop has a reputation as

a 'cool' cultural practice that engages groups of young people who otherwise may not 'participate' in mainstream, sanctioned cultural activities. Looseley (2004) explains the selection of Hip Hop as a vehicle for supporting a participatory social inclusion agenda (from the French cultural policy perspective) saying;

Participation amounts to an apprenticeship in citizenship that can make up for the shortage of cultural capital. The first step in an exclusion policy, therefore, is the recognition of divergent or emergent forms of expression. Since the 1990s, this has primarily taken the form of supporting 'urban cultures' or 'street arts', by which is chiefly meant hip-hop. Certainly, the enormous popularity of hip-hop with the young in France, where it has become the voice of the *quartiers*¹⁴, has made it the major challenge for policy agents, as its revolutionary creative methods, together with its frequent aggressiveness, sexism, racism and resort to Graffiti, have often sorely tried their liberalism. Urban cultures also include what the ministry currently terms the 'new territories of art': alternative locations and conditions for the production and reception of such emergent forms. (pp.21-22)

Hip Hop in this respect presents as an appropriate medium for those in the business of commissioning instrumental, participatory arts activities. Problematic is the pervasive instrumental agenda within publicly commissioned, socially engaged arts that suggests a type of 'holding down' of participants (Dubois 2011:399) through its focus on social function rather than a promotion of its intrinsic aesthetic value as an art form or its counter-cultural qualities. When Hip Hop is positioned as a cultural practice through which the participant can elevate themselves in terms of social and cultural capital and status, but that the terms of this empowerment are dictated externally to the individual there is a sort of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2006) at play in the holding up of hope as a means of stifling dissent.

In the vein of Gardniner's (2000) LeFebvrian perspective, paradoxical to the above, one could argue that the mass commercialisation of Hip Hop culture over the past

14 Socially disadvantaged suburban neighbourhoods (Looseley 2005:148)

three decades (Rose 2008) has not dampened the continued existence of marginalised, underground Hip Hop cultures and scenes (as referenced in Bramwell 2015, Speers 2014, Belle 2014). Their continuance may therefore contribute toward the preservation of Hip Hop culture's subcultural status in the face of its professionalisation as an externally commissioned, socially engaged arts project or even to catalyse the next generation. Scholars have asserted in no uncertain terms however, that the mass commercialisation of Hip Hop has damaged the culture deeply diminishing its breadth of narrative and its capacity for expression and transformation through the commercial propagation of select rap messages (Rose 2008, Asante 2008, Chang 2006).

If the aforementioned scholars are correct in their accounts of the historical trajectory of Hip Hop since its commercialisation, then there is arguably scope for further damage, or potential repair presented via the platform of Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged project. In contrast to commissioned community arts projects, those responsible for the commercialisation have never professed to care about the empowerment of their audiences or those participating in Hip Hop culture. Equally, if Hip Hop as externally commissioned arts work involves engaging people as participants in the name of social good and empowerment then is it not of primary importance that we take the opportunity within this work to heed Gardiner's (2000) predictions to maximise on the drawing of attention to the processes of officialisation that are at play and their impact?

In relation to the above point, the following passage from Paul Willis highlights the necessity for considering what is happening in the commercial Hip Hop music sphere as well as what is happening in the use of Hip Hop for commissioned, socially engaged arts as interrelating parts of a larger Hip Hop cultural system;

What we are confronted with is a whole way of life interpenetrated by a whole symbolic system, not a series of discrete bits of behaviour alongside a series of discrete cultural artefacts. The meaning of any particular elements of behaviour, or of any isolated expressive work, rests totally on its intricate relations with other parts of the whole integrated cultural system. (Willis, 1974)

Although the research will show that practices, values and in turn the relationship to cultural democracy in each of these contexts (Hip Hop as organic grassroots practice, as commercial practice and as funded, commissioned practice) function differently, all of these contexts overlap and impact upon (and are impacted by) the values and processes in their neighbouring contexts as part of an overall ‘Hip Hop eco-system’ (Marshall 2015). Similarly, artists and those engaged in the culture are often engaged in more than one, or all, of these different spheres of Hip Hop. Therefore, despite some significant differences between them, it is necessary to consider these contexts as interwoven spheres within the wider Hip Hop eco-system, rather than contexts that function in isolation.

The final section of this discussion considers the existing body of literature on Hip Hop in relation to what theorists say about its capacity for empowerment and agency. This literature is drawn into an investigation of Hip Hop culture through the lens of cultural democracy, as defined in the previous chapter, to explore what it is about this cultural practice that resonates – even if only in theory - with the concept of cultural democracy.

2.4.4 Resistance, agency and critical engagement: Hip Hop’s tactical processes of performance

Taking some of the key themes from the definitions of cultural democracy discussed in the previous section of this literature, this discussion shows that grassroots Hip Hop can be positioned as a critically engaged practice and a vehicle for cultural

agency through exploring a series of key ‘tactics’ embedded within Hip Hop’s processes of performance. These tactics are shown to function as acts of resistance, of autonomy, and of spatial reclamation that can encourage spaces and opportunities for cultural democracy. The tactics of Hip Hop practice offer a mode of social engagement that has the potential to claim space for itself through disruption, to challenge existing social structures and in doing so create new and alternative political and social discourses (Kitwana 2004).

Strong resonances can be drawn between Hip Hop modes of practice and current issues within the discourse of arts engagement; participation, empowerment and co-creation are examples of these. How contemporary Hip Hop practice in the UK can empower its subscribers and construct space within which to articulate new modes of citizenship (Trend 1997, Mouffe 2013) are considered here. Theory relating to the ways in which Hip Hop appropriates space and power (for both artists and audiences) specifically through disruptive, dissenting and participatory creative practices is investigated to understand how people may engage as citizens through creative, politically (Habermasian-Bakhtinian) decentred sites in the UK today.

According to Pennycook (2007) rap’s susceptibility to commercialisation and conformism suggest it is not inherently resistant. On this basis the same argument could be made for all Hip Hop’s elements. However, the specific ways that Hip Hop practices and techniques are shaped and deployed can resonate with notions of resistance, the use of these ‘tactics’¹⁵ as we shall refer to them from now on, are

15 Echoing Jeffers and Moriarty’s (2017) use of the term ‘tactics’ in their writing on the dissenting stance of the 1970s community artists, the term ‘tactics’ is intentionally employed throughout this thesis with reference to Hip Hop rather than ‘strategies’. It is adopted in support of Michel de Certeau’s definition of tactics as the individual

deployed within some Hip Hop contexts as resistant acts. Hip Hop's 'distancing' (Potter 1995) preserves its position as a platform for questioning existing power structures and opposing 'the establishment'. It arguably therefore exists as a politicised practice (Stapleton 1998) – in some contexts - in the way that Francois Matarasso (2013) argues community art no longer does due to its depoliticisation through appropriation by its funders.

The term 'oppositional' is deployed here in relation to Hip Hop to signify it as a practice characterised by resistance against authority, a form of politicised alternative discourse formulation and a rejection or subversion of traditionalised form, however caution must be exercised in defining Hip Hop as oppositional practice. Raymond Williams (1958) distinguishes between 'oppositional' and 'alternative' practices where oppositional practice seeks to challenge and replace the hegemony and alternative practice seeks to find a way to co-exist with dominant hegemony. The implications of this distinction become interesting when applied to Hip Hop practice, given that it can sit in either or both of these categories if we are to adopt Lipsitz (1997) position that Hip Hop is a protest practice, but one that often chooses to work through the existing cultural infrastructure.

Moving forward with the understanding of Hip Hop as a distinct set of cultural practices underpinned by a politicised and social consciousness and at the same time

actions in everyday activities deployed by ordinary people to manipulate and appropriate the creations of the dominant institutions of power as opposed to the concept of strategies as being the overarching frameworks of dominant structures of power implemented to achieve their objectives (1988). To speak in terms of tactics is therefore more appropriate to this analysis and research subject matter. For an in depth discussion of the terminology 'strategies' and 'tactics' as applied to Hip Hop see Speers (2014:193-197).

a tool used for commercial advancement, co-option and censorship it is possible to turn focus towards the ways in which this is articulated through this group of interrelating elements. This includes exploring how such practices provide potentially helpful responses to some of the issues faced when considering the cultural democracy ideology.

Drawing on the need to create and preserve decentred creative spaces through which notions of citizenship are constructed David Trend (1997) brings the medium of Hip Hop into dialogue with the concept of creative sites of alternative cultural articulation. Writing about cultural democracy from a USA perspective Trend cites Tricia Rose's socio-cultural analysis of Hip Hop's history (1994) to argue that the creative relational processes within Hip Hop culture are imbued with the democratic impulses required for citizenship. Trend (1997) suggests that impulses for participation, engagement, and empowerment are values contained within the modes of practice deployed in Hip Hop culture. The impulse to congregate and the appropriation of urban space he argues to be contributing factors to this quality.

Trend argues Hip Hop is imbued with the potential to act as a progressive politics and a primary means of circumventing what he terms 'expressive roadblocks' (1997:167-172) through the development of communicative strategies that empower individuals to question existing power structures. He notes the lack of distance and the process of shared meaning making between audience and performer as examples of how Hip Hop creates these conditions for challenging power structures. Indeed, there are a number of characteristics that it can be argued make Hip Hop an appropriate training ground for the articulation of engaged cultural citizenship.

The appropriation of space and control through disruption or subversion is characteristic of the modes of practice employed by Hip Hop culture (Samy Alim

2006). For Trend (1997) these make Hip Hop a prime site for decentred cultural articulation and therefore democratic engagement. He goes on to briefly highlight Graffiti writing and DJ sampling in the context of youth culture as key examples of the appropriation of space and control through radicalised form. Disagreement with the status quo is expected and challenges against existing wisdom have traditionally been a feature within Hip Hop culture making this practice well placed as a space for the construction of alternative political discourses. Under certain conditions it is a space more readily able and willing to question existing social relations and entrenched political ideologies than most. Within Hip Hop the value of dissent and subversion of the established are indwelling. Take for example the B-boy battle, or the rap battle, these are long-established elements of Hip Hop culture that depend on subversion and opposition, and (verbal and physical) participatory decision-making-dialogue amongst performers and between performer and audience.

Trend (1997) argues that the practices of Graffiti, DJing and break-dancing are all ones through which the producer “uses materials to speak to to their communities, often in quite powerful ways” (pp.169). If we consider the Graffiti practice of ‘tagging’ one of its aims is to tag places that are difficult to get access to, for example very high up. Aside from a demonstration of skill this arguably makes a powerful statement about the power of Graffiti to appropriate any and all public spaces for its own means. For Burkitt (2004) it is the reclamation of space and in turn its control, that exemplify the political activities of new social meanings (p.225). For Burkitt this control extends to control over the production of social meanings. According to Evans (in Maudlin and Vellinga 2014) Graffiti writers develop a shifting ideological spatial system of recoded transience through their acts of spatial re-appropriation and reinterpretation. How these things may become compromised through the socially

engaged, externally commissioned Hip Hop project is explored in the findings section of this thesis.

Trend (1997) invokes the Brechtian concept of the 'radicalised spectator' (p.168) to explain how Hip Hop practices of sampling and Graffiti create a distancing effect for the observer using the creation of distance to encourage critical questioning. Graffiti's appropriation of official space can arguably function as a 'detournement' (Debord 1984) of existing power relations. Graffiti artist Banksy's work is a particularly well-known example of this. Current debates about the complexity of Banksy's relationship with the commercial sphere and dominant cultural elite aside (see Banet-Weiser 2011, Hansen and Flynn 2015) many of his images subvert corporate logos and iconic images representing war and social ills. Consider for example his 'Mild Mild West' piece depicting a teddy bear throwing a Molotov cocktail. If this can function as detournement and that encourages the 'radicalised spectator' then Graffiti can play a role in politicisation of the art. This act of detournement can be positioned as one way that spaces for critical engagement are encouraged through Hip Hop. In turn this presents opportunities for cultural democracy to be encouraged within these spaces through a critical drawing of attention to the ways that culture and cultural value is communicated.

Graffiti very overtly draws tensions between the official and unofficial use of space and the same goes for sampling music. However Hip Hop also subverts space in less obvious ways too. The physical subversion of space in Hip Hop has traditionally happened through the appropriation of street locations for B-boying and cipherring. Technology such as the boombox in the 1980-90s offers another example of an item that enables the subversion of public space through its ability to play music out loud in the street. Hip Hop has traditionally happened in these spaces and via these means

but increasingly legislation and policy prohibit the use of public space for these practices. For example, the increase in young person ‘crowd’ policing policy in the UK or New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani’s infamous clamp down on the use of public park space in the 1990s. This raises questions for community artists and those involved in the funding and provision of arts to engage those that are termed ‘difficult to engage groups’ today. Perhaps people have been engaged and participating in arts, but, as the title of Sophie Hope’s (2011) thesis suggests, they have simply been ‘participating in the wrong way’ (or in the ‘wrong’ arts).

The reclamation of public space can therefore be argued to exist as a key feature within various Hip Hop practices. Forman (2013) outlines the modes of practice through which Hip Hop’s political character is extended through the content of message rap or socially conscious rap but also through “the appropriation and use of localized public spaces by dance crews and aerosol “Graffiti” artists or even the volume at which people listen to rap music when cruising city streets” (2013: 247). The emphasis placed upon the importance of appropriation of localised space here provides the crux of the need to give further consideration to what happens when Hip Hop is then transposed into institution and official spaces and becomes subject to the rules that govern those spaces.

The concept of the Hip Hop ‘cipher¹⁶’ alongside the B-boy gathering and the act of Graffiti are perhaps the most explicit examples of this spatial reclamation. Theorist Imani Perry (2004) explains that the cipher is;

...a conceptual space of heightened consciousness and exists on an 'insider/outsider' basis where entry is refused to those unenlightened so that alternative energy doesn't interrupt the moment of rhyme sharing (2004:107).

Hip Hop-ologist H. Samy Alim describes the cipher as a lyrical training ground for MCs, it is a space of both community and competition, offering all participants an opportunity to hone their skills and to share ideas in the spirit of teaching and learning (2006:2, 97-98). To read the creative phenomenon of the Hip Hop cipher from a spatio-temporal perspective is to expound on its resonance with ideas about the reclamation of decentred, resistant space. The cipher event often occurs outside in public space and the inception of a cipher is rarely pre-agreed or pre-arranged. It exists as a highly ephemeral and often spontaneous gathering of MCs, who form a circle take their turns to 'spit bars' (deliver lyrics, either pre-written or freestyle) and when all have finished the cipher ends and the MCs disperse. It is arguably a space of inclusion and exclusion (in that no one who is not an MC may enter a cipher) and therefore raises interesting questions about 'the rules' of participation in Hip Hop culture. However, it undeniably demonstrates a democratic impulse to congregate and exists as a space of decentred critique (as MCs are free to say what they please) away from hegemonic structures of power. As with the on-street B-boy gathering, the cipher's ephemeral, fluid and spontaneous nature also means that it exists as a space that is de-territorialised (to employ a term from Potter's theory on Hip Hop language, 1995), ontologically resistant to external intrusion by authoritative, dominant forces.



Figure 1: Cipher Circle, Scotland, UK,(© Spee Six Nine 2018)

Henry Lefebvre's Marxist theories on the social construction of space (1991) offer an appropriate tool for reading the 'spatialisation' of Hip Hop processes of practice such as the cipher, the B-boy gathering, the rap battle or the act of Graffiti. Lefebvre's writings argue that space is primarily a social construction and that the processes of spatial production are conflicting and political in character. In particular Lefebvre's conception of 'representational spaces' as something "...embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art..." (p.33) offers a useful frame of reference for discussing the way that some Hip Hop spaces are constructed and their purpose. Lefebvre's philosophy (specifically writings on contradictory space and differential space) are also useful for drawing out some of the tensions implicit in the

construction of presumed 'counter-spaces'¹⁷, their ontological contradictions and their relationship to hegemonic influences. As Lefebvre states, "social space works (along with its concept) as a tool for the analysis of society" (p.34).

The conceptualisations of Hip Hop spaces mentioned in this chapter give the impression that Hip Hop processes of practice may work to construct what Lefebvre terms 'differential space' through its resistant and oppositional qualities. Here Lefebvre's philosophy of social space offers insight into the complexity of the relationship between dominated and 'deviant' or 'counter-space' allowing us to analyse more critically the tensions between grassroots empowerment, autonomy and hegemonic influence in such spaces. Lefebvre's contemporary Edward Soja's (1996) concept of 'Thirdspace' allows us a specific entry point into interpreting the sociology of spaces produced through Hip Hop. For Soja (1996) Thirdspace is a hybrid space of critical spatial awareness that blends the subjective and objective and is therefore capable of renegotiating and challenging existing and traditional boundaries of identity and culture. It disturbs the histories that make it and through this it constructs new politics and systems of authority. It constructs new spaces of meaning and negotiation. When, for example, we speak about the potential for Hip Hop to create new, alternative political and social discourses (e.g. Kitwana 2002,

17 There is a case to argue that Hip Hop processes of practice can produce what Lefebvre calls 'counter-space' as a utopian conceptualisation of space made possible through projects of resistance (p.349). though whilst Lefebvre presents an example of counter-space as a community act of political resistance he specifies that this sort of space is not devoted to leisure activity (p.383), which conversely suggests that spaces produced through a creative practice such as Hip Hop would not fit into this definition.

Rose 1994, Keyes 2004, Dyson 2007, Lamont Hill 2010, Pollard 2014) it is possible to locate this process as an act of Thirdspace, or differential space production.

There is also a case to suggest that specific Hip Hop processes of practice such as the cipher, the act of Graffiti, the B-boy battle or the rap battle event can be read (though not exclusively) as an example of Hakim Bey's (1985) concept of a 'temporary autonomous zone' or T.A.Z. Bey's T.A.Z. exists as an ephemeral and ontologically resistant space that may require "tactics of violence and defence" (p.99) to get started. The T.A.Z. relies on subversion and 'invisibility' to create an ontologically anarchic space separate from the forces of control (p.63) (that is to say separate from Governmental and hegemonic interference). The T.A.Z., Bey explains, is in many ways a tactic of disappearance that uses its ephemeral spatio-temporal qualities as a means of resistance. These ideas are echoed in the ontology of the cipher and therefore the concept of the T.A.Z. exists as a useful framework for reading the spatio-temporal qualities of Hip Hop performance events such as the cipher. Within his 1985 writings Bey even invokes Graffiti as an example of what he terms 'poetic terrorism', which he describes as;

...an act in a Theater of Cruelty, which has no stage, no tickets, no rows of seats and no walls. PT must categorically be divorced from all conventional structures for art consumption.... (1985:5)

It is interesting to note that whilst certain elements of Hip Hop practice resonate strongly with Bey's conceptualisations of the T.A.Z. and though Graffiti is used as an example within the text itself, Hip Hop cannot be said to be divorced from conventional structures for art consumption given its mainstream presence thus the conceptualisation of Hip Hop spaces as examples of T.A.Z. can also be said to be a somewhat idealistic conception. Yet Hip Hop is still held up as an example of de-territorialised, resistant practice (e.g. Potter 2005, Samy Alim 2006). It is in fact the

tensions between these juxtaposing characteristics of Hip Hop and its processes for 'resisting' that offer as yet unexplored ways of reimagining the adoption of cultural democracy in practical terms. In light of this it is useful to bear the qualities of the T.A.Z. in mind in considering Hip Hop however, the concept of Thirdspace possibly offers a more transposable reading of the nature of socially produced Hip Hop spaces. Equally, to draw Bey's work into dialogue with Hip Hop practice is to venture away from ideas of democracy into the realm of cultural anarchy, and it is indeed questionable whether Hip Hop practices potentially resonate with both of these ideological realms.

Elsewhere within Bey's collection of essays on ontological anarchy and poetic terrorism he states that *techniques* can always be appropriated and co-opted. This is also true of Hip Hop's techniques and tactics. It is perhaps therefore a misnomer to refer to the resistant quality of the tactics of Hip Hop processes of performance as ontological or indwelling. Purely by attempting to define and discuss the usefulness of Hip Hop's tactics for dealing with dissent, for empowerment and for resistance and de-territorialisation this thesis runs the risk of appropriation and co-option. According to the ontological characteristics of Hip Hop as outlined above this research *is* a type of appropriation of Hip Hop, but it does so to explore the potentiality of Hip Hop consciousness as a means of developing ways to encourage the conditions for people to empower themselves to make meaningful creative decisions. This thesis explores the ways that Hip Hop, in a number of contexts, can challenge the status quo of cultural value and the ways culture is traditionally communicated. It therefore exists not to prescribe a notion of how Hip Hop should 'be done' but to critique, and to identify spaces for resistance and challenge within the Hip Hop eco-system.

There are also ways that Hip Hop can be said to claim and manipulate space that are less about the politics of embodying physical space (as in Graffiti or the cipher) and more about the negotiation of spatial thresholds and the appropriation of discursive space. This may be through acts of rupture or resistance or with the aim of resistance as an outcome. Less well documented is the negotiation of discursive space in Hip Hop through being 'in between', through the fluctuating occupation of different spaces in the name of creating space for decentred social critique. This conceptualisation can be applied to Hip Hop practice in general but becomes particularly pertinent when the practice of the rapper in particular is mapped in terms of their navigation between different roles associated with the occupation of different social spaces in order to function as effective social narrators.

On the subject of Hip Hop and the negotiation of space, Arnold van Gennep's (1960) concept of liminality can be employed as a useful analytical point of reference for such a mapping. It has already been mentioned that Hip Hop operates both in the realms of the commercial and the conscious, as well as being a practice that is both marginalised and mainstream, and affords its subscribers empowerment as self-enabled producers and passive consumers. Thus, Hip Hop can be argued to function in many ways in the spaces found between these binaries, or in other words Hip Hop as a practice exists in liminal spaces, pushing at the thresholds of both the mainstream and the marginal, the official and unofficial.

The narrative space occupied by some rappers can be construed as an example of liminality. In *Critical Pedagogy Comes at Halftime: Nas as Black Public Intellectual* (2010) Marc Lamont Hill addresses the unhelpfulness of the commercial/conscious categorisation of rap arguing it is too general to explain the potentiality of USA rappers such as Nas or The Roots whose practice sits entwined in the space between

this oppositional binary and therefore offers a vital social critique (2010, 98-100). This, it could be said, locates rap as a liminal practice. Lamont Hill draws parallels between USA rapper Nas' mode of practice in this respect and the concept of the Gramscian Intellectual. In doing so this provides a purposeful frame for highlighting progressive intersections between different discursive roles. The importance of the artist as Gramscian intellectual is outlined by Chantal Mouffe in her theory of Agonistic politics;

Envisaged as counter-hegemonic interventions, critical artistic practices can contribute to the creation of sites where the dominant hegemony can be questioned....By constructing new practices and new subjectivities, they can help subvert the existing configurations of power. In fact, this has always been the role of artists, it is only the modernist illusion of the privileged position of the artist that has made us believe otherwise. (2013:104-5)

Forman (2010) highlights the resonance between the idea of the organic intellectual and Hip Hop processes of practice in stating "the original art forms associated with hip-hop were allied with the expression of urban identity and meaning among 'organic intellectuals' (Gramsci, 1971) that emerged outside of the institutional infrastructures where the arts are traditionally nurtured" [no pagination]. In a more specific Hip Hop focussed reflection of Mouffe and Forman's perspectives Pollard (2014) picks up on Hill's conceptualisation of Nas as a public intellectual. Pollard argues that Nas is an example of a Gramscian organic intellectual who creates a critical pedagogy by navigating between the commercial/conscious binary – between socially engaged narrator and gangster - making space to challenge the boundaries of these categorisations;

...the 'celebrity Gramscian' Hip Hop artist grapples with the divide between so-called commercial and conscious Hip Hop music. The terms 'conscious' and 'commercial' are used to distinguish between rappers that are supposedly more politically and artistically courageous and complex and those whose music is aimed solely at popular success...By situating himself within patriarchal parameters that are circumscribed all the more narrowly by

the 'gangsta culture' of popular rap music, Nas is able to construct a pedagogy that acknowledges and yet expands what is possible within these limits. (2014:2)

So, for Pollard (2014) the interplay between conscious and commercial is a key component of Nas' ability to function as an organic Gramscian intellectual. Pollard's framing of Nas' practice in this way serves to further illuminate the complexity of the tension between conceptualisations of the commercial and conscious in Hip Hop practice. Tricia Rose (2008) has also argued that to place these conceptualisations in a binary stance can indeed be reductive and harmful for Hip Hop and its artists.

However, there is an argument to be made for an expanded conceptualisation of this polemic that recognises the importance of the role it plays in both identity construction in Hip Hop and as evidenced above the productive potential of those who negotiate to create space between the two concepts in innovative ways.

Operating in the liminal space between 'gangsta' and 'socially engaged narrator' as exemplified in the above, or between 'socially engaged narrator' and 'court jester' as in the rap battle environment can be read as another distancing tactic that allows Hip Hop rappers to construct and draw attention to alternative political and social discourses.

Jim McGuigan (2004) explains that economic reasoning is driving more and more of the cultural aspects of our lives and argues for a re-definitive imagining of culturally driven reasoning in our society. The development of rap lyrics fore-grounds this tension, with some Hip Hopper's explicit 'materialism as essentialism' approach and others (like Lowkey) from the conscious camp who challenge this view. This is not to claim however, that Hip Hop has 'solved' this binary. I call it a tension because it is exactly that. The tension between these two approaches is debated at length in the Hip Hop community, with heads usually falling into one or the other camp. Speers (2014)

highlights this as a key ongoing debate in UK Hip Hop. The notion of liminality and of the rapper as Gramscian intellectual offer a productive way to frame this debate.

The point here is that Hip Hop is functioning as a space where these sticky issues and philosophical tensions are discussed, dissected and re-thought out loud with others.

The insights discussed so far in this section resonate with Hope (2011, 2017) in so far as Hope's writing explores how the opportunities for cultural democracy are created through her art as a socially engaged practitioner who works with communities through arts to 'effect social change'. Hope's thesis argues that even in a socially engaged, government funded context there are occasions where her work creates the space for challenging the status quo and empowering individuals to effect social change. She re-introduces the idea of cultural democracy as a means of analysing the power relations behind the production and consumption of arts and culture today (or what we might call the democratisation of culture). In the same way that the concept of postmodernity can itself be theorised and implemented as a critique of modernism, Hope argues that the concept of cultural democracy can perform much the same role for the democratisation of culture (2011).

Hope argues that her work can create the conditions for cultural democracy through the rupturing of dominant discourse, the challenging of expected communications of culture and expected forms of participation, which create a critical distance and allow participants to "reclaim the right to express themselves, creating conflicts...through uninvited acts of disobedience" (2011:3). Here Hope is discussing the tools of disruption, subversion and the metaphor of 'critical distance' as a means of creating the conditions for cultural democracy.

Hope makes a convincing argument if the Habermasian approach to the possibility of a critical sphere separate from the political sphere is assumed (the Habermasian

public sphere and its relationship to culture are discussed at length in Jim McGuigan's *Culture and the Public Sphere*, 1996). This possibility is also implicitly assumed when we refer to the idea that Hip Hop can in any real way actually 'distance' itself from systems of social coercion. A Bakhtinian-Habermasian conceptualisation of the public sphere is adopted within this thesis, the Habermasian potentiality of the public sphere is accepted but with the added acknowledgement, as per Bakhtin's critique of Habermas, that any distinction between public, state and private (and cultural) spheres is porous, blurred and entangled with the hegemonic apparatuses, institutions and mechanisms that seek to manage such distinctions.

Hope's insights (though not focussed on Hip Hop) echo those of Trend (1997) and can be effectively brought into dialogue with Hip Hop practice. In the same way as Trend, Hope draws on the idea of the Brechtian distancing effect as a theoretical means to explain how the disruption of expected communications of culture can create the space for cultural democracy.

The theorisations of the community arts movement pioneers such as Su Braden (1979) and Owen Kelly (1984) equate the purpose of cultural democracy with achieving community empowerment, social justice and cultural liberation. Their ideas about how to achieve this through creative practice similarly revolve around creating space to critique the status quo. Because Hip Hop lyricism is also sometimes overtly didactic in the Brechtian sense in that MCs can act as social narrators or storytellers, this brings with it what theorist Michael Wilson describes as the story teller's responsibility to perpetuate social questioning by drawing attention to the 'existing social systematization of speech in the network of education and of the culture industry' (2006:xviii). Wilson says storytellers therefore must remain sceptical, questioning the meanings and the resonances of the words they use. This illuminates

another reason for Hip Hop's mission to 'tell the truth' and highlights an example of what Hope (2011) argues when she talks about the sort of critical practice that can create space for cultural democracy. Hope (2011) draws on the Marcusean concept of the 'rupture' of expected practice, context or discourse as a necessary means for people to be able to work out 'what is false and true in society' (p.77-78). Marcuse also states that these ruptures cannot occur in an 'established framework of repressive tolerance' and that a radical break from the norm is needed. Reconsidering Hope's reading of Marcuse in the context of Hip Hop practice offers an explanation as to why the culture would continue to preserve its ontology as a resistant form, and why it deals in myriad controversial subject matters.

bell hooks' (1989) theorisation of the idea of 'talking back' as a defiant act of speech also resonates strongly with the Marcusean concept of the rupture within the context of Hip Hop speech acts and engaged arts practice processes of the sort Hope seeks in her work. It should be noted here that hooks writes from a Black, feminist perspective and the intersectionality between race, gender and class is intrinsic to hooks' conceptualisation of 'talking back'. The reference this paper makes to hooks' theorisation does not suggest that any and all people may engage in 'talking back' in the contextual sense that hooks employs the term. Instead the intention here is to draw on the notion of a defiant act of speech in explaining how (some) Hip Hop employs language to disrupt expected modes of communication and how this act can serve as a means of decentred social critique.

If we agree with Marcuse then any platform through which the 'rupture' can occur must be one that is primed for 'breaking with the established order' (in Hope 2011). Immediately NWA's F**k tha Police (1988) and Public Enemy's Fight the Power (1989) come to mind as examples of the way Hip Hop tries to maintain its claim to

being the space were these breaks and ruptures are welcome by 'keeping separate' from such establishments. Skinny Man's Council Estate of Mind (2004) album provides an appropriate UK example.

If the previous paragraphs have focussed largely on spaces of resistance and agency creation, the following paragraphs focus on languages of resistance and agency creation. By this I refer to exploring *how* Hip Hop speaks, i.e. its modes of communication, their effects and the composition of Hip Hop Nation Language (or HHNL) (Samy Alim 2006) and its deployment, in relation to cultural democracy and exploring *what* Hip Hop speaks about in the context of tensions between empowerment/oppression and resistance/hegemony. Trend's (1997) analysis explains that the manipulation of space and the juxtaposition of contexts that Hip Hop practice creates offer a method of perpetuating the questioning of existing discourses and expected behaviours. If this is the case, we can include the Hip Hop's creative development of language as another example of this.

Helpfully, rap narrates and communicates processes of critique. My own experience as a performance maker reflects Hip Hop as being a forum where space is made for the creation of lyrics that question social injustices and power relations. However, I would argue that this questioning is rarely an organised or sustained questioning of one or another perceived injustice. Though this is not to say that conscious underground Hip Hop doesn't attempt to say something important or has no political message albeit not one unified message. Because of Hip Hop's allegiance to the ideas of free association and expression as well as its disregard for established social power constructs and subversion of expected modes of practice a unified Hip Hop politics (or scene) arguably would not be possible for this reason.

The variance in Hip Hop thematic content, values and style is symptomatic of Hip Hop's positioning of itself, and the positioning of its artists as life-narrators, a perspective addressed at length in author Imani Perry's 'Prophets from the Hood' (2004). By this I mean that Hip Hop functions as an established avenue for expressing your life experiences as you see them and essentially talking about whatever you please. This it views as its mission and right, and it is one that it fiercely defends. In this sense the microphone and the platform to share thoughts functions as a soap-box. Similarly, in a live cipher MCs will metaphorically fight to gain their 'space' to deliver their bars, indicating the value placed on 'having the conch', sharing thoughts and expressing yourself – hence the phrase 'mic-snatching'. According to Boyd this is because Hip Hop seeks to tell the truth at any cost, in spite of the consequences that might accompany telling the truth (2003:143).

By situating itself in this role as arbitrator of life-stories and preserver of freedom of expression Hip Hop resultantly ends up including art that deals with the questioning of power relations and social ills though this is only one feature of this cultural liberty, we also experience the full spectrum of life-experiences including money, sex, love, hardship, violence and interrelations with others. Often Hip Hop is equated with only the most brutal aspects of the above life-experiences (Rose 2008) though its defence of the right to express these life-experiences unrestrictedly – to 'speak ya clout', 'keep it real', 'express yo'self' - tells us something of its capacity for empowerment.

Within Hip Hop the processes of discourse construction through rap lyrics openly unpick and in turn attempt to make sense of the conditions and polemics that impact upon it as an art form - commercialisation and capitalism, questions of authenticity, what constitutes the popular and what constitutes cultural value – alternative political

and social discourses are formed through this process. Dimitriadis (2009) explains that this is one of Hip Hop's unique characteristics, that artists themselves are "having this discussion – struggling over the meaning of 'popular'" (p.50). This process of practice positions Hip Hop as a conscious and critically engaged practice and can be thought of as a site primed for the critique of traditional ways that culture is communicated, something that Hope (2011) suggests is necessary in the process of attempting to encourage cultural democracy through creative practice by seeking opportunities for critical engagement and ruptures in traditional forms of arts participation.

Kelly (1984) asserts that achievement of the aims (cultural democracy) of the original community arts movement would have required an increased "understanding of the context within which they were to be attempted....an understanding of the specific ways in which capitalism has encroached on the previously 'private' areas of consciousness and sociality, and it would have required strategies to oppose this" (p.97). Arguably Hip Hop and its processes of practice, in theory, are primed to challenge such conditions in the sense that Looseley (2005) suggests and Dimitriadis (2009) demonstrates in highlighting Hip Hop's conscious discourse around the meaning of commercialisation and the popular. For example, Adam Haupt's (2003) analysis of the lyrics of South African Hip Hop crew Godessa finds that the lyrical content within their work can be positioned as a process of challenging capitalism and Patriarchy through cultural practice. Similarly, Vito (2014) analyses the construction of political discourses within the lyricism of Immortal Technique.

The enduring tension between commercialism and authenticity in Hip Hop is debated explicitly within its creative expressions and its scholarship (e.g. Speers 2014) indicating a distinct awareness of the impact of capitalism on the conditions within

which it finds itself. Lipsitz (1997: 37) cited in Speers (2014) argues that “Hip Hop is protest music against the conditions of oligopolies, yet much of the culture has decided to work *through* rather than *outside* existing structures” (p.63).

Forman (2013) expands on the complex nature of this dynamic awareness amongst Hip Hop artists stating “The distinctions are not precisely reducible to a familiar art versus commerce dynamic; wide audience appeal, corporate participation, commercial success, artistic integrity, ’hood status, and progressive politics are not necessarily at odds in hip-hop” (p.245). Though the business sector has attempted to frame Hip Hop as a commercialised component of popular culture it is rather the conflict between this and ‘real art’ that characterises a significant amount of the discourse of Hip Hop (Forman 2013:245).

Hip Hop lyrics and wider Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL) deliberately subvert and invert established modes of language communication. This ‘defamation of mastery’ (Potter 1995) could also be argued to be a ‘*verfremdungseffekt*’ or Brechtian distancing effect in Hip Hop terms through distancing the listener through the disrupting of expected modes of communication. This notion supports the Maher’s (2005) theory of Brechtian Hip Hop. Maher brings Brecht’s focus on didactics and self-production into dialogue with the work of Hip Hop duo Dead Prez to describe an approach to the study of politics within rap and a frame for exploring the ways that rap draws the listener’s attention incongruously to its social and political observations.

Theorist Russell Potter invokes Deleuze and Guattari’s writings on ‘minor’ and ‘major’ languages to offer an explanation as to how Hip Hop nation language functions in opposition to ‘standard’ language (1995). I propose in addition to Potter’s theory that this is one way that the ‘radicalised spectator’ is encouraged

through Hip Hop. I am employing H. Samy Alim's term 'Hip Hop Nation Language' or HHNL (2006) to mean not just lyrics within Hip Hop music but to describe the broader lexicon of the Hip Hop community that is also known to the generation of people who have been exposed to Hip Hop culture. Here Samy Alim is referring to the argument that Hip Hop has always had a focus on language and its creative development or manipulation¹⁸. He argues that the manifestations of this experimental literacy have filtrated to some extent into the wider dominant vocabulary of society and that there is a whole generation of people who have grown up hearing the lexicon of Hip Hop culture and are familiar with its semantics.

Potter claims that HHNL is akin to a 'minor' language, it exists at the outer limits of standard language working in opposition to it through valuing variance and questioning established modes of communication. Potter goes on to explain that in Deleuze's theory minor languages work to deconstruct and deform the accepted categorisations of the major language. However, Potter argues that Hip Hop is a 'resistance vernacular' that goes a step further than a 'minor' language by deploying variance in order to deform and reposition the rules of intelligibility set up by the dominant language' (1995:68).

18 It is worth noting the evolutionary aspect of Hip Hop language and lyrics as another justification for continuing to write about and study Hip Hop after the initial brief flurry of post-hegemony studies writings in the 90s and 00s. Hip Hop language continues to focus on development. When we consider the infamous Sugar Hill Gang 'Rappers Delight' (Sugarhill Records 1979) and its simplistic yet effective '...hip, hop, hippy to the hip hip hop and ya don't stop...' style of rapping compared to the increased complexity of the second wave Wu Tang era lyrical style and again to today's multi-syllable (Samy Alim 2006) focussed complexity of rhyme scheme and metaphor use, it is clear that the Hip Hop language experiment continues to evolve.

Potter's (1995) use of Deleuzian spatial philosophy in the context of HHNL goes some way to explaining how space for the aforementioned Hip Hop 'verfremdungseffekt' may be created. In Potter's theory here however HHNL exists only in resistance to the dominant language not as its origin or destiny (like Deleuze believed). This is an interesting insight in terms of the place of Hip Hop as something that is both 'resistant' and also commercially prevalent. This suggests the minor must maintain its de-territorialisation (from the major) in order to preserve its capacity for questioning and deconstructing it. Maintenance of this 'distance' could be read as a strategy for creating the conditions for cultural democracy in the sense as argued for by Hope (2011) of using creative practice to create ruptures in expected modes of communication or participation that generate spaces for critical engagement. Despite the resistant and coded character of HHNL, it cannot be said to be impervious to co-option. The broader use of Hip Hop language by those beyond the culture or outside of the Hip Hop nation can be read either as merely an inevitable effect of the extensive permeation and increasing familiarity with Hip Hop culture amongst mainstream society, or more sinisterly as a practice of appropriative co-option.

The specific linguistic devices common to Hip Hop lyrics can also be positioned as a tactic for resistance through distancing. A small number of theorists have begun specifically to explore the role of metaphor in Hip Hop (for example Allen 2005, Perry 2004, Potter 1995). The development of obscure and low resonance, emphatic metaphors particular to 'conscious' Hip Hop lyrics are argued to function as an act of Hegemonic resistance (Allen 2005) by forcing the listener to 'decipher' their multi-layering and multi-meanings. This insight into the resistance of Hip Hop lyrics against mass interpretation can equally be applied to the coded practice of Graffiti writing. Simply put, hand-styles are not easily decipherable for good reason.



Figure 2: Handstyle, Klonism, Leeds, UK, (©Klonism 2017)

This sort of codification in Hip Hop is prevalent in Hip Hop culture and its mission is one of resistance against mass interpretation. Todd Boyd explains this clandestine mode of operation is because Hip Hop is a weapon of guerrilla warfare. He states that it “speaks in a code that allows people to communicate with one another beyond the eavesdropping that those in power usually engage in” (2003:143). Theorist Samy Alim phrases this another way. He says that ‘There is a reason why Hip Hop communities resist others’ attempts to control their language varieties...Heads know that policing language is a form of social control that amounts to nothing less than policing people’ (2006:9).

Rap’s profuse relationship with metaphor and specifically the use of low-resonance and emphatic metaphor found in rap lyrics can be read as a further tactic in Hip Hop’s resistance arsenal. It is another means by which Hip Hop practice negotiates the construction of alternative social and political discourses. In metaphor ‘resonance’ is referred to as the range and number of implications that can be drawn between two subjects and ‘emphasis’ is the amount of reflection needed to interpret a metaphor (Black in Hauser 1986:157). When Hip Hop rap employs low resonance, emphatic

metaphor use; i.e. metaphors that have a small number of implications between its subjects and require a great deal of reflection to interpret this can be read in terms of resistance through codification. This tactic functions by allowing the artist and listener to develop new conceptual arrangements for reflecting on their life experiences through consideration of innovative and complex layering of metaphors.

Socio-linguists Lakoff and Johnson argued that metaphor functions as an important means of orienting ourselves in the world and understanding our experiences of the world in their seminal theory of conceptual and ontological metaphor (1980).

Metaphor use in Hip Hop can therefore be positioned as far more than fancy word play, existing as a codification process, a tactic for resistance and a distancing technique that encourages critical engagement as well as a means of sharing understanding and knowledge and a tool for social and cultural orientation. The Hip Hop relationship with metaphor functions as another example of a distancing effect for a listener who is required to spend time deconstructing the metaphoric construct that the rapper has assembled through (if we are to believe Potter and Deleuze) a deconstruction of dominant major language.

The use of humour in Hip Hop lyrics can be said to serve the same purpose as the low resonance, emphatic Hip Hop metaphor. Here Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1972) offer up another useful insight in support of this analysis. That is the idea of being 'forced to think' and it resonates with analyses of the performative writing strategy Deleuze and Guattari utilise in their text *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (originally published in 1972). There are various performative language strategies used by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* to force the reader to think about what was being written;

In considering Anti-Oedipus we should first discuss its performative effect, which attempts to “force us to think,”... First, we find a bizarre collection of sources... Second is the book's vulgarity...A third performative effect is humor...

(Smith and Protevi 2015)

The performative writing strategies used in Anti-Oedipus can be considered in a Hip Hop context. Influenced by Anton Artaud's ideas about the 'Theatre of Cruelty' (Artaud 1958), Deleuze and Guattari (1972) intended through the use of these strategies to force the reader to think critically about what was being said. This is a helpful insight to map onto a Hip Hop context because arguably the strategic performative use of metaphor (in this case Deleuze and Guattari's 'gleeful coarseness of polemics' Smith and Protevi 2015), of humour and of vulgarity are trademark characteristics of Hip Hop. Intentional grotesqueness and vulgarity are a distinguishing feature of battle rap lyrics for example. The aim of this being to garner attention, to make people listen and to reinforce the 'truth'. Even though this 'truth' operates within a carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1998) framework where it is understood that the interaction is performative and the usual rules of social communication and habitus do not apply. In addition to Deleuze and Guattari's work, Bakhtin's theories of the Carnavalesque and the Grotesque here also offer useful supportive insights into the social production of space that support this sort of behaviour and can function for its inhabitants in an inclusive and liberating way.

By utilising the performative language strategies of vulgarity and humour outlined above Deleuze and Guttari (1972) disrupt the expected mode of communication usually found in philosophical texts. Deleuze and Guattari's hope was to make readers critically question existing accepted modes of thought through the creation of this disruption. Hip Hop's use of vulgarity, humour and language that resists mass interpretation (and is developed through a grounded, de-territorialised aesthetics)

creates similar disruptions in modes of communication. Again, like Brecht's didactic distancing effect this can arguably provide a space where we can 'look differently' upon the established and the expected. The idea of this alternative language and its function as resistant, subversive and imaginative clash with dominant ways of thinking resonates with Jim McGuigan's writing in 1992 in his book *Cultural Populism* where he cites Bourdieu's (1984) writings on popular language explaining the tensions caused by the struggle between 'vulgar and official discourses'. This also speaks to Su Braden's (1987) writings on the use of elitist vocabulary in the discourse of arts and also Bakhtin's (1984) concept of official and unofficial language (p.11-12) where he argues that the official discourse of 'arts and culture' remains entrenched in the elitism that cultural theorist Raymond Williams was responding to in his seminal 'Culture is ordinary' theorisations (1958) .

The use of language as a weapon of resistance in the ways outlined above can be located as playing a role within Hip Hop's conceptual arsenal of tactics for distancing and disruption that encourage the creation of space for critical engagement amongst its listeners. Within these spaces reside opportunities for cultural democracy in the sense that through processes of resistance and de-territorialisation these spaces are decentred. In turn they are primed for the construction of alternative social and political discourses functioning either explicitly and didactically (as in Mayer's Brechtian reading of Hip Hop 2005), through their existence as intrinsic political acts (e.g. a Graffiti handstyle in a public space or the reclamation or subversion of a previously appropriated word) or more covertly (as in the process undertaken in deconstructing complex metaphors in rap lyrics).

The capacity of creative expression to 'empower' and create agency through participation has been extensively considered in scholarly studies. Hadley and Yancy

(2012) speaking on the subject of youth empowerment write that “...rap and Hip-hop provide healthy ways of shared (and sharing) vernacular expression, and healthy way of affirmed (and affirming) modes of being (ontology) and complex ways of knowing (epistemology) that are important for youth identity and survival” (p.xxvi-xxvii).

Whilst this statement functions to justify Hip Hop’s use as a socially engaged, applied art form, it’s focus on ‘healthy’ sharing can also be problematised as a type of sanitisation of the practice. The question of sanitisation through institutional appropriation and the application of Hip Hop as a socially engaged, applied art form is investigated at length in the discussion section of this thesis.

As referenced in Haupt’s (2003) analysis of the lyrical strategies of *Godessa* and Haupt’s (2008) analysis of copyright in peer to peer platforms and the politically inclusive counter-discourses developed by South African Hip Hop artists, possibilities for Hip Hop as a vehicle for creating agency (as in Loots 2001) continue to reside in production even within commercial contexts. While writing rap lyrics can be positioned as a vehicle for empowerment through the provision of a structure for producing self-narrative as Hadley and Yancy (2012) point out also through the act of being given a ‘mic’ either literally or metaphorically an individual is granted the space and the respect of others willing to listen to their narratives that functions as a means of empowerment.

According to Hadley and Yancy the act of giving ‘one mic’ signifies a demonstration of respect for the narrative and interior lives of others, “[it] says *you* can speak for *yourself*” (p.xxvi) and is therefore a means to empower the individual. Interview data from ethnographic research I carried out in 2013 found that part of the pleasure and instrumental value gained through Hip Hop by its artists was in the act of simply being the one designated the microphone. One artist said; “it’s like having the conch

you know, people have to listen” (A.B.D.) Hadley and Yancy (2012) argue that potential for empowerment is also located in the acts of consumption (reception, listening) within Hip Hop in the applied context saying that listening to the lyrical content of rap music can act as an emotional and cognitive springboard to encourage engaged critique and consideration of self-identity and engagement in wider social and political narratives. In this way rap music can function as a powerful invitation for others to speak.

In any discussion of Hip Hop in relation to creating agency and encouraging empowerment it is also important to mention the DIY ethic traditionally associated with the culture. A DIY ethos has been historically associated within Hip Hop practice due to its emergence as a grassroots art form originally practised by individuals from marginalised and economically deprived communities. The lack of traditional performance spaces required to engage in Hip Hop and the relative lack of specialist equipment needed contribute to the reduced need for external facilitation in engaging in the culture. Indeed, the minimalism and accessibility of the materials required to practice Hip Hop resonate strongly with the notion of self-empowerment and the “equality of access to the means of cultural production...” (Kelly 1984: 101) cited as conditions for cultural democracy. Quoting rapper Nas’ assertion that “all I need is one mic to spread my voice to the whole world” Hadley and Yancy (2012) explain that “Nas’ minimalism has important implications for self-empowerment. His minimalism valorizes the importance of simply being able to speak and the sheer power and transformative possibilities inherent in lyrically or rhythmically expressed speech” (p.xxvi).

The DIY ethic in Hip Hop continues to form an important part of its ontology (Speers 2014) and the recent availability of cheap, home based recording technology as well

as access to digital platforms for marketing and advertising have meant the DIY ethic continues to be a significant feature of the UK Hip Hop scene (Speers 2014:122). It is possible to locate Hip Hop's DIY ethic as representative of cultural agency and autonomy in creative practice in that it requires little external facilitation or traditional 'training' to engage as a producer in the practice. However, as Gill (2008) and points out, when considered in relation to the relative precarity this situation inflicts upon those trying to make a living from such endeavours the 'celebration' of DIY entrepreneurial culture is arguably a consequence of the neoliberal economic and cultural agenda and its ubiquity in recent decades.

Speers (2014) draws on Chapman (2013) in explaining that "neoliberalism increasingly constructs individuals as entrepreneurial actors who are autonomous, calculating and self-motivating. Agency and responsibility is thus located entirely with the actor, and the precarious relation to employment is celebrated as a condition of 'flexibility'" (p.124). Therefore, conversely the DIY ethic celebrated in Hip Hop culture exists at grassroots, organic level of engagement as a positive aspect of the culture and an enabler in terms of creating cultural agency, but when transposed into the context of commercial endeavour the focus on DIY entrepreneurialism is at the same time something that constricts the artist.

In 1990 Paul Willis wrote two reports for the Gulbenkian Foundation on arts and cultural provision for young people entitled *Common Culture* and *Moving Culture* (in McGuigan 1992). Within the first report *Common Culture* Willis notes the capacity of Hip Hop practices to empower consumers to be producers of culture for example in DJing or sample-based production. He goes on to explain that Hip Hop constructs its notions of community and value through a method of grounded aesthetics, by re-imagining and re-appropriating through production.

Willis (1990) goes on to cite the role of technology as a key enabler of Hip Hop's physical and metaphoric reclamation of space. This is true; Hip Hop has embraced the role of technology since its genesis and has developed around it. Take for example its inventive use of record decks for turntablism (first developed by Kool Herc) and scratching (first developed by Grand Wizard Theodore) (Smith 2016), its use of music sampling or the widespread recent utilisation of home music production software for beat making (Neal 2004). These practices signify a symbolic reclamation of cultural production and agency (Neal 2004:568).

Less obvious manipulations of technology have historically included the spatial reclamation that occurs from the use of a boom box to play Hip Hop music in public (Forman 2002). Even the manipulation of microphone technique for the purposes of beat boxing or MCing in 'cupping' the mic can be positioned as a phrasing technique that effects in a re-appropriation of technology. 'Cupping the mic' is a phrasing technique done by most rappers and beatboxers where the artist's hands form a cup around the mouth of the mic rather than hold the microphone by its neck as in most traditional music forms. This efficacy of this practice is debated at length on internet forums between artists and sound engineers (and also in practice). I have witnessed arguments break out on stage at Hip Hop gigs between artists and sound engineers due to the determination of artists to engage in this practice. It is done largely because the artist can hear themselves better, often in the absence of appropriate monitors. However, this practice affects the sound frequencies that emanate to the audience. There is also arguably an element of this technique becoming embedded as part of the fabric of Hip Hop style and practice over time, whether needed or not.

I would add to Willis' insight into the role of technology as a key enabler of Hip Hop's reclamation of space by pointing out that more emphasis deserves to be

accorded to the notion that these technologies have empowered individuals to produce 'arts' themselves, without the requirement for external 'facilitators' or 'animateurs' per se (as noted in Neal 2004). The materials that are needed to produce this art are either borrowed or stolen from others (i.e. music samples) depending on your views on intellectual property. Other materials or resources that are required to make Hip Hop are created by the individual, such as words, physical movement, beatbox. Aside from Graffiti paint and DJ decks Hip Hop is distinct in that it is designed to be practiced without the need for much equipment or a traditional performance space (in the sense of a theatre space, for example).

Willis' (1990) insights into the capacity of Hip Hop to empower people to become producers are echoed by David Trend (1997) and again by Sophy Smith (2013) in her book *Hip Hop Turntablism, Creativity and Collaboration*. Smith draws on Brewster and Broughton (1999) arguing that Hip Hop blurs the boundaries between consumption and production and is definitely a culture of both. This is also evident when the make-up of members of the Hip Hop community are informally surveyed, an overwhelmingly high proportion are producers as well as consumers of Hip Hop.

A taxonomic point of distinction for further exploration of the passive-consumer and active-producer dynamic in Hip Hop in the UK is offered in Dedman (2011). Dedman classifies these subscribers of Hip Hop culture as 'purists' and 'peripherals' in exploring how those involved with Hip Hop "exert significant degrees of autonomy over their cultural participation" (p.507). Dedman's classification provides useful terminology for application to the study of different sorts of Hip Hop culture subscribers and in relation to investigating how Hip Hop is navigating the tension between a 'commercial' and 'conscious' polemic. His analysis offers insight into the

question of how agency is negotiated through consumption within UK Hip Hop and Grime scenes.

This discussion has brought Hip Hop and cultural democracy into explicit dialogue through the exploration of the ways that Hip Hop processes of practice and tactics resonate with the conditions that theorists outline as necessary for cultural democracy. It has focussed in particular on the thematic conditions of agency, resistance (against dominant a dominant cultural hegemony) and the construction of spaces for hegemonic critique. There is a common theme of 'space' that has run throughout this discussion of Hip Hop tactics and the potential to encourage the conditions of cultural democracy. This 'space' can be viewed in terms of claiming power, in terms of resistance and in terms of distance. For Trend (1997) it is through this spatial reclamation that decentred critique can occur. By space I do not necessarily refer always to physical space (as in the space Graffiti re-appropriates) but also the space in terms of power, discursive space and ontological space (as in Hip Hop as a war of position or its 'de-territorialisation' of language, Potter 1995).

The tropes of agency creation and the creation of spaces for critical engagement and questioning the dominance of existing political and social discourses have been discussed in this section. Discussion has shown that these conditions are encouraged through tactics for 'space/difference', 'disruption' and 'resistance' within Hip Hop practice, and can tell us something of the way that grassroots Hip Hop practice may create spaces to encourage cultural democracy.

This discussion has shown that Hip Hop manipulates space in a number of ways. This occurs through the re-appropriation of physical space, through the development and preservation of a resistant vernacular and through the differentiation from hegemonic cultural space or what Deleuze would call the 'minor' (defined as functioning as

resistant to the dominant cultural space or 'major') (Potter 1995:68). The discourse of Hip Hop is kept unofficial and in the same way its practices of sampling, B-boying and Graffiti disrupt official uses of space, which can also be categorised as an distancing effect. Hip Hop preserves its capacity to sustain this critique through working to maintain a resistance vernacular based on what could be thought of as a lived semiotics of 'difference' that works to deconstruct the 'major'. Hip Hop practice is therefore arguably a prime vehicle through which to seek the type of spatial disruption that Hope (2011) refers to as a method of encouraging space for cultural democracy within creative practice.

As discussed, there are many examples of how Hip Hop can be defined as a resistant practice as a conduit for emancipatory ideas, as a voice-finding vehicle for marginalised communities, and a tool for highlighting social and cultural inequalities (Speers 2014: 64). However, Krims (2000), Templeton (2005) and Negus (1999) caution against the fetishization of Hip Hop as a resistant force stating respectively that resistance within Hip Hop can be thought of as a process of carving out space for enjoyment and recreation rather than revolutionary rebellion, that resistance can be thought of as a refusal to accept *complete* commodification of the culture and that Hip Hop remains vulnerable to hegemonic co-option.

Before this thesis embarks on the main discussion of findings from this study to explore how the conditions for cultural democracy may be encouraged (or discouraged) through Hip Hop in different contexts, and what role the aforementioned tactics play within these contexts, the following chapter outlines the methodology used for this research.

3. Methodology

THIS IS HOW WE DO IT, LIKE MONTELL SAYS

COVER ALL BASES IN THE BLAST RADIUS LIKE BOMBSHELLS

MAKING A CAREFUL APPROACH LIKE TIGERS ON GRASS PLAINS

I GOT PLANS THOUGHT OUT FAM I'M EXPLORING IN MAD WAYS

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have established that Hip Hop can be positioned as both popular culture and resistant subculture capable of creating space for critical engagement and alternative discourse formulation. It is therefore an appropriate subject to investigate through the lens of cultural democracy. This secures the foundation for the central argument of this thesis; that Hip Hop, as a resistant and creative subculture of practice, is well placed to provide new ways of challenging social dominance and in this way can exist as a contemporary manifestation of culture-as-social-action for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. In addition to this, Hip Hop's negotiation of position between resistant subculture, commercial entity and, even more recently, externally funded, socially engaged arts work provides a rich blend of contexts within which to explore its differing (and sometimes waning) relationship to the idea of cultural democracy and, critically, to explore where the spaces for cultural democracy might reside within the blend of different contexts Hip Hop finds itself operating within today.

As such I have separated out the specific questions this research explores and listed these below;

- What is cultural democracy (how did it come about and what does it mean today, in the cultural landscape of the UK) and what are its necessary conditions?
- How do these resonate with Hip Hop practice and culture?
- How are Hip Hop artists and heads engaging with Hip Hop in ways that may encourage the conditions for cultural democracy?
- Where do the spaces exist within different (applied and non-applied) Hip Hop contexts for cultural democracy to be encouraged, and what are the factors that encourage or discourage the above?

To meet the research objective to explore the idea of cultural democracy through the lens of engagement in Hip Hop culture and practice, it is necessary to approach the research questions and in turn the research design from an appropriate methodological perspective.

I begin by justifying the employment of ethnography as the most appropriate methodological approach for this research. I present the rationale for approaching the research as an ethnography and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of ethnography as methodology and method. Following this I outline the specific research methods undertaken to collect data, including qualitative interviews, ethnographic participant observation and self-reflexive auto-ethnography. I then go on to discuss sampling methods employed, followed by a discussion of issues pertaining to the positionality of the researcher in the context of this research and ethical considerations of the study. Finally, I set out the process of data analysis and presentation.

3.2 Ethnography as method and methodology

This research explores the concept of cultural democracy as experienced by some artists (specifically Hip Hop artists working in community art settings and through externally commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop work). Its aims are to capture the social meanings of a lived culture of practice and this therefore demands an approach that allows observation of, and immersion within, a culture and the capacity to acknowledge the value of reflexivity. As such, an ethnographic approach was chosen as the base methodological mode of enquiry for this study. The ethnographic approach attempts to capture the social reality of a group (Fetterman 2010), their “social processes, identities and collective practices” (Cohen, 1993: 127) through the collection of descriptive data that focusses on the ways in which members of a group negotiate meaning through social interaction (Burns 2000: 404).

Because this research is fundamentally an exploration of cultural ideology (from a practitioner-theorist perspective) and the unit of analysis is not numerical, an ethnographic approach, supported by qualitative interviews was deemed most appropriate. Due to the emphasis of the research aims on gathering information about cultural values and practices, and therefore the importance of context, the research questions were most effectively served through ethnographic exploration. The inclusion of interviews and ethnographic observation in the research design intends to open up avenues of insight that exist as the recent King’s College youth policy report (2015) argues, within living people. Speers’ (2014) exploration of authenticity in London rap scenes similarly employs ethnography as methodology to achieve its aims. Speers’ quotes Feld (1984) and Clifford (1997) in explaining the usefulness of ethnography in studying music scenes as being focussed on collaboration, repeated

visits (to a scene) and deep hanging out (Geertz 2000) as well as being “the most sophisticated methodology for achieving a subtle and rich analysis of musical cultures that takes into account the embedded and entangled wider cultural, social, political and economic practices” (Feld in Speers 2014: 80).

Speers goes on to highlight the current lack of ethnographic research into Hip Hop (2014: 81). She explains that the majority of existing Hip Hop research is grounded in historical, textual or discourse analysis with the exception of a few notable ethnographic studies in global Hip Hop (e.g. Condry 2006, Dimitriadis 2009). Since Speers’ original date of publication there have been a couple of other notable ethnographies of Hip Hop in the UK (e.g. Bramwell’s 2015 ethnography of London Hip Hop scenes) however, there remains a small number of UK Hip Hop ethnographies, both Speers and Bramwell focus on London. This study aims to provide a perspective on UK Hip Hop beyond the London scenes by representing participation across cities outside of London. Whilst this proliferation runs the risk of disregarding regional variations in Hip Hop it is of import to move beyond solely London-centric accounts of Hip Hop in the UK given the considerable levels of participation, number and activeness of scenes outside of the capital.

Ethnography as methodology and method (Brewer 2000) in the remit of this research provides an appropriate paradigm in terms of allowing the study of Hip Hop ‘on its own terms’. The research design takes into account post-structuralist critiques of ethnography (e.g. Denzin 1997, Coffey 1999) in terms of its assumption that there is a ‘real’ world to be accessed and studied. However, it defends its use of the ethnographic paradigm through the adoption of a reformist stance on the issues presented by postmodernism in relation to the nature of multiple, socially constructed realities and the limits of knowledge (Blaikie 2000). In other words, a type of critical

realist meta-perspective is assumed, which attempts to reconcile the independent nature of things with the dependence on subjective, sensory experiences acknowledged as the means by which we come to know about the world. Social realism (Bhaskar 2008) is adopted as a research paradigm and overlays constructivism adopted as a meta-theory that recognises there exists multiple interpretations of realities. It assumes that whilst the notion of an external reality exists there are multiple domains of realities, other reality domains also consist “not only of events that are experienced, but also of events that occur, whether experienced or not, and of the structures and mechanisms that produce these events” (Blaikie 2007: 151).

This research paradigm acknowledges that the aim of the study, and ergo its ontological assumptive approach, is to increase understanding of a social world that a group of people have constructed and is reproduced through their interactions and activities (Blaikie 2007: 124). Whilst positivists assume there is a logo-centric external and knowable reality and idealists assume the position that reality is wholly created, the field of social realism asserts a middle ground between positivism and Hermeneutics, a naturalist anti-positivism (Bhaskar 1998, Blaikie 2007) in which Bhaskar (1986) proposes that “experiences, events and mechanisms constitute three overlapping domains of reality” and that “social laws need not be universal; they need only to represent recognised tendencies” (Blaikie 2007: 147-148).

Critical realism as a meta-theoretical perspective was developed by Roy Bhaskar and exists as a combination of Bhaskar’s philosophies of knowledge of ‘transcendental realism’ and ‘critical naturalism’ (2008). Transcendental realism exists as a critique of positivism. It adopts the view that objects in space and time exist independently of our sensibilities and our experiences of them, but rejects the positivist

conceptualisation of causal mechanisms in favour of the idea that things have concrete causal structures. In other words, it finds that things have causal powers because of their internal constitutions (Owens 2011). Bhaskar asserts that an object's causal structures are arranged in different strata or layers, which for complex objects (such as humans) can include socio-cultural and psychological strata (Bhaskar 1975, Archer et al 1998). Its relevance as an appropriate meta-theory for the study of social sciences is therefore that it asserts that "social phenomena must be explained through reference to the interaction of social structures, and so cannot be adequately explained in reductive terms of the activities of structures at more basic strata" (Owens 2011:7). Critical naturalism similarly contributes to the critique of positivism taking the view that "knowledge claims made about reality have a necessarily interpreted character" (Owens 2011:8, Sayer 2000). It therefore recognises that knowledge is socially constructed. It acknowledges that the researcher's access to knowledge is problematic in that what we can know and observe is determined by the combination of hidden causal structure activity (Owens 2011, Archer et al 1998). Ultimately, critical realism is an appropriate meta-theory upon which to construct an auto-ethnographic methodological research design in the case of this thesis since it presents a philosophy of knowledge that focusses on the importance of both observation and interpretation in research (Owens 2011:11).

This research therefore seeks to develop an ethnography premised on the meta-theoretical assumptions of a constructivist, social realist research paradigm (Blaikie 2007:145-151). This ethnography is developed in practice through the holistic reflection of patterns and themes in the data gathered through theoretical analysis, and fieldwork filtered through the lens of the 'ethnographic self' (Coffey 1999) – in this case, the Hip Hop self. This meta-theoretical positioning acknowledges the tentative

scope of knowledge and its temporal and spatial limitations as well as the role of the researcher (Blaikie 2000:51).

As Speers (2014:72) explains, Bhaskar recognises the world as “a socially situated, but not socially determined one” and that as a result the social realist paradigm encourages the ethnographer to design research that encompasses the full spectrum of events, behaviours and interactions *as well as* wider structures and mechanisms in determining theories of specific social groups. The notion that reality(ies) exist externally, but that they are socially constructed and reproduced and transformed only “through the activities of social agents and social structures” (Benton and Craib 2001 cited in Blaikie 2007: 148) denotes the resonance between constructivist social realism as research paradigm and this research as a study into the way that Hip Hop (a socially constructed culture of performative practice and lifestyle) may encourage the conditions for cultural democracy (an ideological construct). This is a research question that cannot be considered in isolation or disregard of the mechanisms and structures that impact on public cultural freedom and agency, or those that inform Hip Hop as practice and culture.

Ethnography as a mode of methodological enquiry for this research presents a number of advantages and disadvantages. The general rationale used by social scientists in making the case for ethnography centres on a critique of quantitative methodology (Hammersley 1992). This is based on the assertion that quantitative analysis neglects the process by which social phenomena develop, disregards the role of group interaction in the construction of social phenomena and treats such phenomena as more defined than they really are (pp.11-12). However due to ethnography’s focus on description as mode of meaning making, validity and

reliability are the commonly cited issues presented when considering rigour in ethnographic research (Brewer 2000).

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) argue that researchers can build in the necessary degree of rigour to their research by being transparent about their data collection and analysis methods and by affording consideration to researcher reflexivity in their work. Sayer (1992) explains that designing and implementing an adequately robust ethnographic study is to conduct research in a systematic, repeatable way and providing transparency in the way that the research was conducted. In response to this necessity to demonstrate validity and transparency the following sections include an explanation of the research design as well as a discussion of the sampling methods used and the process of analysis undertaken.

Hammersley (1992) also highlights the problems with the goal of ethnography as being a means of producing theoretical descriptions. He argues that “descriptions cannot be theories since they represent objects and events in particular space-time locations; whereas theories are about types of phenomena, wherever their instances occur” (p.27). Hammersley argues that to negotiate this theoretical deficit the ethnographer must adopt a ‘reproduction model’ (p.28), that is to say the ethnographer must represent the phenomenon being studied ‘on its own terms’, however, in acknowledging the role of researcher subjectivity Hammersley concludes that what is really needed is for the ethnographer to make explicit the value assumptions that underlie their ethnographic descriptions (p.28) in order to bring rigour and validity to their research.

This project is informed by my years working as a Hip Hop lyricist. Interpretive ethnographic and Hip Hop-ological¹⁹ methodological perspectives are employed to explore the concept of cultural democracy through primary data drawn from interview with Hip Hop practitioners working in communities. This is supplemented by interviews with non-Hip Hop artists working in communities and participant observation (Burns 2000) of Hip Hop culture events. These data collection methods are supported by an auto-ethnographic exploration of the positionality of the self as researcher and Hip Hop practitioner in the form of a reflexive log. Through this log I, as an observer-participant (Burns 2000:405) create space to reflect on my own biases, experiences and assumptions in relation to Hip Hop culture. As Coffey (1999) explains, the process of reflexivity in research is an essential part of the ethnographic research process. Macdonald (2001) states that reflexivity is the wider business of ‘anthropologising’ aspects of the ethnographic enterprise itself (in Speers 2014).

The aim of this method of data inquiry serves to acknowledge and critically engage with the definition and location of the self (Coffey 1999) in the context of this research. This perspective distinguishes this study from many other studies of cultural engagement by embracing and making productive the fact that I write from the position of performance maker, academic, and also Hip Hop head. The research is supported through the critical investigation of relevant literature in the form of academic texts and journal articles from theorists and practitioner-theorists in the fields of Cultural Studies, Hip Hop Studies, Philosophy and Performance Studies.

¹⁹ Hip hop-ology, to mean the study of Hip Hop.

3.3 Limits of the study

It is understood that by employing an (auto)-ethnographic perspective this research has aimed to capture accounts of experience through reflection on arts engagement and cultural freedom. This approach has created a rich qualitative data set, however it is acknowledged that as with all qualitative research such an approach does not provide a breadth of highly generalisable data (Patton 2002, Burns 2000). In this case the data does not create (nor does it aim to) a breadth of data regarding the place of the arts in people's lives, nor does it provide an objective account of the successes and failures of cultural democracy. Instead it focuses on the conceptual underpinnings of cultural advocacy ideology as it has been experienced by some artists and theorised by some academics, and ultimately, what can be learned from this data (and by implication of methodological design 'how' we can learn from this type of data).

The use of an ethnographic methodology (including an auto-ethnographic element) also imposes limitations in terms of my own biases and experiences of Hip Hop culture (my positionality in relation to this research is explored in further detail in the next section). It must be recognised therefore that my experiences of Hip Hop culture are specifically spatially and temporally rooted, as are those of the artists I interviewed during the course of this research. For me, those experiences of Hip Hop culture are rooted within the United Kingdom, more specifically within the context of a Northern, post-industrial and metropolitan city. They are also particular to the era of Hip Hop within which I grew up and was most active within the UK Hip Hop scene, the early to mid-2000s. Therefore, my own notions of Hip Hop authenticity and the values specific to the culture are impacted by this spatial and temporal conditioning. It is important then, within the course of this thesis to highlight when and where my

own experiences of Hip Hop stand contrary to others' experiences, where my existing knowledge or understanding is 'out of date' and to foreground throughout this writing where the spatio-temporal rootedness of others' Hip Hop experiences is apparent.

This study is the first of its kind in the UK to explicitly theorise the idea of cultural democracy in relation to engagement in Hip Hop. There are limits created by choosing Hip Hop culture as an exploratory lens through which to investigate the subject of this study. In the interests of time it is not possible to investigate how all contemporary alternative arts and cultural practices might create the conditions for cultural democracy, any study that attempted such a broad remit would undoubtedly lack the required depth of insight. There is however, certainly scope for future research into ethnographies of cultural democracy in other contemporary arts practices. This research shows specific examples of how some are negotiating the relationship between their craft and the concept of cultural democracy. Whilst an ethnography of the place of cultural democracy in almost any contemporary art form would be possible, Hip Hop provides an exceptional place to begin as a result of its legacy in relation to community, its arguably resistant and disruptive nature as well as its argued capacity to function as engaged critical practice. These factors place Hip Hop – at least in theory - ahead of the starting line in terms of resonance between its ontology and the conditions required for cultural democracy.

The majority of Hip Hop theory literature utilised in this study is USA based, this study aims to contribute to a UK perspective. The reason for the inclusion of USA based Hip Hop theory is because there is a much greater wealth of academic writing on Hip Hop from the USA due to the relative longevity of Hip Hop culture in the USA and also the USA being the birthplace of the Hip Hop movement.

The primary data gathered during this study is the result of interviews carried out with arts practitioners based mostly in the UK and discussion is focussed on the UK. This study is one of a small number of studies of Hip Hop in the UK so far that attempts to move away from a London-centric account of Hip Hop and it is unique as an investigation of the growing field of Hip Hop as a vehicle for externally commissioned and funded socially engaged arts work. There are a number of UK theorists currently writing about Hip Hop in the UK (e.g. Speers 2014, 2017 and Bramwell 2015), who are included in this research. Similarly, whilst a large amount of literary analysis focussing on cultural democracy and its associated key concepts is UK based, this research also draws on some theorists writing about cultural democracy from outside the UK in order to support its investigation (for example Graves 2005, UNESCO 2001).

3.4 The positionality of the researcher

I am a member of what theorists Bakari Kitwana (2004) and H. Samy Alim (2006) refer to as the Hip Hop generation having grown up being exposed to Hip Hop culture through media, fashion and music throughout most of my life. As Kool Herc says “Hip Hop is the voice of this generation. Even if you didn’t grow up in the Bronx in the ‘70s, hip-hop is there for you. It has become a powerful force. Hip-hop binds all of these people, all of these nationalities, all over the world together” (cited in Speers 2014:7). As a child in a small Northern, working class, post-industrial city in England (Wakefield) then as a teenager in a semi-rural tourist city (York) and as an adult in a large metropolitan, working class city (Leeds) the majority of my early exposure to Hip Hop came initially, as is the case for many other people of my generation, via the increasing commercial mass-marketisation of American Hip Hop. From West coast to

East the verbal dexterity and the articulation of social narrative combined with a creative musical aesthetic that characterised 1990s USA Hip Hop resonated with me as a teenager. Later this led me towards an exploration of UK Hip Hop music that began with Task Force's (2001) *Music from the Corner* album. That there were people using the same beat style and densely crafted, poetic rapping skills as the USA artists of my childhood, but speaking about subject matter that reflected my own life experience made engagement with this culture of music all the more meaningful. As Rag 'n' Bone Man says in *Foreign Beggars' Standard* (Par Excellence 2018) "I grew up on Task Force, Skinnyman, Rodney²⁰ and Roots Manuva".

The ability to engage in the production of Hip Hop without the need for external facilitation or access to funds, and the 'lack of permission' required to visualise oneself as an artist within the context of this culture played a significant role in the process of beginning to writing my own rhymes. This shift from consumption to production occurred within an environment at the time where a number of individuals close to me were also engaging in the acts of lyric writing, DJing, music production, breakdancing and Graffiti. Since then I have enjoyed a lengthy career in the UK Hip Hop industry and underground scenes; MCing in a Leeds based crew for nearly a decade and working in press and marketing for a number of UK Hip Hop acts, a period facilitating youth engagement activities through Hip Hop and I now continue to write rap lyrics for audio production music. I therefore bring to bear on this research a lifetime of Hip Hop love and passion, an understanding of the dynamics

and history of the development of Hip Hop in the UK, and experience of the commercially funded, publicly funded and grassroots spheres of Hip Hop in the UK.

It is acknowledged that I approach this study as both a practitioner and a theorist.

Though this study does not explicitly take the form of Practice as Research (PaR) it adopts the perspective that there is scope for the researcher's practice to inform the research or what we might term Practice informed Research or PiR. PiR is defined by Reed and Procter (1995:11-31) in the context of their research into healthcare as research "which uses the researcher's experientially gained professional practice knowledge and understanding as a methodological device, both as a direct and legitimate source of data, and also as a tool for enhancing the quality and insight of the analysis." Employing a PiR based approach therefore allows space for practitioner knowledge and understanding to inform both the purpose and the methodology of the research.

My Hip Hop background is useful experience to bring to bear on this research study and to enable me to occupy an insider-outsider role within the ethnography, however it is important to acknowledge that as a result of this practitioner experience, and of my own socio-demography there is a need to acknowledge and to navigate my own biases and assumptions in relation to this research. Coffey 1999 explains that the complexities of the socially constructed self in the context of ethnographic research move far beyond traditional dichotomies of strangeness and membership in the context of ethnographic research (p.21). Whereas scholars (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) have argued for the need to maintain a sense of distance and estrangement in ethnographic research in order to look more effectively upon the ethnographic imperative, Coffey (1999) agrees that conceptualisations of the self in

research are multidimensional. Coffey explains that reducing the process of negotiating involvement/observation and strangeness/familiarity in ethnographic research to opposing dualities is largely unhelpful (1999: 37). Ultimately Coffey advocates for a process of acknowledgement and critical engagement within the researcher's negotiation of place and identity in fieldwork. My position as a researcher with a background in UK Hip Hop and a familiarity with some of the participants and events I observed and people I interviewed resonates strongly with Coffey's theorisation of selfhood in research. At some of the events I attended I participated as I would if I were there in a personal capacity, in other scenarios such as interviews I could not pretend that my role as a researcher did not have bearing on the form, structure and dynamic of the situation. My positionality as a researcher in the context of this study was certainly more complex than merely observer or participant, 'insider or outsider' (Blaikie 2007). Burns' (2000) taxonomy of the observer-participant relationship and Whyte's (1993) definition of the participant-observer were applicable only to discrete aspects or events during this research in relation to my positionality as researcher. The overall negotiation of my selfhood in relation to this study and my experiences of Hip Hop culture required a process of critical engagement as part of the design of this research. As Coffey (1999) suggests, critical engagement acknowledgement and self-reflection in this respect should be "...a part of, rather than tangential to, the ethnographic research endeavour" (p.36). Similarly Agar (1980) suggests that an explicit process of acknowledgement – sometimes in the form of 'bias awareness training' – of the ethnographer's biases, and sometimes by way of a documented procedure highlighting "some of the experiences that you had that led you to the conclusion, and that potentially might have *falsified* that conclusion" (p.49) can be an effective methodological means of

negotiating such bias. Self-reflexive exploration in this regard has highlighted a number of issues.

In the following paragraphs I pose these issues as provocations and then demonstrate the strategies, plans and processes I have implemented to attempt to successfully and meaningfully negotiate (or where this is not possible to acknowledge and remain critical of,) these issues. As a practitioner how do I successfully negotiate the issue of conducting meaningful interviews and conversations with other practitioners in the role of researcher? And how do I avoid interviewing only those that I know/have existing relationships with and therefore inadvertently creating a data set skewed towards my own experiences and the experiences of those close to me? In response to these issues, whilst it is acknowledged that there may be merit in conducting some interviews practitioner to practitioner, I have ensured that the interview participants selected represent a mixture of practitioners I already know and practitioners I do not have an existing relationship with through the implementation of snowball sampling (Patton 2002) (as discussed in the sampling chapter). A snowball sampling method allowed me to capitalise on the access I have to practitioners whilst also gaining participant referrals through these practitioners to recruit interview participants who I do not already know. This degree of separation has allowed me to conduct interviews primarily as a researcher and to avoid a situation whereby I am interviewing only participants who know me primarily as a practitioner.

Consideration must also be afforded to the issue of how do I explicitly and usefully allow my practice to inform my research, my analysis and my writing in a way that is both meaningful and upholds the integrity of the research study? I am a white, working class female (now in my 30s) from a post-industrial city in the North of England. How do I negotiate the issue of attempting to speak for the UK Hip Hop

scene at large, for youth sub-culture at large and/or avoid assuming that my experiences within this culture are necessarily reflective of the experiences of others who may be involved in Hip Hop but experience it from a very different socio-demography, gender, race, or generation than that of my own? Neate (2003) in exploring his own identity as a white, suburban, English adolescent offers personal insight into this debate in suggesting that Hip Hop can create “a bridge between cultures” (p.204). For Wood (2009) Hip Hop in Britain embodies this characteristic in embracing “a sense of group identity that also allowed for individual creative expression” and maintained a “multi-directional flow of ideas between Britain and other sites of the Black diaspora” (pp.187-188). Despite Neate’s and Wood’s enhanced conceptualisation of inclusion within Hip Hop culture challenges remain for the researcher in any ethnographic study of Hip Hop in negotiating the liminal space between insider-outsider. As Dedman (2011) points out in his ethnographic study of agency in Hip Hop consumption amongst different groups, identifying specificity in cultural knowledge and creative engagement within subcultures and youth affiliations “causes problems for the researcher as such identifiers of subcultural belonging are almost impossible for an ‘outsider’ to appreciate” (p.507). In response to these issues I begin by echoing the mantra of ethnographic wisdom expounded in the introductory pages of so many ethnographic methods texts (e.g. Fetterman 2010, Burns 2000, Mason 2002) that the ethnographer begins their endeavour with an open mind about the culture they are studying. This was necessary, despite my own experiences of Hip Hop, which were useful to bring to bear on this research, it was also important that I recognised my experiences did not necessarily reflect those of others and therefore my starting point for the ethnography remained thus. It has been critical that within the course of this research I have solidified the

understanding that my experiences of Hip Hop as a culture and my engagement with it are both very much temporally and spatially rooted in a specific leg of Hip Hop's evolutionary journey.

My 'golden era' (Forman 2015, Speers 2014) of Hip Hop is temporally positioned in the experience of early to mid-2000s UK Hip Hop music. Spatially, my experience centres on that of a mixture of Hip Hop scenes in the semi-rural (small town and city) and metropolitan larger city suburban environment outside of London. It has been key to the integrity of this study that I consistently remained conscious of this spatio-temporal aspect of my Hip Hop experience. There have been a number of developments in UK Hip Hop subculture since my golden era, in terms of style, music and expression, and it has been crucial that I employ reflexive strategies to keep in check the understanding that what I consider Hip Hop has undergone significant shifts since the time I was most heavily engaged in the culture.

I have maintained a reflexive log throughout all phases of the research. This log is not published as part of the thesis but provided a place to reflect on my own biases and experiences of Hip Hop and cultural democracy. The auto-ethnographic element underpinning this research and the choice of Hip Hop as case study also allows my role as a researcher to function as a 'mediator of languages' (Blaikie 2000:52). I am able to use my working knowledge of Hip Hop culture to map its practices and values in terms of ideas about cultural democracy and related current discourses within the wider cultural sector and performance communities. This research component also allows me to summarise and debate key sentiments arising from the research through the writing of lyrics (my creative practice), which it is hoped will offer an alternative and complementary method of exploring and increasing understanding of the results of my study. The inclusion of the reflexive log does not however mean to imply that

the process of reflexivity in this research is confined to one stage of the research or that all reflexive practice is encapsulated within the log, rather the process of reflexivity has been an integral process throughout all of the research process. As Brewer (2000) explains, reflexivity and interpretation are integrally bound together and reflexivity acts as a bridging process between interpretation and the means of conveying interpretation within the representative text of this thesis (pp.126-127). It is therefore an ongoing and embedded process, which has permeated the spirit of this study throughout.

I have endeavoured to acknowledge my own biases and assumptions throughout this thesis where possible (including the production of the ongoing, reflexive log), and also to incorporate contrasting and juxtaposing view points from other practitioners so that findings are not based solely on my experiences in and of Hip Hop and the UK Hip Hop scene.

It should also be mentioned here that my experience has been within a scene that self-identifies as UK Hip Hop (as opposed to Grime or other rap cultures and communities). Though I interviewed some artists and observed some environments other than those identifying as UK Hip Hop, the interviews in study are largely centred on the experiences of artists identifying as part of the UK Hip Hop scene. It is acknowledged that experiences may be different within other rap scenes and this is an area into which further future research is necessary.

It was the case that many of the artists who had reached the point in their lives where they had the experience to deliver Hip Hop community work, and the desire to do so, and in many cases had also achieved some sort of accompanying youth or community work qualification were approximately 30+ years old. Part of the reason therefore that this study focuses on those identifying as 'Hip Hop' is due to the general ages of

those involved in Hip Hop community work and as a by-product of this, the era of Hip Hop lineage they grew up around. It is also perhaps that more historical definitions of Hip Hop culture being intrinsically linked with ideas of community has informed this generation's notions and experiences of Hip Hop. This has in turn impacted their career choices as an art form that is suitably positioned for utilisation within a community work context.

This study adopts a partly auto-ethnographic perspective in order that I can carve out meaningful space to utilise reflexive thinking to contribute to the findings within this research. This could also be framed as a phenomenological element to the research offering a process of capturing how I "...experience some phenomenon – how they [I] perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others." (Patton 2002: 104). I have endeavoured to make clear within this thesis where these sorts of reflections on personal experience are incorporated into the data and subsequent findings. The following section details the form of the fieldwork I undertook for this research.

3.5 Data Collection: Fieldwork

3.5.1 In-depth interviews

Key to the concept of cultural democracy in arts practice are the notions of democracy and of empowerment. It was therefore important to get a feel for how artists working in communities today are addressing issues of democracy and community empowerment. As such the research focuses primarily on gathering data from interviews with Hip Hop practitioners who work in or with communities and/or in a public arts context. A full list of Hip Hop artist interviewees is included at

Appendix B. Though interviewing Hip Hop professionals runs the risk of confusing the boundaries between ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ within a study of cultural democracy, it is important to note that these artists are all also engaged in Hip Hop as individual creative expression, and sometimes also Hip Hop as a commercial endeavour, as well as facilitating publicly funded Hip Hop arts workshops. They therefore bring to bear on the research an interesting perspective and their negotiation of practice between the boundaries of these contrasting realms is discussed in the data analysis. For the remainder of this thesis I will refer to this group as ‘Hip Hop arts workers’ or ‘Hip Hop artists’. These interviews (15 in total) focussed on exploring the artists’ approaches to and experiences of working as facilitators for externally commissioned Hip Hop work for the purposes of social engagement and the relationship between this work and the Hip Hop practice they engaged in for their own creative expression.

The questions asked centred on the key themes identified through the literature review process; ‘the nature of participation’, ‘the factors that impact on engagement in Hip Hop culture’, ‘perceptions of empowerment and agency’, ‘processes of empowerment and agency’, and ‘articulations of cultural value’. A smaller number of interviews (6 interviews) were also carried out with what I shall refer to for the purposes of categorisation as ‘non-Hip Hop arts workers’ or ‘Non-Hip Hop artists’ (full interviewee list is included at Appendix B). This group comprised ‘community arts workers’, ‘facilitators’ and ‘artists working in communities’ – in the more traditional sense of the common understanding of ‘community arts’ – (who did not work through the medium of Hip Hop) with the aim of developing a complementary understanding of the role that cultural democracy plays in the frameworks that these artists apply to their community work. These interviews focussed on exploring the

experiences and approaches used by these individuals within their work. Discussion guides for both interview groups are included at Appendix C. Originally seven non-Hip Hop artists and 21 Hip Hop artists were contacted for interview.

It is important to note here that members of both groups of artists (Hip Hop and non-Hip Hop) worked with a variety of social, public, youth and community groups. The groups they worked with encompassed a diversity of demographic and socio-cultural situations ranging from work with prisoners to unemployed individuals to school children. This research locates itself as an entry point for catalysing a wider, more critical and nuanced discussion into Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work and as such does not go as far as to differentiate findings based upon the specific socio-cultural demographic diversities within the groups of participants these artists work with. Directions for further, future research into the field of Hip Hop as socially engaged, applied arts work could, and should, include investigations into the notion of empowerment through Hip Hop engagement based on work with specific groups (e.g. prisoners) to explore any differentiation in the ways that Hip Hop may encourage cultural autonomous agency for different types of participant groups. Inglesias (forthcoming 2019) is one such study currently underway in the USA, which explores how engagement with Hip Hop may support in the development of cultural worth amongst foster youth in Higher Education.

I wanted to examine whether non-Hip Hop arts workers and Hip Hop arts workers were likely to have diverse experiences of doing art in communities and with people. To avoid groupthink effects (Lunenburg 2010) or a situation where experiences are so diverse time constraints don't permit participants to share their full experiences, it was therefore appropriate to carry out in depth individual face to face interviews rather than focus groups in order to gather data. This method permitted an adequate

deep dive into participant experiences and allowed question structure to be responsive to participant experiences. However, the aim of these interviews is still about understanding artists' experiences and therefore a qualitative dialogical method (Sullivan 2012) was most appropriate for all interviews.

The in-depth interview exists as an active social encounter grounded in a dialogical exchange and comprises a process of communication, understanding and interpretation (Negus 1999). The in-depth interview therefore also exists as an encounter where the researcher is afforded the space to be adaptive to the responses of the participant remained important given the potentially diverse nature of the experiences of the participants in relation the cultural group under study.

The research utilised judgement sampling of information rich cases for the purpose of yielding in depth insight and understanding of the research issue (Patton 2002).

Different sampling sub-methods were employed for each of the two participant sub-groups for the purpose of exploring the research question at hand. Hip Hop artists engaged in work with communities and public groups through the medium of Hip Hop comprised the primary participant group, as this allowed in depth insight into the issue of how Hip Hop is (or is not) used as a means of encouraging cultural democracy. This necessitated the deployment of snowball or chain sampling (Patton 2002).

Snowball sampling in this context allowed me to locate further information-rich cases by asking people with whom I had existing relationships in the Hip Hop community "who else should I speak to?" This resulted in certain names or organisations arising repeatedly by valuable informants, which allowed me to tailor my approach for interview to meaningful cases. This method of sampling allowed me to negotiate the 'network in' to doing an ethnography that Michael Agar (1980) discusses as the need

to identify a social trail from you (the ethnographer) to your first informant (pp.27-30). Agar illustrates the importance of an introduction from a 'good source' i.e. a person or persons who are established as a part of the group you are trying to study, in terms of the potential quality of subsequent interviews and in gaining participants for interviews who are comfortable, open and relaxed because the person carrying out the interview with them has been introduced by a trusted source – or what we might call the quality of the 'link up' to draw on Hip Hop terminology.

This sampling method also enabled me to move beyond the circle of existing relationships I had within the Hip Hop community and thus mitigate against sampling bias and the tensions I negotiated between being an insider-outsider in terms of the Hip Hop community in relation to my ethnographic self (Coffey 1999). This 'link up' method however also exists as a limitation of this study. By utilising this method this research recognises that power imbalances may be perpetuated as the identification and therefore implicit validation of a 'good source' implies a value judgement made by the researcher. This value judgement is in turn implicated within the sampling method chosen. The researcher and those responsible for selecting the sources are pre-determining a value system based on who within the realm of Hip Hop culture is a worthy source of information. This research therefore includes the caveat that the sources identified through this sampling measure are 'quality sources' in the sense that they were validated by other members of the Hip Hop community, but recognises that this also means there are almost certainly whole communities of practitioners within Hip Hop culture that have not been captured by this research because their participation within the culture is less publicly visible or because their links within Hip Hop culture extend through different branches of its community.

Initially judgement sampling was carried out to select and contact participants fulfilling the criteria outlined above, and in turn some of those practitioners referred further participants for interview based on their own networks of practitioners working in similar fields or by similar means. Participants for interview were selected based on their experience working in community arts settings and with communities or individuals through (publicly funded) arts through the medium of Hip Hop. The justification for participant selection for this group was as follows;

Hip Hop artists working in communities were selected based on having worked with communities or public groups specifically through the medium of Hip Hop either currently or recently on more than one occasion. Participants constituted a mixture of practitioners who ran their own Hip Hop community/youth work organisations and those who worked on an ad-hoc basis delivering workshop type arts provision through Hip Hop. Participants were drawn from a range of age groups and were aged between 21-45. This was in order to reflect a variety of Hip Hop generations and those who practised actively in the early days of Hip Hop's development in the UK as well as those who entered the scene in more recent decades. All practitioners still considered themselves active practitioners in their field of Hip Hop expertise, though spent a greater or lesser proportion of their time engaging in Hip Hop practice outside of a community/public art context - i.e. producing art privately for pleasure or commercial means - than others.

It is important to note that the largest number of Hip Hop practitioners interviewed fell into the 30+ age category, which clearly impacts their understanding and experiences of Hip Hop culture. For example, if I had interviewed mostly under 25 or under 20-year-old participants, their accounts of Hip Hop culture and their experiences may have been very different due to the shifting nature of modes of

expression, identity construction and value systems within the culture over time. It was the case however that most of the artists who had built up a level of experience in the culture to reach a point where they could deliver Hip Hop community work, and also – self admittedly – reached an age where their maturity informed an altruistic element to the work they wished to undertake within communities, tended to be approximately late 20s upwards.

Interview participants in the ‘non-Hip Hop artist’ sub-participant-group were selected based on a different sampling approach. The reason for this was because, whilst the aim of the interviews with Hip Hop practitioners working in communities was to explore how cultural democracy may be encouraged through Hip Hop – which is a primary concern of the research - the aim of speaking to non-Hip Hop artists working in communities was to gain an understanding of how these experienced non-Hip hop artists were engaged with the idea of cultural democracy and the role this played in their approach to their work. This was a secondary consideration of the research and the aim of investigation into the latter group served the sole purpose of strengthening understanding of the former. Artists were therefore selected for interview based on a process of homogeneous intensity sampling (Patton 2002), which is to say that a smaller number of cases were selected that “manifest[ed] the phenomenon of interest intensely” (Patton 2002: 234). Exploratory work was undertaken to identify a number of non-Hip Hop arts workers who fulfilled the criteria of having a notable interest in the concept of cultural democracy and also a long history of undertaking or facilitating work with community groups through arts. These participants were therefore able during interview to discuss explicitly the notion of cultural democracy in relation to their work. In contrast the Hip Hop practitioners working within

communities were not necessarily aware of the concept and therefore the structure of the interview discussion necessarily differed.

The non-Hip Hop arts workers selected all had over 10 years' experience working in the community context. The exact lengths of experience ranged between 12-30 years. This selection criteria enabled an in-depth discussion with the arts workers around the framework they used to engage public and community groups in their work and also the role that they felt cultural democracy played in this/in their work. Selecting practitioners with a long ranging experience of community arts work meant that practitioners were more likely to have had the time and opportunity to develop a framework for their work, and to apply it in a number of projects/situations with a number of different groups. Though the drawback to intensity sampling is located in the lack of ability to generalise findings (Patton 2002), because the purpose of these interviews was to gain a flavour of the ways that community arts workers might conceive of cultural democracy in their work to bolster consideration of the ways that Hip Hop arts workers are working, there was not a need to generalise findings from these interviews and therefore this did not present an issue.

The participants for all interviews from both sub-groups were drawn from various cities across England. Though representation of all towns and cities was not possible within the remit of this research, and there were a number of initial participants based in the region where I live due to the snowball sampling method utilised, effort was made to ensure a relative geographic spread of participants including interviewees from: London, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, Glasgow and a small number working nationally in order that regional variations in experience did not inadvertently skew research findings. Through interview discussion it became apparent that regional variations in the composition and heritage of Hip Hop scenes

were perceived by the individuals interviewed. This was often a result of factors such as size of region, history of musical heritage in the region and/or the existence of long-term institutions and/or organisations that encouraged or developed Hip Hop based talent in the region. Therefore, there exists an argument for further future research on a regional basis in relation to Hip Hop and cultural democracy.

The question of how many interviews is enough? (Crang and Cook 2007) posed an issue in this research. Had time and financial constraints allowed, I could have continued interviewing participants from the selected groups for an almost indefinite period of time given the number of active community arts workers and the popularity of Hip Hop as a medium for community engagement in the UK. However, I concluded that I would not yield significant further findings from doing so due to reaching a saturation point (Ortiz 2003) whereby in the later stages of interviewing artists were saying similar things.

Practitioners were generally happy to give interviews although a small number either did not respond to my request or responded to say that they did not have time in their schedules to accommodate an interview. Where the latter occurred a telephone interview was offered, which was taken up by some practitioners. Those who did not respond were contacted with follow up requests, but where practitioners did not respond within 3 months attempts to make contact ceased.

The interviews take the form of in-depth, semi-structured conversations (Sherman-Heyl 2001) with practitioners, lasting for no longer than 90 minutes, and taking place at a variety of public locations as convenient for the interviewee (and on occasion in private locations such as the artists' studio where appropriate). Most interviews took place face to face, though a number of the interviews were held via telephone/video conferencing (Skype). Supplementary conversations were carried out via email where

face to face meeting was not possible. There were also a number of interviews that utilised social media instant messaging facilities (IM) to ask follow up questions to interviewees. This method of communication was particularly useful where travel distance or time constraints prohibited a face to face meeting, or, in certain cases where reputational risk may have been a factor in corresponding via personal email or telephone. For example, when interviewing Graffiti writers corresponding via professional aliases ensured that anonymity was protected for these participants at all stages of the research process.

3.5.2 Ethnographic observation

The research included a period of ethnographic immersion in UK Hip Hop culture events and experiences. The aim of this method of data collection was to gather data on the behaviours of Hip Hop artists who are not necessarily involved as practitioners in an applied arts context. These artists engaged in Hip Hop practice for their own individual expression and/or for commercial gain. The advantage of participant observation was that it allowed me to observe the behaviours of these artist 'in situ' as the behaviour occurred rather than reflectively in interview (Burns 2000) in an attempt to gather data on the ways that cultural democracy might occur in a naturalised Hip Hop context.

To attempt to interview artists about the place of cultural democracy in their work would arguably have been fruitless in that the term cultural democracy may be entirely unfamiliar. Whereas taking Hip Hop practice and acting it out in a community arts context is a conscious process of application and therefore a discussion point in interview, the process of 'just doing Hip Hop' and the interrelation between this act and matters of cultural freedom, agency and resistance

is not necessarily something thought out or considered a priori. It was therefore most appropriate to observe this in action through participant observation. This period of research involved the ethnographic observation of practice and values active within practice.

Themes for field notes and observations were identified prior to this fieldwork and the observations focussed on 'the nature of participation', 'the factors that impact on engagement in Hip Hop culture', 'perceptions of empowerment and agency', 'processes of empowerment and agency', and 'articulations of cultural value' drawn from the analysis of the critical literature review.

In *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* within a chapter entitled *Deep Hanging Out* author Clifford Geertz argues for the 'value, the feasibility, the legitimacy and thus the future of long-term, close-in, vernacular field research' (2000:110) as a tool for continuing to provide rich insight into the interpretation of cultures. It was envisaged that exploration of the research question would involve drawing out tacit knowledge and therefore an ethnographic immersive method is preferred over a directly dialogical interview scenario. O'Grady (2013) explores the implications of immersion within the complex social and spatial dynamics of popular music festivals arguing that where a performance event is imbued with a sense of play, and in turn there is an element of flow to the event, then the researcher benefits from not intruding in such a way that may interrupt that flow, and instead benefits from immersion within the space of play. This insight applies neatly to events such as the Hip Hop cipher, where the sense of flow is paramount (both literally and metaphorically) to the event. As such the period of ethnographic immersion involved attending community events, performances, as well as taking part in ciphers, studio sessions and other events as appropriate. 'Studio hangouts' (in

the vein of Geertz' deep hanging out) are an ideal opportunity to inhabit a space not only where Hip Hop happens but also a space reserved solely for it. The nature of studio recording means that studio hangouts are also an authentic reason to inhabit such a space for an extended period of time.

In total I attended 28 different events during the period of ethnographic observation during this research (including 9 studio hangouts), during which I was able to observe the behaviours of and interactions between artists and between artists and producers, as well as the structure and form of such events. Studio hangouts proved themselves to be an exceptionally useful form for ethnographic observation for the following reasons, a) when artists are recording (i.e. someone is physically in the booth and the process of recording is happening) there are long periods within which participants in the studio are required to be silent, which gives the ethnographer a chance to observe behaviours without distraction and to catch up on writing field notes; and b) in most of the studio hangouts I attended there were usually a number of artists present and most, at certain points during the session, would be writing their lyrics or making changes to written lyrics. This meant that there were a number of attendees sat around with notebook and pen writing at any given time, which in turn means that the ethnographer present is able to sit also with notebook and pen scribbling field notes in the moment without being regarded as an oddity. This of course means that the ethnographer is not required to scribe field notes retrospectively after an event such as a cipher or stage show as I was often required to, which limits the efficacy of memory recall and can result in diminishing perceptions of the event.

The longer between the event and the period of capturing field notes the memory moves increasingly away from specific details and further towards general stereotypical conceptualisations (Agar 1980: 112). The third reason that studio

hangouts lend themselves to productive ethnographic observation is that unlike a stage show in which the music is so loud it precludes much conversation at the time of playing, or a cipher which assembles solely for the delivery of rhymes and then disperses ephemerally immediately afterwards, the studio hangout lasts much longer than a cipher but necessitates long periods where the artists are able to speak and interact freely and unencumbered by background noise whilst the producer attends to his or her mixing duties.

In addition to the 9 studio hangouts I also attended 13 live gigs/Hip Hop culture events (including one Hip Hop discussion panel) and 6 ciphers (though these often overlapped with the live music events in the sense that they would occur outside the venue following or during a gig).

3. 6 Ethical considerations²¹

I identified the issue that for certain interview participants, specifically active Graffiti writers, exposing their given name within a research study where they may potentially speak about prohibited or illegal activities could pose a risk to their personal liberty and they may be vulnerable to criminal proceedings if their identity was revealed. Therefore, during interviews participants were informed that they could exercise a right to remain anonymous if they wished, and also to refuse to answer any questions or to terminate the interview if they wished. Anonymity was offered as an option to all interview participants, as discussing the subject matter may have posed a

²¹ This research was approved by the University of Leeds ethics committee, reference: PVAR 14-078.

threat of reputational risk for those arts practitioners dependant on public funding for their work, however all participants (with the exception of active Graffiti writers), elected to remain identifiable.

Interviews did not exceed 90 minutes in length and always took place at a location convenient and comfortable for the participant. Most often this was a cafe or in some cases at the studio of the practitioner in question.

For the in-depth interviews consent was obtained in writing from participants. For ethnographic observations all data has been anonymised thus avoiding the need to obtain written consent as this was not always practical or appropriate in some of the observation environments for example at Hip Hop events or studio sessions, where participants were aware of my presence in the role of researcher, but also aware that data findings would be recorded anonymously.

Some of the images within this thesis have been reproduced with kind permission from the artists and photographers who created them. Consent for this has been obtained in writing. Where obtaining consent may have incurred considerable reputation risk or revealing identity through the obtaining of consent may have led to possible prosecution (as in the case of the Graffiti artists who kindly allowed me to reproduce images of their artworks) then consent was obtained from the artist using their artist pseudonym.

3.7 Analysis of Data

The analysis of qualitative data often begins with the identification of key themes and patterns (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). Initially general concepts from the data were extracted using a bespoke process of coding the occurrence and significance of

various themes. The overarching themes initially identified were ‘the significance of community’, ‘official vs. unofficial space’, ‘self-reflexivity in practice’, ‘preservation vs. innovation’, ‘formalisation and formularisation of practice’, and ‘the impact of professionalisation’. A thematic interpretive (Mason 2002) analysis was used to analyse the relationships between these themes and the initial themes identified through the critical literature review (‘resistance’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘critical engagement’ in relation to cultural democracy and Hip Hop). To ensure consistency in analysis the same thematic categorisation process was used in a cross-sectional fashion (Mason 2002) across data gathered from all sources. Though this initial cross-sectional ‘open coding’ (Strauss 1987) was limited in that it only provided a broad overview of the key themes in the data (Mason 2002) it provided a useful starting point to further, more specific ‘selective coding’ (Strauss 1987) of the data in secondary stages of analysis. An excerpt from the thematic analysis frame used in the coding process is included at Appendix D.

The indexing categories used represented interpretive readings of the data initially, then a second open coding and selective coding of the data was undertaken to identify reflexive findings that included cross-sectional analysis of the reflexive log I had produced in conjunction with my field notes throughout the research. It was anticipated that thematic patterns within this data were unlikely to be extracted or made useful for analysis through the employment of analysis tools that isolate data-parts from the context of the broader data set. For this reason, Nvivo is not used for analysis and instead a bespoke process of coding data was utilised.

Interview, field notes and secondary data were first grouped by key themes at a macro-level through open coding. A number of tensions were evident in what the practitioners were saying and doing (for example there was clearly a significant and

active tension at play between the appreciation that ‘knowing your history’ was important in Hip Hop culture and at the same time that a key part comprising Hip Hop’s ontology was its capacity for reinvention and its reoccurring tropes of ‘cut and paste’ and intertextuality). I also reorganised many of the thematic codes under different headings so that I was able to re-read and re-visualise the data in different ways. I did this with my central research questions in mind (namely ‘how does the idea of cultural democracy resonate with Hip Hop?’ and ‘how may Hip Hop encourage the conditions for cultural democracy?’ respectively).

I undertook a process of re-coding all the categories under the headings ‘macro-level’ ‘mid-level’ and ‘micro-level’ in order to gain a better sense of the resonances between the conditions that the theoretical critical review had identified as being necessary to cultural democracy and the processes of practice in Hip Hop (and accounts of applications of these) I had gathered. Then interview data was further split by various conditions and sub-categorisations (including age, Hip Hop element practised, length of experience in community Hip Hop work and whether participants owned/ran their own community Hip Hop work organisation) and re-coded selectively to provide further insight into specific demographics of the interview participant sub-set.

The process of coding the data thematically provided an initial link between the original data and my theoretical concepts (Seidel and Kelle 1995). The process of coding in this way served as analytic vehicle for me to expand and extract the data to formulate new interpretations (Coffey and Atkinson 1996: 30). When all data had been coded in this way, I next retrieved the data according to each code so that it could be viewed by theme and explored the data to search for patterns, themes and contrasts to find conceptual coherence (as well as conflict) in the data. This process

of conceptualising the data (Bryman and Burgess 1994, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) formed the foundation for the generation of insight in relation to the original research issue.

I also produced a number of working diagrammatic representations in the process of my analysis, including taxonomic models pertaining to the tactics and tools of the practice of Hip Hop as a method of engaging community or public groups through arts and also tabular diagrams to illustrate the key themes arising from the research and the tensions within Hip Hop culture in this context that were extracted from the data sets. A number of these working process diagrams are included at Appendix A. Producing diagrammatic representations functioned as a heuristic analytical device (Huberman and Miles 1994) allowing me to more easily read some of the relationships between different parts of the data (Mason 2002). This also helped where different sources had produced different formats of data findings for example drawing together findings from field notes and from interview transcripts. This process entailed part of the progression from coding to interpretation of the data in facilitating the retrieval of the data from its codes to re-illustrate it by each code diagrammatically (Huberman and Miles 1994).

3.8 Presentation of the data

The main chapters of this thesis containing discussion of the data analysis are organised to explore the place of cultural democracy in relation to Hip Hop in different contexts. The first discussion chapter *Exploring the Landscape* discusses the key drivers to practice that influence artist engagement in Hip Hop in different contexts and the impact these drivers have on their modes of practice. The second main chapter *Identifying Challenges* discusses the ways that institutional conditions

shape the practice of Hip Hop in different contexts to challenge Hip Hop's values and status as a resistant practice. The third discussion chapter *Creating agency* explores the ways that artists working in commercial and externally commissioned Hip Hop contexts are responding to the challenges discussed in the previous chapter. The final chapter *Towards a Framework for Cultural Democracy* then illuminates ways that the conditions for cultural democracy in relation to Hip Hop in an applied arts context may be productively encouraged and refined beyond current practice.

The style in which the main findings from this research are communicated and presented aims to take into account Fetterman's (2010) and Chang's (2006) caution regarding the presence of the ethnographer in the final written communication of the research. Fetterman warns that in describing a culture, the focus should be on the topic in hand, rather than the omnipresence of the ethnographer felt through the domination of their signature through every part of the writing. This was a challenging phenomenon to reconcile due to the auto-ethnographic component of the research. In this sense I needed a writing approach that would satisfy both an ethnography of cultural democracy in Hip Hop culture, and also a degree of auto-ethnographic reflection and a reflexive component (Mason 2002) in the interpretive reading of the data. In response to this I have endeavoured to focus the presentation of the data findings on the topic in hand and included direct quotation where possible to reflect the voices of the practitioners and members of the culture to the greatest degree.

A supplementary method for communicating insights and concepts identified through the analysis of data in this thesis involves what Fetterman (2010) refers to as the use of literature in making effective the science of the ethnographer. Use of this method of writing served the dual purpose of creating a quasi-separate space where my

presence as auto-ethnographer may be felt without compromising the integrity of the ethnography and also contributed to the concise and effective communication of key messages, concepts and insights from the research to the reader. Fetterman uses the examples of Shakespeare and Ibsen to illustrate how the ethnographer may utilise their word-craft to communicate data findings through parallels in narrative subject as well as the use of metaphor, simile and irony to describe a moment, a concept or a scenario to its fullest (2010: 129).

Refracting Fetterman's concept through a Hip Hop lens, this thesis adopts this method of presenting writing of findings through literature, but more appropriately to this study it uses Hip Hop lyrics to achieve this goal. Throughout this thesis Hip Hop lyrics are included as a means of using the narrative of human drama and social observation contained in them to represent concepts, ideas and findings arising from the analysis of data. The lyrics – my own, written during the analysis phase of research for precisely the purposes outlined above – are distributed so as to summarise, expand or condense key insights from the research findings

4. Discussion

NWA STATE THE STRUGGLE WE'RE LIVING WITH
TO EXPRESS OURSELVES GREATLY WITH FULL CAPABILITIES
IMAGINATION IS LIMITLESS BUT BASICALLY PRIMITIVE
IF OUR CHOICES IN THE STATE OF AFFAIRS ARE ALL SYNONYMS
GET IN WHERE WE FIT IN AND LIVE WITH IT
WE'VE CREATED A CREATIVE DISSONANCE
AN INDIFFERENCE, TO SPACES FOR CITIZENS
TO SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER BUT WHO'S REALLY LISTENING?
DEAD PREZ SPOKE THE TRUTH, ITS BIGGER THAN HIP HOP
THERE'S STILL FIRE IN THE BOOTH BUT THE MOVEMENT'S BEEN RIPPED OFF
TIME'S TICK TOCKED
NOW WE FINDING THE STYLE'S MARKED BY MARKETING BIG SHOTS
THE FIGHT'S STILL ALIVE, FIND IT IN THE SPACE
WHERE WRITING AND CIPHERS AND BREAKIN TAKE PLACE
COVERT OPERATIONS GUERRILLA TACTICS
LET'S SPEAK ON RESISTANCE AND DISTANCE AND GANGSTERS
LET'S TUNNEL THE UNDERGROUND OUT LET'S TALK CONSCIENCE
LET'S TALK COMMERCE AND LAUGHTER
HIJACKS AND FIGHTS BACK, BEFORE WHAT COMES AFTER

4.1 Introduction

The processes of practice outlined in the final section of the literature review are re-presented as something of a taxonomy of conceptual tactics for critical engagement.

This taxonomical approach has been deliberate. In order to consider the Hip Hop *modus operandi* in terms of resistance, dissent and distancing it is useful to think individually of the critically engaged acts that can facilitate these conditions (see also Appendix A 7.1.3 for a working process diagram illustrating this taxonomy). The range of conceptual Hip Hop tactics drawn out within the literature review are to be received as an exploration of the potential arsenal within Hip Hop's possession for encouraging some of the values of cultural democracy. In short, they are presented as an idealistic representation of the potential capacity for cultural empowerment of Hip Hop practice.

The research found that in practice the use of these tactics is dependent on the context within which they are mobilised. It is useful at a theoretical level to consider the features of Hip Hop processes of practice as a taxonomy of tactics in the context of Hip Hop's relationship with cultural democracy. If encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy involves creating and preserving decentred spaces for the articulation of engaged citizenship and identifying spaces through which alternative social discourses may be constructed, the Hip Hop tactics of operation presented above may be deployed as means to achieve these aims. On a meta-level the practice of Hip Hop can therefore be positioned as a practice that is informing the discourse of cultural pluralism, re-appropriation, the public as agent-not-object and the deconstruction of cultural space to allow equality of access by those excluded from art. In this way it can be conceived of as a space for cultural democracy as critical practice. For Looseley (2005) it is exactly the "wind of aesthetic and cultural change blowing in...from Graffiti, rap and other urban or street arts" (p.154) that is informing this discourse.

Through the course of this research examples were identified where disruptive tactics of resistance, rupture, dissent and the reclamation/creation of decentred space occur as a means of empowerment (cultural agency and autonomy) and critical engagement through Hip Hop practice. The research finds that contextually, geographically and temporally these tactics are/have been applied very differently. Throughout the history of Hip Hop these tactics have been employed to differing degrees. Similarly, in different places and spaces the deployment of these tactics has waxed and waned depending on the political and social environment surrounding the individual Hip Hop practitioner. More broadly the blend of social, economic and political factors that contribute towards the development of a Hip Hop culture in any given context also impact how, and if, these tactics are deployed.

In the context of Hip Hop used in applied arts settings for the purposes of socially engaged arts participation (i.e. Hip Hop arts work with youth or community groups) the research demonstrated that many of the tactics for resistance operational in Hip Hop within other settings do not feature in the ways that artists work in this setting.

This data analysis discusses where spaces might exist for the deployment of these tactics and how they are (or are not) differently deployed in the different contexts that Hip Hop finds itself operating within. Many of the Hip Hop tactics and processes of practice discussed within the literature review are dependent on the organic, everyday participatory nature of Hip Hop. The notion of an autonomous space for critical engagement and site of alternative discourse formulation for example becomes a more challenging concept when Hip Hop is transposed into an official institutionalised space such as a school or community centre or in a commercial environment. The degree to which conceptual Hip Hop tactics for resistance and distancing are deployed and the degree of conscious thought that accompanies such

deployment whether making geographical, spatial, temporal or contextual comparisons all have in common their relationship to the dynamics of the structures of power that surround participants.

This analysis therefore explores what the relationship between Hip Hop and cultural democracy is within different, but interrelated contexts as part of the wider Hip Hop eco-system. It focusses on where the spaces for cultural democracy may exist within these contexts. It then goes on to suggest the ways that the systemic conditions impacting upon Hip Hop in its different contexts are being challenged in the attempt to work towards the deployment of Hip Hop as a productive framework for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy.

4.2 Exploring the landscape: Hip Hop in different contexts

Where this discussion focusses on Hip Hop produced for commercial ends, it refers to work streams that artists are engaged in for profit making purposes. It refers to workstreams that are self-catalysed and do not have a socially engaged or externally publicly commissioned dimension (though as we shall see in the following section, there is often a complex web of factors playing a role in any one artist's motivation to practice). The research identified a greater number of spaces of potential, and challenges faced by artists, to encourage the conditions for cultural democracy through Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work. However, it is important where relevant to discuss Hip Hop as a commercial endeavour because a number of the artists I interviewed were involved in commercial Hip Hop work streams, and more broadly, because of Hip Hop's prevalence within the commercial world as a commodified product.

The types of commercial endeavours the artists I observed and interviewed were engaged in included paid live music gigging, independent record label ownership and independent label releases, featuring in paid rap battle leagues and working as self-employed promoters putting on Hip Hop events. During the course of this research there were a number of instances where I observed artists utilising a number of the tactics outlined in the literature review to challenge the systemic conditions that were imposed upon their work and to challenge pre-existing notions of cultural value and similarly a number of ways that the commercialisation of Hip Hop has shaped notions of Hip Hop practice in the everyday, and the externally commissioned, socially engaged contexts.

Where the following discussion refers to everyday, organic participation in Hip Hop it is referring to grassroots level engagement in Hip Hop practice and culture that is not for commercial ends or a result of externally commissioned work. In other words, everyday grassroots engagement in Hip Hop is Hip Hop practice and culture that is produced, consumed and participated in by individuals or groups for the purposes of self-fulfilment and is entered into without a high degree of external facilitation by people on their own terms. The types of grassroots activities that those I observed and interviewed were engaged in extended to unpaid performances, ciphers and jams either in private or public spaces (both rapping and breakdancing), music production in the home, Graffiti sessions and unpaid voluntary work with community led Hip Hop organisations.

Where this discussion refers to Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work it is used to denote the idea of Hip Hop as an instrumental methodology, to refer to Hip Hop practice deployed in an educational, community or therapeutic context to meet certain social objectives associated with the groups it

works to engage in that setting. Here the adopted definition of socially engaged arts is that of Sophie Hope (2011) who draws on various conceptualisations²² to describe arts work “often characterised by artist-led, non-object-based encounters, performances and collaborations with others outside the gallery, has its roots in conceptual, performance and community arts, radical theatre, critical pedagogy and community activism.” (p.181). In short, I refer to arts work that is artist-led but engages people and usually happens outside of traditional arts institutions. The addition of ‘externally commissioned’ as a point of clarity refers to arts projects that are catalysed and funded through a source external to the artist leading them.

In many ways the externally commissioned, socially engaged arts project sits in opposition to ‘community arts’ – as something rooted in the local that aims to pursue social justice through collective action - despite this sort of arts work commonly being described as such. The term ‘community arts’ (through Hip Hop) was frequently cited by the artists I spoke with as a term for the work they did, however, almost exclusively the projects were externally commissioned and interestingly where artists were involved in community catalysed or led projects, the facilitators stated that they experienced challenges and most often rejection from public sector funding sources instead gaining support for their projects from commercial or charitable organisations. In the case of Hip Hop socially engaged, externally commissioned arts in the UK, projects are commonly funded directly or indirectly through local councils, schools or youth services, through third sector organisations or directly or

22 by Dickson 1995, Matarasso 1997, Royal College of Art 2000, Albert 2003, Doherty 2004, Bishop 2006a&b, Butler & Reiss 2007 and Suchin 2007

indirectly via national funding bodies i.e. the Arts Council England or National Lottery fund.

Hope (2011) offers an argument that reinforces the potential of focussing on externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work and its relationship to cultural democracy. She describes the opportunity presented by utilising creative practice as a framework for cultural democracy through which to investigate the socially engaged arts commission explaining;

It [cultural democracy] implies more complex, self-directed interruptions that contest predefined parameters and frameworks of commissioned art. As reclaimed emancipated reflections and actions, cultural democracy can offer a space for drawing attention to the inherent problems of an industry that constructs scenarios of empowered participation through 'consensual collaboration' but often leaves power-relations intact. (p.9)

This highlights the importance of asking where are the examples of the deployment of the tactics for resistance, disruption and reclaiming decentred space that Hip Hop claims within this work? The following discussion sections therefore give significant attention to the context of Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work as a context where practitioners are claiming an ethos of empowerment and social responsibility. The discussion of Hip Hop in commercial and organic, grassroots contexts is included where relevant and where these contexts impact upon each other.

Whilst all acts of Hip Hop can be argued to be political, in some circumstances the reclamation of public space through Hip Hop is an overtly political act. At other times and in other spaces and places this has been less deliberate. It cannot be said that a group of school children participating in an introductory breakdance workshop facilitated inside their school by a local artist deploys tactics for resistance in the same way as rival gangs meeting on the streets in the 1970s to battle through the

medium of breakdance. It cannot be claimed that every Hip Hop event strives for the harmonising of disparate communities in the same way that early Bronx block parties did, or indeed that the social narrative of racial unity contained in Arrested Development's early tracks or the racial politics and authoritarian challenge found in NWA's *F**k the Police* is reproduced in all Hip Hop music. In some cases, the use of Hip Hop as a means of constructing alternative social discourses has been more or less explicit depending on the motivations of the participant and the social context within which they operate. The next section therefore discusses the various drivers to practice that motivate the artists I interviewed.

4.2.1 Drivers to practice

The interview data showed that the motivations driving artists' engagement in Hip Hop within different contexts are varied, complex and often interrelated. The spectrum of motivations spanning amateur self-fulfilment to professional justification are significant in exploring the relationship between cultural democracy and Hip Hop. Artists' references to amateur self-fulfilment resonate strongly with the idea of cultural democracy, however motivations relating to professional justification speak to very different perceptions of cultural value. A number of the artists I interviewed consider both of these motivations to form part of their drive to practice, which signifies something of the complexity of the relationship between Hip Hop and cultural democracy in its many operative contexts.

The artists I interviewed described their motivations to practice as ranging broadly from commercial gain, to self-fulfilment, to an altruistic desire to support and uplift communities and to pass on knowledge about Hip Hop to others. Most commonly artists listed an interrelated web of factors as bearing an influence on their reasons for

engaging in different Hip Hop contexts. These varied depending on socio-cultural conditions, financial conditions, the systemic conditions surrounding their work, as well as temporal factors.

It was evident that the motivational drivers to practice amongst artists were not a fixed conception but were constantly in flux, and at times mutually competing factors made up the fabric of their motivation to practice. For example, one artist I interviewed began practicing Breakdancing in his teens for self-fulfilment and after a number of years he started to volunteer as a teacher within a community breakdancing group. He is now a qualified youth worker and works in a paid capacity delivering youth-targeted Breakdancing workshops.

Another individual explained his role as a self-employed Hip Hop event promoter (which was the source of income he depended on for a living) but described himself as playing a role in offering support slots within the events he produced for local emerging and new artists to give them support in developing their reputation and their fan base. This promoter was also concurrently actively involved in local volunteer and charity based Hip Hop work. Another artist described his initial engagement with Hip Hop as being for self-fulfilment, with his focus turning to altruistic, community support drivers to practice as he matured.

My own engagement with Hip Hop is similarly the result of a range of motivational drivers. I began practicing Hip Hop for self-fulfilment in my teens. This has remained my primary driver for engagement with Hip Hop despite being involved in paid gig work (for which my motivation was to be able to afford to release my own music and therefore increase my exposure as an artist and continue to practice), professional paid song writing (for which my motivation was purely financial), ad hoc Hip Hop workshops (for which my motivation was financial) and community led Hip Hop

organisation voluntary work (for which my motivation was altruistic and focussed on the aim of working to develop, share and preserve Hip Hop culture).

For Bloustein (2007) the skills that individuals acquire through participation in popular culture practices such as Hip Hop incorporate the possibility of both financial gain, power *and* self-fulfilment and have high cultural value because of this. Most of the artists I interviewed cited self-fulfilment as the foundational and original driver of their practice, however for many, especially those involved in executing Hip Hop work in communities and with public groups, community support and the passing on of knowledge about Hip Hop culture to a younger generation was described as playing a significant role in the reasons for their work. Whilst there was one artist who described commercial and reputational gain as a primary driver to practice, for a larger number of those interviewed, a desire for self-fulfilment underpinned their engagement, with commercial gain developing at a later point in their practice as an influencing factor that they hoped would provide them with the financial security to be able to continue their practice for the purposes of self-fulfilment.

Here 'self-fulfilment' is used as an umbrella term to categorise a number of specific benefits that the artists I interviewed perceived themselves to gain from engagement in Hip Hop practice. These included fostering a sense of belonging to a group or a community, developing skills in a specific craft (on more than one occasion the craftsmanship motivation was likened to the practice of a martial art, where one could 'train' to become masterful in a practice), a pleasant way to pass leisure time, a creative (and in some cases cathartic) way to express oneself and/or to speak about one's thoughts and feelings, as well as the development of a reputation and in turn the gaining of respect and positive recognition from others within the Hip Hop community.

Those who were involved in Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work similarly cited a number of drivers to practice that ranged from the altruistic to the commercial and self-fulfilment. Most of the artists working in this context stated that their primary drivers to practice were to help communities, the passing on of Hip Hop knowledge and encouraging others to celebrate the culture. A small number cited the financial support this type of work offered them as a key driver, in order that they might maintain a career in the creative practice that they enjoyed, so that they could continue to practice Hip Hop for self-fulfilment and/or pursue a career in Hip Hop as a commercial endeavour.

For a number of the artists I interviewed, working through Hip Hop in the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged arts was an interest that had developed over time, growing from what was an initial driver for self-fulfilment through engaging in the practice. Similarly, those seeking commercial gain through their practice had mostly initially engaged in the practice for the purposes of self-fulfilment. This suggests a temporal aspect to the drivers to practice that artists experience.

On further probing it was apparent that the artists' ages and the life stages play a significant role in their drivers to practice. Where most cited self-fulfilment as their initial driver to practice, as artists described growing up through their engagement with Hip Hop, they stated that increasing financial responsibility and a decrease in available leisure time due to family caring commitments and other work responsibilities had shaped their drivers to practice. This re-shaping has effected in a number of artists pursuing financial remuneration working either through the commercial context and/or the externally commissioned arts work context. For Eikhof and Haunschild (2007) "When artistic production is professionalised, artistic

practices are connected to whatever kind of market and therefore comparisons and measurements become inevitable. Accumulation of cultural capital, driven by artistic logics, and accumulation of economic capital, driven by economic logics, become intertwined” (p.532). It has become the norm for a significant number of artists to operate concurrently within the various contexts (e.g. commercial, externally commissioned) in order to make a living. As ‘forced cultural entrepreneurs’ (Speers 2016) Hip Hop artists are proficient at capitalising on the benefits they receive through their practice. Most often these were cited by the artists as increased income, time and resources as well as the opportunity to fulfil what they saw as part of Hip Hop’s championing aim to pass on wisdom regarding what they knew of the culture of Hip Hop. Whilst the boundaries between these realms are porous and bear an impact on each other, the modes of operation within each can differ significantly and, in some cases, contradict each other. For example, in a recent Hip Hop artist seminar panel on ‘rap role models’ in Bristol I was asked to reflect on the ‘duty’ of Hip Hop to present an inclusive and positive influence on communities and young people (Russell, Kennaby, Evans and Little 2018). I explained that whilst I was involved in a number of community focussed Hip Hop endeavours, in my own Hip Hop practice that I engage in for self-pleasure I did not feel the need to present a positive or aspirational example to others, and because I saw this as my own practice for myself, I resented the idea that anyone would expect me too, instead I reserved the right to express exactly what I wanted to in the way I wanted to.

The above examples highlight something of the tension artists are exposed to in the various contexts that comprise their working environment. This tension forces the artist to enter into a process of negotiation between the terms of their practice in each context and notions of authenticity in relation to their identity as an artist. Eikhof and

Haunschild's (2007) Bourdieusian analysis of the logics driving engagement in creative production finds that the interrelationship between artistic and economic logics mean that "in order to justify their actions to themselves and to significant others, artists need to constantly reconstruct their understanding of art and re-relate their contribution to it" (p.532). This was evident in the conversations I had with artists about their practice. It illustrates the complexity of the tension between the idea of Hip Hop as a practice through which cultural freedom and individual self-expression can be encouraged, and also a conduit for community engagement that has come to represent a responsibility that precedes socially engaged arts work. Further complexity is layered upon this tension through external commissioning and the conditions that accompany such official sanctioning of arts work. The tensions between the systemic conditions imposed upon artists operating in different contexts and the personal politics motivating the artists demonstrate the complexity of the artist's position within the Hip Hop eco-system and the complexity of Hip Hop's relationship to the idea of cultural democracy.

The web of factors motivating artists to practice in different contexts demonstrate that it is not as simple as to say that involvement in socially engaged, externally commissioned work or in grassroots practice results in, or is driven by the encouragement of cultural democracy. Nor is it so straightforward as to be able to assert that Hip Hop reflects the idea of pluralism of cultural value systems when it is clear that professional self-justification implies a determined hierarchy of cultural value.

Almost all the artists interviewed who worked through Hip Hop with community or public groups also explained that as they had grown older, they had developed an increasing motivation to help others and to teach others through the medium of Hip

Hop. This, they described variously as a desire to pass on knowledge about what they perceived to be Hip Hop's values and its history. They endeavoured to share the values of Hip Hop culture with younger generations, and to encourage and support others in discovering their voice through Hip Hop. Whether this altruistic motivation exists as a core ethic or plays a role within a larger, more complex web of professional self-justification factors is difficult to ascertain. Certainly, the artists perceived themselves to be labouring under an altruistic premise. Spee Six Nine, a Glasgow based MC told me "100% of the time it [my Hip Hop work with public groups] is about trying to help/be involved in the community". This reoccurring theme of the significance of 'community' and the role it plays in the work artists undertake is explored in more detail in the following section.

4.2.2 Hip Hop and 'community'

The literature review highlighted the contentious involvement of the term 'community' in relation to notions of cultural democracy by foregrounding the tension between definitions of cultural democracy as dependent on collective social action (Matarasso 2013) and 'community empowerment' (Braden 1976, Kelly 1984, 1985, Bennett in Jeffers and Moriarty 2017). Critiques of cultural democracy based on the premise that its current iterations are essentially instrumental and individualistic (Matarasso 2018, Kelly and Hope 2018) illustrate the need to explore the relationship between Hip Hop and community in this respect. This is not least because the term 'community' arose so frequently as a driver to practice in the conversations I had with Hip Hop artists working in the socially engaged, externally commissioned arts context as both a driving motivation for their work and as Hip Hop's historical 'purpose'. Before embarking on a discussion of the development and

increasing professionalisation of Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work it is therefore important to note the relationship between Hip Hop and the notion of community.

Hip Hop has a historically pervasive association with notions of community and this, and shifts in the definitions of community as referenced within Hip Hop culture over the years, bear influence on both the justification for employing Hip Hop as a vehicle for commissioned, socially engaged arts work as well as the characteristics of such work and the methodologies that underlie the work. The term community features prominently within the discourse of Hip Hop and is used to represent different aspects or categorisations of communities depending on the context and specifics of its usage. Scholars and those writing on the subject of Hip Hop commonly refer to the 'Hip Hop community' to signify those who participate in Hip Hop culture and those actively involved in the cultural practice of Hip Hop (Akom 2009). As McLeod (1999) points out, the Hip Hop community (meaning those involved with Hip Hop culture) is neither homogenous nor can it be classified as one community but rather a collection of scenes and communities associated through a broadly similar set of practices and overarching cultural identity. For McLeod these are distinguished by differing political, social, generational and spatial articulations of identity.

The term community is employed pervasively to group together those involved in the cultural practice of Hip Hop. However, community in the traditional sense - to mean a place-based community (Giddens 1984) or to use Su Braden's definition of community in relation to community arts "a neighbourhood defined by the recognition of the people within it of common environmental and economic conditions" (1978: xvi) - also has an important, historical association with Hip Hop. This association is linked to both spatial identity (e.g. McLeod 1999, Forman 2002)

and also the originally envisioned potential of Hip Hop as a vehicle for unifying, transforming and uplifting communities (e.g. Rose 2008:x). As KRS One infamously stated in the track *Hip Hop* (Koch Records 2008) “we need unity in the community”. Though Hip Hop originally emerged from geographic communities, it is now more accurate to say that it exists within communities of interest or ‘communities of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991).

The importance of the link between Hip Hop and notions of community is key to understanding its roots as a voice-finding/discovering practice (something that was discussed by a number of interview participants) and through its framing as a ‘revolutionary cultural force’ (Asante 2008: 8). It is also key to understanding the prevalence of its instrumental use in the socially engaged, externally commissioned arts context. This understanding was evident in the research findings. Artists’ understandings of the import of community and localised place within Hip Hop came to the fore during interviews;

The culture was born out of communities which had basically been subjugated by the ruling class, and had their cultural identities dragged through the mud. Holding block parties for local people to come together at, and also compete at, and improve their skills at their chosen art form: this mentality has pervaded Hip Hop to this day. It's why you get people shouting out the area they're from on the mic, or being proud when an MC from their area gets successful. (Daddy Abe, MC)

As Daddy Abe describes above, the culture came from within communities, the marginalisation of those communities and Hip Hop’s role as a transcendental vehicle for those communities has resulted in the need for members of Hip Hop culture to uphold and celebrate a continued association with the notion of ‘community’. This

reflects McLeod (1999) who writes, in describing what authenticity²³ means in Hip Hop, that “For many, keepin’ it real means not disassociating oneself from the community from which one came – the street. Moreover, it means emphasizing one’s ties to the community (which partially explains why so many Hip-hop artists mention the name of their neighbourhood in their songs)” (p.142). Similarly, Forman (2002) develops this conceptualisation of the importance of Hip Hop’s relationship with localisation and place. Speaking on the place of community within USA Hip Hop he states that

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 emphasis on support, nurture and community co-exists with the grim representations that generally cohere in the images and discourses of ghetto life. (p.181).

From these examples of the various common usages of the term community and what it means within the discourse of Hip Hop, we can ascertain something of its importance as part of the fabric of Hip Hop identity construction and its *modus operandi* more generally.

The Hip Hop artists interviewed as part of this study that worked in externally commissioned contexts and in commercial contexts overwhelmingly expressed the idea of community as being fundamental to Hip Hop. This was expressed in two main conceptualisations. The first was the common trope of stating that Hip Hop came

23 The notion of ‘authenticity’ in Hip Hop is an expansive and intricate conceptualisation. This thesis does not attempt to explore this idea in detail but rather invokes this wider debate to contextualise the conceptualisations of community amongst the Hip Hop artists I interviewed. For a more in-depth discussion on notions of authenticity in Hip Hop see McLeod (1999), Speers (2014), Pennycook (2007), and for authenticity in popular music more generally see Barker and Taylor (2007).

from the community, meaning in this context that it originated at grassroots level and developed from the bottom up. The second conceptualisation of the relationship between Hip Hop and community was its role as a vehicle for community building and transformation through voice-finding, alternative political and social discourse construction and the empowerment of its subscribers and an emphasis on collectivism and collaboration. Wigz told me “Hip Hop to me is about collaborating and also giving a voice to the often unheard.” In this second conceptualisation of community in Hip Hop artists are referring to the capacity of Hip Hop to act as a force in fostering a ‘sense of community’ (Sarason 1974, McMillan and Chavis 1986) through recognising and capitalising on the breadth of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities of ‘socially marginalized communities’ (Yosso 2005) and its capacity for invigorating collective social action/activism (Clay 2012). In agreement with this sentiment Trend (1997) states that popular music cultures such as Hip Hop can “serve as a vehicle to amplify protest and consolidate community on deeper levels” (p.168).

Within the sample of artists I interviewed, the data findings suggest that the differing notions of the relationship between Hip Hop and community reflect the artists’ understandings of Hip Hop within different decades of its evolution and can be mapped as such. The pioneer and second wave artists I spoke to and interviewed talked about the role of Hip Hop as being a force for supporting and uplifting communities. King Monk, a Graffiti artist and member of the Universal Zulu Nation stated;

From where we came from, we came from those streets we were the disaffected youth so we can channel into the disaffected youth a lot easier and that’s where HH comes from it comes from disaffected communities you know? Hip Hop is from the community, it is community.

Third generation artists demonstrated a similar perception of Hip Hop's intrinsic relationship to community. Bigg Taj, a beatboxer from Glasgow stated;

As we know, Hip Hop culture is about the community, so when I hear 'Hip Hop state of mind' I think of someone thinking of spreading a positive message either through music, community work or any other platform. People coming together and having a jam, having a good time together. That's community, that's Hip Hop.

Daddy Abe, an MC and producer echoed this sentiment explaining that he believed being community minded was a central tenet of the Hip Hop mind set. This was also reflected in four other Hip Hop artists' responses to being asked what they thought constituted a Hip Hop mind set. Klonism, a Graffiti artist from Leeds (now based in Mexico) stated that he viewed Hip Hop as having a fundamentally socially engaging community role, and that teaching Hip Hop in the community functioned as a means of fulfilling this aim.

The research found a more distinct binary perception about the role of community between interview participants who were younger. On one hand, a number of these artists articulated many of the same perceptions that Hip Hop was fundamentally connected to community and saw part of their role as preserving this connection. Many of the artists I interviewed saw Hip Hop as lending itself to a natural form of community development work. In contrast to this, a number of other younger participants saw Hip Hop today as being somewhat divorced from its historical context and with that, from the sense of closeness to community that it once possessed. These artists saw the quality of reinvention as a foundational part of the culture, and as such perceived Hip Hop to have moved away from notions of community in its developmental trajectory. They instead expounded individualism in the name of innovation and cultural freedom as a guiding tenet with commercial pursuit taking a more central role for them in their practice.

Many of those from the pioneer and second wave generation were old enough to remember unofficial block parties, jams and community events from the early years of Hip Hop both in the USA and the UK, and for them the role of Hip Hop as intrinsically connected to community represented an organic feature of Hip Hop's ascendance through grassroots occupation of spaces, community events and participation. The older generation viewed Hip Hop's link with community through a far less preservative lens, though it could be said that their views were articulated with a dose of nostalgia unavailable to younger generations. It was the second and sometimes third wave generations of Hip Hop artists whose perceived connection between Hip Hop and community possessed more of a preservative aim. This perception is suggestive of a more official art form than a creative practice that resonates with the notion of cultural democracy. Whilst the older generations defined Hip Hop in far looser terms that focussed on the experimental and innovative roots of Hip Hop's hybridity²⁴ as an art form, second and third wave generations are old enough to remember Hip Hop's 'golden era' (Green 2003) of 'back in the day' innovation and quality (Speers 2014) but, as discussed in the history of Hip Hop commercialisation in the literature review, the Hip Hop culture that has informed the majority of their experience has been a far less organic and community centred, and far more commercialised entity²⁵.

24 Both in the sense of its existence as a 'remix culture' (Markham 2009) and the methods it employs, and also in diasporised terms as an expression of Black culture which has been, as Hutnyk (2005) explains enthusiastically affirmed by the process of capitalisation "the hybrid creativity of black style is affirmed (and it is affirmed also by the market, by the entrepreneurs who want to cash in), and expressions of enthusiasm for this creative change are obvious" (2005: 92).

25 see Rose 2008 for an in depth discussion on the dynamics of this historical trajectory.

The pioneer and sometimes second generations have lived through a greater number of transformations or iterations of Hip Hop and were largely at peace with the notion that Hip Hop would persist in its relationship with community, albeit in different forms depending on its specific iteration at any given time. Younger artists I interviewed were generally not so secure in their confidence of Hip Hop to retain its connection to grassroots and some viewed part of their role as preserving this connection, whilst others claimed an intentional disassociation from Hip Hop history, seeing the community values espoused by older generations as out of date and no longer relevant. The third wave generation (and in some cases the second wave) hold a unique position straddling two different iterations of Hip Hop lineage. On the one hand this generation are old enough to feel a connection to the origins of the culture and the definitions of the culture upheld by the pioneer generation, whereas on the other hand their experiences of Hip Hop culture have been largely rooted in the era of mass commercialisation and commodification of Hip Hop, and the complexity of their experience having a footing in each of these worlds is demonstrated in the ways they negotiate their definition of the culture and their socially engaged work.

Closeness to 'community' and its relationship to Hip Hop can therefore be positioned as one of the currencies with which Hip Hop artists negotiate their temporal identities and position themselves through their work. In other words, for older artists a claim to community closeness and pride in Hip Hop history and knowledge functions as a claim to authenticity within Hip Hop culture and a technique to distance oneself from the commercially commodified realm of Hip Hop.

For the younger artists I interviewed their relationship with Hip Hop was observably one that functioned within the context of commercialisation of the art form. One second wave interview participant stated that he saw Hip Hop community work as a

means of “bridging the gap between two generations of Hip Hop culture” (interview with Daddy Abe). The focus on Hip Hop’s link with community amongst the younger generations was in some ways at odds with the perceptions that older artists held about their descendent generations. Interview participants from the older generations demonstrated a perception that the younger generations were primarily concerned with financial gain and less concerned with community support through Hip Hop. In reality, some of the younger generation of artists doing Hip Hop community work continue to value the connection between community and Hip Hop though there was a recognition amongst the younger artists that today we operate in a complex and altered political and economic landscape to that of Hip Hop’s early years;

Everyone has to make their money, so I think the primary driver of community workshops is to stay as close as you can to the art and work as little as possible, and so you’re doing good work it doesn’t feel like work so much when you’re doing it. And the generation I was talking about they are probably a pre-Thatcher generation, so it probably comes hand in hand with your work is your investment in the community so they’ll be from that school where it goes hand in hand as opposed to now where it’s like what governments paying for that. So then I think the driving force a lot more was like, care of how kids are growing up, payment was second. The pay was shit anyway. So here now in an individualised community it’s how to serve self-interest whilst not negating others interests, it’s not that you’re working against others’ interests, it would be impossible to try do it in the old school way, if you have primarily community interest it’s not sustainable, it’s impossible to be altruistic like that. (interview with Ste Allen)

The understanding amongst Hip Hop artists working in ‘communities’ reflected a complex process of negotiating between the idea of upholding and paying respect to the organic, grassroots historical legacy that characterised the emergence of Hip Hop, whilst also navigating the issue of authenticity within the contemporary landscape of an altered sense of what constitutes the term community and the need to sustain a living through their practice.

A large proportion of the artists interviewed highlighted a ‘special’ capacity for Hip Hop to engage communities. They spoke of community in the geographic sense as in

‘communities of place’ (Kemmis 1992) and also at times in relation to ‘communities of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991), or ‘communities of circumstance’ (Marsh 1999). Artists referred mostly to communities of place – and usually economically deprived, disparate communities - when they spoke about the traditional role of Hip Hop in transforming and unifying communities. However, in the context of the socially engaged arts work they undertook they were far more frequently delivering provision to communities of circumstance. The artists mapped the same logic of the impact of Hip Hop in traditional, place based communities across to their work with communities of circumstance. This is interesting given the critical discussion within the literature review of the changing nature of the notion of community over the last 30 years and the suggestion that community does not necessarily exist as a prerequisite characteristic of cultural democracy. This is despite descriptions of Hip Hop that position it as the very embodiment of post-modern individualism (for example Matarasso’s reference to Graffiti artist Banksy’s work as “cynical and essentially individual” 2013: 220). In this way a tension within Hip Hop is evidenced; between Hip Hop as an essentially individualistic practice, and also as a practice tied to perceptions of community closeness and dependency.

This mapping of logic across different types of communities raised challenges for the externally commissioned, socially engaged practitioners in their work, such as levels of prior engagement and understanding of Hip Hop’s history amongst participants. However, the continued emphasis these artists placed on the importance of the ‘localised’ is significant. Though Hip Hop continues to transcend its “specific concrete expressive locations (Hadley and Yancy (2012: xxvi) retaining a sense of the localised is part of the apparatus of Hip Hop’s ontological functioning; “Localization forces us to contend with the ‘on-the-ground’ realities, the specific ethnographic

contexts, and the socio-political arrangement between language use, identity and power” (Samy Alim 2016: 9). It is therefore appropriate that how these artists express the relationship between Hip Hop and community is largely rooted in a context of localisation.

In order to maintain a perceived level of integrity in their work *going into* communities, artists evoked a mixture of Hip Hop’s origins as being intrinsically linked to community transformation and commonly perceived instrumental benefits of the art-form as a means of building confidence and encouraging creative expression as justification. Despite organic involvement in Hip Hop culture today being more reflective of communities of interest mostly the interviews I carried out with practitioners working in socially engaged contexts evidenced reflections on the role of Hip Hop as a tool for empowering geographic communities. Here Hip Hop occupies the role of a vehicle for encouraging a sense of community and also as a vehicle used to challenge how the community is seen or sees themselves. This perception served as an anchor point for identity construction amongst artists working in all the performance contexts that were investigated (grassroots/everyday, commercial and externally commissioned) and functioned as a key way that artists expressed their perceptions of the values they associated with Hip Hop. It is arguably Hip Hop’s closeness to community and its quality as a tool for community empowerment that originally led to it being selected as a medium for deployment in the context of professional, socially engaged, externally commissioned arts work. The following chapter goes on to explore this trajectory in depth and its impact on Hip Hop practice.

4.3 Identifying challenges: problematising Hip Hop's development in different contexts

Benji Reid, a B-Boy (body popper) and now physical theatre director who co-founded the Hip Hop theatre movement of the 1990s in the UK, speaking on the origins of breakdance and its relationship to community explained

It's what you would call social dance, popping, Breakdancing, B-boying, disco dancing, robot, all of these dances were social dances and they were urban social dances. So, I mean it's slightly different, well very different from ballet coz that wasn't social at all. I think all social dances come out of the community.

The idea that now public bodies are commissioning Hip Hop as an instrumental tool for artists *going into communities* is one fraught with debates around authenticity, (dis)-empowerment and agency. In response to these challenging conditions artists are organising their approach to such work by drawing on a mixture of 'cultural and social capital' (Bourdieu 1986), entrepreneurialism and an understanding of the discourse of post-New Labour instrumentalist reasoning to stay afloat in the contemporary landscape of participatory arts. In undertaking this sort of work Hip Hop artists are forced to re-negotiate their identities as professional socially engaged arts practitioners through navigating tensions between the logic and conventions of a Hip Hop *modus operandi*, and that of community arts worker. Spee Six Nine, an MC, told me;

As an artist I am just having fun and making music that I feel at the time so my writing style changes depending on my situation but in the classes and workshops I feel it helps people on certain levels...and use the things I know about writing and making music to try and bring some positivity to people...I have a lot of freedom in my classes but I also have certain guidelines to follow, for example if I am teaching creative writing with a group of young people we have to keep the focus on something that the whole group can be involved in so a lot of the time we use a subject like family or a certain movie that they have all seen so nobody feels left out..

The above passage highlights both the perceived importance of community within externally commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop work, and a pervading aspiration of positivity and inclusion. This aspiration was echoed by a number of artists, with the historical 'peace, love, unity and having fun' (Chang and Watkins 2007) tenets of Hip Hop culture being foregrounded as an under-labouring ethos for the work.

The practice of deploying Hip Hop as vehicle for the socially engaged arts commission can be viewed as an apt choice of creative practice for engaging communities due to the close association it has historically with the idea of community empowerment. Conversely it can be considered a process of co-option of an organic, community-based practice displaced and reinserted according to the agendas of those external to the very types of communities from which it originally emerged and that it originally sought to emancipate. A co-option that, by its very nature, poses a risk to what might remain of the social form of creative expression described above by Benji. The idea that there has been a growing trend in recent years evidenced in the UK of using Hip Hop as an officially sanctioned medium for externally commissioned community arts work is somewhat challenging given the historical conception of Hip Hop as a community-based practice that emerged from within the heart of socially and economically marginalised communities.

4.3.1 The professionalisation of Hip Hop arts work

Older artists I interviewed spoke of pioneering youth work and community group Hip Hop projects that stretched back over the last three decades. However, these early projects were described as ad hoc affairs that began to arise around the same time as the New Labour instrumentalist policy imperative of the late 1990s. King Monk

reflected on the nature of the emergence of Hip Hop as externally commissioned community work saying;

Yeah I would say I'm a pioneer of Graffiti workshops, there wasn't anyone else teaching it at the time. The first time I was asked to it was by a company out in Huddersfield at the time and they said they would pay what my train fare and my sandwich and they'd give me £100 and this was back in the 90s, this was. I think it was 1997 and so of course I took it up it was like £100! Anyway, that was our first commission and so we set the grounds for that...then when Leeds City Council got hold of it the graf workshops exploded, and I gave the work out to a few different people. It gave them a good chance to go out there and something but then you know things changed. Because of the Health & Safety aspect I started to step away from the aerosol aspect of it. It's funny that it all became official.

Far from being a highly calculated manoeuvre on the part of the artists being commissioned, the early days of Hip Hop as socially engaged arts work are described by King Monk and other artists I interviewed as emerging as a hitherto unparalleled opportunity to supplement artists' income by remaining close to the artistic practice they loved. As institutions switched on to the idea that Hip Hop – synonymous with youth culture - could appeal to 'difficult to engage' and 'at risk' groups of young people and that a number of the artists already considered engaging communities as part of their culture the number of these opportunities grew. King Monk also talked about the early tensions prevalent in employing Hip Hop artists to undertake this work saying that as the use of Hip Hop in this context increased artists clamoured for the opportunity to be involved and many wanted a piece of the publicly funded pie to support their income. King Monk's comments suggest that the development of a 'market' for Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned arts work has in turn created a demand from artists wishing to be involved.

Most commonly in the UK the use of Hip Hop in the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged work now takes the form of workshop provision. It is fair to say that, to a lesser extent, the application of Hip Hop has also taken the

form of Hip Hop theatre and numerous Hip Hop activities that are deployed in prison environments and in the form of block party style community celebration days. This raises one of the key tensions that will be drawn out for discussion; between subcultural practice and coercive institutions, and between notions of official and unofficial spaces and cultures.

The increasing 'Hip Hop workshop' trend has provided an additional income stream for artists. It is perceived by the artists I spoke with to have contributed to the acceptance of Hip Hop as an official and positive cultural practice and produced results in terms of a successful method of engaging youth groups through an arts medium that aims to give a voice (or more accurately supports in voice finding or voice discovery²⁶) to those not usually heard. However, the analysis shows that the increasing professionalisation of socially engaged, commissioned Hip Hop arts work has impacted on the nature of its form and attitudinal styling in the applied context. Here Hip Hop finds itself as the officially sanctioned art form propagated for socially engaged arts work.

As with the commercialisation of Hip Hop, the process of becoming officially sanctioned to undertake countercultural work has presented a variety of advantages and disadvantages for the artists in question. It has forced artists into a challenging position as being both responsible for upholding the integrity of Hip Hop as a subcultural practice, gate-keeping the parameters of the cultural cache Hip Hop carries with it and also negotiating a place for Hip Hop within the systemic hegemony

26 The terms 'giving a voice', 'finding a voice' and 'discovering a voice' were used (often interchangeably) by the artists I interviewed.

of various institutions that seek to simultaneously involve and distance themselves from the culture of Hip Hop. In this respect these artists are tasked with navigating the integration of Hip Hop within the institution *and* the synchronous maintenance of its separation from it.

Defined as the appropriation of a relevant stylistic cultural expression that fits the mould as a contemporary version of community arts, the discourse of instrumentalism still pervades much of what artists claim are the advantages of employing Hip Hop as medium for socially engaged arts work. Unity, a Graffiti artist and Writer from Cardiff, offered an insight regarding her experience of Hip Hop community work that responds to this problematisation aligned to the notion of cultural democracy and foregrounding the idea of supporting those who are already engaged in everyday participation in Hip Hop culture;

I quite often get phone calls from youth centres saying oh we want to give our young people a treat or a fun day out and you're not, it's just not, it's a surface thing. So, what I would always try and do is find the people in that community who are already tagging and putting their name up, they're the people who need to be engaged.

Six of the artists interviewed cited an advantage of using Hip Hop as a medium for community arts-based work as being it's capacity to engage people previously disengaged from society thus accepting the problematisation of participation as quasi social fact that Stevenson 2016, Jancovich and Bianchini 2013, and Jancovich 2017 rally against.

Aside from the 'special' capacity of Hip Hop to engage and uplift communities that was cited by interview participants as an advantage of utilising Hip Hop as a vehicle for socially engaged, commissioned arts work, there were two other main advantages that participants frequently referenced. A key trope cited in the interview data in the

advantage of employing Hip Hop as a medium for socially engaged, commissioned work was based in continuing perceptions of its relevance and endurance as a 'cool' practice;

Hip Hop, despite being over 40 years old, is still cool and it reinvents itself again and again, adapting itself to the times, and to different cultures and messages...Using the cultural cache Hip Hop has can be very useful in overcoming barriers. (interview with Testament, MC, Producer, Writer)

Similarly, King Monk (Graffiti Artist) said "it's something that's over 40 years old, it's been around for 43 years and it's still cool and relevant within communities for people now although it[s form] may vary now". Scott Akoz (B-Boy) told me similarly "it's cool, and cool works." Paradoxically the idea that Hip Hop has retained the cultural cache that Testament, Scott and King Monk refer to above is articulated as being part of its capacity for resistance and its status as a subcultural practice. Both of these qualities are, by definition, challenged when Hip Hop is officially sanctioned for use in the context of externally, publicly commissioned arts work.

The reoccurrence of the term 'cool' within so many artist interviews in relation to what makes Hip Hop an appropriate vehicle for socially engaged arts work is intended to infer its continuation as a subcultural practice and its street status. However, Frank's (1998) text *The Conquest of Cool* positions the role of 'hip consumerism' as the co-option of subcultural, 'hip' activities and cultural expressions as a form through which the everyday falseness of consumer oppressions are held up as fake in order to perpetuate the process of consumption. In other words, by adopting the language and imageries of the subcultural within the language of mainstream media and advertising, the 'cool' is hijacked to function as just another extension of encouragement towards increased consumption. If Frank's position is adopted, then the 'cool' to which these artists refer is no longer part of the subcultural cache that

Hip Hop once was, but rather a way of disguising a commercially commodified product by positioning it in opposition to other commercially commodified products. In this way, Hip Hop's perceived 'cool' presents a tension between subcultural authenticity and mainstream consumerism that these artists are employing to justify their work within communities.

The other commonly cited reason that Hip Hop was felt to be an especially suitable vehicle for socially engaged, commissioned work centred around a sense of common identity that artists felt with the groups of participants they were often employed to work with and the continued credibility of Hip Hop as a sub-cultural, oppositional practice. A professed sense of identification and commonality between Hip Hop artists and the 'disaffected' communities (frequently young people) it is often employed to engage with is evidenced as a key factor in the perceived continuing advantages of using Hip Hop artists to facilitate externally commissioned, socially engaged work.

King Monk told me that;

What it is, is that we connect with those young people because we are those young people. From where we came from, we came from those streets, we were the disaffected youth so we can channel into the disaffected youth a lot easier and that's where Hip Hop comes from it comes from disaffected communities you know?

This sentiment is echoed in Forman (2013), who speaking on the phenomenon of 'Hood work'²⁷ in the USA highlights the "strong connective links between 'Hood Workers and the institutionally defined "problem kids" or so-called "at risk" youth"

²⁷ To mean youth work for the purposes of social transformation and political conscientisation in economically deprived localisations framed through the discourse of Hip Hop.

(p.249). Similarly, Wigz (Graffiti Artist) told me that “my workshops are mainly in deprived areas working with young people. That’s where Graffiti came from and still appeals to that demographic.”

In the following passage Unity points out the lack of consideration around identifying artists from within communities to deliver such work;

...my long-term experience and relationship with the community centre plays a role and the scene in Cardiff is quite small so its building those relationships if I was someone coming in from the outside it wouldn't work. It's a crazy situation where you get a big-name person coming in and doing a workshop when really it should be people from that same community.

Whilst there is undoubtedly a benefit to having artists working in communities that can relate and empathise with the experiences of members of that community, there is a homogeneity implied in the perception of ‘disaffected’ communities’ experiences as universal amongst some of the artists I interviewed. As evidenced in the discussion above artists going into communities to deliver Hip Hop arts work were often engaged in delivering provision to communities of which, geographically at least, they were not part of. The sentiment expressed by King Monk and Wigz that they identify and feel familiarity with the experiences of the young people they work with therefore exists as a generalised sentiment. A more critical reading of this sentiment would be to proffer it as a means of self-justification against ‘selling out’ through one’s Hip Hop practice.

The research evidenced a tension for many artists in negotiating between the conditions imposed by the process of institutional commissioning of their art and the desire to remain ‘raw’ and ‘real’. In this vein B-Boy Scott Akoz pointed out that commercial success and talent as an artist does not always equate to success and ability as a workshop facilitator. There was a recurrent theme within the research

interviews that an individual required skills as a communicator if not as a youth or community worker in addition to skills and knowledge as a Hip Hop artist in order to facilitate meaningful and successful Hip Hop arts work.

One interview participant suggested that an accreditation for Hip Hop arts workers would be beneficial in terms of giving the artists increased authority and capacity in terms of entering into such work, and that commissioners would know that the individual possessed an appropriate level of skill and knowledge of Hip Hop and also community work and communication skills to undertake such work. However, when I probed around how an accreditation of this sort might be developed and who might award it the participant found themselves describing a tension between wanting to retain the integrity of the 'raw' and 'real' aspects to bringing authentic lived Hip Hop experience to a socially engaged, commissioned context and that of wanting to empower artists in their relationship with commissioners. In response to the conditions that they find themselves working within, the artists I interviewed had developed a range of reactive, bespoke conceptual approaches to the question of what constitutes a 'Hip Hop arts worker', what form their work should take and what messages they should be conveying within it. In explaining this approach, the artists invoked a mixture of different frameworks and approaches. These included drawing on a range of Hip Hop sensibilities (as we shall discuss in more detail later), blending them with existing youth and community work values, and invoking an instrumentalist rhetoric of participation and empowerment as well as Hip Hop's historical links with notions of community to support their justification for the purpose of their work.

Interview participants described the advantages of using Hip Hop as a vehicle for socially engaged, commissioned work as variously an effective tool for; engaging

disengaged youth in the production of music, art or dance, more specifically; getting boys into dancing, encouraging engagement in more traditional arts activities (i.e. MCing or lyric writing as a means to encourage engagement in literature, Graffiti engagement as a gateway to painting etc.²⁸). They also cited encouraging physical activity (breakdancing) and galvanising an interest in music education as advantages. The artists I interviewed were not commonly the ones either applying for funding to commission projects or the ones responsible for evaluating them through evidencing instrumental outcomes. However, the value they perceived in their socially engaged work was articulated most often through the discourse of instrumental arts participation. By a process of continued exposure to, and operation within, the context of the hyper-instrumental arts participation agenda they had come to understand their socially engaged, commissioned work in these terms.

On one level this is problematic in the sense argued by Hadley and Gray (2017) that the consequences of the increasing 'hyperinstrumentalist' cultural policy agenda in the UK can be positioned as an attack on the autonomy of arts and culture. For Hip Hop community arts workers to readily subscribe to and encourage this agenda in the way they articulate the benefits of their work diminishes scope for critique of such an agenda. On an individual level, if the absolute structural determinism argued for by authors such as Berardi (2009) is to be acknowledged, the homogenising conditions of Neoliberalism lead to subjects that serve its interests and in turn their actions are

28 That Hip Hop should be employed with the aim of 'getting young people into studying Shakespeare' for example can be positioned as a positive attribute but it is difficult to reconcile this with the notion of cultural democracy, it is rather more the embodiment of the democratisation of culture. (see Dubois 2011:398-399 for discussion on this type of provision as a 'legitimist policy oriented toward elite culture').

positioned as purely the effects of powerful, impersonal forces (Berlant 2011: 15).

This is an extreme prognosis but also a cautionary thesis for those involved in socially engaged, externally commissioned Hip Hop work.

It is significant that the language largely used by the artists to describe Hip Hop's appeal in the externally commissioned, socially engaged arts context is entrenched in the discourse of an instrumentalist policy agenda. Arguably, what is considered Hip Hop as vehicle for socially engaged, commissioned arts work has been shaped by the arts policy context it has grown up in. As with many artist's descriptions of the benefits of using Hip Hop in this context, the lexicon of Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned work is a product of the discourse of 'participation' borne from the previous three decades. It, and its artists know no different discourse through which to articulate its benefits and have not been endowed with the longevity or consistency of applied practice nor the space, funding and time for self-reflection to formulate an alternative discourse.

In contrast to this, during conversation with a number of non-Hip Hop artists working in communities it became apparent that they have all conceptualised, to varying extents, the frameworks and vocabulary that they employ to approach their work with public and community groups. This is arguably because any community arts worker or organisation that has defended itself to any extent against the hegemonic appropriation of its methods and processes over the last forty years and emerged with a set of strategies that have enabled them to use funding as opposed to be used by funding (Kelly 1984: 97) will have required a significant level of thought and analysis of their processes, values and aims.

Ultimately, the UK is at a stage where community arts and the work of community arts workers has had time to be theorised, extended dialogue about the subject has had

the space to be drawn out and a vocabulary has been developed to support the ideas and aims contained within its discourse. The ad hoc nature of the development of Hip Hop arts work within communities has meant that it has not enjoyed (or demanded) the same level of attention. Therefore a supporting vocabulary and methodology of articulation has not developed in the same way.

The professionalisation of Hip Hop as ‘community arts work’ in the UK has occurred through a low level, ad hoc, and informal process that has enabled it to proceed somewhat under the radar in terms of critique of methodological approach and implications. Many of the artists I interviewed, despite working regularly over a number of years in the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop arts work, have not been afforded the space or the career security in these roles to engage at length in reflection of the approaches they use.

For commissioners, a lack of consideration of the implications of employing Hip Hop in this context has been a convenient approach to avoiding dealing with the resistance, antagonistic and dissenting elements of Hip Hop in its selection as a vehicle for public arts – a refusal to engage with the less sanitised aspects of Hip Hop helps the case for positioning it as an appropriate vehicle for fulfilling the instrumentalist, participatory arts agenda and resulting ‘engagement’ of otherwise ‘disengaged’ young people. This has resulted in the pervasive vocabulary of instrumentalism amongst artists discussed in previous sections and inhibited artists in terms of articulating their self-identity as Hip Hop arts workers, and has left a number of artists struggling in terms of locating their practice within a methodological framework that confidently encompasses and adequately defends the range, intention and benefits of their practice. The increased professionalisation and official ‘sanctioning’ of Hip Hop arts in this context have forced artists to occupy a

challenging space between subcultural and countercultural practitioners and developers of an institutionalised iteration of this practice.

Scott Akoz, a B-boy described how changes over the last 15 years in the ways that local authorities and schools commission arts workshop provision has impacted his work. He explained that during the early days of commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop work funding and decisions were often made at a higher level resulting in a uniformity and pre-designation of the sorts of workshop provision that was delivered. More recently however changes in the commissioning process have seen more flexibility in the ways that workshops can be commissioned, which has increased opportunities for bespoke workshop provision. The increased flexibility of those 'purchasing' artists to deliver work has meant also an increased level of understanding and savvy when booking artists. Commissioners are now able to employ a broader range of artists and enter into more specific and diverse negotiations about workshop content and form according to the needs of the groups they are commissioning on behalf of.

Scott also explained that the rise of the internet has impacted the Hip Hop workshop environment because where previously the commissioning of artists was restricted to word-of-mouth recommendation, today commissioners are able to draw from a wider pool of resources. However, he also highlighted that this often meant that commissioning based on good artist reputation occasionally gave way to those who were in a position to best market themselves online. Arguably this practice speaks to the idea of increased flexibility and power for commissioners rather than for the artists.

Almost all the artists I interviewed said they were often asked to facilitate one-off workshops in their chosen element of Hip Hop practice. This invariably involved

them either approaching or being approached by a youth service, school or institution and then going into the location or institution, often with minimal briefing, to 'do some Hip Hop' with a group that had been singled out by the institution for attendance. It is fair to assert that the 'one-off workshop culture' is prevalent in externally commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop art work in the UK (as with other forms of 'community' art work, see Love and Mattern 2013). It is fast becoming the norm for the delivery of Hip Hop provision in this respect.

Though the research identified limited examples of other types of applied Hip Hop work including series of workshops (for example a summer school of 6 workshops running on a weekly basis) some examples where artists ran their own companies that delivered Hip Hop workshop and project provision, and one longer term Graffiti project (which we shall discuss in more detail later on) the 'one-off workshop' was most commonplace.

Often the one-off workshop culture meant that artists neither had a great deal of information about the wider aims of the project nor were they involved in the design of the project. They also had little or nothing to do with the participants following the provision of the workshop. For one off workshops artists were usually commissioned from within the same region but were seldom members of the same groups or communities that they were employed to work with. Selection of artists for workshop provision was most commonly on the basis of word-of-mouth or reputational recommendation and recruitment of artists was described by those involved as feeling 'last minute'. In this respect the one-off workshop culture establishing itself as the norm for the provision of socially engaged Hip Hop arts commissions is problematic.

When Hip Hop artists were asked during interview if they were ever privy to the agendas and objectives of those commissioning the socially engaged Hip Hop

projects they were employed to work on, many were not. Some were made aware of certain project objectives but often at distance from the discussion around how they would/should be achieved. This was despite a number of artists explaining an openness to working collaboratively with commissioners to plan and formulate projects to best benefit participants. Much less were participants involved aside from workshops occasionally being commissioned as a result of a youth group requesting to 'do a Hip Hop workshop'. Lack of participant involvement in planning and catalysing projects Rimmer (2009) explains in relation to music-related activity, can effect in "reduc[ing] projects' chances of encouraging the kind of broader competence and confidence building that 'at-risk' young people's participatory cultural activity might ultimately help foster" (p.88). This also arguably becomes less about cultural democracy and meaningful decision making.

In one scenario a Graffiti writer was informed that the workshops he was employed to run were related to a project around drug and alcohol issues. Similarly one Breakdancer was aware of numerous objectives to increase physical education in schools and to encourage boys to engage in more dance activities as reasons for his employment. Those who had experienced involvement in project planning and design stages often had previous experience as youth workers and therefore possessed increased professional capital in the eyes of those who were commissioning the work. The artists who were in a position to do so drew on these skills to mediate their involvement.

Unity highlighted the risks presented by the perpetuation of the 'one-off-workshop' culture in Hip Hop community work for both artists and workshop participants;

...doing those one off workshops I've never found fulfilling, it's always felt a bit of a mission rather than accomplishing anything for myself as an artist or anyone else other than nice photos of kids using a spray can, so I've worked

for a long time at a community centre so I have a good idea of community and impactful work and I'd much rather do something long term....[during a project undertaken last year] all the time I was asking who's the person who's going to be here when I've gone, and there was nobody.

Unity also explained that the one-off-workshop culture can create a lack of trust amongst local Graffiti writers through tokenistic engagement. Interestingly Unity referenced that there is already an existing awareness amongst young, local, Graffiti writers that the one-off-workshop culture is the norm for socially engaged, commissioned Hip Hop arts "I think because of what's come before and what other workshops are and they know what other council funded things have been...". This statement indicates that negative perceptions of the form of socially engaged, commissioned Hip Hop arts have already been formed by potential participants. Joe Snow similarly highlighted the potential of longer-term provision for achieving intrinsic benefits saying "over longer workshops I find you can use Hip Hop to guide them along a decent path, teaching respect and self-worth."

The above conditions do not, even without further exploration, sound optimal for meaningful publicly engaged arts projects. In a worrying emerging reflection of the historical trajectory of the later years of the community arts movement of the 1960-80s (see Kelly 1984, Matarasso 2013, Jeffers and Moriarty 2017), the professionalisation of Hip Hop community arts work is beginning to represent some of the same cautionary signs of dissolving the very aims and aspirations of the practice. I make this comparison in the sense that commissioners are not allowing artists the space to assert these aims rather than suggesting the artists do not know how to 'do' meaningful Hip Hop or community arts work. However, it would be true to state that, due in part to the financial and career related precarity many artists face, some artists are eagerly buying into this philosophy of practice rather than pushing back against commissioners to demand this space.

Of those Hip Hop artists interviewed who do externally commissioned socially engaged arts work, there were few who had the length of experience undertaking the work to arrive at a point where they felt the need for a great deal of self-reflexivity and critique of the work they were doing. Similarly, whilst the sanctioning of Hip Hop for use in this context was felt to have led to its acceptance and officialisation over the last decade, a number of the artists I interviewed still did not see themselves as official or accepted in the sense that they felt non-Hip Hop artists and arts workers were.

The increasing trend in utilising Hip Hop artists to facilitate such work is relatively new in comparison to community arts in general. It is important to offer here a brief comparison between the methodologies and politics of the non-Hip Hop artists I interviewed. This is important because the deployment of socially engaged, commissioned Hip Hop arts work is beginning to reflect the trajectory of the community arts movement in its dependence on funding, potential co-option and its uncertainty about asserting its aims and values in the context of the conditions it finds itself operating in. If there are lessons to be learned from the path that community arts negotiated for itself, let us explore them.

In contrast to the Hip Hop artists, the experienced non-Hip Hop artists involved in externally commissioned, socially engaged work I interviewed discussed at length entering the work they did with a critical reflective lens to hand. The aim of this was for them to ensure that questions about participant involvement, empowerment, decision making and agency maintained primacy. The primary difference between these two groups of artists was that those non-Hip Hop artists were far more fluent in the language of 'public funding'. Alison Andrews founder of A Quiet Word theatre company told me that

...there is a need to make work that really does engage places like this. What stories and discourses are held here? The answer arrived for me as a framework to offer people. Saying, we find this place really interesting. You have to engage and be there, then people ask what are you doing here? Then we can start a dialogue. So, the framework is a methodology.

For Richard Sobey, a producer who works facilitating socially engaged creative projects internationally, this need for genuine exchange extended to that of a multi-logue as a necessary proponent of meaningful engagement “The pluralism of different voices, experiences and opinions around the table is key”. For a number of the artists I conversed with on this subject, critical reflection during all stages of their involvement with externally commissioned/funded arts projects was crucial. The foregrounding of this reflexive element of their role as arts workers (or in some cases as mainstream artists who have learned the language of socially engaged practice) was not evident in the conversations I had with the Hip Hop artists, with the exception of two individuals both of whom had been involved with the process of applying for funding and project design for Hip Hop community work.

For some of the non-Hip Hop artists their methodology for approaching projects was not explicit or neatly encapsulated within a given term but commonality was evidenced by a list of self-reflective questions that the artists armed themselves with on entering in to such work. These questions all revolved around empowerment and the levels of agency that participants possessed in the course of the project. During the planning and implementation stages of their projects these included; what range of voices are being heard, who is visible, how confident am I that people are making informed decisions, how can we work together (with a community), are we representing what is important to them (the community). Equally in evaluative post-project stages these artists were critiquing the impact and legacy of projects, which for them included exploring what ‘good impact’ means in the context of a given

project. This element of what the non-Hip Hop artists were doing lacked in the Hip Hop-as-community-arts sphere. For the Hip Hop artists, where this occurred, it did so in a more fragmented and less considered way. The main distinction between these two groups was that the non-Hip Hop arts workers were undertaking a far more explicit and pronounced process of self-reflection – or possibly self-justification - and critique of the conditions that informed their projects.

Artists who had been involved with Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work for a long time, or those who ran their own organisations offering the provision of these services demonstrated a greater level of critical reflection upon the state of Hip Hop as commissioned community arts work. This sub-group showed greater concern for the ways that Hip Hop is being utilised within this arts context and articulated some of the factors they felt required greater consideration by artists undertaking this type of work, and also those commissioning it.

Those who had more experience in delivering community based, externally commissioned Hip Hop work stated they felt that they had developed confidence through their experience to push back against commissioners when they were involved in discussions around project design and that they felt more capable of articulating the benefits of Hip Hop as a medium for this work. They were self-reportedly more fluent in the ‘language of the funders’ and they stated that this confidence was the result of longevity in the field rather than anything taught or any formalised training they had received. This fluency referred in some cases to an increased understanding of how to ‘play the game’ in order to gain work and to gain funding. Less often, in other cases, this fluency referred more radically to an increased ability to challenge the rules of the game. It could be said that these artists had gained an increased level of ‘navigational capital’ (Yosso 2005) through their

Hip Hop work in this context. Unity cited the lack of a body of evidence specific to Hip Hop community work that artists could use to support them in articulating the benefits of Hip Hop community work and in making an empirical case for what factors contribute towards constituting meaningful Hip Hop projects in the applied community context;

I am more confident now with pushing what something needs to be to make a meaningful impact rather than ticking a box, but people need to have that confidence and that self-awareness to know what a project needs to be to make it meaningful. That knowledge needs to be shared and spread out so artists can have that confidence to push for the provision of projects that are meaningful.

The choice to work through the systems of institutional dominance in this way reflects tensions within Hip Hop as a culture that is at the same time entrepreneurial and one that tries to defend its position by resisting rules and conditions imposed upon it by dominant institutions.

External arts project commissioners have been swift to enlist Hip Hop as a means to achieving the instrumentalist aims of participatory arts initiatives by taking advantage of the potential opportunities for engaging 'difficult to engage' groups that Hip Hop purportedly brings with it. However, those responsible for the rise in the professionalisation of Hip Hop as applied, socially engaged arts work have seemingly taken little time to think critically about the shape or consequences of its application in this context. The degree to which appropriation is inevitable when a practice such as Hip Hop is transposed into the socially engaged, externally commissioned practice is a key consideration in relation to the challenges that have been outlined in this section. The following section explores the impact of this transposition in more detail.

4.3.2 Negotiating dynamics and parameters of practice

The research showed that the shift in Hip Hop's status as anti-establishment art form (and as a co-opted commercial entity) through its professionalisation in the context of externally commissioned work raises questions about the ownership of practice, its purpose, as well as its form and content. This section and the next explore how the deployment of Hip Hop as a vehicle for externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work has in some cases effected in the differentiation of artist practice and contributed to the formalisation and formularisation of the practice.

A number of artists I interviewed said they planned their workshops to differentiate between age groups of young people and with the intention of being as inclusive as possible in terms of subject and ability. Some MCs also cited examples of occasions when they had professed rap's capacity as a medium for free speech and unrestrained self-expression, then had been faced with a participant in the workshop producing rhymes that were racist or otherwise offensive. Though some MCs experienced in delivering workshops have learned to challenge and discuss such material as a learning point for the participants, they have not always developed strategies for reconciling the idea of freedom of expression and 'speaking ya clout' entirely with how to productively deal with dissent in this context. Whereas they stated that in a rap battle or a cipher scenario the active participation of the surrounding crowd (acting as 'emancipated spectators' in this scenario [Ranciere 2009]) would mean that the person delivering said rhyme would be taken to task via the crowd's response through a collective sense of determining appropriateness or establishing social norms in Hip Hop.

Though the above examples demonstrate active participation, the extent to which space is made for dissenting voices is debatable. The workshop example shows

participants being actively encouraged to freely express themselves, but in this instance a strategy for dealing with a dissenting participant voice has not been developed. In the rap battle and cipher scenario the crowd are invited to judge and to respond to the performance but it is questionable even in these scenarios what room exists for disagreement and dissent in audience response. The same argument could be applied to Hip Hop in the commercial sphere and the selection of specific rap narratives for propagation. Paradoxically, while in the commercial sphere it is deemed acceptable that some of the commonly propagated rap messages are violent or misogynistic, the narrowness of the commonly perpetuated rap narratives also works to prevent a broader range of dissenting voices from being heard. Similarly, in judging the outcome of a rap battle the majority decision carries, there is therefore little room for discussion or deliberation between audience members who may have a difference of opinion about the value of the performance.

Jancovich (2015) discusses the pros and cons of participatory decision making specifically in arts organisations and highlights the importance of creating decision making processes that allow for deliberation and a range of dissenting voices to be heard. Jancovich's research cautions against the use of binary voting mechanisms as a tool for encouraging meaningful participatory decision making, which is arguably exactly what the rap battle audience-as-judge scenario equates to. The contradictory Hip Hop workshop example of professing a focus on free speech but not possessing a framework within which to facilitate this in full demonstrates a challenge in encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy through this sort of work.

Spee Six Nine told me "I have guidelines I have to follow [in delivering workshops]". Unity told me about the "uphill struggle" experienced in attempting to implement meaningful Hip Hop community work and described some institutional

representatives as displaying discomfort at the notion that the Hip Hop arts worker would attempt to stake a claim to the direction of a project;

I went to a meeting about it this morning and the guy was really uncomfortable being in the room with me, because I am more confident now with pushing it now what something needs to be to make a meaningful impact rather than ticking a box.

Often therefore these artists negotiate the terms of their practice within very thin boundaries, sometimes foregoing some of the resistant, expressive and antagonistic qualities that position Hip Hop as an appropriate vehicle for empowerment and engaged critique. One artist told me that;

[that] throws up a conflict because when you talk about authenticity its only authentic if you can be totally honest, if you want to put some poetry down to express yourself using Hip Hop as that vehicle you're restricting the words you want to use its not really as authentic as it could be. So therefore using bad language its arguably healthier for them to swear talking about something that affects them at least then they'd be expressing themselves wholeheartedly, coz otherwise it's not really true expression. (Paul Webster)

The implication that “All work must remain respectful, positive, nonantagonistic, and free of profanity” (Forman 2013: 254) (see also Evelyn 2000 *The Miseducation of Hip Hop*) leaves the Hip Hop artists in a tricky position in trying to navigate the terms of their practice in relation to Hip Hop conceptualisations of authenticity. Forman’s insight above supports the accounts I gathered from a number of the artists who described differentiating their practice for the applied community context included adopting a model of Hip Hop that foregrounded the ‘peace, love, unity and having fun’ tenets of the culture. This model served as under-labourer to the form-based model of performance facilitation providing a methodology for them to frame the objectives of their work in the socially engaged, externally commissioned context. Spee told me “I grew up listening to a lot of the founding fathers of Hip Hop and they preached four main points, Peace, Unity, Love and Having Fun so I believe those four

words are what I consider to be my mind state”. In a separate interview Shane ‘10 Tonn’ Fenton echoed this ethos commenting that “My approach to this [Hip Hop work] is feeling being serious and having fun is my duty”. Through the employment of this ‘4 tenets’ framework artists felt they were able to stay true to what they deemed the values of Hip Hop in their externally commissioned workshops, but similarly it could be said that the invocation of this particular framework simultaneously offered them a way to circumnavigate the pre-requisite for non-antagonistic outputs that Forman (2013) refers to. Artists were less able to explain how dissent, authoritarian disregard and/or antagonism featured within their workshops. Conversely these things played a significant role for artists engaged in Hip Hop practice for the purposes of self-fulfilment and to a certain extent within Hip Hop for commercial ends, where (as discussed in more detail in later sections) artists saw part of their role as developing and disseminating discourses that critiqued the nature of existing cultural hegemony through their work (usually either through lyricism or Graffiti).

For those new to the culture artists cited identifying different needs; three of the artists I interviewed explained that often when they were commissioned to deliver a workshop they would arrive and speak to the participants to discover a very limited knowledge and understanding of Hip Hop. They were then faced with an ‘on the spot’ negotiation between formulating the workshop around the limited knowledge of participants (i.e. delivering a rap workshop using chart rap music as a mutually familiar starting point) and/or creating space to deliver a ‘Hip Hop history’ lesson as part of the workshop to increase knowledge and understanding amongst the participants. This history lesson also served as a basis for the artists to encourage some of the voice-finding, innovation and conscientisation aspects of the practice

amongst participants because, in their words, it helped participants to understand and engage with the experimental and innovative nature of Hip Hop culture. They described that this process took time and often in a 'one-off-workshop' doing any work to increase understanding of Hip Hop culture amongst participants was a carefully weighed decision against providing commissioners with the 'activity output' they expected from a Hip Hop workshop.

One artist told me that it was a 'catch 22' situation in that they felt participants benefited more in the long run from taking the time to outline a definition of Hip Hop culture that opened the participants up to the idea of conscientisation and experimentation because it empowered them with the ethos of DIY and innovation for themselves and gave them an understanding of the 'framework' within which these could be deployed (Hip Hop), but that often this came at the cost of having to forego equipping participants with the 'tools' to implement that ethos (i.e. learning the forms, tactics and idioms of Hip Hop practice) due to time constraints.

Some artists described differentiating their practice in one way or another when undertaking externally commissioned work. When Wigz tells me that his participation in Graffiti is no longer dependent on reclaiming public space and therefore challenged by the illegality of practice and the time constraints that presents "...When I got into doing workshops I obviously had to change my approach and rather than doing quick five minute paintings to avoid getting captured I suddenly had loads of time and resources..." he is demonstrating that in some cases artists are being required to differentiate their practice in order to work at delivering externally commissioned, socially engaged projects. The question raised by this is whether a process of 'depoliticisation' is occurring through this forced differentiation and

whether this is occurring through a process of self-censorship or official censorship, or both.

Klonism told me that he experienced a huge difference between work for himself and externally commissioned community-based work that centred on a limited time resource and a battle for that limited pool of time between the two kinds of work.

This indicates that some practitioners consider their practice in the socially engaged, commissioned context to be a different, and sometimes competing, pursuit to that of practice applied for self-fulfilment.

The relationship between mainstream consumption of Hip Hop and individual production is considered during artists' workshop preparations; three artists mentioned that they consider what is popular and 'saleable' when preparing for workshops to a far greater degree than they do when practicing Hip Hop for their own enjoyment. In this sense artists are differentiating their practice to place the desires of the people they are working with front and centre. I have had similar experiences in facilitating Hip Hop workshops with young people where their experience of Hip Hop is solely commercial record chart music. Within the workshop environment there is very little time to expand on any understanding of Hip Hop that they might arrive with and very often the workshop content is dictated by this. Arguably this lends credence to Unity's claim that it is more meaningful to support those who are already engaged in the culture. This perspective also speaks more directly to the idea of cultural democracy.

There is potential within Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned arts work to draw on the Hip Hop tactics for rupture and resistance to encourage critically engaged practice. However, when we foist Hip Hop upon those who are not engaged with the culture, we are perpetuating a democratisation of culture in the same way as if we

forced the same group to attend the opera or the ballet. As such there is a negotiation process at play here for artists in planning their workshop content between authenticity, convention, and artistic integrity in the differentiation of practice that artists undergo for applied community work.

The prioritising of considerations around popular Hip Hop music consumption in the delivery of commissioned, socially engaged work can be positioned as an effect of the interrelation between official and unofficial space within the context of consumer capitalism. Some artists described methods of workshopping that focussed on the primacy of participants as producers. In describing the differentiation of practice Joe Snow told me that;

If you're working with more experienced artists it's all about building their own style so you focus on that. In these cases I will focus around their style picking out parts of their style that work and encouraging them to build these. This makes it quite different to the artwork I would do whilst not at a workshop.

In the Hip Hop workshop scenario artists are therefore negotiating delivery of provision through a complex assessment of both participants' consumption habits and the facilitation of the production of Hip Hop culture.

In response to the question of whether a process of depoliticization is occurring through this differentiation, there were a number of interesting instances where I observed artists differentiating their practice based on the conditions imposed upon them by their choice to produce Hip Hop as part of a commercial framework. For example, during one studio hang out where a group of artists were preparing to lay down (record) a track that they were hoping to attain radio play for, the artists engaged in a process of re-writing parts of the track to preclude swearing and other words they deemed would reduce their chances of radio play. Conversely, the same

group of artists also displayed a sort of resistant pride in including obscure metaphors in their lyrics that they felt few people would be able to decode. This represents an example of the inherent tension that artists in the commercial realm face in relation to negotiating their authentic identity as artists alongside the need for commercial acknowledgement, either to increase their appeal to a larger audience or to gain financial compensation to make a living from their Hip Hop.

In challenge to the apparent commonality of differentiating practice in response to the systemic conditions imposed upon artists engaging in Hip Hop in different contexts, some artists did not feel that they differentiated their practice in the externally commissioned, socially engaged context. The element of Hip Hop culture that the artist specialised in played a role in this, for example those I interviewed who were MCs and Graffiti artists/writers felt that they differentiated their practice to a greater extent than those who were DJs or Breakdancers due to the nature of their particular mode of expression – the content of rap narrative or images contained in Graffiti pieces can exist as a more direct and explicit form of resistance.

The increased degree of differentiation of practice amongst MCs and Graffers therefore indicates the reluctance and diminished scope for resistant or dissenting Hip Hop expression within the context of the institutionally supported arts project. On the other hand, a number of artists referenced a sense of freedom they felt both through the liberation of self-employment and in terms of guidance on the content of their workshops. The absence of feeling constrained did not always equate to an absence of differentiation of practice in this context. The general lack of involvement in the design of such projects and the practice of being ‘parachuted’ in to work with public groups rather than embedded within that community (which is not a novel issue, see

Braden 1978, Kelly 1984) indicate the imbalance of the power dynamics between artist, participant and those commissioning the projects.

One area where Hip Hop artists did not differentiate between their own practice and their practice in the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged work was evidenced in the way they referred to their role. All the Hip Hop artists continued to refer to themselves as Hip Hop artists when referring to their work as socially engaged, commissioned practitioners. This process of self-identification stood in contrast to that of the non-Hip Hop artists I interviewed who all self-identified their work and their role in different ways. Where the Hip Hop artists interviewed who invariably referred to themselves as Hip Hop artists or, more commonly, by the specific Hip Hop element or elements they specialised in (i.e. MC, B-Boy, Graffiti artist/writer etc.) the non-Hip Hop artists referred to themselves as a mixture of; community artists, community arts workers, project facilitators, producers, theatre makers, practitioners, or curators. This denotes a distinction between Hip Hop as a community of practice and the non-Hip Hop artists' labelling of their roles in relation to the position of power they do (or do not) possess with respect to their work.

Some members of the non-Hip Hop artist interview group rejected the labelling of their role at all, explaining that they felt there was a specific power dynamic implicit in the locating of the 'expert' attached to terms such as artist and curator, which negated the agency of those groups with whom they carried out their work and positioned them as 'non-experts'. More than one of the non-Hip Hop artists referred to their role as 'translator', which for them represented a brokerage type function between the 'language' of the funder and the communities with which they were working. Two of the Hip Hop artists I interviewed who had extensive experience in delivering commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop work told me that they saw

themselves (in relation to external funding bodies) as providing much the same function, which they asserted came about as a result of their long-term involvement in the field of commissioned, socially engaged projects and had taken a number of years to acquire these skills. This also plays into the previously discussed conditions for authenticity in Hip Hop; and that the practice of Hip Hop provides a structure through which people can visualise themselves as creators (or artists) as well as the self-starting, entrepreneurial emphasis found within Hip Hop culture. In alignment with Speers' more recent (2017) notion of the Hip Hop artist as forced cultural entrepreneur Forman (2013) explains that

Hip-hop artists often strategically assert their authenticity and 'Hood status as a means of burnishing their professional reputation and market profile and promoting saleable products, taking on multiple personae and performative stances in order to finesse transitions across various social contexts. (p.245)

This insight could be extended to the context of Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned arts work in the UK to offer an explanation of the ways that Hip Hop practitioners present themselves and assert their authenticity in this context. As previously discussed, a number of the artists I interviewed referenced the cultural cache and relevant status of Hip Hop as contributing to its powerfulness and usefulness as a tool for socially engaged, commissioned work. Scott Akoz told me "You don't have to win participants over when its Hip Hop, you have their respect. They know that this person is knowledgeable and talented and highly skilled". I suggest that self-identifying as an artist in this context is partly a strategic, preservative - albeit sometimes subconscious - manoeuvre on the part of these individuals to retain and communicate authenticity in the work they carry out.

The Hip Hop artists' self-identification choices could be a symptom of the need to articulate authenticity and expertise in Hip Hop (that is, to consider oneself an artist).

However, the more egalitarian, meritocratic lexicon of the terminology of Hip Hop practitioners could also play a part in this process of self-labelling – there is ostensibly no amateur and professional binary in the world of Hip Hop of the kind that pervades the discourse of the wider arts world. A more common assertion in the UK is that someone is an ‘underground’ or a ‘commercial’ MC. This binary still implies an economic judgement, but it is not one that is determined by or attached to an artistic value judgement. In other words, an MC may be underground – that is to say not successful or necessarily viable in commercial terms but their work is respected and judged with a set of value associations that do not depend on economic capital for a positive reading. Similarly, commercial success is judged only in terms of its economic reason, and bears little relation to the artistic ‘success’ of an MC.

The interesting point here is not whether underground or commercial is better but that each is an interwoven conscious path of progression and the different forms of reason driving them are explicitly acknowledged and debated. Also, importantly these terms (and all terms, phrases and expressions of language in Hip Hop) are permanently up for debate and are pushed, stretched and re-formed as a matter of course as per the nature of Hip Hop’s relationship to language. It is possible then to apply a totally altered set of value criteria (or mutable sets of different value criteria) to the discourse of arts that can be effective, nuanced and understood.

Some of the terms developed and employed by Hip Hop Nation Language to identify cultural value are different than those of the wider performance community and can also be viewed as supportive tactics for creating the space for cultural democracy.

There are ‘rules’ for sustained inclusion and acceptance within some specific areas of the sphere of Hip Hop culture for example a high level of skills in your chosen craft or for some the knowledge and reverence of Hip Hop history is deemed important

(respect the architect), both of these attributes were referenced by a number of the artists I interviewed.

Despite the complex process of identity negotiation that influences participation in Hip Hop culture, there are highly egalitarian elements to the culture. Not least the DIY ethos of the practice, but also some of the lexicon as mentioned above. An MC may be skilled or they may not be and there are multiple sets of parameters within which this success is perceived to be measured e.g. an MC can be lyrically revered and successful in that respect, or have 'street fame' or 'underground fame' but not necessarily be commercially successful or vice versa. Again, here we see the explicit awareness demonstrated within Hip Hop discourses that deal directly with the economic reasoning that drives so much of the cultural aspects of our lives that McGuigan (2004) refers to.

Due to the DIY ethos of Hip Hop culture and its humble beginnings its value systems rarely if ever revolve around any sort of 'amateur/professional' status dynamic thus supporting Hip Hop's capacity as a vehicle for self-visualisation as an artist and voice discovery referred to by some of the artists I spoke with. In a complete reversal of the tactic taken by the non-Hip Hop arts workers the Hip Hop arts workers self-identified as artists and promoted the Hip Hop qualities of voice discovery and self-visualisation of the self as artist for those who participated in their workshops. In effect this situated all as artists and producers. The non-Hip Hop artists mostly self-identified as non-artists in the community work scenario to attempt to flatten the power dynamic between artist and participant with the aim of engaging participants to produce and create for themselves. Ultimately both groups of arts workers demonstrated a similar intention in terms of re-addressing the relationship dichotomy between artist and participant, but where the non-Hip Hop arts workers' method was

to meet participants on the level of non-expert, the Hip Hop artists method was to elevate all to artist.

Community artist and author Su Braden (1978) writes at length about the problem of discourse regarding public art (pp.147-166). She is writing specifically about the need for artists working in communities to re-think the terms of the vocabularies they use when working with others. Braden argues it is necessary to develop a vocabulary for speaking about arts that is not reliant on values that are pre-determined by one class within society, or that imply notions of excellence that are decided by 'others'. She writes about the institutional indoctrination of existing perceptions of excellence in the arts and how the language of technology provides a widely accessible vocabulary. The development of Hip Hop linguistics that re-negotiates these notions could be argued to demonstrate an example of this. However, we also know that the intentional obscurity of some Hip Hop lyrics and their resistance against mass interpretation goes against this idea, highlighting something of a paradox. It could be said that Hip Hop provides a resistant discourse that creates opportunities for cultural democracy in the way Braden appeals for, but that in an implicitly Foucauldian approach, inclusion in said discourse is still the subject of certain criteria and creator of power relations, these just happen to be different criteria to that of the dominant discourse.

The transposition of Hip Hop into official realms via external commissioning and/or external funding has shaped artist practice within these contexts. This section has suggested that Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned arts work often reflects the agendas of those involved in commissioning projects rather than the artists or participants involved. These agendas and their associated rules and spaces often inform and transform the character of the practice deployed in such settings. The

following section goes on to specifically explore how transposition into official *spaces* has impacted on Hip Hop in this context.

4.3.3 Critiquing the spaces where Hip Hop happens

Transposing Hip Hop practice into official contexts (i.e. externally commissioned work), and official spaces (e.g. the school environment or commercial radio) challenges its identity as an unofficial, street-based culture of practice. If part of what makes Hip Hop credible is its heritage as a cultural practice that has existed outside of the ‘system’ and is characterised by an anti-establishment outlook, then what are the consequences of its usage in officialised contexts and spaces? Forman (2013), writing on Hip Hop youth work in the USA (where the field of practice has been theorised to a greater extent than in the UK) highlights that commissioning institutions such as public-school sites “increasingly accept and even encourage the use of hip-hop content in their classrooms but remain indifferent to the cultural implications of doing so.” (p.252). This presents a tension in using Hip Hop as an official art-form in delivering externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work.

There was evidence of some artists considering the politics of the spaces within which they worked such as the following account of the ways individual Graffiti writers feel about the spaces used for the provision of Graffiti as socially engaged, externally commissioned practice. Unity captured the importance the meanings of official and unofficial space in Hip Hop telling me that when she organises a (Graffiti) painting session on the street it is usually well attended, but when she arranges one inside a publicly funded community or youth group venue attendance is significantly reduced. This highlights a marked difference in the perception of authenticity and ownership in terms of the street space and the official space.

Today I organised a sketch session inside the community centre and nobody came and it's because I was doing it in a formal setting not in a street setting and all of these guys that I'm doing the paint sessions with, in the back of their mind they're like "why are you doing this what's the agenda", a couple of them have said "oh you're trying to trap us". Because when you are just painting with people there's no agenda but when it's a funded thing there's always gonna be an agenda, and that does change the dynamic of what you're doing and whose coming and why they're coming.

The use of the word 'trap' in the above passage is a powerful indicative metaphor for the perception of ownership over official spaces amongst the young people Unity is working with. As Burkitt (2004) explains that "What we refer to as 'institutions' associated with the state or the economy are attempts to fix social practice in time and space – to contain it in specific geographical sites and codify it in official discourses." (p.211). Indeed, there have been numerous examples where I have found myself in spaces thinking 'Hip Hop doesn't happen here'. The Graffiti writers Unity speaks about above are enacting a protest through non-participation against these attempts to spatially and temporally fix social practice. Having highlighted this however, there was little evidence within the research of any sustained use of reclamation or rupturing tactics to construct spaces for alternative discourse formulation. Hip Hop in the socially engaged, commissioned context needs to hear and understand this protest and the spatio-social politics it represents.

King Monk was acutely aware of the link between Hip Hop's credibility as a tool for socially engaged arts work and its historically prohibited nature. In the grand tradition of appropriating counterculture expounded by authors such as Dick Hebdidge (1979), Hip Hop's acceptance as a professionalised tool for commissioned community arts work has so far brought benefits to many of the artists delivering such work. For the artists involved in this work who I interviewed these benefits that have as yet outweighed any potential longer-term consequences that might result from attempts to officialise it;

Well Hip Hop is almost seen as if, you know it's still cool, kids and, you know a lot of it was illegal you couldn't go out and spray paint and you weren't allowed to breakdance at school but then suddenly we were being paid by the council to go teach people to Graffiti and then on top of that you know teaching B-boying when we would have been in trouble at school for B-boying that wasn't allowed...it's amazing that we're accepted at that level now. (King Monk)

Similarly, Wigz, a Graffiti artist/writer cited the benefits he perceives in his work as a community artist through Hip Hop; "I would mostly paint illegal Graffiti spots, trying to get the most 'up' out of other locals on the scene. When I got into doing workshops, I obviously had to change my approach and rather than doing quick five-minute paintings to avoid getting captured I suddenly had loads of time and resources to play with". Reflecting these comments Joe Snow captured this attitude towards the perceived benefits of officialised Graffiti work succinctly stating "instead of getting fined I get paid". There was an almost grateful sentiment described by a number of the artists that their practice had been awarded official status and recognition.

The increased official acceptance of Hip Hop as a cultural practice afforded these artists increased cultural and professional capital in the context of the official space, which for them is usually attached to the institution and in turn the source of funding for their work. Unity told me;

There's more and more people who 'get it' because Graffiti is starting to be seen as a creative outlet rather than just vandalism because there's so many people doing it for a living and they're selling their art and they started on the street so it's easier to explain that progression to the people with the money.

At the same time however, this double-edged sword requires the artists to negotiate the terms of their practice within the altered framework of rules imposed by its transposition into official space. The long-term vision for Hip Hop community arts work is absent within accounts of its benefits to the artists. There is an acknowledgement by these artists that Hip Hop's unofficial status, prohibited aspects

and ergo its association with risk contribute towards its continued relevance and capacity to meaningfully engage those who might reject mainstream or traditional cultural activities. This perception however is at odds with the notion of an increasingly officialised realm of practice. I enjoyed numerous conversations during artist interviews about the state of the game today. During these conversations reference was made to the increasing marketisation of Hip Hop as a commercial product, the impact that this continues to have on perceptions of the culture, and implications for its future development. However, rarely did consideration of the impact of officialising or marketising (in the neo-liberal sense) Hip Hop as a vehicle for externally commissioned arts work arise. The artists referred to myriad opportunities that Hip Hop arts work of this sort presents for sharing Hip Hop knowledge with a wider audience and engaging people in the culture. Seldom however was it identified as an area of 'risk' in terms of how its deployment as a result of the systemic conditions surrounding it might impact the broader culture as a whole. It was, perhaps unsurprisingly coming from individuals that made their living (or supplemented their living) from it, seen as a positive thing. Arguably the use of Hip Hop, a creative practice and body of cultural knowledge that rose from the streets and focusses on amplifying the voices of previously oppressed communities, as an art form for publicly commissioned, socially engaged arts *is* a good thing. But however noble the origins of the art form in question and the general basis for its application it remains vulnerable to co-option and appropriation in the same way that Hip Hop does by the forces of commercial marketisation. As such there is scope for Hip Hop in this context to flex some of the resistant, entrepreneurial and specific components within its muscular system to defend its voice and its integrity within this context.

The artists I spoke with attributed Hip Hop's continued relevance to its capacity for resistance, re-invention and its qualities as an unofficial culture. This raises the consideration whether, in the future, we will experience a tipping point where the acceptance and officialisation of Hip Hop cultural through its deployment in official spaces and for official projects will erode its appealing status and credence as an unofficial, relevant and rebellious practice in this context. Despite their nuanced understanding of the effects of the mass marketisation of Hip Hop the artists I interviewed had not considered its transposition into the realm of 'sanctioned' activity and official spaces to pose a risk to Hip Hop's status instead focussing on what they largely perceived to be the inherently good intentions behind the funding of Hip Hop youth and community-based arts work. There was therefore little insight to be gathered from the interview data on the potential future course of Hip Hop arts work in this respect.

How these artists position the acceptance of Hip Hop culture through official sanctioning of the art form within dominant cultural spaces is problematic in relation to the notion of cultural democracy. Forman (2010) points out that this process of legitimisation (or acceptance as the artists I interviewed referred to it) has significant implications in relation to hierarchical structures of value stating

It [the term legitimisation] implies that the urban spaces of "the street" are bestowed with distinct and powerful meanings that can be juxtaposed against official or institutional spaces. In such juxtaposition, the street and other cultural spaces associated with hip-hop are commonly deemed illegitimate and are also imbued with racial and class values that distinguish them from the more legitimate social values of a dominant white, middle and upper-class social cohort. [no pagination]

For Shotter (1993) It is reductive to speak of the various official and unofficial spaces Hip Hop occupies (as both organic practice, as commercial practice and as applied/funded practice) as if they were "uncoupled realms" (p.80). Burkitt (2004)

draws on Gardiner's (2000) critique of space in everyday life to explain that our lives do not adhere to a binary distinction between official and unofficial space but instead are heterogeneous and multidimensional "Just as there are social fields in which practices and relationships are made more open to government and official codification, so too are there social fields that are constituted as spaces of hope and resistance" (2004: 216).

For Burkitt marginal practice can transform the dynamics of the interplay between the official and unofficial space "In such unofficial and marginal practices, the symbolic and material products of official institutions can be transformed into something quite different than that intended by official powers" (2004: 216). This supports Hope's (2011) vision for ruptures in creative practice as framework for cultural democracy. Another account that lends evidence to the idea that Hip Hop does not take place in sole separation from official spaces is the reasoning that underpins the emerging and growing body of literature on Hip Hop as Critical Pedagogy studies (CHHP) (see Akom 2009, Sotvall 2006, Land and Stovall 2009, Rodriguez 2009, Samy Alim 2007). Akom (2009) argues against the dichotomisation of Hip Hop from the educational space in saying that "Hip Hop—for those of us from the Hip Hop generation or post-Hip Hop generations— has had a significant presence in the classroom; particularly during the 1990s and into the twenty-first century when a remarkable thing happened: aspects of youth culture in general, and aspects of white and Asian youth culture in particular, underwent a Black reincarnation via the Hip Hop aesthetic" (p.53). Whilst the field of CHHP studies is centred on the place of Hip Hop within the educational curriculum and hence focuses on the classroom as a space where Hip Hop may play a role, this argument is nevertheless an example of the blending of Hip Hop and institutionalised space that CHHP scholars believe can

productively co-exist to fruitful ends. CHHP scholars argue this can occur through employing Hip Hop pedagogy as a tool for social justice and a vehicle for encouraging and orienting discussion on the intersections between race and racism with other forms of oppression, centralising the knowledge of students of colour, foregrounding a commitment to social justice, and challenging traditional paradigms and texts (Solorzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Perhaps therefore there will be no ‘tipping point’ where the officialisation of practice diminishes Hip Hop’s ‘cool’ but rather the attempt to homogenise, colonise and fix practice in official space will paradoxically “provoke opposition and negativity. A plurality of what [Lefebvre] calls ‘differentiated’ spaces continues to persist under neo-capitalism...” (Gardiner 2000: 97). More complex than a straightforward takeover by the officialisation of spaces where Hip Hop occurs, the intricacies of the process of negotiation between official and unofficial space in this context will continue to give rise to fresh articulations and manipulations of social meaning and creativity as has been the historical case with the relatively recent emergence of Grime and even more recently UK Drill.

The scope for empowerment of individuals through the medium of Hip Hop in official spaces therefore extends beyond an increased focus on sharing Hip Hop’s history as pedagogy. It is also arguably to be encouraged by seeking opportunities to critique the relationship between the dynamics and ownership of official and unofficial space and official/unofficial culture in the moment of participation. As well as by foregrounding Hip Hop as a vehicle for innovation, expression and the construction of alternative discourses rather than perpetuating a stylised performance training regime in isolation from this contextual understanding. This would be to move beyond the provision of training/participation in the four elements to facilitate

an overstanding of the conditions in and through which Hip Hop community arts work is deployed and to encourage critical self-reflection amongst participants of the implications of situating Hip Hop practice within official spaces.

There is a need for critical consideration by the artist of the spaces that Hip Hop is being transposed into and the implicit and explicit structures of power that define these spaces. This is true for those involved in externally commissioned, socially engaged work and also for those engaged in Hip Hop generally that continues to be impacted more widely by the social, commercial and political conditions that surround it. Exploration of the spaces that Hip Hop has historically embodied, the reasons for this and the conditions imposed upon these spaces is a necessary part of this. This sort of critical engagement would be characterised by considering the hegemonic nature of space, its architecture, the systems of control in potential Hip Hop spaces and how the methods of Hip Hop practice challenge these. To approach Hip Hop engagement in public and official spaces from this perspective opens up opportunities to explore with participants what spaces they feel ownership of, why and what forces govern these spaces. Crucially, this call to draw attention to the tension between official and unofficial spaces requires applied Hip Hop arts work engages participants in public spaces and spaces they feel ownership of – to take it to the streets.

This section has discussed how the politics of official and unofficial space impacts on Hip Hop in the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged work. The following section extends this theme to explore how the officialisation of Hip Hop arts work in terms of both institutional rules and spaces has contributed to the formularisation of Hip Hop in this context.

4.3.4 The formalisation and formularisation of Hip Hop

The professionalisation of Hip Hop as community arts and the one-off workshop culture that has accompanied it has in some cases resulted the teaching of the ‘forms’ of the Hip Hop elements as a primary focus – the “four-mula” (Forman 2013: 255). Some of the artists I discussed this with explained that they taught breakdancing, Graffiti or rap skills or facilitated participation in projects using these skills according to the conventions of these forms within Hip Hop culture generally. This approach in turn has therefore favoured a formula based approach to teaching ‘what Hip Hop is’. Whilst this has certainly not curtailed the development of newer Hip Hop based forms such as Grime it is worth paying attention to exactly what is being taught in the commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop context. KRS One makes the assertion that the elements of Hip Hop culture are ‘refinitions’ instead of definitions as they are not discrete, fixed entities but are constantly evolving and changing (2003). Despite KRS’s theorisation, the primacy of form evidenced in a number of the interviewed artists’ accounts of their applied Hip Hop work suggest a diminished focus on the concept of ‘refinition’ in the Hip Hop elements in this context.

The mass marketisation of Hip Hop has almost certainly gone some way to influencing the formularisation of Hip Hop practices in general. Through the commercial propagation of select Hip Hop imageries and narratives within the cultural mainstream over recent decades, a number of Hip Hop archetypes have been developed and stereotypes sustained (see for example Rose’s 2008 ‘Gangsta, Pimp, Ho trinity’). The general perceptions of Hip Hop today amongst mainstream cultural consumers unfamiliar with its history and original values are therefore rarely exposed to the innovative and experimental ontological aspects of Hip Hop (Rose 2008).

As with the propagation of select content within the commercial realm, the ‘form-based’ model of Hip Hop culture being propagated through the one-off workshop focuses most commonly on a template of the conventions of Hip Hop form. For example, a Breakdancer teaching a group of young people specific breakdancing moves, a freeze, a top rock etc. or a Graffiti artist teaching a group of people various methods of painting using aerosol cans are in effect stylised movements. These are particular methods with an emphasis on the physicality of Hip Hop style rather than a focus on equipping people with the knowledge of a Hip Hop approach to experimentation and innovation.

The research found that the mass commercialisation of Hip Hop has also had an influence on the expectations of a number of commissioners in relation to the form and content of workshop delivery. Two of the artists I interviewed mentioned that when they were commissioned to deliver workshops those in the commissioning role often had a preconceived notion of the aesthetics of such a workshop that were based on a surface level understanding of Hip Hop culture gained solely through exposure to stylised, mainstream, commercial Hip Hop products. One Graffiti writer told me that “they [commissioners] want you to go in and do a mural with the kids, coz that’s what they’ve seen before, they’re not interested in you teaching the history [of the culture], they want a pretty output so they can take photos”.

One MC told me “you’re expected to reproduce whatever’s in the charts, they don’t want you to be playing these kids Nas or Black Thought even though that could really touch them”. Breakdancer Scott Akoz explained that “they [commissioners] expect kids to be doing head spins for the entirety of the session”. Incidentally Scott used the explicit tactic of utilising the warm up and cool down time within a workshop to

increase the participants understanding of Hip Hop culture and share the history of the social and political conditions that originally gave rise to breakdancing.

During interview Paul Webster told me “I’ve done a lot of summer schools where young people get to come and try all elements of Hip Hop and then you know get a certificate for it or whatever to say they’ve tried it”. Graf writer Wigz similarly reflected on his Graffiti workshop content saying “regarding murals, I’ll usually stick to a style the young people and youth workers can relate to and try include characters. These are mainly readable old school styles, stuff they might have seen in subway art”. Graf writer Joe Snow said “the basics are very easy to learn so it’s easy to get people into”. These artists’ comments reflect the form-based primacy that is often forced by the expectation of the one-off Hip Hop arts workshop. The suggestion to move away from, or at least engage in critique of form, presents a tension. The maintenance of traditional form, as Forman (2013) points out, is an important part of the “powerful and ubiquitous discourse” (p.244-245) permeating Hip Hop conceptualisations of authenticity.

Some of the artists told me that they often did not have time within a one-off workshop to share information about the place that innovation and hybridity have played in the construction of Hip Hop as an art. A number of artists were hopeful that teaching Hip Hop would facilitate helping people discover their voice, and afford them an accessible means of expressing themselves in ways they otherwise would not. They were hopeful that this would lead to the people in question developing these skills in an innovative manner to create something new independently.

The primacy of a ‘form-based’ model over that of an ‘innovation-based’ model of Hip Hop in Hip Hop as community arts work is significant. By isolating a teachable formula of movements and methods, sometimes the fifth element of Hip Hop

(knowledge), the sixth element (overstanding) and the focus on innovation and resistance that has characterised the development of Hip Hop is disregarded in this context. For Trend (1997) “music can define alternative frames of reference for political thinking linked to new ways of articulating the body and means of experiencing the world” (p.168). Formularisation of the art form can be argued to pose a risk to the benefits listed by Trend and in turn challenges the development of alternative social and political discourse production through its practice.

It is undoubtedly easier for those wishing to transpose Hip Hop into an officialised space and to reap the advantages of its reputation for engaging those ‘disaffected’ to be able to select a version of Hip Hop that arrives at their door without the baggage of being challenging, resistant or critically engaged. This also perhaps accounts for the foregrounding of the peace, love, unity and having fun model of Hip Hop that a number of the artists expounded as an under-labourer for their socially engaged, commissioned work. The difficulty in evaluating and evidencing socially engaged, commissioned community-based arts interventions (Matarasso 1996, 1997, Merli 2002 and Belfiore 2009) could also play a part in this excessive structuring of outputs. The need for funded community music participation interventions, which seek to encourage social inclusion, to justify investment (in an instrumental policy context) can become detrimental to their original objectives through their focus on tangible outputs and with this dictate the parameters that delivering practitioners must operate within (Rimmer 2009).

The primacy of form is a tempting aspiration. Indeed in my experience of engaging in the production of Hip Hop I understand and have felt this temptation, for example when being offered a beat to write to I am drawn to those that are similar to the existing Hip Hop I most like and whilst something different is not out of the question

the task of writing to a beat that is very different (e.g. a higher tempo, an off-beat snare or high hat, in one instance even the suggestion by a crew mate we write a verse of five-beat bars instead of the traditional four) is definitely a more challenging task.

The temptation to nestle oneself comfortably as an MC in a burrow of 80-90bpm, boom-bap, iambic pentameter is strong. As artists to what degree do we innovate ourselves or encourage innovation or prioritise the knowledge or overstanding element when delivering externally commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop arts?

It could be argued that by accommodating the primacy of a formularised model of Hip Hop that is expected in the context of the externally commissioned workshop, artists are contributing to the de-politicization of Hip Hop. Or worse, that through failing to distinguish for participants the key differences between ‘convention’ and ‘rules’ in Hip Hop practice they are helping to reproduce activist and Womanist Alice Walker’s ‘prison of image’ (in Asante 2008). Asante (2008) describes the commercialisation of Hip Hop imagery and narrative stereotypes as contributing to the continued oppression of Black peoples in the USA through such a prison of image.

The artists I interviewed who were operating in the commercial Hip Hop realm described a similarly complex and contradictory relationship with the tension between formularisation and innovation in their work. I also observed these artists consciously making decisions about formularisation and innovation in examples of their work. I observed artists aligning their practice with established stylistic norms within Hip Hop, saying for example, that they would do a “mersh²⁹ track”, or an “up

²⁹ See glossary

in the club track” meaning that they would produce a track that followed the established conventions of what has now come to be commercially propagated rap music. Similarly, I heard artists refer to deliberately producing “an old skool boom bap track” meaning they would follow the conventions of 80-90bpm, early 1990s East Coast USA rap music production and style. On the other hand, I also experienced artists – often the same artists - foregrounding innovation in terms of content. This manifested in their lyrical or music production, coming up with ideas for tracks that they felt would challenge the existing conventions of UK Hip Hop music or would deal with explicitly ‘socially conscious’ themes in their lyrics that attempted to develop new, alternative social and political discourses.

In some cases, artists working in the externally commissioned, socially engaged context described formalised performer training as occurring, without enough sharing of the understanding of how the particular blend of styles and forms came to be. The logic of instrumentalism that pervades the context of socially engaged, commissioned Hip Hop arts work informs the set of creative practices and content arts workers are able to facilitate. Forman (2013) asserts that those delivering youth work through Hip Hop experience the same constriction of practice “as indicated by tendencies toward a restricted set of creative practices and content production, despite the good intentions of a progressive pro-social agenda there is also a circumscribed definition of civic participation and community that lies at the heart of many ‘Hood Work initiatives” (p.254).

The process of formalising Hip Hop participation through its transposition into official spaces and contexts runs the risk of negating the very things that make it. Here Lefebvre’s words are significant;

The 'cool' prevails. Everything is ostensibly de-dramatized; instead of tragedy there are objects, certainties, 'values,' roles, satisfactions, jobs, situations and functions. Yet there are powers, colossal and despicable, that swoop down on everyday life and pursue their prey in its evasions and departures, dreams and fantasies to crush it in their relentless grip. (2000: 65)

In challenge to Gardiner (2000) and Burkitt's (2004) theorisations about the interrelation of official and unofficial space prompting the development of creative, marginalised practice discussed in the previous sub-chapter, there is an argument to be made that by formalising Hip Hop, it becomes formularised. Benji Reid, speaking about the end of the Hip Hop theatre movement of the 1990s stated

...it became very comfortable, it stopped becoming edgy, dirty and experimental, it became very formulaic very quickly and I think as soon as something becomes formulaic and people start to formularise it then it starts losing the energy.

The argument that formalisation equals formularisation is an important one. Through self-reflective practice and self-critique artists are able to draw attention to when and where this happens. The current USA and UK experience does not however present a universal case for the formalisation of Hip Hop as leading towards a negative consequence. Shapiro's (2004) analyses of the institutionalisation of breakdancing in France, which portray an extremely positive account of this process (or more accurately processes of different types of institutionalisation) describes the formalisation of breakdancing (or *la danse Hip Hop*) as contributing to an interpretation of the practice that signifies the tying together of the social worlds of professional academic dance and Hip Hop culture into a culture of practice that both legitimises and prescribes, via a system of extended state support, which has also served to bridge different social classes and encourage social unity;

La danse hip-hop carries a philosophy of social life that promotes understanding and accepting differences and communicating across borders of class and culture as foundations of society...Although tensions exist between competing conceptions of hip-hop as culture or as a means for

social action, as an art form or as an entertainment open to commodification, a shared philosophy seems to be the underlying and uniting principle of la danse hip-hop in France. It translates the “positive values” extolled by American hip-hop into beliefs and actions that flow from different currents of French social reformism—namely, faith in the social power of collective action, of education and of art, all under the aegis of the state. (p.330)

In contrast to this idealisation of the institutionalisation of breakdancing in France, Looseley (2005) points to examples where the attempted formalisation of Hip Hop dance in France through its exposure to ‘professional’ dancers has resulted in “Hip-hoppers [being] expected to betray the defining characteristics of their art, which derive from oral spontaneity and competitive performance, by, for example, writing down and codifying their routines rather than relying on improvisation.” (p.152).

Looseley’s example here indicates the continued struggle in institutionalising Hip Hop culture (see also Dubois 2011). Shapiro (2004) does not however suggest that the institutionalisation of breakdancing has been a cohesive process, and she is investigating a context where such institutionalisation could be described as further developed and advanced in comparison to that of the UK, however la danse Hip Hop exists as an example of how collective social action may be promoted through Hip Hop within the context of increasing institutionalisation and professionalisation of practice.

There is a potential future interplay to be considered between the contexts of what is occurring in the externally commissioned, socially engaged arts realm and that of the commercial realm. This discussion has already touched on some of the existing ways that the commercial sphere impacts externally commissioned work (e.g. artists differentiating their workshop practice to take account of chart music trends, and the expectation by commissioners on the form of workshops based on their own experiences of commercial Hip Hop imageries and narratives). However, it is also

worth considering how the formularisation of performer training that is ostensibly occurring in some Hip Hop workshop scenarios may impact future commercial and everyday realms of Hip Hop engagement. If space is not afforded to sharing the innovative and experimental elements of Hip Hop culture within today's workshops, what place will tomorrow's artists give over to this aspect of their practice? Arguably there is an opportunity for artists working in externally commissioned workshop scenarios today to instil an understanding of the historical place of innovation and experimentation within the frameworks they use to approach their work to contribute to the skill building and voice finding capacity of Hip Hop that these artists so frequently cited as an inherent quality of the art form.

Whilst part of the voice finding capacity of Hip Hop was described by artists as being brought about by those new to the culture experiencing existing practice (which must necessarily take a form) in the context of social and accessible circumstances, these artists also valued the innovative, hybridised dimensions of Hip Hop that played a role in informing their historical experiences of the culture. If an absolute formularisation of the practice is to occur through its formalisation (through commissioner expectation and through artists' lack of critical self-reflexivity on their approach to their work) there is a risk that the voice finding element of the culture could be lost.

The previous four sections within this chapter have provided a critique of the current landscape of Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work in the UK. Specifically, this critical discussion has addressed the process and subsequent impact of the professionalisation of Hip Hop as 'arts work', its transposition into official spaces and its navigation of institutional rules. Some of the ways that content, form, artistic purpose and Hip Hop's tactics are altered within this context have been

acknowledged and dissected. The following chapters go on to explore the responses to these circumstances that artists are developing through their work, where artists are challenging these conditions and seeking spaces to encourage cultural democracy.

4.4 Creating agency: spaces for cultural democracy in different Hip Hop contexts?

The previous chapters have discussed some of the key challenges facing the development and deployment of Hip Hop in different contexts and investigated how systemic conditions and external social imperatives have shaped the practice of Hip Hop. In addition to the meta-influence of Hip Hop practice on discourses about the nature of cultural value, pluralism and “overturning the traditional power relations between art forms and between artist and public” that Looseley (2005) claims Hip Hop is informing, we must ask; where do the specific opportunities for reclaimed emancipated reflections and actions that Hope (2011) references exist within Hip Hop arts work imposed upon community, youth and public groups?

Aside from the perceived advantages of employing Hip Hop for socially engaged, commissioned work cited by the artists (its relevance, its appeal as a resistant and rebellious culture, its continued cultural cache, a sense of empathy and common identity between artists and ‘disaffected’ individuals) they also described how they perceived Hip Hop empowered workshop participants. The following sections explore these accounts in relation to the tactics for resistance presented in the literature review to explore how Hip Hop might usefully find its voice through applied and commercial contexts. Through the synthesis of research findings and literature it seeks to resolve some of the issues raised in the previous chapters and

discusses what the conditions are that may encourage resistance and agency within these contexts.

The following discussion suggests the practical ways that the conditions impacting Hip Hop in different contexts are being challenged (and may be challenged) in the attempt to work towards the deployment of Hip Hop as a productive framework for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. It highlights instances where artists *are* identifying spaces for encouraging agency through seeking opportunities for rupture in practice leading to critical engagement, alternative discourse formulation, and empowerment through voice discovery. In this way the artists are helping participants to develop and increase their 'resistant capital' (Yosso 2005) through Hip Hop. This is especially important when we are talking about Hip Hop's use as externally commissioned, socially engaged work, to engage those who may not already be engaged in the culture - in other words a form of democratising culture rather than cultural democracy - it is key to explore where the opportunities reside within this context to create spaces to encourage cultural democracy to explore how Hip Hop as methodology may retain the integrity of its voice in this context in the long term.

4.4.1 Seeking spaces for critical engagement

The previous discussion has highlighted the need for enhanced critique of the politics of the spaces within which Hip Hop currently finds itself operating including the relationship between official and unofficial spaces. This section develops this theme to explore where opportunities to engage in critiques of the politics of space may be sought, and of the ways that cultural value is communicated may be sought within

Hip Hop practice, as well as the means through which those opportunities are (or might be) created.

The analysis of interview data showed some limited evidence of artists finding ways to challenge the notion of formalisation and formularisation through their role as socially engaged, commissioned practitioners and as commercial practitioners. For example, the DJs and producers I interviewed and observed encouraged participants in their workshops to experiment with the technical equipment they were using. They also made an effort to explain the common idioms of Hip Hop within their work including cut and paste, sampling and (for MCs) intertextuality. This was however, frequently weighed against the expectations of commissioners to produce tangible outputs within considerable time constraints, including pieces of music or lyrics, and for Graffiti workshops, pieces of artwork.

For the participants involved in externally commissioned practice and listeners of Hip Hop whom I observed, they often became to some extent emerged in a conversation about the world around them. This engendered a kind of critical engagement with the social and political issues that impacted them in their everyday lives. Some artists are seeking out opportunities for the “reclaimed emancipated reflections and actions” and spaces for critique that Hope (2011: 9) suggests can encourage cultural democracy as a kind of framework for critical practice within socially engaged, commissioned arts work.

Scott Akoz explained that part of his approach to workshops always involved engaging participants in learning about the history of Hip Hop and breakdance and the struggle through which the practice emerged rather than concentrating exclusively on teaching the form of breakdance. He explained that this focus on the spreading of knowledge was how he was taught to deliver breakdance workshops (by experienced

veteran B-boys) and that he saw it as an important element of the commissioned, socially engaged work he now carries out. He described part of the impact of engendering these critically engaged discussions as being to increase participant understanding about the commodification of Hip Hop and the Hip Hop message as well and their understanding of the politics underpinning Hip Hop's evolution.

There are examples from the artists I interviewed that evidence their seeking out opportunities within their work to discuss how notions of authenticity are constructed in Hip Hop and the tensions between materialism and social conscientisation that exist in the discourse of Hip Hop. These can be read as specific examples of rupture in expected modes of participation within socially engaged, commissioned arts.

Breakdancer Paul Webster told me;

I have always felt that it's important to not lose the authenticity of Hip Hop, and the whole message of respect and knowledge [rather than materialism as essentialism]...So with the community work I do I've always tried to represent really authentic Hip Hop and sort of talk to the young people about that and sort of have discussions with them about that....

This passage demonstrates the artist utilising an awareness of the conditions of present-day Hip Hop impacted by the surrounding context of present-day capitalism and using this to encourage critical discussion of these conditions with the individuals he works with. This awareness and emphasis on the materialistic and capitalist conditions within which Hip Hop (and society) currently exists and operates is significant. This can be viewed as a statement about the increasing commercialisation and perceived decline in 'real' Hip Hop. Hip Hop's acute acknowledgement and critique of the contemporary capitalist conditions within which it operates as observed in Paul's example above and can be positioned as form of resistant challenge to the existing structures of cultural hegemony that impact on it. This example can be used to demonstrate the capacity of externally commissioned,

socially engaged Hip Hop for critically engaged, decentred critique. Conversely, it can also be positioned in opposition to the notion of genuine plural cultural value associated with cultural democracy. The conceptions about ‘real’ Hip Hop held by artists imply a fixed, and hierarchical set of values that contradicts the notion of democratic cultural decision making and cultural value.

The sort of informal opportunity for engendering critique and political engagement referenced in Paul Webster’s above response was common in the accounts I collected from the Hip Hop artists. Though not the primary focus of their work, the artists working regularly in communities seize such opportunities to encourage this kind of discussion through their workshops. The example above drawn from the interview with Paul Webster demonstrates that these discussions can be motivated in part through the desire for tactical preservation and articulation of notions of authenticity in Hip Hop relating to the conceptualisation that a knowledge and appreciation of ‘back in the day’ Hip Hop is a requisite for ‘keepin it real’ (McLeod 1999, Forman 2015). Similarly, Testament reflected on the countercultural aspect of the Hip Hop voice within his work as a socially engaged practitioner saying “For me it’s applying the countercultural message of Hip Hop. It’s often goes against the status quo, it is a voice of rebellion - using this as inspiration for young people to find their own voice, and do their own place in the world. Hip Hop often makes its own status quo.”

The few examples highlighted within the research where artists are seeking opportunities to encourage resistance and engaged critique through rupture indicate the potential of Hip Hop in this context as a framework for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy and its use as a critical pedagogy. Cultural agency was encouraged by virtue of empowerment through spatial reconfiguration and designation of space for participants to express themselves. The examples listed do

not however reflect the expanse of resistant ‘tactics’ of the sort discussed in the literature review that are active within the wider Hip Hop context. It can be said that some ‘Hip Hop community arts workers’ are drawing on the resistant meta-philosophy of Hip Hop to inform and shape their work with public and community groups. Some artists are seeking out spaces to encourage critical engagement as a deliberate and foundational element of their methodology for work in this context. Conversely, for others there is more of an opportunistic approach to engendering critical engagement where they are seizing opportunities to engage participants in critical dialogue about the commodification of culture and the political tensions that underpin Hip Hop where those opportunities present themselves.

In the vein of Hope (2011) within applied Hip Hop work opportunities exist to focus on moments of space within participation where disruption of usual modes of participation can happen. This is a suggestion for artists to seek moments of disruption and dissent through which attention can be drawn to the tension between official and unofficial notions of culture and space. In doing so, artists may focus and elaborate on these moments and explore how the idioms and techniques of Hip Hop support in the creation of these moments (i.e. the manipulation of language, the act of reclaiming public space, DIY, cut and paste).

For those operating within grassroots and commercial contexts there are also opportunities to seek out moments of disruption, whether this be through the rupture of expected modes of language use, through the construction of alternative social and political discourses and the use of distancing techniques (i.e. didactic Brechtian distancing effects or operating as a Gramscian Hip Hop intellectual), or through the disruption of physical (as in Graffiti) or lexical (as in rap) space more generally.

These acts of disruption create spaces for critical engagement for both producers, participants and spectators that can be exploited in the name of resistance.

The ethnographic observations undertaken during this research found examples of artists labouring under a commercial imperative seeking out spaces through which they could encourage critical engagement. One artist had an opinion on the preparation of tracks for radio that links into the commercial/conscious debate in Hip Hop outlined in the literature review, which provided insight into the complexity of the process artists undergo in navigating the parameters of their practice in relation to the systemic conditions that surround their work. J. Chambers an MC from Manchester who records and releases music as well as being heavily involved with community based and socially engaged Hip Hop projects told me that;

It's when business meets art...there's an inner argument...there's definitely pressure to become more commercialised...I find myself defending being a socially conscious MC, people ask what Hip Hop do you do? People are trying to push socially conscious stuff now...too much swearing is hard to play on radio...and there are a lack of radio edits generally.

The above quote demonstrates that the process of navigation undertaken by artists in relation to the conditions that impact upon their work cannot be said to be as straightforward as differentiation (or in this case commercial dissemination) equals depoliticization. The above quote also demonstrates the continued relevance of the place of social conscientisation in Hip Hop, in other words the 'knowledge' element discussed in the literature review. The recent emergence of USA rapper Kendrick Lamar positioned as an explicitly 'conscious' rapper and the monumental degree of

commercial success he has achieved³⁰ have reinvigorated and reframed this argument to some extent within Hip Hop (e.g. Love 2016). J. Chambers' comments echo those made by UK socially conscious rapper Akala at the 2015 Hip Hop history event panel referenced in the literature review where he draws attention to the relative spread of conscious and commercial voices and messages that have always been present within rap. At the same event Akala also locates the interplay between the commercial and conscious as an important aspect of Hip Hop's messaging and its power to engender critical engagement saying;

I think a part of why a lot of my generation and the young yout's here and going to prisons and elsewhere there's an ear for the stuff I've got to say [now] its partly coz of the way I started, like 'yo he's stood on a police car, and he had a bald head and he was talking some madness', and I was inspired by a lot of the artists we've spoken about here today, the NWAs, the Mobb Deep's the etcetera, that voice and aggression. (UZN 2015)

Akala was responding to questions about the influence of popular USA Hip Hop during his younger years and shifts in his mode of practice over time. Here Akala refers to his negotiation of an identity that resonates with a socially conscious narrative and a thug narrative. He demonstrates the significance of considering how aggression and dissent can attract listeners to engage in socially conscious themes highlighting the intricacy of the course rappers navigate between these two roles. Akala frames his continued success in terms of varied influencing artists and the value of verbal dissent as a precursor for conscious social engagement. J. Chambers also cited a similar function of the interplay between commerce and conscious as

30 Forbes Africa labelled Kendrick Lamar the 'conscious capitalist' in a 2017 article, highlighting the interesting juxtaposition in Hip Hop as a practice that occupies a firm footing in the commercial realm and also a practice of resistance and social conscientisation.

being important to Hip Hop saying that “All artists start off a bit angry, but through writing about the things you’re living that make you angry, you explore and ask why – you question – and through that questioning that pushes you towards the socially conscious”. The ability of rappers to move between these two realms, and the importance these artists place on their ability to do this exists as an example in practice of the sort of Hip Hop Gramscian intellectualism theorised by Pollard (2014).

The power of Hip Hop to be a space of dissent/competition/aggression as well as a space of engagement in social and political discourse is not to be underestimated in consideration of the abilities of rap artists to embody the role of the organic intellectual and the interrelationship between the conscious and commercial. This is not to disregard the narrowing of conscious messages in mainstream Hip Hop that has occurred during its commercialisation in recent decades (see Rose 2008, Asante Jnr 2008) but to point out that spaces for critical engagement remain in commercial Hip Hop. This narrowing and hollowing out of commercially propagated rap music has done much to suppress the range of voices and perspectives within rap that are amplified. In the same Hip Hop history panel in the UK, seated next to Akala, Talib Kweli observes “you have a thousand million conscious rappers but you don’t hear about them coz their music’s not on radio no more” (2015). The complexity of the interplay between commerce and conscious is positioned by J. Chambers and Akala above as a strength of Hip Hop in that an interest in the former can encourage a drive towards the seeking out of the latter. It is also arguably demonstrative of the ‘working through’ existing cultural and commercial hegemonic infrastructures cited by Lipsitz (1997) that Hip Hop undertakes, which can be positioned as a nuanced act of resistance of the sort that Dhoest et al (2015) argue to be characteristic of contemporary subcultural practice. These kinds of examples highlight the

opportunities that continue to exist within commercial Hip Hop to create spaces for critical engagement (for both artists and listeners).

4.4.2 The development of alternative critical discourses

The development of alternative critical discourses through Hip Hop practice was one specific area where the research found more examples within commercial and grassroots, everyday engagement in the culture compared to the externally commissioned, socially engaged arts context. The artists working in the externally commissioned workshop context professed to take a specific interest in helping to empower participants through voice discovery and cultural freedom through engagement with a culture they could remake in their own image. However, there were far fewer instances of the encouragement of participants to develop critical discourses through the art they produced during workshops. Perhaps for artists this presented too great a challenge to the expectations of commissioners and to the institutional rules and expectations that impacted their work in this context, which relates back to the impact of formalisation and formularisation outlined in the previous chapter. In this particular process it could be said that artists working in the commercial realm enjoy greater freedom than those working as socially engaged Hip Hop arts workers. The following analysis of a Don't Flop³¹ rap battle – developed from my ethnographic field notes - introduces and illustrates various instances of Hip Hop tactics' resistance outlined in the literature review. The artists carved out spaces

31 A British rap battle league

within which they used distancing techniques to engender critical engagement for the audience whilst acting as Gramscian intellectuals.

Don't Flop is a commercial rap battle league. All of the artists I interviewed who were involved in the league were financially compensated for their appearances, and many of them viewed their participation in the league as a means of increasing their exposure to a larger audience and fortifying their reputation. For some this was to further their career as a battle rapper and others saw it as an opportunity to gain exposure to further their careers as rappers away from the battle scene, to increase their music sales and/or to raise their commercial profile in order to get booked for more gigs. The battles are held as public music events where admittance to the public is charged, the battles are then posted on YouTube for increased advertising and exposure.

The following passages are drawn from ethnographic observation of the Don't Flop Matter vs. Harry Baker battle that took place in November 2015;

...Matter's next line goes "you have a swag that says I did my dissertation on battle rap" using class as an incitement to highlight perceived inauthenticity as an artist. Matter then continues on this theme berating Harry Baker for his public attempts at 'poetry' and making reference to attention he has previously gained from institutions such as BBC Radio 4. The crowd are openly laughing at many of Matter's lines...Earlier Matter had joked about Baker attending 'non gender specific poetry readings' and Baker claps back with a line about that not being true because he gets loads of bitches, then he instantly turns straight to the camera and drops his rhyming cadence to say "I would just like to apologise to the non gender specific poetry community for my use of the word bitch". The crowd cheers at Baker's flip on Matter's line.

In the final round Matter begins a diatribe about Baker's class and privilege saying "you got funding, sent to seminars and never faced no pressure for nothing". Then says "poetry is supposed to provoke thought and maybe even ignite a movement, you seem content with mild amusement". Then goes on to say "Eurgh looks at you and sees that pseudo-intellectual money, that Guardian money, that Edinburgh Festival money...Sad fact your boy Rowan's just following the pound sign."

Here both rappers' use of class as a metaphorical target for the punchlines of their bars can be positioned as the construction of a narrative on authenticity in present day Hip Hop and a discourse around the appropriation of Hip Hop by culturally hegemonic institutions. Matter's lines about "pseudo-intellectual money, Guardian money, Edinburgh festival money" and BBC Radio 4 serve as a critique of the appropriation of Hip Hop and its cultural cache by dominant cultural institutions. They imply that Baker's association with these institutions makes him 'less authentic' as a Hip Hop rapper and more concerned with seeking commercial reward than 'keepin it real'. These tactics can be located as examples of what Dimitriadis (2009) refers to as Hip Hop's unique practice of artists themselves explicitly discussing the meaning of what constitutes 'popular'. This is in effect an example of de Certeau's (1988) concept of La Perruque as theorised in Hope (2011) as one of the ways that space can be created within which traditional ways of communicating cultural value may be critiqued.

Matter employs a similar tactic when he levels the accusation at Baker of being involved in "non gender specific poetry readings". The humour within this line resides in the notion that Baker's involvement in a poetry scene external to Hip Hop diminishes his reputation as 'Hip Hop' and that Baker is concerned with involvement in highly 'politically correct' and bourgeois pastimes that for their focus on political correctness and bourgeois character sit in opposition to the values of Hip Hop. When Baker flips Matter's lines about his involvement in "non gender specific poetry readings" he uses Matter's accusations about his class and involvement in this poetry scene to simultaneously acknowledge his involvement and make an ironic statement about the gendered nature of Hip Hop and the incongruity between the two spoken word scenes. The crowd are appreciative denoting their understanding of the nuances

between the two scenes and the understanding of the use of misogynistic vocabulary in Hip Hop. Here Baker is managing to both use the term bitches and simultaneously highlight the unacceptableness of the use of the term within Hip Hop.

The combination of the Hip Hop tactics at play within this exchange serve as a means of rupturing the expected modes of lyrical interchange within the battle. Both rappers' use of humour as a Deleuzian tactic inadvertently forces the audience to engage with ideas about class, misogyny and cultural appropriation within Hip Hop culture.

Baker's 'flip' on Matter's accusations about non gender specific poetry where he drops cadence and turns to camera (essentially a 'breaking of the fourth wall' in theatre terms) functions with similarities to Brechtian V-effekt distancing for the audience (both the audience present and those who will later watch the performance recording), as a type of ironic Hip Hop didacticism.

Throughout the rounds both performers make jibes at each other's appearance. Towards the end of his verse Matter finishes by asking "before I head to the bar to neck a couple of shots, I've got something to say and I don't care if I get judged or not, I realise this might not be the best platform to push this on, but fuck it...Jeremy Corbyn is a fucking don". The crowd explodes in agreement whooping and hollering so that Matter has to pause before starting his next lines.

Matter's closing lines about Left-wing Labour opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn are an unusually explicit example of political narrativization and critique within the battle scenario. This is evidenced by Matter's pre-qualification "I realise this might not be the best platform to push this on...". Whilst during the course of this research I have observed a number of spaces created through live Hip Hop performance through which rappers construct and share alternative political discourses, this is perhaps the most forthright example of creating a space for such narrativization through disruption of the expected form of lyrical interchange in a battle that I witnessed.

Matter uses the same sort of rupture technique as Baker uses to speak to the camera

earlier in the round to expound an explicit Leftist political allegiance. In rupturing the usual flow and pattern of the battle exchange in this way Matter demonstrates an example of critical political engagement through Hip Hop.

At the time of writing this thesis a Right-wing, Conservative Government sits in power in the UK and the opposition leader to which Matter refers has been positioned by the mainstream media in recent years as a radical socialist. Corbyn's engagement in Leftist political activism since the 1970s has been viewed by the mainstream media and the current Right-wing Government as problematic. Corbyn has enjoyed unprecedented grassroots support throughout his time in opposition by movements such as Grime 4 Corbyn³², which according to Crack Magazine (2017) influenced 24% of Grime fans to vote. Corbyn's leadership has ignited further movements such as Momentum³³ and The Movement for Cultural Democracy³⁴. Therefore, when Matter invokes Jeremy Corbyn's name in his bars he is aligning not just with a Leftist political stance but specifically with a particular strain of Leftism associated with grassroots empowerment and the support of the Hip Hop scene. As with all battle lines, the bar is intended to garner a reaction from the audience as within Don't Flop the audience reaction judges the winner of the battle. Undoubtedly Matter takes a risk in foregoing a joke or punchline in the traditional sense of the battle by using this explicitly political line in his closing remarks, but also, he is playing to the political proclivities of the audience. The crowd reaction in response to this line is remarkable

32 www.grime4corbyn.com

33 www.peoplesmomentum.com

34 www.culturaldemocracy.uk

and probably denotes the loudest cheer of the evening amongst the gathered audience. This example represents the sort of Hip Hop Brechtian didacticism that Mayer (2005) argues to be a characteristic of Hip Hop performance processes. It also highlights the preparedness of the crowd to engage in explicit political discourse within the context of the battle scenario. However, it is worth highlighting here that whilst the audience are being 'forced to think' in the Deleuzian sense, the performance and the battle scenario do not accommodate room for dissent amongst the audience, only performative, potential dissent from the rapper's opponent.

Reflections on the Don't Flop battle highlight a number of things about the nature of the rap battle and the potentiality of Hip Hop as a vehicle for cultural democracy. The two rappers employ a sophisticated mixture of techniques and tactics in combination that support the idea of Hip Hop as a critically engaged practice, creating space through their performance process for explicit, decentred social and political critique. There are examples contained within the rap battle that resonate with the notion of creating space for the rupture of traditional expectations about content and form within cultural expression and about forms of participation.

The role of the audience as arbitrators of success in the battle denotes a process of active participation and, it could be said, empowerment amongst an audience within a performance scenario. Conversely, this could also be said to be a process of disempowering the minority and the question must be asked whether there is space for disagreement within this sort of scenario. Arguably the audience are empowered to participate in the sense that they are asked to 'judge' the results of the battle through shouting up for who they think performed best. However, this is a tactic that empowers the majority rather than anything that can be said to denote equity in terms of negotiating cultural value. Those who disagree with the results of the battle openly

discuss their disagreement outside the venue afterwards and this kind of debate is welcomed, however, this method of ‘participation’ for the audience can be positioned as an example of the problem with some forms of participation discussed in the literature review (by Hope 2011, Stevenson 2016, Jancovich 2015, Cooke and Kothari 2001), that it essentially silences dissent. Whilst the performers are encouraged to adopt a position of dissent, the rules of the battle are such that the audience majority opinion is favoured.

There are a number of examples within the battle where the crowd are asked questions (sometimes these are rhetorical, sometimes they are literal). There are also a couple of instances where the audience are asked to inject their own ideas into the performance material, for example Matter’s question “what rhymes with Harry Baker?”. Matter’s closing lines however represent an enhanced degree of emancipation for the spectators, inviting them, by virtue of their agreement or disagreement with a certain politics, to engage with and consider their current allegiances within the current political climate in the UK. Again, this tactic echoes a quasi-Brechtian didacticism of sort employed at various points throughout the battle. By operating in the liminal dimension between ‘your mum’ jokes and jibes at their opponents’ appearances and extreme political narrativization, these performers demonstrate the effectiveness of the role of the ‘Gramscian organic intellectual in Hip Hop’ (Pollard 2014) by creating a critical pedagogy through navigating between the politically conscious and shallow vanity binary associated with Hip Hop. These performers move easily between the role of socially engaged narrator and court jester - making space to challenge the boundaries of these categorisations.

Three central themes can be identified within the blend of tactics utilised by these performers within the Don’t Flop rap battle example; The creation and claiming of

space for decentred critique, the manipulation of language as an act of resistance (specifically through the use of humour and vulgarity in the aforementioned example), and the use of rupture/disruption as an act of resistance and distancing technique.

Within the externally commissioned, socially engaged context the research found far fewer examples of the sort above where the development of alternative, critical discourses was explicitly encouraged. This was in part the result of the time constraints placed upon artists working in this context, and in other instances the rules of the official spaces where this work took place prevented artists from encouraging the sort of critical engagement and dissent contained within the examples discussed above. This was particularly evident in the work of Graffiti artists whose workshop provision was necessarily discouraged from exploring themes of spatial re-appropriation and its politics given the prohibited nature of ways this usually occurs within unofficial and informal spaces.

Graffiti artists that I interviewed focussed on form and output within their workshops and did not have the opportunity to explore the politics of spatial reclamation within their workshops. In this way it can be said that an explicit depoliticisation of Hip Hop is occurring through this process. For the MCs I interviewed involved in Hip Hop work in this context, they experienced a slightly more expansive and flexible set of expectations of the content of their workshops. Though they were similarly constrained by time and bound by institutional rules there were a small number of artists who felt confident in the process of encouraging their workshop participants to develop lyrics that focussed on challenges to existing social and political narratives.

The research found a number of artists are seeking more indirect methods to circumnavigate the institutional rules that impact their work so that they can

encourage the conscientisation of their participants. These included using socially conscious rap lyrics as a provocation for participants to engender critical discussion, which can be positioned as an attempt to encourage the Brechtian radicalisation of the spectator that Mayer (2005) writes about, and the emancipated spectator that Ranciere (2009) conceptualises. The research similarly found examples of artists using parts of their sessions to discuss the broader tenets and elements of Hip Hop culture and its history foregrounding the ‘knowledge’ and ‘innovation’ elements of the culture and discussing the wider social politics that gave rise to the emergence of Hip Hop culture in the USA. In terms of the resistant tactical processes of performance outlined in the literature review however, my observations of commercial Hip Hop endeavours demonstrated far more examples than my observations and conversations regarding Hip Hop as socially engaged, externally commissioned work.

In terms of how the formulation of alternative discourses come to be created through Hip Hop practice, aside from the rupturing of space, reference to the process of ‘voice discovery’ through Hip Hop was a commonly cited trope within the data findings during conversations with artists. A number of the artists I interviewed stated that one of the main ways that they felt Hip Hop encouraged agency was as a tool for helping its participants to find their creative voice. The following section explores this phenomenon in more detail.

4.4.3 Voice discovery, being in ‘flow’, and visualisation of the ‘self’ as artist

A number of artists spoke about the self-empowerment of the participant through Hip Hop workshops i.e. self-expression, enjoyment, building confidence, building a friendship network, voice-finding, what Forman (2013) refers to as an ill-defined version of empowerment. Rapper and Graffiti writer Joe Snow told me “for me the

Hip Hop mind state orchestrates around building up skills and working on talents to realise self-worth, ultimately this can lead to a sense of purpose”. Similarly, Shane ‘10 Tonn’ Fenton said “The work I do with the young people is about, self-belief, confidence, dreams, brotherhood and sisterhood and that we are one.”

The themes of voice discovery, self-worth and visualisation of the self as artist arose frequently when artists discussed the empowering qualities of Hip Hop used for externally commissioned, socially engaged arts. They are also motivated at times by the desire to support in ‘voice-discovery’ and promote the reconsideration of cultural value regimes. One artist referenced a focus on the cultural pluralism of Hip Hop, through his work Bigg Taj told me that he emphasised “not many workshops/sessions would talk about confidence in yourself and doing what you want to do and being proud.” (Bigg Taj). This statement highlights the potential opportunities within Hip Hop community arts work for valorising the notion of the self as creative being and *doing what you want to do* in terms of cultural expression.

The modes of empowerment described by the artists revolved largely around facilitating the conditions for individual self-expression, transcendence of ones’ environment or social circumstances and voice-discovery rather than direct references to collectivised community transformation or social activism articulated in conversations about the historical ‘purpose’ of Hip Hop. This is an interesting distinction. On one hand the historical ‘purpose’ of Hip Hop was cited by a number of artists as being based in collective social and community action, however in practice in present day the artists spoke of Hip Hop as being fundamentally empowering on an individual level. It was difficult to ascertain whether the artists felt that these levels of empowerment (collective and individual) continued to function simultaneously to some extent. These artists also perceived the commercialisation of

Hip Hop and an increasing focus on consumer capitalism to have significantly impacted this shift. Here I do not make a judgement about whether community social action or individual empowerment is more important in this context, but rather I aim to highlight the disconnect between historical perceptions of Hip Hop's purpose (which were heralded as its justification for use as socially applied arts work) and its qualities for empowerment today (which are somewhat at odds with the notion of collective action).

Speaking on rap specifically the artists highlighted the idea of voice-giving and voice discovery as a metaphor for empowerment. During interview Testament told me that;

Using Hip Hop in arts participation correctly can get instant engagement from participants. It can encourage them to dig deeper into their experiences, opinions and work hard on creating their own work. (interview with Testament)

Testament's use of the word 'opinions' in this insight also implies a process of developing wider social narratives.

The advantages are things like helping to get things off your mind or being able to express feeling that you may not have been able to do through talking. If I am doing a session of creative writing with young mothers for example, they are able to write down things on their mind which they may not have wanted to share otherwise. (Spee Six Nine)

It comes down to giving young people a voice to speak, let the young people tell their stories, be a positive influence in their lives too. (Bigg Taj)

These passages highlight the potential for rap to function as a means of alternative emotional expression and a structure within which to form, process and articulate self-narratives, which can work as a site of "counter-nihilism and counter-destructiveness" (Hadley and Yancy 2012: xxxi). Take for example Klashnekoff's (2004) lyrics in *Daggo Mentality* "Suffocate my pain, keep it contained within the pages, its less dangerous, channel my chi into changes".

Hip Hop's perceived role in supporting and transforming communities was described variously by the artists I interviewed as occurring through the means of voice discovery and self-visualisation as a creative producer;

...it would happen in the street and that's what was so important about Hip Hop at the time. It was totally accessible as an art. And this allowed people to see themselves as dancers and see themselves as Graffiti artists and musicians and DJs under this cultural language called Hip Hop. (interview with Benji Reid).

Benji's words here are reflected in Hadley and Yancy (2012) who state "rap and Hip Hop provide structure within which youth can achieve a sense of themselves as creators" (p.xvii). It could be said that in this way Hip Hop engagement is functioning to nurture aspirational capital (Yosso 2005). A number of other artists also positioned Hip Hop as a vehicle for voice-finding listing it as a "communicative tool" (interview with J Chambers, MC), and variously as a means of expressing feelings, expressing oneself (in a way that one might not be able to do through talking alone) and, for beatboxer Bigg Taj it was described as "let[ting] the young people tell their stories".

In support of the idea of empowerment through visualisation of the self as artist the research identified the need for investment in resources that propagate 'everyday' participation in Hip Hop culture, for example legal Graffiti walls and community studios, which were cited by a number of the artists I interviewed as being fundamental for creating autonomous cultural agency for those involved in Hip Hop culture. Where legal Graffiti walls exist, they are well used, as evidenced by Unity's account of the popularity of the 300ft 'hall of fame' in Cardiff. The research also identified examples of where localities have a cultural history of strong community studio provision a meaningful contribution is made not just to the development of local artists and increased social cohesion but also to future generations of community workers. These sorts of provisions offer a method to meld together the

states of 'community arts engagement' and 'inherent creativity/organic everyday engagement' given that they are accessible to all and used by professional artists as well as beginners. Ste Allen speaking on the history of the long running Nottingham community studio provision CRS told me about the contribution made by the studio;

There are two faces, two groups, two community centres in Notts that have received funding that have done immense work in allowing people the space to produce art...CRS a community recording studio for the last - there's a documentary that's just come out called NG83 about when Hip Hop first arrived in Notts in 1983 that generation of Breakdancers, and then that generation were the first to set that up in community groups, then the generation after that is when community groups were embedded - So there's CRS near Stenton Market, this is run by Trevor Rhodes and Nick Stead, they are not only community workers but nurture the talent out of seemingly talentless kids³⁵ then send them out in the wider world so there's a lot of Notts artist that have been through that programme and are now community workers themselves. From what I see, and I've been here a while, Notts is a bit unique you don't see that [the training of new practitioners] in every city.

The above passage from my interview with Ste Allen highlights the valuable interplay that can be achieved between community-based Hip Hop provision and Hip Hop in the commercial context. Through the provision of community studio resources engagement at a fundamental grassroots level is encouraged and artists are supported firstly in their visualisation of self as artist, then in tackling the conditions imposed upon them moving into the commercial realm of Hip Hop.

The above account of CRS in Nottingham also highlights the importance of thinking longer term about the socially engaged Hip Hop projects being commissioned and their impact. The impact on participation and ongoing engagement with creative cultural expression resulting from longer term projects was also referenced by

35 This turn of phrase was employed within the context of our conversation to imply the dominant hegemonic institutional view on the talents of said young people rather than to imply that the young people were 'talentless' or that the Hip Hop workers viewed them this way.

Breakdancer Paul Webster in describing his journey towards becoming a full-time applied Hip Hop arts worker. Paul was not alone in recounting the role that a longer term funded Hip Hop project played in introducing him and his peers to Hip Hop and breakdance in the first place. Paul stated that the ongoing nature of the project allowed proper opportunity for developing an interest and working on a skill set. To reiterate what Unity told me regarding her applied Graffiti work in Cardiff, at the very least there is a benefit to “keep[ing] a link when the project is finished so I’m still supporting people in that community”. Unity is currently involved in a rare long-term Graffiti project in the city of Cardiff. At the time of writing the project is in its early stages, but Unity hopes that the extended, yearlong, project will provide a meaningful opportunity to engage with and support people in the area with the skills and resources they need to develop their own practice.

In addition to voice discovery as a mode of empowerment we can also locate the act of performing rap, specifically freestyling, as a sort of empowerment through the achievement of creative ‘flow’. Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow (1988, 1996, 2014) argue that being in ‘flow’ functions as a means of achieving optimal psychological experience during the undertaking of an activity whereby one can lose oneself in the moment through the act of deep concentration and focus. Csikszentmihalyi states the individual can attain a state of transcendence beyond their circumstances in that moment. Reflecting this sense of transcendence Joe Snow told me that “[Hip Hop] opens up a different walk of life which doesn't fit into the everyday nine to five money grind”. For Csikszentmihalyi the act of being in flow results in the person forgetting themselves, being unaware of the passage of time and, crucially, in terms of empowerment, a feeling of *being in control* (1996). Freestyling provides an exceptional example of the potential of being in flow because its success as a

performative act requires the individual to achieve a state of performance where lyrics are produced only semi-consciously and at a rate above and beyond that which the performer could consciously manifest.

I had a number of enthusiastic conversations with rappers about the feeling of flow they experienced in freestyle. Whilst some conceded that very experienced freestylers often had a stock repertoire of rhyming vocabulary they could draw on, there were also occasions when rappers achieved flow in their freestyling where they described feeling as if “lyrics were coming out faster than my head could produce them, it was just happening without me trying” (conversation with an MC during ethnographic fieldwork attendance at a Hip Hop night). There was however also an understanding amongst these artists that this was not something that usually occurred without the artist already being practiced and confident as an MC.

In my own experience as an MC despite a number of years practicing, I only achieved what I would determine being ‘in flow’ during a freestyle twice. This experience resonated strongly with the descriptions the other artists I interviewed gave about the act of lyrics being produced faster than the conscious brain has time to register them or make a decision about what you will say next. It is perhaps therefore that one-off workshops with those new to rap are unlikely to result in this sort of ‘in-flow freestyle’ experience. Though it is certainly something that with longer term provision targeted at those who are already engaged in the production of Hip Hop culture could be encouraged.

The act of being in flow also applies to the other Hip Hop elements, in the same way a rapper can be in flow during a performance the same can be said of a Graffiti artist/writer or a Breakdancer or a DJ. Aside from the specific example of freestyle flow, there were examples evidenced in the artists’ accounts of their workshop

experiences where they had witnessed participants being in flow in the activities they were undertaking. Klönism told me about his experiences of this (in facilitating a Graffiti art workshop);

As soon as I have written their name in a cool Graffiti style and all they have to do is colour it in with paint pens or whatever they will sit down for a full 2 hours and work on their painting. I believe art is a very relaxing, peaceful and personal expression for young people and in my experience I have seen it work in this way hundreds of times. And after lots of workshops I get social workers, youth workers and even correctional officers thanking me with amazement that I have managed to get a usually disruptive young person to sit down for ten minutes and do something let alone for two hours.

All of the above-mentioned artists speak about production and/or augmented performance as a means of empowerment. A number of MCs I interviewed cited using an example of a Hip Hop track as a basis for the starting point for their workshops. These tracks are usually selected by the artist according to what Hip Hop or rap is currently in the UK music charts and is currently seen as popular. The artists utilised the act of listening to these tracks with the people they were working with as a jumping off point to encourage discussion of the structure and content to lead towards encouraging participants to begin their own process of writing. The above examples demonstrate that empowerment through Hip Hop community work is not limited to the act of production but rather is also informed by the act of performing and the act of reception.

There were incidences evidenced where those delivering the project provision aimed to facilitate a sense of openness and ownership on the part of the individuals participating, encouraging them to lead the way in terms of workshop content;

From drugs to mental health, gangs to bullying all these topics come up a lot but generally the young people lead the way in the workshops I do. (Klönism)

I try to not censor or have topics that can't be discussed, for example if a young person wants to include something drug related in a mural it opens up the opportunity to talk about drug culture. (Joe Snow)

In reference to encouraging participants to have ownership over the work being produced, another artist brought to the fore the self-facilitation aspect of Hip Hop's DIY ethos in the context of empowerment

...the really accessible thing about writing lyrics is that you really don't need anything get started. You don't need records or paint or equipment. So if you can just give kids a few pointers and a bit of inspiration, it really is opening a whole world of opportunities for them which are free of charge. (Daddy Abe)

Similarly, promoter Ste Allen told me "Hip Hop, you don't need a lot of stuff to do it, it's always been the one that's allowed kids the most space to express you know, kids that need to express themselves". Many of the artists' descriptions of empowerment through Hip Hop contained cautions around the skills, knowledge and approach implemented by artists working in the commissioned context. There was evidence of definite perceptions of what it meant to implement work in the 'right' way;

If a practitioner plays into the negative stereotypes about Hip Hop or doesn't have enough knowledge about Hip Hop this can reinforce bad behaviours or creates a negative mood amongst participants. And also, participants might think Hip Hop is not for them, because of the stereotypes surrounding who does and does not DO Hip Hop. (Testament)

The requirement for those with an appropriate level of skill and working knowledge of Hip Hop to deliver work was commonly cited. Testament's comments above also reflect the impact of commercially propagated Hip Hop imageries and stereotypes on contemporary engagement in his reference to mis-perceptions around who does and does not do Hip Hop. The idea of artistic skill as a prerequisite for delivering Hip Hop workshops differed to the non-Hip Hop artists who I interviewed. The non-Hip Hop artists articulated the primacy of their role as facilitators over and above their identity as an artist in their own right as being important for meaningful community

arts work. Some of these individuals did identify as artists outside of the socially engaged work they undertook however they felt that their primary role in the community arts context was to facilitate the creative potential of the group they were working with. The Hip Hop artists referenced this encouragement and facilitation as being the same purpose that they fulfilled in their community work, but as discussed, they mostly continued to identify primarily as artists in that context.

As well as highlighting the need for individuals who are highly skilled and knowledgeable in the field of Hip Hop practice, artists also demonstrated concern that meaningfulness in socially engaged, commissioned work would require a deeper understanding by those commissioning it to avoid surface level tokenism and misappropriation of Hip Hop culture and practice. This, they felt, would be damaging to wider societal perceptions of the culture as well as disempowering to those already involved in the culture.

If it's done as a gimmick it's kind of disrespectful to the reality of what it is...Also a lot of the people that are writing Graffiti don't necessarily benefit from the use of their culture to engage with young people, it's like appropriation. (Unity)

The statements discussed above from Testament and Unity imply some level of critical reflexivity in the practice of Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned work. They also imply a level of responsibility for both artist and commissioner in undertaking the use of Hip Hop to inform this type of arts work.

4.4.4 Enhanced critical reflexivity

Primarily, it is the responsibility of those involved in the commissioning, facilitation and delivery of applied, socially engaged Hip Hop work to critically engage with the conditions that surround their work and to explore what role their work takes in

encouraging cultural democracy. This would be to strengthen Hip Hop artists' 'navigational capital' (Yosso 2005). It would mean to encourage and advocate for explicit forms of critical self-reflection for artists centring on the sort of questions being used by the experienced non-Hip Hop artists; about participant involvement, empowerment, decision making and agency. Such self-reflexivity would entail artists asking "whose voices are being heard?", "what work are we doing here, and why are we doing it?", "what are the social conditions that are impacting this work for the participants?", "what are the conditions being imposed upon my work by the commissioning bodies, and where do the spaces exist for participants to challenge them through this work?", "where is the space for engaged critique within this work?" and "why is Hip Hop the vehicle for this work?".

The need for enhanced critical reflexivity in such practice is acknowledged by some of the Hip Hop artists I spoke with. Speaking specifically on the trajectory of Hip Hop theatre Benji Reid described, with the benefit of retrospect, the ways that increased reflexivity may have supported the continued developmental evolution of the movement;

...I think part of what the major problem was, was that you had people who weren't really skilled or knowledgeable about their politics and then you had a weakness of skill within the culture of Hip Hop. There are three things I think were really important, a working knowledge of Hip Hop or an expertise in Hip Hop in one of the elements at least, a working knowledge of theatre and an understanding of your own politics whether that's exploring mainstream politics, exploring identity, exploring sexuality I think there was a lack of real interrogation when it came to make work. I am more interested in people interrogating how they make work because I think it's through that self-exploration that one can kind of really explore deep and meaningful work.

With the exception of Benji's second condition, which relates specifically to theatre making, a number of the other Hip Hop artists I interviewed recognised the first condition (strong skills and knowledge in Hip Hop practice) as pivotal for meaningful

Hip Hop community work. The third condition Benji references - an understanding of one's own politics and the need for explicit interrogation of how work is made - it seems - is happening less in Hip Hop community work. As Kelly (1984: 116) explains "Our [community artists'] working practices must include an analysis of the productive processes we use". The same is arguably true of commercially motivated Hip Hop activities. Increased self-reflexivity and critique of the ways that such work is being made may support in developing what Owen Kelly (1984: 43-47) and Francois Matarasso (2013) describe as a robust, political framework within which to embed community-based arts practice as a means of locating, preserving and foregrounding a critical dimension.

The suggestions discussed above place responsibility on the artists involved in applied work to take the initiative to engage in self-reflexive practice and to work towards enhanced conceptualisations of their methodological approaches. However, those involved in commissioning work face similar challenges if the development of a culture of meaningful commissioned, socially engaged Hip Hop work is to be sought. The involvement of artists in the design process for externally commissioned, socially engaged projects is crucial. It is similarly important to involve participants in such planning of provision, those already engaged in the culture within a locality may have very different needs to those new to the culture. For example, it may be that those already engaged in the culture require specific types of space or resources in order to further their production or performance capacity.

The deployment of Hip Hop in the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged work also provides a unique opportunity for critical engagement and reflection on the institutional and commercial conditions that impact upon work in this area. This discussion has already drawn attention to the ways that Hip Hop in this

context may engage through practice in critiques of the spaces where Hip Hop happens and the institutional rules that impact it. However, the research has also shown that what occurs in the commercial realm of Hip Hop impacts on the art form when it is transposed into an applied arts scenario. Here we can consider Dimitriadis' (2009) comments about the uniqueness of Hip Hop as a practice that its artists explicitly engage in discussion about the meaning of the popular and in turn about cultural value, and also Lipsitz' (1997) observation that Hip Hop protests *through* the structures of dominant commercial frameworks rather than outside of them. An opportunity is therefore presented to apply these characteristics to critiques of the conditions that impact on Hip Hop's increasing employment as a vehicle for the 'democratisation of culture'.

Examples have been illustrated throughout this discussion where artists are (directly or indirectly) seeking out opportunities to do this either through discussions of the history of the socio-political context that gave rise to Hip Hop, or for example through the use of socially conscious rap music content as a basis for encouraging participant engagement and critical conversation, or through the foregrounding of voice discovery and self-visualisation as an artist for participants. The nature of the externally commissioned Hip Hop workshop on one hand limits scope for critical engagement in terms of time constraints and commissioner expectations. On the other hand, it presents myriad opportunities for critical engagement through the production and reception of practice itself and through the ways that artists choose to interweave the element of conscientisation within their workshop delivery.

Ultimately it is for artists to explore where spaces to encourage this critical engagement can be found within their work. The informal development of Hip Hop as professional arts work over the last decade and a half has paradoxically meant that

Hip Hop in this context has retained some of the ‘unofficial’ subcultural cache that contributes towards its success as a method of engaging individuals who may choose not to engage in officially sanctioned, mainstream cultural activities and as such retains some of its capacity to act as a resistant, critically engaged practice. At the same time however, the professionalisation of Hip Hop in such a low key, precarious and ad hoc fashion has simultaneously denied Hip Hop artists working in this context the space and the status to engage in meaningful, extended consideration of their working processes and methodologies. In this way Hip Hop has been officially sanctioned to a degree that it meets instrumental public funding requirements for addressing a ‘social issue’, but not to the extent that its artists have been afforded the professional status, security and respect to consider themselves professional arts workers with a distinct remit to challenge the conditions within which they find themselves operating.

It is not for external commissioners to assume they know what meaningful Hip Hop community work should look like or how best to engage through this medium. In relation to this, it is also of importance to consider who the participants are that are to be ‘engaged’. Should we be engaging those who are already involved in Hip Hop culture? What more might there be to gain from engaging with these people?

Otherwise the process of commissioning Hip Hop to ‘engage’ randomly selected groups is an exercise in the democratisation of culture rather than anything remotely related to the idea of cultural democracy.

The concluding chapter in this thesis *Towards a Framework for Cultural Democracy* aims to reconcile some of the Hip Hop tactics for resistance outlined in the literature review, and discussed with artists, with the use of Hip Hop in the context of commerce, and externally commissioned, engaged arts work as a methodology for

encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. It builds on the examples discussed throughout the sections within this chapter to conclude this study by re-conceptualising how Hip Hop may function as a framework for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy within community work and within commercial work.

4.5 Conclusion: towards a framework for cultural democracy

This discussion has shown that Hip Hop values in different contexts of practice are varied and complex. The relationship between Hip Hop and the notion of cultural democracy is a complicated and contested one dependent on the dynamics of the context of practice. The analysis has focussed particularly on the context of Hip hop as used for socially engaged, externally commissioned arts work because it occupies a challenging space in between the notions of cultural democracy that resonate with grassroots, everyday Hip Hop engagement, and the democratisation of culture scenario that can be positioned in relation to the commercial Hip Hop realm and its propagation of select forms, content, imageries and narratives.

Hip Hop as externally commissioned, socially engaged practice struggles against and also must work within the rules of dominant cultural and governmental institutions and official spaces, which impact both its form and content. Despite these coercive forces that are at play within this Hip Hop context, the practice continues to demonstrate examples where spaces for rupture, resistance and dissent can be sought to preserve its cache and sub-cultural status as well as its capacity to exert some of the qualities that make it an appropriate medium for social engagement in the first place.

Hip Hop as community arts occupies a liminal space between antagonistic subculture of resistance with the capacity for community and individual empowerment through hegemonic critique, and at the same time an officially sanctioned, 'healthy' and non-agitative art form. What occurs within this space is often contradictory, sometimes ill-considered and at times incredibly powerful. Arguably Hip Hop in this context can function both as a DIY culture encouraging cultural democracy or as a professionalised art form, but so far this research suggests that currently in many cases it does not do these very successfully at the same time. The research evidence indicates that the professionalisation of Hip Hop in this context has contributed to a sanitisation of practice in some cases, which has worked to erode the prevalence of some of the knowledge and overstanding qualities in this form of practice.

From the preceding analyses I argue that Hip Hop continues to demonstrate potential as a positive vehicle for meaningful socially engaged arts work, but that currently there is a deficit within the application of practice in this context in the UK. There is a need for increased reflexivity and critique of the conditions of practice amongst those commissioning and delivering provision without which Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned work is at risk of ignoring its potential as a vehicle for empowerment and emancipation and instead edging towards a sanitised performer training regimen. The systemic conditions currently surrounding such work force artists to negotiate the terms of their practice within very thin boundaries indeed.

The displacement of Hip Hop from grassroots community and the focus on form rather than freedom contests the artists' need to justify their work as an instrumental vehicle for community transformation and empowerment. This creates challenging working conditions and, in some cases, encourages the sacrifice of the things that are professed at a basic level to make Hip Hop an appropriate medium for this work in

the first place. The same can be said of Hip Hop that is impacted by the conditions of commercialism, depending on the extent to which these conditions coerce the shape and form of the resulting practice.

The following conclusion explores the ways that we might usefully re-conceive of the use of Hip Hop's conceptual tactics in order to suggest ways that Hip Hop as applied practice may function as a methodological framework to encourage the conditions for cultural democracy. Through reconsideration of the issues faced by Hip Hop as applied practice this conclusion argues for a broader conceptualisation of what it is to do Hip Hop as community arts work if Hip Hop is to find a meaningful voice in this context. Primarily it focuses on the scope for enhanced critical reflexivity for artists and in relation to this process, how we might consider Hip Hop as an explicit methodological framework for 'community arts'. Such a re-conceptualisation of Hip Hop as applied practice necessitates a move away from facilitating the formula of Hip Hop and refocus to foreground what Hip Hop is about, what is *does* and *why* it does it rather than solely reproducing a template of existing form whilst separately, in other contexts Hip Hop continues to innovate and reinvent.

The case is argued that applied practice should not be restricted to facilitating one version of a Hip Hop arts formula. This will require increased engagement and investment from those who develop community arts agendas as well as a sizeable effort on the part of the Hip Hop artists working in such contexts to critically engage with the question of what they are teaching/facilitating in their community arts work. A re-conceptualisation of Hip Hop in the context of applied practice would mean to critically engage with the intricacies of the ontology of Hip Hop as a resistant sub-culture. The idea of Hip Hop as methodology for this sort of work could be further developed by increased consideration by the artists of; the sort of model of Hip Hop

they are selecting and applying to their commissioned, socially engaged work, the consequences of choosing a particular model for this work, and the conditions that are informing their work in this context.

4.5.1 An existing framework in practice

Marsh (2012) offers a re-conceptualisation of Hip Hop as a way of knowing through her experience in community-based Hip Hop projects. She suggests that beyond a framework for reactive youth intervention work Hip Hop projects of this type can facilitate a recognisable sense of place, a meaningful arts practice and powerful form of expression that can help people to carve out space to understand themselves and to challenge dominant cultural frameworks. The above analysis shows that to some extent Hip Hop – and by Hip Hop here I include its surrounding ethos of knowledge, DIY, overstanding and empowerment - *is* functioning as a framework for artists working in externally commissioned, community settings to deliver their work and by artists producing Hip Hop for commercial ends.

Often sub-consciously, the spirit of Hip Hop culture is being employed as a method of encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy by virtue of its focus on expression, DIY, accessibility, the promotion of engaged critique and through its positioning as grassroots practice connected to community. It is also encouraging the development of resistant capital and aspirational capital for participants. That Hip Hop artists consider the consumption preferences of participants within their workshops indicates that while recognising their own experiences of Hip Hop and Hip Hop preferences are specifically spatially and temporally rooted, they also value Hip Hop culture as a wider, useful methodology through which meaningful socially engaged art work can flourish. In other words, by employing a community-

knowledge-form-overstanding framework yet adapting specific new styles and content within that methodology they continue to engage participants critically in the act of production and reception.

The *Hip Hop state of mind* that practitioners conceded they used to approach their work embodied many of the things highlighted in previous chapters as encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy. When asked about what having a Hip Hop state of mind meant to the Hip Hop artists, all agreed they felt they possessed one, but found it challenging to verbalise the intricacies of what this meant in practice. Artists cited a Hip Hop state of mind as variously representing; peace, love, unity and having fun as tenets for their attitude toward involvement in the culture and as a methodological framework for their work in communities (Spee Six Nine, King Monk, Ten Tonn). Intermingled with the things that the Hip Hop framework above offers cultural democracy are a number of other complementary frameworks that Hip Hop practice adopts. Common reoccurring tropes artists referenced in their descriptions of the Hip Hop state of mind included enhancing confidence/a sense of purpose (Daddy Abe, Big Taj, Joe Snow), having a DIY ethos (Daddy Abe, Benji B), being community minded (Klonism, Daddy Abe, Bigg Taj, Wigz), active participation (in the culture) (Paul Webster, Klonism, rebelliousness/competitiveness (Daddy Abe, Joe Snow), crafting skills (martial art-ism) (Joe Snow, Paul Webster), and having fun (Spee Six Nine, Bigg Taj, Ten Tonn), sharing a positive message (Bigg Taj). To a lesser extent commonality was demonstrated in the themes of; having a knowledge of the history/elements of Hip Hop culture (Spee Six Nine, Unity) and a political and spiritual awareness informed by Hip Hop culture (Testament), seeing the bigger picture (Unity), expressing yourself with style (Wigz), and collaboration/having a tight crew.

In addition to the overlap between artist definitions of a Hip Hop mind state, many held in common the perception that the Hip Hop mind state was something that they embodied rather than a conscious framework that contained their involvement with Hip Hop culture. King Monk said “...my mind is a Hip Hop state of mind. The thing is for me, I consider my life is just Hip Hop so I just take it in as I take myself into a situation...it’s the fact that it just comes along with me, as KRS one said ‘I am Hip Hop’”. What became apparent through the course of the interview conversations was that the Hip Hop mind state was part of the way that these artists understood themselves through their work – in whichever context they were operating. It is positioned as something that they had gained through their involvement in Hip Hop culture, but they feel it transcends an attitude that comes along with the culture or is something they draw on during their time spent undertaking Hip Hop based activities and instead exists more in the form of a set of wider life skills that one carries with oneself on a daily basis.

Dimitriadis (2009) states “Hip Hop is truly a lifestyle” (p.xiii) and this perspective echoed amongst the artists I interviewed; “...it’s showing them a way to express themselves but also have fun as they do so. The unity tenet of Hip Hop is also important as it can be taken out of the workshop and put into practice in a day to day environment” (Spee Six Nine). The notion of a ‘Hip Hop state of mind’ transcended context for many of the artists I interviewed, existing as an underpinning methodology that they could carry through to their work as commercial artists, in their grassroots engagement and in their community-based work.

Similarly, Testament told me “for me [the Hip Hop mind set] it’s approaching LIFE with it” and Paul Webster said “its [the Hip Hop mind set] like having a framework to put all your energy into, it provides a discipline, which, if you improve your

discipline and focus through practicing your bars or Graffiti skills on paper you can apply it to every aspect of your life". In relation to these conceptualisations Francois Matarasso's thoughts on the future of community arts resonate strongly;

... it [critical reflection on the future of community art] might produce a community art practice that is rooted in humanist and democratic ideals; that questions assumptions, including its own; that is ethically engaged and politically aware; that sees money as a means, not an end; that gives people skills for life, not just for work; that is co-operative with others and competitive with itself; that is optimistic and joyful. (2013:237)

To speak of Hip Hop as a methodology or a framework with which to approach questions of empowerment is somewhat of a misnomer because 'methodology' and 'framework' imply a sense of consciousness. The ways that the Hip Hop modus operandi is shaping the approach of artists delivering commissioned, socially engaged arts work are more about the organic influence of the Hip Hop state of mind and experiences in Hip Hop culture within that context rather than a conscious application of cultural aptitude. This in one sense is a positive thing. That a significant number of the conditions artists define as constituting a Hip Hop modus operandi or state of mind resonate with those for encouraging cultural democracy (i.e. active participation, DIY ethos, political awareness) position Hip Hop as a potentially appropriate vehicle for socially engaged arts work beyond its convenience as tool for fulfilling an instrumentalist public arts agenda. In addition, these are qualities established and embedded within the culture of Hip Hop a priori to its application in a commissioned, socially engaged context. However, because this modus operandi exists for many of the artists I spoke with on a pervasive, sub-conscious level, there were few examples within the recorded accounts of the sort of self-reflexive exploration and explicit critique that were demonstrated in the accounts of the non-Hip Hop artists.

4.5.2 The case for an explicit methodology?

As it stands, Hip Hop provides a creative framework imbued with resonances that suggest how we might encourage through it the conditions and spaces for cultural democracy. This potential can be considered in the foregrounding of the physical acts through which Hip Hop's tactical arsenal and idioms become manifest (e.g. processes for the reclamation of decentred spaces, the construction of alternative social and political narratives, the remix/cut and paste hybridisation, its resistive role in raising political awareness³⁶). This also occurs through the methods its artists employ to seek out spaces for emancipated critique and reflection through these acts that are informed and framed by its under-labouring ethos (e.g. DIY, a focus on knowledge and overstanding, focus on experimentation and innovation, focus on conscientisation). There is space for artist engagement (in the context of socially engaged, commissioned Hip Hop arts work) with processes of self-reflexivity to analyse the practices utilised and to challenge the conditions surrounding their practice. There is also space for a sustained seeking of opportunities to encourage critical questioning and participate in the development of the conscientisation of those artists' attempts to engage through their work. (See also Appendix A 7.1.4 where I have outlined these key areas of opportunity for explicating Hip Hop as a methodology for applied arts work in relation to encouraging cultural democracy in a working process diagram).

The analysis has demonstrated that artists have not for the most part been afforded, or demanded, the privilege of space, time and resources to consider how they might

36 See Stapleton (1998)

make the case for Hip Hop as an explicit methodology in and of itself in the context of socially engaged, commissioned work. This could be encouraged through the conceptualisation and further theorisation of the above matrices of act/process/idiom, under-labouring ethos and the articulation of their interrelation within a robust, encompassing and explicit framework. ‘Hip Hop’ is a socially engaged, commissioned arts methodology that extends beyond the ‘four-mula’, the task moving forwards – if we are to support the case for Hip Hop as a vehicle for externally commissioned work at all - is to support in finding ways to conceptualise and articulate that methodology with resilience and perspicaciousness.

Closely related to the above, further questions arise for the practitioner in terms of consideration of the frameworks and methodologies they are employing within their applied work; “what methodology am I using here?”, “what model of Hip Hop am I selecting here and why?”, “what role is ‘knowledge’ and conscientisation playing within this work?” and “what are the implications of using Hip Hop as a methodology for this work?”. The last question here is also one that commissioners need to explore. An exploration of the above-mentioned questions would allow practitioners to work towards an enhanced critique of the methods and methodologies being used to approach Hip Hop work in the applied context. Ultimately artists are responsible for embedding their approach to applied work within a robust framework. To be aware of, in charge of, and critical of this framework is to arm oneself with the tools to defend – as much as is possible - against the hijacking and sanitation of the Hip Hop modus operandi within the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged arts work. The relative infancy of Hip Hop as professionalised community arts practice means that the opportunity to shape the practice context is still available.

If the methodological approach to Hip Hop work in communities suggested above is adopted it cannot be without considering a broader, but interrelated question about the purpose of Hip Hop as its vehicle – that is for practitioners to ask not only how and why is Hip Hop being used here, but to develop this line of questioning through considering whether Hip Hop is or should be the vehicle at all, or whether in fact, to quote Asante (2008) it is something ‘bigger than hip hop’ that is at stake? If Asante’s perspective on the death of Hip Hop is adopted, and we are to acknowledge that Hip Hop sits as a momentary expression bound within a much greater lineage of socio-cultural Black experience and expression, then it is important for artists working in all Hip Hop contexts to reflect on whether through their methodological approach they are perpetuating the sharing of a formularised shell of a social movement that according to Asante (2008) is no longer doing the work that it was originally intended.

On one hand it is tempting to align with Asante’s position and to advocate for the removal of Hip Hop from being deployed as externally commissioned, socially engaged work in order to prevent further formularisation through formalisation and erosion of its resistant qualities at the mercy of the systemic conditions that surround it. However, I argue that the examples where artists are identifying spaces for engaged, resistant critique, voice discovery and conscientisation through their work demonstrate that there *is* potential for Hip Hop in this context to encourage cultural democracy and autonomous cultural agency through the existing infrastructure. There is a need to ensure that it is the artists and the heads that are the ones who retain the claim to be the people to do the shaping of this creative context moving forwards.

By buying into a form-based approach to Hip Hop arts work and backgrounding the innovative and experimental aspects of Hip Hop, and its history as an art form

that 'brings in from the outside' (Asante 2008), artists must consider whether they are contributing to the stifling of the continued reinvention of new creative expressions. If artists consider their methodological approaches with a critical lens it may be that in some cases there is a need to move focus towards facilitating an innovation-based model of Hip Hop participation instead of a performance-formularisation based model. This would involve an emphasis on sharing skills for innovation and sharing the history of innovation in Hip Hop rather than formularised performer training. This could involve thinking beyond the habitus of form within a stereotypical template of Hip Hop style. This is not to say that there is no place for the form-based teaching of Hip Hop, but rather that in considering and conceptualising different Hip Hop methodological approaches (i.e. form based, tenets based, innovation based) artists open up a richer and more diverse methodological paradigm for their applied work. To conceptualise their approach in this way is to provide reasoning to the use of Hip Hop as socially engaged, commissioned work (beyond the instrumental) and concurrently to create the space to critique that reasoning and the implications of using Hip Hop as a vehicle for such work.

To give consideration to the model(s) of Hip Hop being selected to apply to community-based work (i.e. elemental, tenet based, innovation based) is to open the door to critique why models are selected, the advantages and disadvantages of different models and consideration of the consequences of employing specific models of Hip Hop for this work. It is for artists to give consideration to how they understand themselves through their practice and how this informs their applied work. It is also for artists to gain the confidence to claim the space they need to assert validity and ownership over the process of critical reflection on their methodologies for applied Hip Hop work.

If Hip Hop is to find and sustain its voice within the context of the participatory, applied and externally commissioned arts world, it requires greater focus and preservation of the very things that make it a vehicle for critical engagement, cultural agency and self-empowerment. In essence Hip Hop already exists as a methodology that can be positioned as a creative framework for encouraging the conditions for cultural democracy, the task of those concerned about the future of Hip Hop and social empowerment is to work out how we foreground and not forego these aspects of its character in the applied, socially engaged, externally commissioned arts context.

4.5.3...the outro

This thesis has discussed the potential and actual ways that Hip Hop speaks to the notion of cultural democracy, and the ways that these resonances can become eroded by the systemic, political and contextual conditions imposed upon specific applications of Hip Hop practice. It has also explored how Hip Hop artists are responding (and may respond more thoroughly) to this erosion. It has attempted to highlight some of the tensions that practitioners experience when undertaking work in the context of the externally commissioned, socially engaged project; between preservation and innovation, between dominant cultural spaces and subcultural status, between formalisation and formularisation and between keepin' it real and makin' it official.

The suggestions outlined in the conclusion above do not attempt to provide an instructional manual for those involved in applied Hip Hop arts work or for commissioners and funders of such work. Rather they are intended to provoke further consideration and critique of the existing nature of applied Hip Hop arts work for

both community and commercial Hip Hop artists and the operational conditions within which the art form finds itself. Participants in Hip Hop culture and its artists are undoubtedly best placed to steer the future direction of the development of practice.

The preceding discussion highlights existing issues and shortcomings and provides examples of how other artists and art forms (e.g. community arts) have attempted to navigate such issues. It has critically examined the implications of different contexts of practice. It has been argued that the themes of critical engagement, autonomous cultural agency and resistance in Hip Hop practice that were identified in the literature review are challenged in the context of Hip Hop as externally commissioned arts, grassroots practice and commercial endeavour. However, it contests that they can continue to occupy meaningful space in these contexts to different extents and in different forms. There are different methods through which these qualities may be identified, and may emerge and function to encourage the conditions for cultural democracy in different Hip Hop contexts within the wider Hip Hop eco-system.

Much more must be done to work towards identifying the opportunities where resistant spaces and spaces for critical engagement can be sought out and/or created in Hip Hop within the context of externally commissioned, socially engaged work if it is to be prevented from following a trajectory of appropriation as the commercialisation of Hip Hop has done for the last three decades. Similarly, further development is needed in the form of enhanced critical self-reflexivity and work to identify, develop and embed the methodologies that constitute Hip Hop 'arts work' if Hip Hop in this growing context is to avoid following in the footsteps of the community art movement of the 1960-80s. The research has shown that there is

evidence of the current trajectory of Hip Hop in the applied arts work context already beginning to reflect this journey.

This final chapter has been titled ‘conclusion’ and indeed has concluded the findings of this research study, but it is also, to paraphrase the titles of a number of significant texts on cultural democracy, entitled ‘towards a framework for cultural democracy’³⁷. Therefore, more pertinently it is also a beginning, a starting point and an invitation for those invested in the future of Hip Hop to stimulate further discussion around what Hip Hop in these contexts is, and what Hip Hop as meaningful community arts practice could potentially be.

**...LET'S CLOSE THE BOOK ON THIS I'VE SPIT MY PIECE
ABOUT HOW WE CAN KEEP THIS RAP THING WITH THE STREETS
I BELIEVE, WE'VE GOT THE POWER TO REACH
A NEW GENERATION WHO'VE TAKEN THEIR LEAVE
THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN IT'S A SIGN OF THE TIMES
WE HAD TO WORK HARD TO GROW A HIP HOP STATE OF MIND
THE SPACES WE OWN HAVE BEEN TAKEN AWAY
IT'S ABOUT RECLAMATION AND BREAKING THE CHAINS
HIP HOP DOESN'T ASK FOR PERMISSION, LISTEN OUT FOR THE SOUND
OF A MILLION HIP HOPPERS WHO'LL BUST YOUR DOOR DOWN**

37 For example, J. Simpson's (1976) *Towards Cultural Democracy* report, the 2017 Kings College *Towards Cultural Democracy* report (Wilson et al), the Scottish Cultural Policy Collective's (2004) *Beyond Social Inclusion: Towards Cultural Democracy* report, and Bilton's (1997) *Towards Cultural Democracy: Contradiction and Crisis in British and U.S. Cultural Policy 1870-1990*.

AND THEY'RE RESTLESS THEY'LL RUN DOWN YOUR DEFENCES

WITH DEMANDS, QUESTIONS AND RAP RANSOM LETTERS

THAT START WITH THE SENTENCE "WE'RE BATTLING FOR BETTER..."

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6. Discography

Foreign Beggars ft. Rag 'n' Bone Man and Bangsy. 2018. 22 Karma [mp3].

Standard. Par Excellence

Klashnekoff. 2004. The Sagas of Klashnekoff [cd]. *Daggo Mentality*. Kemet

London Posse. 1990. Gangster Chronicle. [cd]. Mango Records

NWA. 1988. Straight Outta Compton. [cd]. *F**k tha Police*. Priority/Ruthless

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Roots Manuva. 2005. *Awfully Deep*. [cd]. Big Dada

Skinnyman. 2004. *Council Estate of Mind*. [cd]. Riddim Killa Ltd

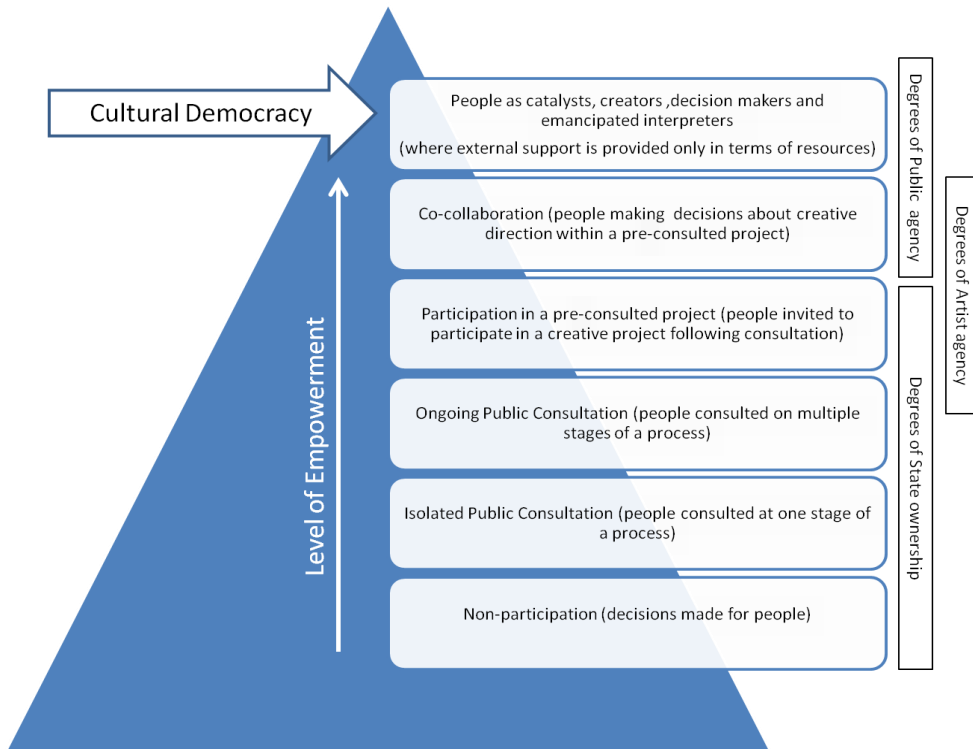
Style Wars. 1983. [film]. Tony Silver. dir. United States: Public Art Films

Wild Style. 1983. [film]. Charlie Ahearn. dir. United States: Wild Style

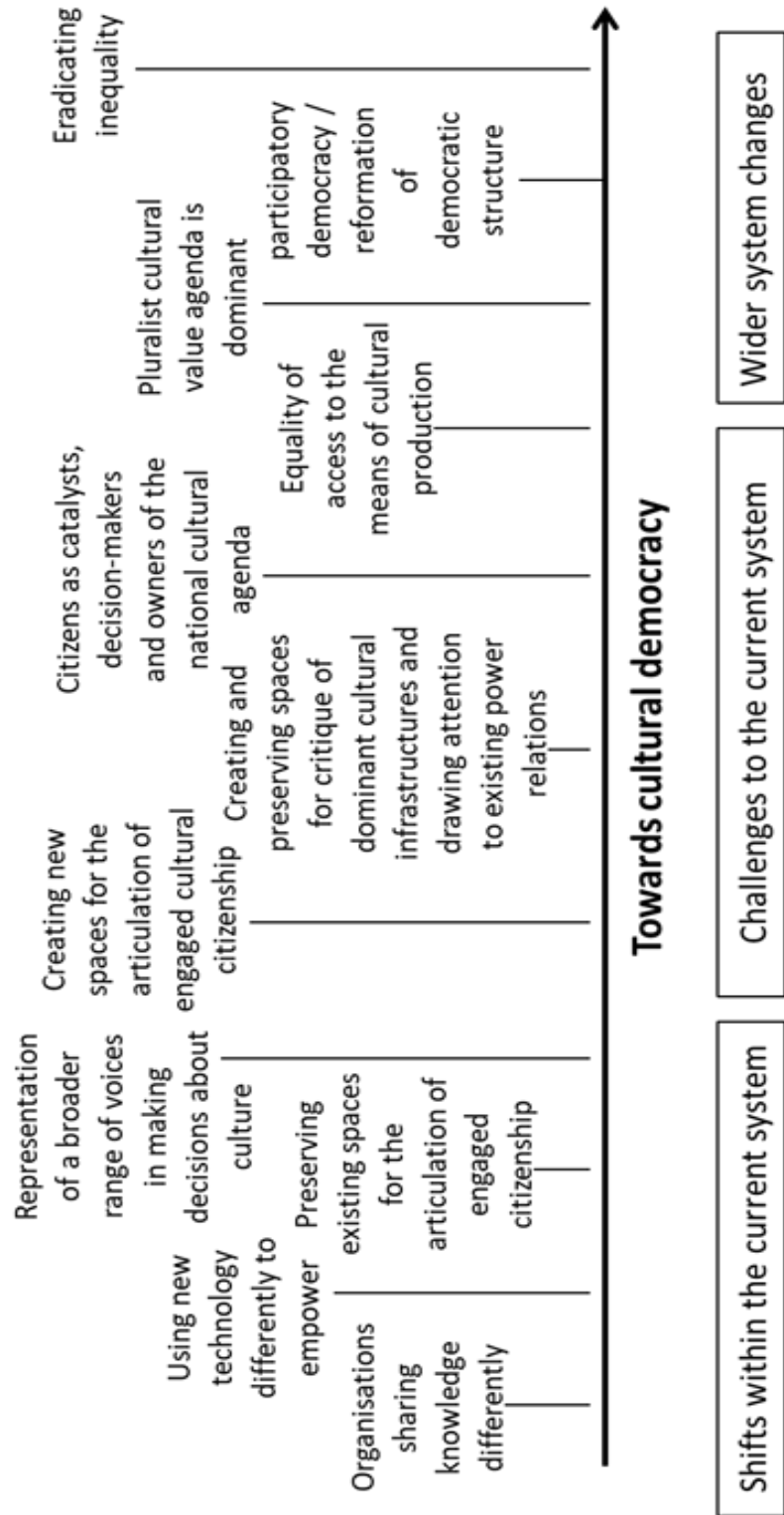
7. Appendix

7.1 Appendix A: Working process diagrams

7.1.1 Re-envisioned diagram of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation for the purposes of mapping cultural autonomy and agency in relation to cultural democracy



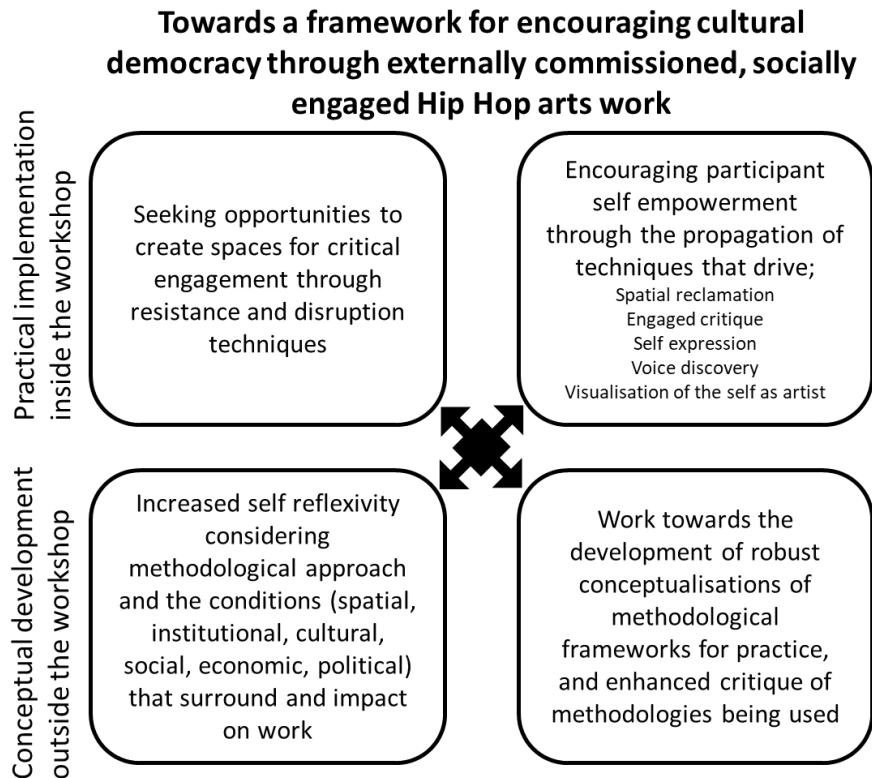
7.1.2 *Imagining a spectrum of cultural democracy*



7.1.3 A taxonomy of conceptual Hip Hop tactics

	Tactics	Indicative examples of Processes of performance
	DIY ethic	
	Collaboration and congregation	The cypher, the 'battle'
	Manipulation of technology	Djing, Scratching, sampling
	Speaking Truth to power/talking back	Rap, the 'Hip Hop state of mind'
	Social narrativisation	Rap
	Languages of resistance	Rap, the codification of language, the manipulation of language
	The empowerment of consumers as producers	Home production software
	Spatial reconstruction/reclamation	Rap, Graffiti, Breakdancing
	Reinvention/innovation	Cut and paste, intertextuality
	Disruption/rupture	Djing, Rap, Graffiti
	Focus on Knowledge and overstanding	'The Hip Hop state of mind'
	The emancipated spectator/participant	The 'battle', rap, 'The Hip Hop state of mind'

7.1.4 Towards an explicit framework for encouraging cultural democracy through Hip Hop as arts work



7.2 Appendix B: List of interview participants

	Name	Role	Location	Interview Group
1	Klonism	Graffiti artist	Leeds/Mexico	Hip Hop artists
2	Testament	MC/Producer	Leeds/National	Hip Hop artists
3	Scott Akoz	BBoy	York/Cumbria	Hip Hop artists
4	Bev Stack	Community artist (Faceless Arts)	Wakefield	Non-Hip Hop artists
5	Shane 'Ten Tonn' Fenton	BBoy and Community activist	Leeds	Hip Hop artists
6	Alison Andrews	Performance maker (A Quiet Word theatre company)	Leeds	Non-Hip Hop artists
7	Ste Allen	Producer/Promoter	Nottingham	Hip Hop artists
8	J Chambers	MC	Manchester	Hip Hop artists
9	Daddy Abe	MC/Producer	Leeds	Hip Hop artists
10	Bigg Taj	Beatboxer	Glasgow	Hip Hop artists
11	Wigz	Graffiti writer/artist	Leeds	Hip Hop artists
12	Paul Webster	BBoy/Youth worker	York	Hip Hop artists
13	King Monk	Graffiti artist	Leeds	Hip Hop artists
14	Joe Snow	Graffiti writer/MC	Leeds/Australia	Hip Hop artists
15	Spee six-nine	MC	Fife	Hip Hop artists
16	Unity	Graffiti artist/writer	Cardiff	Hip Hop artists
17	Francois Matarasso	Community Arts worker/writer	National	Non-Hip Hop artists
18	Benji Reid	BBoy/Choreo-photoist	London	Hip Hop artists
19	Sophie Hope	Arts Worker/researcher	London	Non-Hip Hop artists
20	Richard Sobey	Producer/arts work facilitator	London/International	Non-Hip Hop artists
21	Cassy Oliphant	Community artist	Leeds	Non-Hip Hop artist

7.3 Appendix C: Interview discussion guides

Ref:



Discussion guide: *Current Community Artists/Practitioners*

Depth Int: F2F / Tel / Email / Sky Date: / / Time: : to :		
Resp. Name:		Job Title:
	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project and discuss Interview aims • Discuss interview length, consent and audio recording specifics <p>Context and Warming up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your current role in community arts? • What has been your history/background in relation to engaging the public through arts? • How did you come to be involved in your role as ****? 	10mins
	<p>About working as a socially engaged practitioner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's it like working as a ****? (Probe around any mention of relation to policy approaches) • And, what is a community artist? (If necessary probe around definitions of communities, artist, use projective technique if needed?) • What was your last project? What did that involve? • What approach do you use when you are working to engage communities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (If key terms are mentioned, probe around these): ○ Why is that important? ○ How do you create the conditions for this? • For what reasons do you use this approach? • How has this worked before? • What are the aims of your work as a ****? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (If empowerment or autonomy or associated terms are invoked, probe around these): ○ Why are they important? ○ How do you create the conditions for these? <p>If no key terms mentioned, use flash cards to display key phrases and discuss relationship to role as a community artist.</p>	25mins
	<p>About cultural democracy and policy approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you fund your work? • What does this involve? 	25mins

Ref:



Discussion guide: Hip hop / Socially Engaged Practitioners

Depth Int: F2F / Tel / Email / Sky Date: / / Time: : to :		
Resp. Name:		Job Title:
	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project and discuss Interview aims • Discuss interview length, consent and audio recording specifics <p>Context and Warming up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your relationship to hip hop? • What has been your history/background in relation to hip hop? • How did you come to be involved in your role as ****? 	10mins
	<p>About hip hop as a culture and the place of hip hop in the UK in general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Projective): if you had to explain what hiphop is to a person from another planet what would you say? • What for you is the place of hiphop in the UK? • Is it doing anything different to other arts? • What would the ideal future look like for hiphop in the UK? 	10mins
	<p>About working as a socially engaged practitioner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's it like working as a ****? • What does a **** do? • What are the aims of a ****? (If key terms mentioned, probe around these to prompt further discussion) • How do you use hip hop in your work? • What impact does that have on the people you work with? <p>If no key terms mentioned, use flash cards to prompt discussion around role of DISSENT, DISRUPTION, DEMOCRACY etc in relation to socially engaged work)</p>	20mins
	<p>About hip hop and the state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have been employed by the government/public body to do this work, what impact does that have on your work? • What is your involvement with your funders? • What was the process of getting funding for your role? • What was your experience of this process? • What went well? Could be improved? 	30mins

7.4 Appendix D: Thematic analysis frame excerpt

Theme	Code	Description of code
Engagement in Hip Hop	Motivation to practice	Comments on what were/are the things that drive the practitioner to practice/engage in Hip Hop culture
	Catalyst to engagement	Comments on what was the original driving motivation and how did they first become involved in the culture
	Path within the culture	Details of the practitioners journey within Hip Hop culture over the years and what sorts of practice have they been involved in
	Nature of practice	Comments on the nature of their practice now
Hip Hop work with community & public groups	Group types worked with	Lists of the groups the practitioner work with/has worked with and what makes up the bulk of their work
	Type of provision	List of the form of the provision they are involved with
	Regularity of work	Regularity of practitioner work in this context
	Approach/methodology	Comments on the practitioners approach to their work, how do they plan and execute their sessions
	Place of resistance in Hip Hop community work	Comments describing the extent (if any) that tactics for resistance are deployed in Hip Hop community work, what are these, what role does the concept of resistance play in the practitioner approach in this context
	Place of agency creation in Hip Hop community work	Comments describing the extent (if any) that tactics for agency creation are deployed in Hip Hop community work, what are these, what role does the concept of agency creation play in the practitioner approach in this context
	Place of critical engagement in Hip Hop community work	Comments describing the extent (if any) that tactics for critical engagement are deployed in Hip Hop community work, what are these, what role does the concept of critical engagement play in the practitioner approach in this context
	Challenges in work	References to the obstacles to practice that the practitioner feels they face
	Benefits of Hip Hop community provision	Comments on what the practitioner perceives as the benefits of using Hip Hop as a vehicle for externally commissioned, socially engaged work
	Empowerment in Hip Hop community work	Comments on the practitioner's thoughts on how Hip Hop empowers or disempowers through its use as community work
Working with institutions and funding bodies	Nature of relationship with institutions worked with	Comments on what interaction does the practitioner have with those that commission their work and the institutions and bodies involved in the provision, how are they recruited to deliver the work
	Expectations of institutions	Comments on what are the expectations that the artists perceive the institutions to have about the work they deliver
	Involvement in 'official processes'	Comments on involvement does the practitioner have in planning and evaluation of the provision
Perceptions of value in Hip Hop culture generally	Definitions of Hip Hop	How does the practitioner define Hip Hop and its culture, what does Hip Hop mean to the practitioner
	Hip Hop state of mind	Comments on what does it mean to the practitioner to approach work with a Hip Hop state of mind, what does a Hip Hop state of mind mean to the practitioner
	Contextual distinctions	Practitioners perceptions of Hip Hop within the contexts of commerce, of organic grassroots practice and of community arts work
	Empowerment in Hip Hop	Comments on how the practitioner feels Hip Hop empowers or oppresses those engaged in the culture