Versioning for the love of it: Hip-Hop Culture in Aotearoa

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the meaning of Hip-Hop for members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. Based on participant-observation and interviews with members of the Hip-Hop community conducted during 2001-2003, this thesis provides an ethnographic study into what I have identified as the twelve key characteristics of Aotearoa Hip-Hop (authenticity, community, education, empowerment, history, knowledge, originality, representation, resistance, respect, skill and style). The thesis focuses on how these attributes are embodied in performance and in ongoing dialogues within the Hip-Hop community, as well as in the ways in which gender is negotiated in Aotearoa Hip-Hop, revealing the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. It also considers the influence of the concept of whakapapa on Aotearoa Hip-Hop's distinctive historical trope, showing how ongoing dialogues within the Hip-Hop community occur at events and online, enacting Hip-Hop communities at these imagined and virtual sites.

For my parents

Adam and Diane Gibson

and

for the Aotearoa Hip-Hop Community

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Glossary

The following is a selection of key terms used throughout this thesis. These working definitions were compiled by consulting a variety of books, theses, websites, and from conversations with members of the Hip-Hop community.

Aotearoa – the indigenous Māori term for New Zealand.

B-boy/B-girl – Break-boy/Break-girl. Originally, someone who danced to breakbeats.

Battle – a competition of skill between DJs, MCs or B-Boys/B-girls.

beatboxing – the act of creating rhythmic sounds with various parts of the body, particularly the mouth, throat and hands.

beat juggling – taking two of the same records (or two different records) and manipulating the beat on turntables to create a new one.

bite – to appropriate or steal.

bomb – to write a large piece of graffiti over an extended period or in a concentrated area.

boogaloo – flexing of the muscles to the beat while dancing, similar to popping. A fluid funkstyle dance first done by Boogaloo Sam of The Electric Boogaloos in the early 1970s.

breaker – B-boy/B-girl. When B-boys dance they are said to be 'breaking'. Breaking typically involves athletic power moves and displays of agility, strength and skill.

breakbeat – in Hip-Hop's early years, DJs would play the break beat (drumming or instrumental) section of a song over and over, to which B-boys would dance.

breakdance – an incorrect term for breaking coined by the media.

burners – superlative graffiti pieces.

crew – a collective. Similar to a posse, but not the same as a gang.

cultural texts – any textual product of culture, including videos, CDs, vinyl, books, magazines, newspapers, movies, documentaries, academic publications, and so on. Often products of mass media.

culture as text – a Geertzian notion meaning to analyse or 'read' cultural forms as one would a literary text.

diss – disrespect. To 'diss' someone is to insult or disrespect them.

DJ – from Disc Jockey, a DJ does more than 'push play' on turntables; s/he creatively manipulates records and cross-faders to interpret and create musical material. Sometimes a DJ will create his/her own beats using the latest in recording technology.

ethnoscape – a term coined by Arjun Appadurai meaning "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (Appadurai, 1996:33).

freestyle – improvised rhyme. Can also be applied to dance or graffiti.

fresh – styley, up-to-date, good.

funkstyles – the name for certain styles of dance, including popping, locking and boogaloo. Not the same as B-boying, although Hip-Hop dance has appropriated and adapted funkstyle forms.

glocalization – "A term popularized by Robertson (1992:173-4) to describe how global pressures and demands are made to conform to local conditions. Whereas powerful companies might 'customize' their product to local markets, glocalization operates in the opposite direction. Local actors select and modify elements from an array of global possibilities, thereby initiating some democratic and creative engagement between the local and the global" (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000:377).

graffiti artist – someone who creates works of art in the medium of graffiti.

Hip-Hop – a term encompassing all the elements associated with Hip-Hop (MCing, DJing, graffiti and dance) which originated in 1970s New York City. Hip-Hop is generally referred to as a culture, a shared consciousness of the elements and characteristics the comprise Hip-Hop.

ideoscape – according to Arjun Appadurai, ideoscapes are "concatenations of images … (that) are often directly political and frequently have lots to do with the ideologies of states and the counteriedologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it" (Appadurai, 1996:36). Ideoscapes are composed of "a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including *freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation*, and the master term *democracy*" (ibid, 36).

legal – a commissioned piece of graffiti art (as opposed to 'non-permission', or illegal, pieces).

locking – a dance created in 1970 by Don Campbellock that comes under the umbrella of funkstyles but that has also been embraced and adapted by Hip-Hop.

MC – from Master of Ceremonies or Mic Controller. MC generally refers to a lyricist providing verbal raps over music.

mediascape - "*Mediascapes* refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media" (Appadurai, 1996:35).

old school – a style of music or dance associated with the 1980s (and sometimes the early 1990s).

piece – short for masterpiece, a large and complex work of graffiti.

popping – a style of dance similar to boogaloo with origins in Southern California in the 1970s. Also comes under the umbrella of funkstyles.

power moves – athletic moves in breaking inspired by gymnastics and martial arts. Often involve displays of strength and dexterity.

rap – spoken lyrics or rhymes over beats. Rap is just one of the elements of the wider Hip-Hop culture, and is not the same as Hip-Hop. Different styles of rap include gangsta, party, conscious, old school, and so on (c.f. Zemke-White, 2000:75-76).

scratch – a turntablism move whereby the record is manipulated back and forth under the needle, producing a scratching sound.

sick – excessively good.

tag – in graffiti, the artist's signature. Usually a pseudonym.

throw-up – a quickly executed small piece of graffiti.

toprock – a simple dance usually done to initiate a breaking routine.

turntablist – a term used to describe a DJ with a high level of skill in manipulating records on turntables.

uprock – a move usually done with an opponent in battle; can be confrontational and is quite different to toprocking.

version – a remix of a piece of music. Another's interpretation or rendering of a song or piece of music.

whakapapa – genealogy.

Chapter One

> The fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do. It is only by understanding what people do as they take part in a musical act that we can hope to understand its nature and the function it fulfils in human life.
>
> (Small, 1998:8)

> There exists a harmful disconnect between HIP HOP, an (audio)visual commodity "culture" and a set of proposed lifestyles, and lived hip hop culture, a set of grounded lifeways and a meaningful dimension of social existence.
>
> (Toth, 2003:52)

Introduction

This thesis is about Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa/New Zealand[1]. More specifically, it is about the *people* and *processes* involved in (re)producing Hip-Hop in Aotearoa. The people I have worked with are those who, in the words of one of my informants, "live for" Hip-Hop; they are the "extra effort" Hip-Hop heads, "those that determinedly seek out what is not widely available on radio or television, always fiending (sic) for the new" (Henderson, 1999:49).

I began this project intending to discover what Hip-Hop meant for those actively involved in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. The Aotearoa Hip-Hop community is predominantly made up of urban Māori and Polynesian youth[2] who are involved with Hip-Hop culture in some shape or form (whether as practitioner, supporter, or promoter), who engage with Hip-Hop on a daily basis and have a sense of belonging to a wider culture of Hip-Hop. I learnt early on that members of the community view Hip-Hop as a "culture", a "state of consciousness", a "lifestyle", a way of *being* in the world that is expressed through participation in the musical and artistic elements of Hip-Hop. I also quickly discovered *why* these people are so involved in Hip-Hop, which is

[1] Hereafter referred to as Aotearoa.

[2] However, a number of key practitioners in Aotearoa are over the age of 25 which is the upper-end of the typical youth category. It should be mentioned that there is a growing Pākehā presence in Aotearoa Hip-Hop.

reflected in the title of this thesis. Adapted from Aotearoa group Salmonella Dub's hit single "For the love of it" (from the 1999 album *Killervision*), "versioning for the love of it" recognises that Hip-Hop in Aotearoa is a version (adaptation or interpretation) of a musical form that has its origins in the United States of America. The title also illustrates one of the primary reasons why these "extra effort" Hip-Hop heads do what they do – in the words of rapper Scribe, "we do it for the love, like Salmonella Dub".

This thesis, based on three years of ethnographic fieldwork, seeks to explore what Hip-Hop *means* to those who "live for" it through an examination of the processes by which Hip-Hop culture is (re)produced and performed in Aotearoa. Like Kristina Toth (cited above), I too discovered that "there exists a harmful disconnect" in Aotearoa between media representations of Hip-Hop (which tend to focus on Hip-Hop's most profitable commodity form – rap) and Hip-Hop as a lived experience, which has real consequences for Hip-Hop artists in Aotearoa. Thus, this thesis is about Hip-Hop generated at the underground or grassroots level in Aotearoa; it is not about commercial recorded rap music, more commonly identified as Hip-Hop in public perceptions.

This introduction provides a description of the key elements and characteristics of Hip-Hop culture, derived from my research and fieldwork experiences, which is the basis for my analysis of meaning in Hip-Hop. It also includes an outline of the organisation of this thesis, and concludes with an overview of the available literature on Hip-Hop that has informed the direction of this study.

1.1 Hip-Hop Culture in Aotearoa

> I don't think anyone in Hiphop – a street culture – needs an 'academic' to tell them what Hiphop is.
> Mark Thomson[3], 7 May 2002

It is generally well-known that there are four main elements in Hip-Hop, being MCing, DJing, graffiti art and B-boying/B-girling, and each element in turn is made up of sub-elements (and each sub-element can again be subdivided – styles of rap, for instance,

[3] The names used are those given to me by my informants. Researchers often have to consider protecting the privacy of their informants, but in this case I discovered most informants were happy for their 'Hip-Hop' names to be associated with their views and opinions. In the cases where anonymity was requested, however, I have changed or removed names, respecting the wishes of my informants throughout.

can be grouped into 'gangsta'/reality, old school, 'Hip-pop'/party, 'hardcore', political/conscious, 'bling bling', and so on)[4]. What is not recognised to the same extent is that there are active dialogues in process within the Hip-Hop community in Aotearoa as to what it means to be Hip-Hop (Rose, 1994a:148). These dialogues take place both within performances, when Hip-Hop artists embody what they think Hip-Hop is or ought to be, and across time and space in online discussions and 'cultural texts'[5]. These dialogues tend to focus on the ethos of Hip-Hop.

In talking to members of the Hip-Hop community it soon became apparent that Hip-Hop has a number of characteristics, or what Ian Maxwell has described as a "*Hip-Hop Ideoscape*" (Maxwell, 2003:122). These characteristics include history, community, resistance, respect, education, representation, authenticity, originality, style, skill, knowledge, and empowerment, and Figure 1 provides a visual interpretation of these characteristics. Each characteristic appears differently in each of the elements, but originality is a crucial component of all four elements, as illustrated in the following quote from Tweek, one of Aotearoa's most prominent B-girls and organiser of a number of key Hip-Hop events. Speaking to an audience of 300 Māori and Polynesian youth interested in Hip-Hop at the Hosanna World Outreach Centre in Taita, Lower Hutt, Tweek said:

> There are certain little rules in Hip-Hop, but it's not real strict or anything. There's rules like, in any element you have to be original. You can't go and bite someone's rhyme, you can't go and bite someone's move that you see, you can't go and take someone's style of graffiti or their style of turntablism, you have to make up your own stuff. It's something that requires a lot of creativity and a lot of originality, and if you're taking things from someone that you've seen, from a video, you're not being true to yourself. You've gotta learn to be original, creative yourself, because that's what Hip-Hop is, it's about being creative, being original, being styley, having lots and lots of flavour. So I encourage you, any people out here that MC, that DJ, that

[4] KRS-ONE ("Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone", aka Lawrence Parker), rapper and founder of the Temple of Hiphop, lists nine elements in his "Refinitions" of Hip-Hop: "Breakin' (the study of Martial Arts), Emceein' (the study and application of Rap and Divine Speech), Graffiti Art (the study and application of Colour, Light, and Handwriting), Deejayin' (the study and application of street Music production and broadcasting), Beatboxin' (the study and application of Body Music), Street Fashion (the study and application of Street Trends and Styles), Street Language (the study and application of Street Communication), Street Knowledge (the study and application Ancestral Wisdom and Universal Law), and Street Entrepreneurialism (the study and application of Fair Trade and Hip-Hop Business Management)" (KRS-ONE, 2001).

[5] By 'cultural texts' I mean music videos, CDs, vinyl, books, magazine and newspaper articles, movies, documentaries, academic publications on Hip-Hop, and all the products of art and entertainment encompassed by what Sherry Ortner has called "public culture" (1999:55).

graff or that B-boy, biting is something that's looked down upon by the people in Hip-Hop, by people who live for the culture, by the people who have set the foundations for people like you who are wanting to get into Hip-Hop.

5 May 2001

ELEMENTS, SUB-ELEMENTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HIP-HOP CULTURE

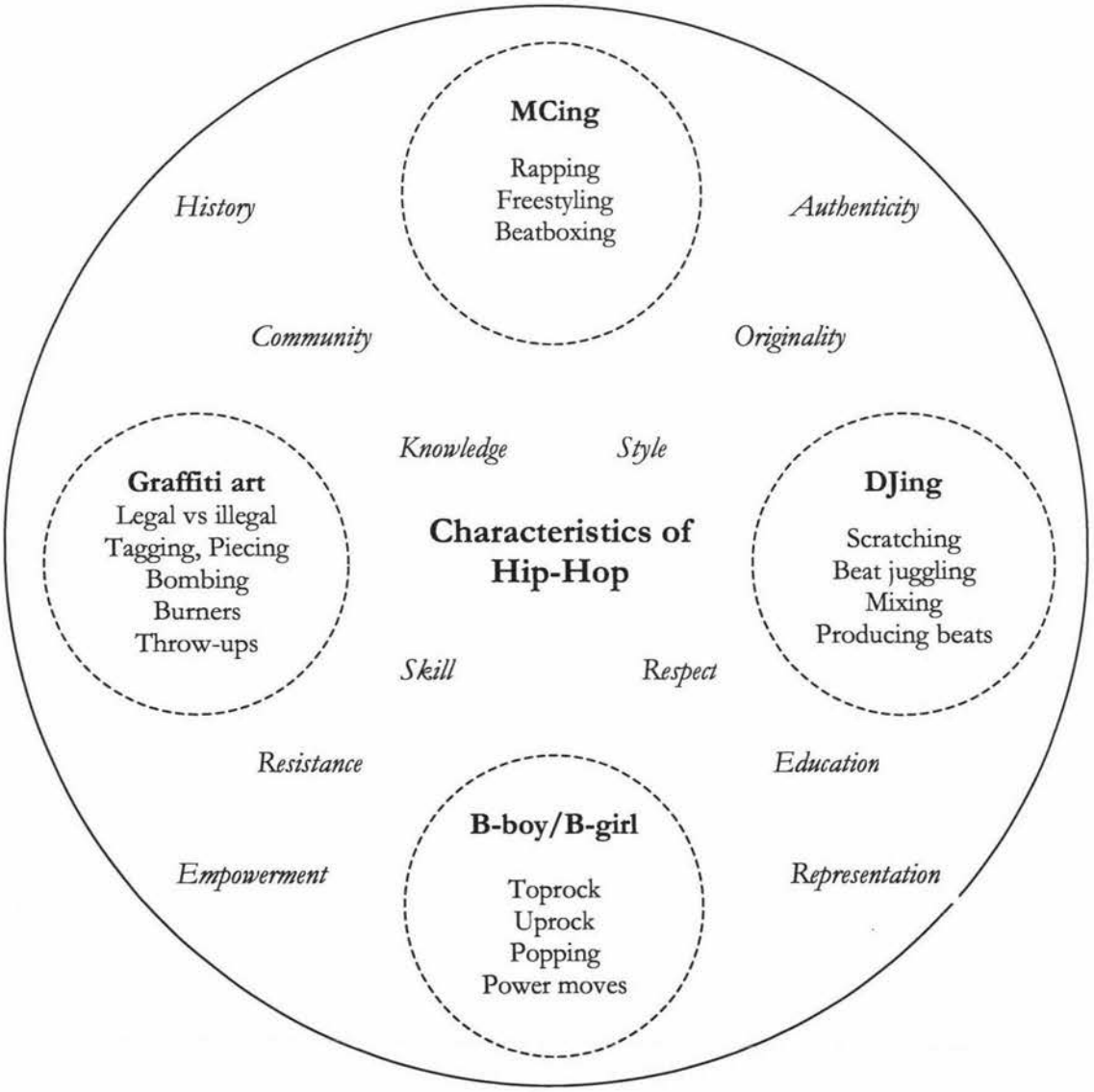

Figure 1: **Elements, sub-elements and characteristics of Hip-Hop culture. Broken lines indicate that elements have fluid boundaries across which discussion ensues regarding the various characteristics of Hip-Hop.**

Sources: Henderson, 1999; Zemke-White, 2000; Bennett, 2002, personal communication.

Not all characteristics are as visible as originality, however. Hip-Hop's historical trope, for instance, is more apparent within the sub-elements of rap (where rappers cite their personal histories, including who they are and where they are from) and sampling, which Rose has called "a means of archival research, a process of musical and cultural archaeology", than in B-boying/B-girling (1994a:79).

1.1.1 THE HIP-HOP IDEOSCAPE

In his book *Phat Beats, Dope Rhymes: Hip Hop Down Under Comin' Upper*, Ian Maxwell found it possible to perceive a *Hip-Hop Ideoscape* in the mass of discursive and ethnographic material he analyses. He stresses that this ideoscape "is not only *my* analytical construct" but is discernable in the references made to "the ideology of Hip-Hop," the "ideals of Hip-Hop," and the "meaning of Hip-Hop" (Maxwell, 2003:122). "Hip Hop," he writes, "was understood has having an "ideological" dimension, as simply being ideological" (Maxwell, 2003:122). He goes on to summarise the ideology of Hip-Hop for Sydney artists, listing many of the characteristics featured in Figure 1 above. This Hip-Hop ideoscape, the dialogues in process identified where Hip-Hop communities are enacted, informs the basis for my analysis of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa.

1.1.2 THESIS ORGANISATION

The areas I have chosen to analyse – performances and cultural texts – are in response to concerns expressed by informants[6]. Tweek has lamented the fact that the elements of dance and graffiti art are often overlooked in discussions on Hip-Hop:

> it always bugs me how the bboying and graffiti elements are continuously overlooked and left out when people are discussing "hip hop" ... Not trying to cause an argument here but I just wonder why a lot of people who say they're into hip hop, only really acknowledge the DJing and "especially" the MCing ... come on yall ... without the bboys and the writers ... hip hop wouldn't be what it is today ... I think there's a real lack of appreciation for these elements in hip hop. I'm a bgirl but I truly respect the other elements and those who participate in them coz I feel that they play a major part of something I love and appreciate in my life and I also think that appreciation for other elements is a part of being

[6] This is an example of the collaborative approach I chose to adopt for my research, which is discussed in more depth in Chapter Two. This chapter also provides some background information about myself and how I came to be studying Hip-Hop, outlines some of the key guiding principles that shaped the direction of this research, and details the processes and methodologies I employed in studying Hip-Hop in Aotearoa.

> in hip hop ... my opinion only but yeah ... I just thought I'd comment on that ... like I said ... not trying to cause an argument ... just an observation I made. Feel free to comment on what I've said ... I'm open to correction or being told I'm wrong!
>
> Tweek, Hiphopnz.com discussion board, 16 June 2003[7]

Accordingly, Chapter Three takes as its focus the dance element of Hip-Hop. In this chapter, I discuss the importance of performance to the Hip-Hop community, showing how it is the vehicle through which the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community appears as such to itself. I also look at performance as dialogue by analysing two different sites, Bodyrock 2003 and Hiphopnz.com, examining how they contribute to ongoing discussions within the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community about the key characteristics (from Figure 1) that comprise what it is to be Hip-Hop. The analysis of Bodyrock 2003, which primarily celebrates B-boying/B-girling, raises some interesting questions about locality and glocalisation, answers to which I found in online discussions at Hiphopnz.com.

One of the passions that has driven this thesis is to understand the "harmful disconnect" that exists between media portrayals and actual lived experiences of women in Hip-Hop, and Chapter Four looks at how gender is negotiated in Aotearoa Hip-Hop. I discuss some of the reasons why the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community has not emulated the sexism that appears in U.S. rap and rap videos, and I show that *respect*, *skill* and *empowerment* are complex but crucial factors to address when analysing gender in Aotearoa Hip-Hop. This chapter notes the absence of women performing Hip-Hop but also reveals the presence of women in the crucial roles of supporter, organiser and fan of Hip-Hop. The chapter ends by providing a brief overview of the important contributions that two of my main teachers, Tweek and Spex, make to Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa.

Chapter Five centres around the key characteristic of *history* (see Figure 1). Aotearoa Hip-Hop has a distinctive historical trope, and in this chapter I discuss why history is so important to the Hip-Hop community, including the idea that the concept of whakapapa (genealogy) has had an influence on Māori and Polynesian appropriations

[7] When quoting from emails or posts in online discussion forums, the original spelling and grammar is used throughout this essay, and a different font will be used to signify electronic correspondence. Also, although I write using New Zealand English terminology, where I have quoted American sources the original American English spelling is used.

(or 'versionings') of Hip-Hop. I also explore some of the themes that emerge when members of the Hip-Hop community narrate their histories, including *knowledge*, *respect* and *education*. An examination of three cultural texts (an article written by Mark Thomson published on Hiphopnz.com, *Back2Basics* magazine, and Te Kupu's documentary *Ngātahi – Know The Links*), and of dance and graffiti performances at the 2000 and 2001 Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summits, reveals how these themes are used in the (re)production and performance of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa.

Chapter Six concludes the research by bringing together the main themes discussed in each of the chapters. It provides a summary of what I think Hip-Hop means to members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community based on my research, showing that Hip-Hop is a complex and sometimes contradictory phenomena.

1.1.3 A PERFORMATIVE APPROACH: CULTURE AS TEXT

In recent years, researchers have started to turn their gaze away from rap's commodity form to the performative aspects of Hip-Hop culture. Greg Dimitriadis's *Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip Hop as Text, Pedagogy, and Lived Practice* has been influential in shaping my own approach to Hip-Hop in Aotearoa. Dimitriadis argues that a focus on the performance of Hip-Hop culture – how it is used and experienced on a daily basis – allows academics "to get beyond a traditional impasse in music criticism – the impasse between looking at texts too narrowly or context too broadly " (2001:15). He also argues that such an approach can reveal the important role of dance in Hip-Hop, a role that has often been understated or ignored:

> The constant search for meaning through rap's vocal content alone has led to much cross-cultural misunderstanding, especially concerning the role of social dance. The link between protest lyrics and social resistance, for example, is often assumed, while the body itself is often ignored or dismissed.
>
> (Dimitriadis, 1996:180)

Such an approach is not new to anthropology or ethnomusicology, of course. Victor Turner has described humans as *Homo performans*, asserting that "man (sic) is a self-performing animal – his performances are, in a way, *reflexive*; in performing he reveals himself to himself" (1985:187). In his book *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (1979), ethnomusicologist John Chernoff argues that the performance itself was most

important, and an entire chapter of Charles Keil's classic text *Urban Blues* is necessarily devoted to a 'thick description' of a performance by the Big Bobby Blue Bland Band in order to illustrate the concepts of "catharsis, charisma, and solidarity" in blues and black culture (1991:142). Anthony Seeger looks at the way musical performances create many aspects of culture and social life for the Suyá of Brazil (1987), and in examining the aesthetics of popular music Simon Frith believes "we need to reverse the usual academic argument: the question is not how a piece of music, a text, "reflects" popular values, but how – in performance – it produces them" (1996:270). Other writings that have informed my performative approach include Finnegan (1989), Cohen (1991), Stokes (1994) and Maxwell (2003), and underlying my work is Christopher Small's concept of music not as a noun but as a verb, what he terms *musicking*:

> *To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practising, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.* We might at times even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door or the hefty men who shift the piano and the drums or the roadies who set up the instruments and carry out the sound checks or the cleaners who clean up after everyone else has gone. They, too, are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance.
>
> (Small, 1998:9)

The works of Clifford Geertz have also played an instrumental role in my reading and interpretation of Hip-Hop performances. Geertz extends the notion of a text beyond written material into the realm of culture, viewing the analysis of cultural forms, including performances, as parallel with penetrating a literary text (1973:448). Cultural forms, he argues, are imaginative works built out of social materials and ideologies that can be read as texts (Geertz, 1973:448).

> Ideas are not, and have not been for some time, unobservable mental stuff. They are envehicled meanings, the vehicles being symbols (or in some usages, signs), a symbol being anything that denotes, describes, represents, exemplifies, labels, indicates, evokes, depicts, expresses – anything that somehow or other signifies. And anything that somehow or other signifies is intersubjective, thus public, thus accessible to overt and corrigible *plein air* explication. Arguments, melodies, formulas, maps, and pictures are not idealities to be stared at but texts to be read; so are rituals, palaces, technologies, and social formations.
>
> (Geertz, 1980:135)

1.2 Global and Local Discourses on Hip-Hop

"If you've never heard of hip-hop, then chances are you're ready for a hip op," wrote James McOnie in the opening lines of his review of *Hip Hop NZ*, a documentary about the history of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa screened in December 2003 (McOnie, 2003). Originating in the ghettos of 1970s New York City, Hip-Hop culture has since transcended place, space and time to become a global phenomenon that is picked up and recast in a variety of ways by youth from all over the world. Hip-Hop has grown exponentially in the past 30 years, coming to dominate music markets and popular culture on a global scale, and academic studies of this global phenomenon have flourished in Hip-Hop's wake. There is a large body of literature on Hip-Hop both within and outside of the United States, and here I will provide a brief overview of the literature that has helped shape the direction of this thesis.

A common feature of all academic writings on Hip-Hop is the tendency to trace its varied musical origins and historical development, illustrating the importance of understanding Hip-Hop in its cultural context (c.f. Condry, 2001, 2002; Cross, 1993; Dimitriadis, 1996, 2001; Flores, 1994; Forman, 2000; Guevara, 1996; Hager, 1984; Hazzard-Donald, 1996; Kelly, 1993; Mitchell, 2001; Neumann, 2000; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1994a; Ross and Rose, 1994; Thompson, 1996; Toop, 1991; and Zemke-White, 2000). Some have argued that this tendency positions the United States (and black urban culture in particular) as the birthplace of Hip-Hop, which can lead to an "overreverential attitude" towards U.S. rap and Hip-Hop and result in non-U.S. versions being viewed as "implicitly parasitical" imitations of an inherently 'black' cultural form (Hesmondhalgh and Melville, 2001:87). In my own research, however, I found that Hip-Hop artists themselves stressed the importance of knowing Hip-Hop's history, and Chapter Five explores some possible reasons for this emphasis on history.

A large majority of the literature takes rap as its subject matter, reinforcing rap's status as Hip-Hop's most visible signifier. These studies range in topic from the commercialisation and commodification of rap (Basu and Werbner, 2001; Dimitriadis, 1996; Negus, 1999), to rap's lyrical content, including violence, misogyny and sexism (Berry, 1994; Guevara, 1996; hooks, 1994; Leito, 2001; Perry, 1995; Roberts, 1996; Dyson, 1996; Loza, 1994; Neumann, 2000). Other topics of choice include ethnicity, race, and the politics and poetics of rap (Fernandes, 2003; Forman, 2000; Lipsitz, 1994;

Rose, 1994a 1994b, 1995, 1996; Shomari, 1995; Stapleton, 1998; Urla, 2001). Although this thesis is not about rap *per se*, I found the work on the sexual politics of rap extremely useful in understanding how gender is negotiated in Aotearoa Hip-Hop, which forms the basis for Chapter Four.

In many respects, Hip-Hop provides a fruitful site for examining the processes of globalisation. The ways in which Hip-Hop is interpreted and practiced differ according to local contexts, and the growing number of studies into Hip-Hop outside the U.S.A. have revealed much about global cultural flows and how notions of locality and differentiation emerge in a globalising world (Appadurai, 1996:18; Bennett, 1999, 2000; Bennett, 2002; Condry, 2001, 2002; Connell and Gibson, 2003; Henderson, 1999; Hesmondhalgh and Melville, 2001; Krims, 2000; Levy, 2001; Maxwell, 2001, 2003; Mitchell, 2001; Wermuth, 2001; Zemke-White, 2000). This thesis does not seek to advance any theory of globalisation; instead it provides a closer look at how the global form of Hip-Hop has been reworked (or 'glocalised'[8]) in Aotearoa according to local conditions. My focus on performance led to an interesting discovery about glocalisation in dance, which is explored in Chapter Three.

I now turn to the growing body of literature on Aotearoa Hip-Hop. The earliest works on Hip-Hop in Aotearoa focused on Hip-Hop's dance form, as this was the first element to become popular in Aotearoa, and the first academic treatment of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa was Tania Kopytko's (1986) article, "Breakdance as an Identity Marker in New Zealand". Kopytko examines how Māori and Polynesian youth in Palmerston North (who practised at the same venue in Highbury that I was to visit 17 years later) used 'breakdance'[9] as a way of gaining confidence and social status, resulting in a

[8] "Glocalization: A term popularized by Robertson (1992:173-4) to describe how global pressures and demands are made to conform to local conditions. Whereas powerful companies might 'customize' their product to local markets, glocalization operates in the opposite direction. Local actors select and modify elements from an array of global possibilities, thereby initiating some democratic and creative engagement between the local and the global" (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000:377).

[9] I was informed on more than one occasion that 'breakdance' is an incorrect term used to describe the dance form of Hip-Hop that was coined by the U.S. media in the 1980s. Dancers don't 'breakdance', they dance to a beat, and B-boy originally referred to people who would dance to repeated 'break beats' spun by a DJ (Hager, 1984). Thomas Guzman-Sanchez, member of the Californian Chain Reaction crew who made a film called *Underground Dance Masters: History of a Forgotten Era* (1998) about the history of locking and popping, wrote an article for Vibe Magazine entitled "There Really Is No Such Thing As Breakdance!" explaining how this common misconception came about and the effect it has had on various dance forms (Guzman-Sanchez, 2000).

"strong and positive identity that did much to raise their self-esteem and realise their capabilities" (1986:25). Kopytko discusses the social and political environment of the time in her analysis of why urban Māori and Polynesian youth were drawn to this dance form, and reveals the double-edged blade of the media, which both brought breaking to Aotearoa and contributed to its demise in the mid-1980s. Mark Scott's *Street Action Aotearoa* (1985), while not an academic text, also provides valuable information on the role of the media in disseminating Hip-Hop to our shores. Scott's work looks at what the 'bop' *meant* to disaffected urban Māori and explains why it was so readily embraced by a generation who felt like they belonged neither on a marae nor in the world of the Pākehā. Tony Mitchell, who is perhaps the most prolific author on Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, takes rap as his focus and his predominantly textual analyses have contributed much to understandings of why Māori and Polynesian youth are drawn to rap, how rap is glocalised here and what kind of lyrical content can be expected in Aotearoa rap.

Three recent theses on Hip-Hop have provided further insights into the ways in which Hip-Hop travelled to Aotearoa and reasons why Māori and Polynesian youth are so drawn to it. April Henderson's MA thesis *Gifted Flows: Netting the Imagery of the Samoan Diaspora* (1999) is a beautiful ethnography that, among other things, draws on Appadurai's concepts of mediascapes[10] and ethnoscapes[11] in tracing Hip-Hop's movement across the Pacific to Aotearoa. Kirsten Zemke-White's thorough and comprehensive PhD thesis *Rap Music in Aotearoa: A Sociological and Musicological Analysis* (2000) focuses specifically on rap music, in particular how and why it is used by youth in Aotearoa. Like Mitchell, Zemke-White notes the influence that traditional Māori and Polynesian culture has had on local appropriations of rap music, and she has since followed her work up by publishing an article entitled "Rap Music and Pacific Identity in Aotearoa: Popular Music and the Politics of Opposition" (2001). The most recent thesis I read was Edgar Bennett's *Scratchin' the Surface: Hip-Hop and the social construction of Auckland's urban-Polynesian youth identities* (2002). Bennett's work investigates the impact

[10] "*Mediascapes* refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media" (Appadurai, 1996:35).

[11] "By *ethnoscape*, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (Appadurai, 1996:33).

that Hip-Hop culture has had on urban-Polynesian youth in Auckland and explores how these youth use Hip-Hop in constructing identities. All three theses, and the published works listed above, have sought to address *why* Māori and Polynesian youth in Aotearoa have so readily appropriated Hip-Hop, and have shown how these appropriations have resulted in a distinctive, glocalised version of Aotearoa Hip-Hop. They have also shown that a distinctive feature of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa is its thoroughly *mediated* nature (Maxwell, 2003) – Hip-Hop's main vehicle to these shores was via the mass media, and for most members of the Hip-Hop community the media (including television, magazines, movies, CDs, books, radio and internet) still play a large role in providing access to Hip-Hop.

These global and local discourses on Hip-Hop provide a solid foundation for my understanding of Hip-Hop culture, and the various threads discussed earlier – history, gender, glocalisation – are woven into the chapters of this thesis. I have also incorporated the findings of recent studies of Aotearoa Hip-Hop into my work. I hope that my approach, which is grounded in ongoing dialogues about the ethos of Hip-Hop and focuses on performance and cultural texts, will complement the work done thus far and add to a deeper understanding of what Hip-Hop means to those involved in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community.

Chapter Two

> Someone once told me that in field work: *You need to know who you are and what you are doing there.*
>
> (Lareau, 1996:207)

> The grounded theorist's analysis tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. The researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. This story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed ... We can claim only to have interpreted *a* reality, as we understood both our own experience and our subjects' portrayals of theirs.
>
> (Charmaz, 2000:522-523)

Research Experiences: Methods for a Musical Anthropology of Hip-Hop

Anthropologists have long known that in the process of doing ethnographic research, the researcher learns as much about herself as she does the people being studied. Barbara Myerhoff has described participant-observation, the hallmark research technique of social anthropology, as the process of "knowing others through oneself" (1980:18). The recognition that the stories compiled by researchers reflect the viewer as well as the viewed (and that research is itself a construct, as pointed to in the epigraph) has resulted in the current reflexive trend in ethnographic writing, locating the researcher in relation to the research. A fundamental trope of Hip-Hop is knowing who you are and where you are from, and my subject of study has been instrumental in the process of coming to know myself. In *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* Chernoff's participants told him that if he was going to be involved with their lives and study their music, he would have to tell his own story too (1979:171), and I similarly found that members of the Hip-Hop community wanted to know about this person who had come to study their culture. The primary instrument of anthropological fieldwork is the anthropologist herself, and this chapter aims to let the reader know something of myself as well as how I studied Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. The chapter is divided into three sections; the first retraces my journey into Hip-Hop, the second outlines some of the guiding principles that have shaped this research experience, and the third discusses the methodological techniques I employed.

2.1 My Journey Into Hip-Hop

How Hip-Hop came to be the focus of my research does not begin with a definitive moment (an article in a magazine, a revelatory experience). I have a short answer prepared for those who asked me why I was studying Hip-Hop – because it interests me, because I like the music, and because I really liked the idea of attending musical events (gigs) as part of my research. However this doesn't explain how I came to be researching this topic as a graduate student at Massey University, nor does it say much about the ways in which I went about researching Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. My journey into Hip-Hop is the result of a series of circumstances that led me to realise that my lifelong love of music could be a subject of academic research. In this section I outline the circumstances that led me to study Hip-Hop, and also how this research process led me to find and articulate my own turangawaewae (standing place).

My interest in musical performance began at an early age. When I was about 8 years old, my father asked me one day if I would like to start learning the Highland bagpipe (I had already been playing piano for a year but don't recall being consulted on the issue). I thought about it for a moment, then said "okay". Shortly after I was having my first lesson, which led to solo piping competitions, playing with a pipe band, playing for Highland dancers and performing in pubs and stadiums across Aotearoa. The pipe band world is one that revolves around competition and performance, and I quickly came to appreciate what a good (or 'winning') performance involved. Being able to play well was of paramount importance, and so was being able to perform for and entertain an audience, whether it be judges, fellow musicians, or interested spectators. Although I later became disillusioned with the competitive nature of piping and left the band, I still love performing and I especially love the social aspects of sharing and making music with a group of people (which, I suspect, was the initial motivation for my parents to enroll their shy daughter in music lessons).

Life as a university student intensified my involvement with music. I started volunteering as a DJ at student radio station Radio Massey (now Radio Control). Radio Control's philosophy of playing non-commercial music exposed me to a whole new world of music, especially Hip-Hop, a genre I enjoyed but had limited knowledge of. I came to develop an appreciation of and respect for 'underground' and conscious Hip-Hop, the kind of Hip-Hop articulated by the likes of KRS-ONE, Common Sense and

Public Enemy. As my studies in English literature and social anthropology progressed and I learnt about colonisation and post-colonialism, oppression and marginalisation, racism and discrimination, politics, power, feminism, globalisation, the human condition and all the other '-ions' and '-isms' that abound in academia, Hip-Hop took on a deeper meaning for me as I recognised these themes within the music. I became a big fan of Aotearoa Hip-Hop as the topics addressed by the likes of King Kapisi and Che Fu spoke to issues of immediate concern in my daily life (racism, colonialism, believing in yourself), and I eventually came to co-host 'The Elements', a specialist Hip-Hop show on Radio Control.

When I started studying I had no idea that my lifelong love for music could also be a subject of professional research (Boggs, 1996:156). I read my first social anthropology paper purely by chance – I needed to pick up an extra paper in my first year and a friend recommended doing Endangered Cultures, so I did. The lecturer for this paper, Dr Jeff Sluka, was instrumental in showing me that I could combine music with study and also use music as a way of study. Dr Sluka was also (and is still) a volunteer DJ at Radio Control who, recognising my enthusiasm for music and for what I was learning in his class, encouraged me to combine music with research for a major essay. My research topic looked at the insidious colonisation techniques that the British empire used first on the Irish and later on the Māori and as part of my assessment I composed, recorded and performed a song about the topic[12]. Thus began my career as a musical anthropologist, which led me to complete a graduate diploma in ethnomusicology at Victoria University and has culminated in the production of this thesis.

The encouragement I received from staff at Massey combined with my increasing involvement in the Palmerston North music scene during my undergraduate years were pivotal in helping me develop my turangawaewae (place to stand). In the late 1990s I became more involved with the Palmerston North music scene, attending gigs, volunteering at The Stomach[13], co-ordinating events to raise funds for charity and

[12] I played the bagpipes, Dave Bloxham provided the vocals and James Dunlop played the keyboards. The song, entitled 'Oppression', was eventually released in 1998 on a compilation CD of Palmerston North music, *Musak*, produced by the Massey University Students' Association.

[13] The Stomach is the name of the community music centre, recording studio, rehearsal space and live music venue run by a non-profit voluntary organisation called Creative Sounds Society Inc. in Palmerston North.

workshops to encourage women to participate in music-making, learning how to be a sound engineer, and eventually performing in local originals bands myself (playing keyboards, synthesisers, bagpipes, and currently bass guitar). I was able to gain part-time employment in the music scene as News Editor at Radio Massey, Administrator for Creative Sounds Society Incorporated and as an itinerant music teacher (bagpipes) at Palmerston North Boys' High School. I was also able to design the research components of most of the social anthropology papers I read to reflect my interest in music. My involvement in the music scene provided me with a strong sense of identity and belonging, and the encouragement of staff at Massey to follow my musical interests strengthened my sense of self as an anthropologist. This was especially helpful in taking on the role of participant-observer for my research. An anthropologist engages in peculiar work – we go to places, often uninvited and unaccompanied, and do our best to participate in and observe the events going on around us at the time (Myerhoff, 1980:18). We approach complete strangers and attempt to gain their trust and form relationships so we can ask them difficult and sometimes deeply personal questions about themselves, what they do, and why they do what they do. In the epigraph to this chapter, Annette Lareau relates how someone once told her that in fieldwork "*You need to know who you are and what you are doing there*" (1996:207, italics in original). My turangawaewae gave me confidence in who I was and what I was doing as a student of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa.

2.2 Guiding Principles

The interests and encouragement of the staff in Massey University's social anthropology department were, of course, crucial to my development as an anthropologist. As students we learnt about the various tools that make up an anthropologist's toolkit, which included not only research techniques and theories but important ethical and moral considerations as well. By the time I commenced this project I had formulated some key personal beliefs that shaped the entire research experience, from the way I collected my data to the construction of the end product. In this section I will to look at the three guiding principles – respect, giving something back, and collaborative research – that provided the framework for this research.

One of the first things I came to understand about doing research was the importance of *respect* – respect for the research participants and for the research itself. As ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl explains:

> ... in one important sense we expect a standard from fieldworkers. We expect of them respect for their material and for the people with whom they work. The informants, the teachers, are keenly aware of its presence or absence; they test the fieldworker to determine if he or she is serious and takes them seriously.
>
> (Nettl, 1983:258)

In Hip-Hop I saw a vibrant and interesting community of people who were putting a lot of time and effort into their craft and into using Hip-Hop in a positive way (*education* and *empowerment* are key characteristics of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, as outlined in Figure 1), and I wanted to use my research as a way to draw attention to this fact. Respect in itself is a vital component of Hip-Hop culture, and I knew that in order to do this research effectively I needed to gain the respect of the people I wanted to work with:

> From what I have seen, people within Hip-Hop culture will share knowledge with you once you gain their trust and respect. I have made initial forays into the 'field' and it is enough for now to just let people know that I am genuinely interested in learning, and to see what happens from there.
>
> excerpt from fieldnotes, July 2000

Early in my research I was 'tested' to see whether I respected Hip-Hop by Tweek, a prominent figure in the Hip-Hop community who later became my main teacher. I met Tweek at the inaugural Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit held in Christchurch in 2000, where she was involved in running workshops and as a performer with her crew, Wellington's Time Bandits. Sitting in the dimly-lit Lumiere Theatre (where a workshop on breaking was being conducted), frantically trying to write down everything the instructors said, it took me a while to realise that B-girl Tweek was actually Joella Wright (nee Raika), a girl who had been in my form class at college in Levin. Tweek was one of the few Māori students in my class (the college was streamed and ours was the 'top' stream), and I remembered her as the type of person who would always be picked first for sports teams (out of girls *and* boys), who was well-liked and who wasn't afraid to voice her opinions. I couldn't believe my luck! She was obviously an important figure in the Hip-Hop community (otherwise she wouldn't have been running the workshop), and when it

finished I hurried up to her, introduced myself and asked if she remembered me[14]. "Lorena? Gee, you look different!" was almost all she had time to say before she had to rush off to the next workshop. Having organised events myself I knew that those involved in running the Summit would have little time to spend on talking to unknown researchers, so I had prepared some business cards with my name, contact details, and a brief spiel about my research, one of which I gave to Tweek.

My 'test' occurred in April 2001, after I had made email contact with Tweek. I had become interested in the stark contrast between the images of women we were presented with in American rap videos and what women in Aotearoa Hip-Hop were actually like, so I decided to contribute a paper on this topic to the 2001 Women's Studies Association Conference. I emailed Tweek to ask if I could interview her about Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa, B-girls, and her role in empowering women through Hip-Hop, and received this in reply:

> Hi Lorena,
> I'm interested as to what your talk is for and what it's about?
> I don't know, I just find it strange that someone who isn't a bgirl is talking about it that's all, not to mean any offence or anything but I'm just a little curious.
> I'm keen to do an interview but I'm curious as to what you're going to be using my knowledge for? Are you going to be using it in your conference talk or what??
> Anyway, get back to me about it because this and let me know exactly what you're gonna be doing with my interview. Please don't be offended by me asking you these questions or saying these things, I'm just curious and concerned that's all OK??
>
> Take care and get back to me soon!!
> tWEEk
>
> Email, 26 April 2001

To paraphrase Lareau (quoted above), Tweek wanted to know who I was and what I was doing there. I sent an email back immediately explaining that I didn't mean to speak on behalf of B-girls, but instead wanted to explore the disparities I was noticing between the images of women in Hip-Hop presented to us on television and what I was seeing in my research. The next week, in person, I asked her if she would like to present the paper with me, speaking as a B-girl in Aotearoa, and offered to pay for her trip to

[14] I made email contact with Tweek in April 2001 after seeing her name on www.phunkrepublic.com, and sent her a private message where I again asked if she remembered me from school. "Yes of course I remember you," was her reply. "We were in the same form class for two years and you were the only one who was faster than me at typing … LOL!"

Christchurch (where the conference was being held) if she was keen[15]. She was, and after working on content together via email we traveled to Christchurch and presented our paper (entitled "B-girls Don't Be") to an interested and receptive audience (see Chapter Four for a discussion of gender in Aotearoa Hip-Hop).

This experience had a major impact on the way I approached and carried out my research. I felt upset and challenged upon receipt of her email, and was eager to show that I had a genuine interest in and respect for what she was doing, and that I sincerely wanted to learn about Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. After a few more emails she apologised for grilling me and explained that she had been used in the past for her knowledge by people who had misrepresented her and what Hip-Hop is all about. Hip-Hop has become a popular topic for journalists, university students and academics to investigate (there were very few occasions where I was the only researcher present at an event), and I soon learnt that people involved in the Hip-Hop community had become wary of people who asked a few questions, took some photos, then went away and wrote sensationalist stories based on partial truths ('angles' in journalist-speak) or incomplete understandings. If this was indeed a test from Tweek, I seem to have passed, and I was later gratified to hear from other members of the Hip-Hop community that Tweek had "good things to say" about me[16]. I had earned the right to learn, and in Tweek found a knowledgeable and patient teacher who gave freely and generously of her time and knowledge.

Another principle that guided my research approach was my desire to 'give something back' to the Hip-Hop community. Research participants are increasingly telling researchers that while they have given their time, friendship and knowledge, they have received little in return (Rudge, 1993:18). Bara Raju, one of the participants of Sita Venkateswar's research amongst the Andaman Islanders, had clearly received nothing back from previous studies done in his community:

> There are always people who keep coming here and take things away. One goes and another one arrives ... The doctors who came from Delhi, took some (plants) with them, they took some of the medicines of the forest.

---

[15] I was fortunate to be the recipient of a Massey Masterate Scholarship in 2001, which enabled me to attend conferences like this one as part of my research.

[16] I was told on more occasion that I was "different" from other researchers. I would ask "in what way?", but people didn't really seem to be able to articulate this difference, apart from saying that I "hung out" more.

> They will make it in Delhi they say, and bring it back. But nobody brought back anything.
>
> (Venkateswar, 1997:55)

As noted above, Hip-Hop is a popular topic for journalists and academics, and I was determined not to be seen as just another researcher who came, asked (possibly irrelevant) questions, and wrote a report to further my own academic career. Article 1 (i) of the *Principles of Professional Responsibility and Ethical Conduct,* a document prepared by the Ethics Committee of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/NZ (which I am a member of), states that "There should be no exploitation of research participants for personal gain. Fair return should be given them for all services" (Ethics Committee, 1987). I wanted to give something in return for the time and knowledge people were giving me, so I decided to turn some of my interview material into articles for publication in popular music magazines (including *Hype* magazine, *The Package*, and Massey's student newspaper *Chaff* – with permission of course[17]). I also made copies of photographs that I'd taken freely available to the Hip-Hop community, and where possible paid participants for their time (with music vouchers, cans of spraypaint, or cash depending on services rendered). I was pleased to find that participants did take me up on my repeated offers to help out, and I happily responded to requests to come and videotape or photograph events, sent copies of photographs to websites for publication, and even proofread and edited the occasional press release.

My desire to give something back was also the motivating factor in my decision to dedicate this thesis to the Hip-Hop community. By presenting this thesis as a koha, I am recognising that it is a body of knowledge compiled by me that I think may be of use (or at least of interest) to members of the Hip-Hop community. Whether they chose to pick it up or not is up to them; in this way, my integrity as a researcher is intact, as is their power to control if and how they make use of this gift.

Deciding to use a collaborative approach was something I did very early in my research process. For me, a collaborative approach involved consulting with members of the Hip-Hop community whenever possible – asking where I should begin learning about

[17] In regard to ethical considerations, instead of obtaining signed consent forms or confidentiality statements from my participants, I verbally discussed issues of confidentiality and came to individual agreements with each person. Participation was also entirely voluntary and people could withdraw from the research at any time without cause.

Hip-Hop culture, letting interviewees shape the interviews I conducted, and by sending participants copies of any work they featured in to check and edit as necessary. I also decided to employ Russell Bishop's (1996) metaphor of whakawhanaungatanga (the process of establishing relationships in a Māori context) as a research strategy. I felt this was suitable to my topic because although my research wasn't specifically on Māori or Māori issues, the majority of people in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community are Māori or Polynesian.

Bishop (2001:208) outlines three related factors in employing the metaphor of whakawhanaungatanga as a research strategy. The first involves establishing and maintaining whanau-like relationships with participants. This is very appropriate in the context of Hip-Hop because members of the community often refer to each other as family (this is also characteristic of Hip-Hop in the United States). Although I made some good friends within the Hip-Hop community I did not achieve a whanau-like relationship with them, as the friendships haven't extended beyond the common interests we share in Hip-Hop. I think as a researcher I will always remain something of an outsider, but I like to think there may be a role for me within the Hip-Hop community as a 'clever head', which is how rapper and producer DLT introduced me to friends at the 2001 Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit in Auckland[18]. The second factor of whakawhanaungatanga as a research process is that researchers understand themselves to be involved somatically in the research process: "that is, physically, ethically, morally and spiritually and not just as a 'researcher' concerned with methodology" (Bishop, 2001:208). I am somatically involved in the research process – Hip-Hop has been at the forefront of everything I have done for the past three years – and this is the reason this chapter commences with my own values and principles rather than the various research techniques I employed (interviews, participant-observation, textual analysis and so on, which will be discussed shortly). The third research factor is that "establishing relationships in a Māori context addresses the power and control issues fundamental to research, through participatory research in a manner that facilitates the sharing of power and control" (Bishop, 2001:208). I didn't always set out to establish relationships in a

[18] I was recently pleased to discover that a paper I gave at the combined conference of the Australia and New Zealand Musicological Societies in Wellington in November 2003 made it on to Hiphopnz.com's Aotearoa Hip-Hop Timeline. At the same conference I was also interviewed by Karizma for a forthcoming television series, *Tuhono*, a youth Māori, Hip-Hop and r'n'b show produced by Whitebait Productions, which is to be screened on the Māori channel in 2004.

Māori context, instead preferring to take my cue from my participants (some of whom consider being Māori as quite a separate identity from being Hip-Hop). However I did always present myself as someone interested in Hip-Hop and willing to listen to and learn from those with knowledge.

When developing theoretical analyses for my data, I found grounded theory methods to be eminently suited to my approach. The strength and relevance of a grounded theory is that explanatory frameworks are drawn from the data itself (Charmaz, 2000); I was able to try out preconceived concepts and ideas for relevance and 'fit', and I feel confident in saying the themes and issues addressed in this thesis (reflected in Figure 1) are derived from the ongoing dialogues in process within the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community.

Although I was able to collaborate in the data collection stage of this thesis, the writing up process made me acutely aware of the contradictory nature of collaborative research. After completing the final draft of this thesis, I sent it to six key participants to review, comment on and make suggestions for improvement as they saw fit. I also invited these participants to write a piece describing projects they are currently involved in and/or overall impressions of my work for inclusion as an Epilogue to this thesis, but unfortunately none had the time to take me up on my offer. I have been able to incorporate most of the changes suggested by participants into this thesis and there was only one instance where I had to reach a compromise between respecting their wishes and remaining true to my own interpretations. Like Philippe Bourgois, I came to appreciate that:

> Although the literary quality and emotional force of this book depends entirely on the articulate words of the main characters, I have always had the final say in how – and if – they would be conveyed in the final product.
>
> (Bourgois, 1991:13)

I have not addressed all of the concerns highlighted by my participants here[19], nor have I made use of all the data I collected. Instead, I chose to focus on areas of common

[19] For example, one of my participants, Mark Thomson, said that (in his opinion) "... unfortunately our muse-sick industry is run by Australians, the most corrupt and racist country on the planet - and that's factually proven. I hope you make note of that in any thesis. New Zealand is the bastard child of a country founded on racial genocide. That goes for all industry here" (email, 10 September 2002). Racism and prejudice in the music industry is obviously an important issue but one that unfortunately fell outside the scope of this thesis.

interest to myself and my participants (performance and gender, history and whakapapa) which form the basis of the following chapters. I have also chosen to use the voices of my informants wherever possible, conveying their words and ideas as they expressed them in the hopes of revealing what Hip-Hop *means* for them. The voices presented here are those of my informants, but the surrounding analyses and interpretations are my own.

2.3 Research Techniques

The methodological techniques I developed to research Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa are, of necessity, grounded in the nature of Hip-Hop itself. This is a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1999; Ortner, 1997; Toth, 2003), with the various sites of Hip-Hop – physical, virtual, and textual – forming my research sites.

One site is the live performance event, where members of the Hip-Hop community come together to participate in 'being' Hip-Hop. Another site is located in cyberspace, where members of the Hip-Hop community gather to discuss Hip-Hop, swap original tracks and even participate in virtual MC battles. Cultural texts are an important component of Hip-Hop culture and these texts comprise my third research site. By cultural texts I mean music videos, CDs, vinyl, books, magazine and newspaper articles, movies, documentaries, academic publications on Hip-Hop, and all the products of art and entertainment encompassed by what Sherry Ortner has called "public culture", which "includes all of the products of what is commonly called the "media" but much more as well" (1999:55). Fortunately Hip-Hop is a popular topic for academics and journalists alike, so I collected artefacts of "popular culture" like a magpie, and, of course, listened to as much Aotearoa Hip-Hop as I could. The various research techniques discussed below have been shaped by the particular sites in which they were used.

2.3.1 PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION

July, 2001. It's a warm evening in central Wellington, and my friend Karen (a fellow music student at Victoria University) and I are sitting on a couch at the Viva Youth Centre on Cuba Mall. I'm here to participate in and observe a Hip-Hop event, an all-

ages evening organised by the Wellington City Council Youth Services team called *Wellington Heat Urban Beat* featuring performances from some of the city's leading B-boys and B-girls, DJs and MCs. Karen's here to experience her first Hip-Hop gig, and we've negotiated our way to the back of the room so we can sit where Heidi (Karen's guide dog) will be out of harm's way. "So," says Karen, "what do you do at gigs as an anthropologist?" "Well … " I start to answer, then stop. I'm quiet for a minute, trying to assess what exactly it is that I *do* at gigs as an anthropologist as opposed to a normal audience member. I go to gigs regularly, often as many as four a month (although not all of these are Hip-Hop gigs), so being at a live musical performance is like a second home to me. I enjoy the music, just like everyone else. I dance, yell, applaud, check out what everyone's wearing, talk with friends … just like everyone else. "Well," I eventually say, "I tend to stay sober so I can go home and write up my notes."

Of course this isn't all I do as an anthropologist at gigs. However, Karen's question caused me to reflect on what, exactly, it was that made me different, and I came to understand that it was the *attitude* I adopted, the anthropological attitude of heightened awareness, of concentrating fully on being there, trying to note everything that was going on around me, trying to see how performers embodied the key characteristics of Hip-Hop they had talked about in interviews and on websites (see Figure 1), that made me different. This is the anthropological attitude described by Kapferer (2000) and Wade (1997), and I attended over 20 Hip-Hop events with an anthropological attitude (see Appendix 1 for a list of events).

Participant-observation is the hallmark research technique of social anthropology and usually requires the anthropologist to spend a prolonged period of time with the community under study. However, the community I was studying was not the traditional society where members of the same group live in close proximity. Also, I was not studying those people as they were all of the time, just during the times they embodied their Hip-Hop identities. The rest of the time they occupied their various social roles as mothers, sisters, employees, students, and it would not have been relevant to follow them round in their daily lives, trying to measure how much time they spent thinking about or 'being' Hip-Hop. Instead I decided to participate and observe at events and performances where members of the Hip-Hop community acted out their sense of selves as Hip-Hop, and I attended a variety of gigs, exhibitions, talks, video

screenings and joined a Hip-Hop emailing list and website. Attending the Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summits in 2000 and 2001 were probably my most intensive times in the field, especially the second Summit where I encountered the Time Bandits Crew (now the Step Kingz) in the street in Auckland checking into the same backpackers as I was planning to stay at. I managed to secure space in their dorm room, and later moved up to the YWCA with them where I shared a room with Spex. Presenting joint conference papers with Palmerston North Hip-Hop crew D'Cypher and Tweek also involved some intensive timesharing with my participants, and I had regular (if short) weekly visits to Hip-Hop workshops at Te Manga Wai in Highbury, Palmerston North. Overall my time in the 'field' would range from two to 72 hours.

Because I was attending performances and events of short duration, I decided to fully focus on 'being there' – experiencing, participating, observing – and had informal conversations with people rather than formal taped interviews. From my own experiences as an event organiser and regular gig-goer, I knew that people at an event don't really want to be interrupted to answer questions, and I didn't expect people to deviate from their normal event-going behaviours (Andrews, forthcoming). People go to gigs to have fun, and although most people didn't mind chatting to me I quickly learned that their demeanour changed if I whipped out my mini-disc recorder or pen and paper. However they didn't mind being contacted afterwards (usually via email) for comments and more formal interview questions (see below for more discussion on interviews).

As anthropology's gaze widens to encompass increasingly more and more aspects of culture(s), so too are concepts of fieldwork changing along with the sites that we study. When I started my research, I didn't feel like a 'real' anthropologist because my sites of study weren't places I could inhabit for an extended length of time. Discovering that there were precedents for a rapid ethnography of music (Keil, 1991; Finnegan, 1989; Cohen, 1991; Bennett, 1999) eased my mind, however, and in 2002 I had the opportunity to work with an American anthropologist practising rapid ethnography in Christchurch. Dr Jan English-Leuck was studying New Zealand's Silicon Valley (Christchurch), and I learnt much from my work transcribing the interviews and taped visits to the field she carried out as part of her research.

In 2001, I inadvertently set up the conditions for rapid ethnography of Hip-Hop culture in Wellington as part of my assessment for the Graduate Diploma in Ethnomusicology I was completing at Victoria University. The initial idea for the workshop came from Dr Allan Thomas, my lecturer at Victoria, who, recognising my enthusiasm for Hip-Hop and performance, suggested that I might like to combine the two as part of my assessment. Fellow School of Music student Daniel Beban and myself co-ordinated a Hip-Hop workshop called *Bomb The Space* (part of a larger event celebrating electronic music), which was held in September 2001 at The Space in Newtown, Wellington. The aim of this introductory workshop was to showcase the four elements of Hip-Hop in a setting where people interested in finding out about Hip-Hop culture could observe, participate, and learn from key members of Wellington's Hip-Hop community. I collaborated with Tweek in organising the format of the day, and we decided on five sections based on the four elements of Hip-Hop (MCing, DJing, graffiti and breaking) and history, which I was by then coming to view as a fifth element of Hip-Hop. Co-ordinating this event was instrumental in helping me identify the key elements and characteristics that constitute Hip-Hop (see Figure 1), which form the backbone of this thesis. The day started with a discussion panel on the history of Hip-Hop (featuring guest speakers Tweek, Juse and Kerb), followed by a graffiti showcase (works by Juse and Kerb), breaking workshops (run by Tweek and B-boy D-Fye), a DJ workshop (taken by Alphabet Head) and an MC workshop (run by Imon Starr of Rhombus fame). Funding for the workshop was sought and obtained from the Wellington City Council, Victoria University, and I also put some of the funds I received from my Massey Masterate Scholarship towards the event. Anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff ran what she called "Living History" classes as part of her research, and found them to be a rich and valuable experience not only for herself, but also for her participants (Myerhoff, 1980). Similarly, I found this workshop to be intensely stimulating and I and my fellow participants (mostly students from Victoria University's School of Music) learnt much about Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. Speaking to Tweek and Kerb after the event, I was pleased to hear that they too found the workshop really inspiring and that they were happy to share their knowledge with so many people who were genuinely interested in learning about Hip-Hop culture. The workshop also brought about some unanticipated benefits to the people I had asked to run the various components of it – Kerb and Juse were able to sell their artwork (Kerb sold his on the day), and Alphabet Head and Imon Starr were asked to be guest lecturers at a class at Victoria University's School of Music.

2.3.2 ONLINE HIP-HOP

As well as attending physical events, I also observed and participated in an online Hip-Hop community at www.hiphopnz.com under the nickname 'piper'. As Tricia Rose has noted, rap (and Hip-Hop culture in general) is fundamentally literate and on the cutting edge of technology (1994a:137). I found that members of the Hip-Hop community also participated in a larger online Hip-Hop community, and virtual relationships were often extended into the physical world, and vice-versa. This online community was an extremely valuable source of information and although I made introductory posts explaining who I was and what I was doing, I found I didn't have to ask many questions online because other members of the community were doing it for me. People are interested in one another in this online community, so would start threads discussing their various ethnic backgrounds, what got them into Hip-Hop, what it meant to 'be' Hip-Hop, what their favourite songs were, and all manner of topics that I found fascinating and revealing (see Chapter Three for further discussion about Hiphopnz.com).

2.3.3 INTERVIEWS AND INFORMANTS

After making contact with members of the Hip-Hop community at events and online, I asked a number of people if they would be interested in doing an interview with me about Hip-Hop in Aotearoa. Originally I wanted my informants to shape the interviews and hoped that we could hold conversations loosely based around the topic of Hip-Hop. After some unsuccessful attempts to interview people using this format, I realised that my informants wanted to know what kinds of things I was interested in as an anthropologist, and were more comfortable if I presented them with a list of questions they could think about before the interview. I started emailing people interview questions and the ones who responded became my research informants. In this way my informants almost selected themselves – I made postings on websites and discussion forums telling people about what I was doing and looking for people to interview, and found the internet to be an extremely valuable tool (and one particularly suited to the Hip-Hop community) for making contacts.

At the outset of my research I compiled lists of questions grouped around topics I was interested in for my interviews. These focused predominantly on identity, ethnicity,

politics, media stereotyping, and gender, and I emailed questionnaires to a variety of people, including both Hip-Hop practitioners and academics (see Appendix 2 for two sample questionnaires). I received some insightful and thoughtful replies from most of the people I emailed, but one reply in particular was to shape my future interview technique. Te Kupu (aka D Word or Dean Hapeta), founding member of Upper Hutt Posse and one of the pioneers of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, told me that my questions were "pretty typical" and that he would get round to answering them when he could. I was somewhat discouraged by his reply, but on reviewing the kinds of questions I was asking I realised that he was right, my questions were typical, especially for someone like him who has been interviewed dozens of times. It was then that I realised why some of the answers I was getting seemed so practised – it was because they *were* practised. I wasn't asking anything new, I was just repeating the same old questions they had been asked by journalists and researchers over and over again, and like Bourdieu I came to appreciate the "kindness and goodwill which respondents can show towards the arbitrary and irrelevant questions which are so often 'meted out' to them" (Bourdieu, 1996:19). I reviewed the kinds of questions I was asking, and decided that they were very journalistic (probably due to my earlier training as a journalist for Radio Massey) and heavily influenced by what people in the media and academics were writing about Hip-Hop. At this stage I realised I needed to start listening more closely to the dialogues in progress within the Hip-Hop community and take my cue from (or *ground* my research in*)* the kinds of things they were interested in. In discussing Pierre Bourdieu's approach to interviews, Fowler examines his suggestion that the fieldworker should never raise questions which do not come from the respondent him or herself, since, in his view, the answers will not be worth having (Fowler, 1996:12). There are limitations to this idea, as Fowler goes on to point out, the most compelling being "the loss of any possibility of systematically comparing answers to the same question or issue" (Fowler, 1996:14). I was also aware that an acontextual reliance on respondents' overt concerns can lead to "narrow research problems, limited data, and trivial analyses" (Charmaz, 2000:514). Accordingly I sought to ground questions in both my participants' interests and in wider discourses on Hip-Hop, and was gratified to receive the following response from Spex in regards to a question I had emailed her: "Interesting question there scholar, I love hearing your questions they're cool and they make me think, define and then redefine!" (email, 26 February 2002).

I stopped conducting formal interviews and questionnaires after receiving that reply from Te Kupu. Instead, I focused on having ongoing conversations with participants (another Bourdieuian idea), both in person and via email. One of the most interesting conversations I had was purely via email, with someone I met online and have never seen in person – Mark Thomson, founder of independent label 833 Records and regular contributor to *Rip It Up* magazine. Our conversations usually started with an interesting comment he made on hiphopnz.com or in a magazine. I would email him, asking for the reasons behind his perspectives, and in this way was able to get to know what it was that he found important about Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. I also made use of interviews published in music magazines and on websites – Hip-Hop is a very popular topic, as mentioned previously, and I saw no point in asking people the same questions that they had quite competently answered in magazines and on television and radio interviews. I felt slightly awkward about bombarding people with dozens of questions, especially as the people who showed an interest in my research tended to be very involved in the Hip-Hop community and lead extremely busy lives (even when Tweek told me she didn't mind I still felt I was 'bothering' her with my endless questions). My concern was recently validated by a press release I received from Jill Leahy, a graffiti artist and Hip-Hop historian from Auckland. Jill (Jillski) and Phaze (a female DJ from Auckland) have recently completed the mammoth task of compiling all the newspaper and magazine articles written on Hip-Hop in Aotearoa from 1988-2002 into a scrapbook, which is now freely available at the Auckland City Library. Part of the press release explains that one of the reasons for the creation of the Scrapbook was:

> This may take the load off people in the NZ Hip-Hop community who are constantly being emailed by outsiders wanting their NZ Hip-Hop History questions answered. The scrapbooks would allow journalists to do their research on New Zealand Hip-Hop before approaching artists for interviews as one possible example.
>
> Email, 7 January 2004

Having such a resource available at the commencement of my research would have been invaluable to my work, and Jill and Phaze deserve much respect for putting together this valuable whakapapa of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa.

2.3.4 PEER FEEDBACK

One of the most valuable research techniques I found was being able to gain feedback from fellow students and academics about my work. Presenting papers at conferences

and participating in the department's PhD group at Massey was exceedingly helpful in developing my research questions, and I could not have done this project without the support and encouragement I received from doing what Lareau has called consulting the academy:

> Talking to colleagues is critical to the development of a question. Writing up the results and having the work critically reviewed is another important step. Comparing your findings to the literature and seeing how your conclusions modify the literature is also useful.
>
> Today my rule of thumb is that every third visit to the field should be followed by some kind of effort to push the (research) question forward. This can be a one hour conversation with a colleague (by telephone if necessary), a comparison with other studies, or a long memo which is then reviewed and criticized by others.
>
> (Lareau, 1996:227)

I cannot express how valuable these meetings are – having a forum to discuss problems, difficulties and experiences with others who know *exactly* what you're talking about is tremendously empowering. It also brought home the fact that all the problems and issues I was facing were not unique to me; others were also challenged by participants upon entering the field, had to reformulate their research questions and start from scratch, needed extensions on deadlines and had the same difficulties in feeling like a 'real' anthropologist. It really is a comfort to know you are not alone, and it is also grounding to realise that you are not the first or only person in the world to experience these sorts of difficulties.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter I have sought to position myself in relation to my research topic, in recognition of the fact that anthropology is the process of "knowing others through oneself" (Myerhoff, 1980:18). I have described how and why I came to be studying Hip-Hop, and how the process of doing this research led me to discover my own turangawaewae as a musical anthropologist. I have also outlined the three guiding principles that shaped the direction of this thesis – respect, giving something back, and collaborative research – and discussed the methodological techniques I developed to research Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. Next I will turn to the role of performance in Aotearoa Hip-Hop.

Chapter Three

> Musics are invariably communal activities, that bring people together in specific alignments, whether as musicians, dancers or listening audiences. The 'tuning in' (Schutz, 1977) through music of these social alignments can provide a powerful affective experience in which social identity is literally 'embodied' ... in certain societies, music and dance are the only means by which the wider community appears as such to itself.
>
> (Stokes, 1994:12)

> It is my opinion that we need more shows like this (BodyRock) – run by Hip Hop heads for Hip Hop heads. So special props to Tweek, Swerv-1, The Time Bandits and everyone else who helped put this show together. For there is a huge following here of people who are starving for Hip Hop and who want to interact with others who are in to the culture. What BodyRock provides us with, is a platform for everyone to connect, for true Hip Hop is about unity not isolation.
>
> Special shouts go to everyone, who performed, helped organise or just attended. For even by just showing up, you had the feeling that you were taking part in something that was truly unique, highly memorable, brilliant and ultimately special. Tweek and fellow organisers deserve full marks for a job well done.
>
> (One, 2002:25)

Embodying Hip-Hop in Performance

Since its inception in the ghettos of 1970s New York City, Hip-Hop culture has been and is still dependent on face-to-face social contact and interaction (Bennett, 2002; Dimitriadis, 2001). Although Hip-Hop culture has since evolved into a variety of mediated narratives (Dimitriadis, 2001), including CDs, music videos and magazines, the performance event remains a vital aspect of it. "The idea of special performance events plays a central part in most local musical groups and activities ... it is generally taken for granted that 'performance' is a pre-eminent, even obligatory, part of music-making" (Finnegan, 1989:143). This chapter will explore how Hip-Hop performances in Aotearoa are used as "platforms to connect" people, reinforcing the reality of a largely imagined community. It will also look at performance as dialogue, examining how events contribute to ongoing discussions with the Hip-Hop community about the elements and characteristics (outlined in Figure 1) that comprise what it is to be Hip-Hop.

Misk One's review of Bodyrock 2002 (cited in the epigraph), a two-day event primarily celebrating the dance element of Hip-Hop, illustrates the importance of performance to the Hip-Hop community. Bodyrock is an annual event organised "by Hip-Hop heads for Hip-Hop heads" that provides a space for like-minded individuals to interact and gain a sense of sociality, of belonging to a wider community, of "unity, not isolation". It is at performances like this that the Hip-Hop community in Aotearoa appears as such to itself:

> [Hip-Hop] brings a community into being through performance, and it maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion, and despair created by the austerity economy of post-industrial capitalism."
>
> (Lipsitz, 1994, as cited in Bennett, 2001:92)

The Hip-Hop community has an imaginary aspect in that not all members of the community know one another (although in a small country like Aotearoa members often do know one another, or of one another) or necessarily live in close physical proximity but *imagine* they share common ideas and values (Maxwell, 2001). Performances allow members of the Hip-Hop community to get together and enact their imagined social roles within that community, that sense of themselves as B-boys or B-girls or graffiti artists or MCs or DJs or ardent fans and supporters of Hip-Hop. Performances also enable the community to experience "what Max Weber called a *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*, a feeling of belonging together" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000:20), and facilitate the celebration of that common bond that unites them all, namely, Hip-Hop.

This sense of belonging, of being surrounded by people enjoying the same experience for similar reasons, of taking part in something Misk One labels "truly unique, highly memorable, brilliant and ultimately special," is a powerful one that I have shared on more than one occasion at Hip-Hop performances. Being part of an enthusiastic audience, surrounded by a sea of waving hands and nodding heads, yelling a chorus in unison with a favourite MC and hundreds of other voices is an incredible experience, and even now the memories bring a smile to my face. Such moments can be addictive, something Misk One alluded to earlier in the review cited above when he described the crowd as "Hip-Hop junkies waiting for their next fix" (One, 2002:24). Writing about performance in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, Jonathan Dunsby suggests this

experience (what he calls "actuality") is a transcultural fact that explains why people flock to live events:

> ... the excitement of actually witnessing performance seems to be at the sharp end of musical practice, the authentic medium for informed intensity, and unlikely to disappear. This excitement surely lies to some extent in the stimulus to be found in any communal activity, there being something that touches our primeval sensibility in the 'buzz' of a crowd of people.
>
> (Dunsby, 2001-2002)

The kind of performances that bring a community into being are different from the individual performances that are inscribed within the routines of the everyday (for instance listening to a rap song, practicing a dance move or sketching ideas for graffiti pieces). There is a "huge following" of people in Aotearoa who are "starving for Hip-Hop", and one of the ways the Hip-Hop community is brought into being is through what Finnegan (1989) calls "artistic events" – the performance situation – of gigs and concerts. The Hip-Hop community is largely an imagined one, as noted above, and events provide sites where "identifications" with a wider culture of Hip-Hop "emerge, crystallize, and fade away" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000:30). Events are not bounded entities, however; they are practices which draw upon dialogues already in progress within the Hip-Hop community and feed back into performances of the everyday. DJ Sir-Vere[20] has also pointed out that as important as gigs are to Hip-Hop culture, they would not exist without a vibrant Hip-Hop community to support them.

I will explore how ongoing dialogues about Hip-Hop's characteristics are embodied in performance. The first performance, Bodyrock 2003, has a similar format to a number of Hip-Hop events I have attended, so I am confident that the dialogues in process it embodies are typical of breaking performances across Aotearoa. The second performance will require a conceptual leap on the part of the reader, since I suggest that the Hip-Hop community also appears as such to itself in another site, a virtual one this time – a website.

[20] DJ Sir-Vere is co-orgainser of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summits, producer of the *Major Flavours* series of compilation CDs, co-ordinator of a number of DJ battles throughout the country, host of the Holla Hour (Hip-Hop show) on music channel C4, one of the country's most talented DJs and one of the pioneers of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa.

3.1 Bodyrock 2003

Dance was one of the first elements of Hip-Hop to become popular in Aotearoa in the early 1980s. Arriving here by way of mass media, the 'bop' (as it was called) found fertile ground in Aotearoa and spread rapidly as it was wholeheartedly embraced by Māori and Polynesian youth, and in 1984 a Bop Olympics was even held at Mt Smart Stadium in Auckland, drawing hundreds of dancers from all over the country. Mark Scott's *Street Action Aotearoa* (1985) provides an insight into just how important the bop was for displaced and disaffected urban Māori and Polynesian youth during this period, and in 1986 Tania Kopytko published an article in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* discussing how 'breakdance' provided an identity marker for youth in Palmerston North. Although the dance element of Hip-Hop lost momentum in the mid-1980s (due in part to negative media portrayals – see Kopytko, 1986) it never completely died, and while not as popular as it once was, it remains an important component of Hip-Hop culture. Today dance is featured at Hip-Hop events that celebrate all elements of Hip-Hop culture, like the Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit, and it also provides the basis for specifically dance-oriented events such as In Da Mix, Bboyz Delight, Battle of the Year (BOTY) and Bodyrock.

Bodyrock is a two-day competitive event centered around B-boying/B-girling that also features Hip-Hop's other elements. Organised and produced by Tweek and her husband Swerv1, the 2003 event comprised of showcase battles and performances occurring on a Saturday evening and the actual Battle for Supremacy (with a $1000 prize for the best B-boy) happening the next day. DJs provided the soundtrack for the event, which also featured a graffiti exhibition, a beatboxing showcase, locking and boogaloo showcases and performances by three leading US dancers who Tweek had selected and arranged funding to fly over especially for this event. Having international guests at an event like this establishes both authority and authenticity and lends credibility to the event. It also raises an interesting point about notions of locality and glocalisation that I will return to shortly.

Bodyrock 2003 was advertised using a variety of media, including Hiphopnz.com (the site of the online group performance I will discuss in the section) and Aotearoa's first and only official dedicated hip-hop magazine, *Back2Basics*. It is usually held at Shed 6 at

the waterfront on Lambton Quay in Wellington, a big corrugated iron building, not the ideal location, but the hiring costs are compatible with the limited budget that Tweek has to operate within. Funding for the 2003 event was obtained from the Wellington City Council, Lambton Harbour Management and the New Zealand Community Trust, but even so Tweek still had to put $5,000 of her "own" money into the event to make it happen. The audience was composed of roughly equal proportions of males and females aged between 12 and 40 and of varied ethnicities (although a large majority of the audience was Māori and Polynesian). Audience and performers alike usually come dressed in their best Hip-Hop gear, with t-shirts and hoodies proclaiming crew names and locations proving popular. Although the event was held in Wellington, members of the Hip-Hop community (including practitioners of all elements as well as fans) traveled from all over the country to participate in and support the event[21].

Shed 6 is used as a venue by a number of different groups, so Bodyrock organisers make an effort to transform it (what British sociologist Andy Bennett (2002) calls "authoring") into a space where members of the Hip-Hop community can gather and live out their sense of selves as Hip-Hop. This was done by decorating the venue with graffiti art and setting out squares of linoleum for dancers to practice or battle one another on. For the 2003 event, a large stage was set up in the middle of the hall for the performances. The DJs were positioned at the back of the stage and above them was a large screen on to which live footage of the dancers was projected for all audience members to see. The showcase performances[22] (held on Saturday night) took place on the stage whereas the Bodyrock Battle for Supremacy (held the next day) was enacted at floor-level, enabling the audience to form a circle around the competitors.

3.1.1 LOCKING SHOWCASE

The first performance examined is a locking showcase which was featured as part of Saturday evening's exhibitions. There are several different styles of dance in Hip-Hop,

[21] I was most impressed to see Auckland graffiti artist and Hip-Hop historian Jillski there, especially after learning that she, like many others, had attended Xzibit's performance at the Big Day Out in Auckland the day before.

[22] A showcase performance is usually a non-competitive exhibition of skill, as compared to a battle which, as the name implies, involves fierce competition between dancers.

and this performance demonstrated locking[23], a style of dance invented by Don Campbell in Los Angeles in 1970:

> ... Don Campbell, a shy teenager in his first year at Los Angeles Trade Technical College, accidentally gave birth to a form of urban ethnic dance that would soon flood the blossoming club circuit – and ultimately change the direction of music in LA.
>
> Attempting to dance, the shy freshman would momentarily freeze or "lock up" in comical pauses between moves; his friends cheered him on to repeat the poses for their amusement. The dance was nothing short of revolutionary: upper-body movement was featured and a partner became optional. From quick gyrating extensions of his hands and arms to sudden pauses, the young Campbell would improvise any move that came to his mind, incorporating props from an empty chair to an ashtray. "No matter what type of mistake I made, they clapped," Campbell recalls. "One time I fell down and improvised that into my dance. Everybody clapped! It was the most strangest thing – no matter what I did wrong, I was doing something right!" The young college student had invented the Campbellock, and he was on his way to becoming the Nureyev of Watts.
>
> (Higa, 2000)

Locking moves highlight what Rose refers to as flow, layering and ruptures in line (1994a:38). This locking showcase was performed by four members of Wellington's Time Bandits Crew; funkstylists Tweek, Spex, and Future, who danced to a soundtrack provided by DJ Kerb. Choreographed and rehearsed prior to the event, this routine was markedly different from the kind of dancing we are usually exposed to on mainstream music television. Locking is usually presented as a stage form, as opposed to breaking which usually occurs in circles (Holman, c. 1980). In his review of Bodyrock 2002 Misk One explained that he was not going to describe the actual dance moves because "I feel the written word does not do them the justice they deserve" (One, 2002:24), and I am inclined to agree[24] (see Figures 2 and 3 instead). I now turn to some of the dialogues in process that this performance embodies.

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[23] It is important to note that while locking has been embraced and adapted by Hip-Hop, it was invented before the advent of Hip-Hop culture, and the originators of this style prefer it to be known as "funkstyles" (pers comm, Tweek, 9 July 2003). Here I will continue to describe it as 'locking' as this performance was introduced to the audience as a locking exhibition.

[24] After spending hours trying to translate dance moves into a descriptive narrative, including an attempt at rendering a 6-step into Labanotation (a standardised system for analysing and recording human motion), I decided that such a description would add little of substance to the body of this thesis.

Figure 2 (above): **Tweek, Future and Spex lined up at the front of the stage at the start of the locking routine.**

Figure 3 (below): **Future and Spex mid-pose.**
Images taken from the Bodyrock 2003 video, produced by Floorwork Productions.

The first characteristic of Hip-Hop (outlined in Figure 1) that this performance embodies is *education.* Presented as a locking exhibition, this performance both educated and entertained (or 'edutained') the audience, showing members of the Hip-Hop community what locking is and how they believe it should be done. It demonstrates a good *knowledge* of *history* on the part of the dancers, who were all dressed appropriately in the *style* of clothes that would have been worn by lockers in the 1970s, and by DJ Kerb in the provision of a soundtrack of 'old-school' beats deemed appropriate for locking. *Respect* for the originators of locking is implicit in the positioning of this performance as a feature exhibition. Each dancer also has his or her own distinct style of dance, demonstrating both *skill* and *originality* (within the prescribed limits of locking). I was interested in finding out how dancers developed their own styles, so asked Tweek whether she learnt her breaking moves by watching music videos or in some other way. Her reply, although referring more to B-girling than locking[25], nevertheless reiterates the importance of *originality* in dance:

> I usually learn moves by accident. I'm more of a "foundationalist" dancer so don't do many tricks or power moves. Most of my dancing is based around toprocking and footwork so with moves I come up with in footwork are usually by accident. I will just practice old stuff and kinda just let myself go and then see what comes out of it. Sometimes I might do something wack and not like it and sometimes I'll do something that feels good so I'll keep that and work on it. I watch videos YES but I don't really practice moves I see on a video, I try to come up with stuff on my own but watching videos definitely helps your mind get creative. You see a move someone does and you're like "dam that was good ... if I changed that to this, it would look dope" kinda thing but I honestly haven't ever taken a move from a video and done it exactly the same as I saw it done.
>
> Email, 6 September 2002

The locking performance was also *empowering* on two levels. Each dancer is incredibly skilful and talented, and the fact that two of the dancers are women really seemed to have an impact on the female audience members present, myself included. As Tweek and Spex each moved forward to take their spot in the limelight, the audience voiced its appreciation of their *skills* with roars of approval. Seeing these women on stage elicited several comments like "*I* want to do that!" from girls surrounding me, which could have something to do with the type of dance being performed. Locking has more to do with "concentration, balance, practice, and precision than with sheer physical strength", and females seem to prefer these types of moves to acrobatic power moves (Guevara,

[25] As noted above, B-girling (or breaking) is an element of Hip-Hop culture, and while dance forms such as locking and boogaloo have been embraced and adapted by Hip-Hop, they come under the umbrella of Funkstyles rather than Hip-Hop (pers comm, Tweek, 19 April 2004).

1996:58). However, as Guevara points out, female dancers are more than capable of performing all types of dance moves, and indeed later that evening a B-girl battle took place between Tweek and Sheeq where each dancer exhibited a wide repertoire of moves, from uprocking and footwork to power moves and freezes. Watching these women perform gave me the same thrill that I experience when I see female pipers or female musicians performing original music in Palmerston North, leaving me inspired and eager to participate (see Chapter Four for further discussion on gender and empowerment in Aotearoa Hip-Hop).

One of the interesting aspects of this performance is the impact it had upon the Hip-Hop community *after* the event, and it is here that the second level of empowerment becomes evident. During the performance the crowd was educated about what locking is, and the very next day in a discussion forum on Hiphopnz.com people were actively engaging with what they had seen, asking one another where locking came from and seeking out more information about the dance. Tweek's efforts to educate people about locking fed back into the community's everyday performances, and it also inspired members of the Hip-Hop community to do their research and learn about locking for themselves.

The next performance discussed is a battle, which, as will be shown, is quite different from a showcase exhibition. The 2003 Bodyrock Battle for Supremacy started on Saturday with approximately 36 competitors moving through a series of preliminary heats until 16 of the best dancers were selected to go on to the quarter-finals which, along with the final Battle for Supremacy, was held the next day. All of the battles were judged by the three American dancers flown over for the event, and, as I mentioned earlier, this raises some interesting questions about notions of locality, glocalisation and authenticity in Hip-Hop. These issues will be discussed before I move on to examine the dialogues embodied in the 2003 Battle for Supremacy.

3.1.2 LOCALISATION IN DANCE

Ian Condry has noted that a striking feature of global flows of popular culture "is that dance – movement of the body – moves easily across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and that movies and videos are a primary channel for this exchange" (2001:229). He

goes on to discuss the importance of human agency in appropriating mediated images, and Bodyrock provides a good example of a global dance being (re)produced by local actors in a local context. However, the presence of American judges serves as a reminder that although the dance is performed in a local setting, it is still recognisable as breaking; the dance form itself has not undergone any fundamental change. Andy Bennett writes:

> It is significant that in much of the work that focuses on non-US examples of hip-hop, there is an implication that 'localisation' necessarily involves some element of stylistic and musical transformation in hip-hop ... the process of localisation, as this relates to rap and hip-hop, or indeed other forms of music and style, need not involve any obvious physical transformations of musical and stylistic resources but may, alternatively, rely on localised affinities, which are experienced more at the level of the experiential and which, in turn, demand a more abstract form of analytical engagement with the situating properties of local environments.
>
> (Bennett, 2000:146)

The localised features of rap music in Aotearoa are identifiable in its soundscapes, content, and language use, as has been shown by Mitchell (1996a and 2000), Zemke-White (2000) and Bennett (2002), and local referents are also visible in music videos, album cover design and graffiti art. However, the dance element of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa does not involve any radical physical transformations that were obvious to me, although I have on occasion seen one or two dancers (usually female) incorporate hand movements from traditional Māori and Sāmoan dances in to their routines. I asked Tweek if she thought people would be able to tell where she was from if she were to perform or battle overseas:

> No I don't think if I was to go overseas people would be able to identify me as being from New Zealand because most people's styles go back to the original New York style and that's what kind of style I have. A lot of the japanese have a 'east coast' style of dancing because a lot of them have been taught by east coast dancers themselves, the only way you can really tell if they're japanese is coz they look like japanese really. I dunno ... it's kind of hard to say. Before you could differentiate the west coast style to the east coast style but now coz there are a whole lot of bboys that are wanting to learn the "original Brooklyns etc etc" a lot of the west coast bboys have an east coast style and that is kind of what it's like all over the world. This dance comes from the east coast so style wise, I think that people in the world are either dancing like east coast or west coast unless they have made up something totally different that is unlike those 2 styles ... I'm yet to see that though. But yeah, to answer your question NO people wouldn't be able to tell if I was from NZ if I was to go to the States and break ... they would most likely think I was from NYC or something coz my style is based around that and I don't think there are any bboys or bgirls for that matter, in this country who have their "own made up style".
>
> Email, 17 September 2002

B-boys and B-girls in Aotearoa, then, are similar to ballet and Highland Dancers here: the dance remains the same, but the dancers' *experience* is localised. Part of this experience involves remaining faithful to the original dance moves, and an authentic dancer will also have a good *knowledge* of the *history* of B-boying/B-girling. This knowledge is not as visible as it is in Hip-Hop's other elements, and I discovered dialogues about *authenticity* in dance were debated more online than they were on stage. I will expand on this in the next section; here I will return to dialogues embodied in the 2003 Bodyrock Battle for Supremacy.

3.1.3 2003 BODYROCK BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY

The Bodyrock Battle for Supremacy illustrates the highly competitive nature of B-boying[26] and also the interaction between dancers and audience. The quarter-finals featured some of the fiercest and most entertaining battles as each dancer sought to defeat his opponent with *skill*, *style* and *originality*. As mentioned earlier, the Battle for Supremacy takes place at floor-level, enabling the audience to form a large circle around the dancers (see Figure 4). Connell and Gibson have noted that audiences "are active agents in the construction of meaning in a live performance ... through verbal interaction and audience validation" (2003:115). As dancers perform their various moves the crowd is expected to respond appropriately, vocalising support for well-executed moves and encouragement for a favourite dancer. The quarter-final battle can be likened to a debate. The first person takes the floor and challenges the other dancers, sometimes in an aggressive, confrontational, 'in-your-face' manner (see Figure 5). The second person responds to that challenge by mimicking (often in an insulting manner) and then improving on the first dancer's moves, and so the cycle continues through the battle. Some of the dialogues enacted in this performance include *skill* (in dance and in the ability to think 'on your feet'), *representation* (each dancer represents not only his crew but also his element), *knowledge* (of the dance and his own physical capabilities), *originality*, *style* and *respect*.

[26] No B-girls made it through to the quarter-finals.

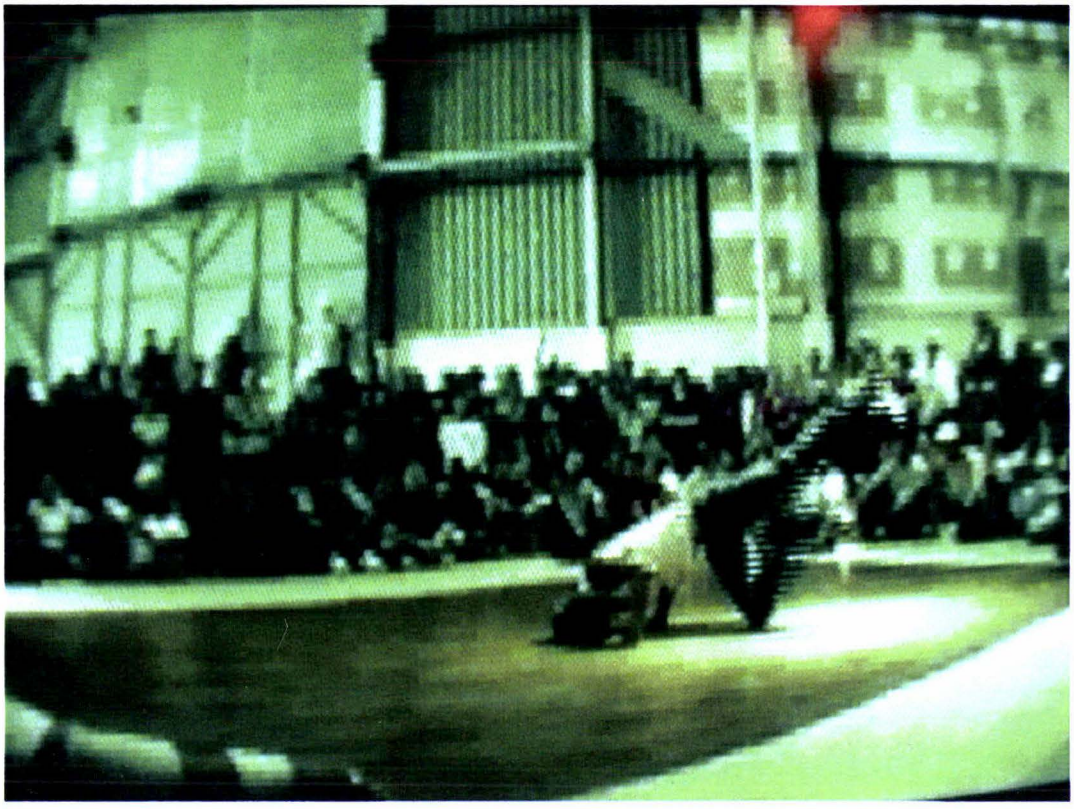


Figure 4 (above): **A B-boy performs in the midst of a large circle at the 2003 Bodyrock Battle for Supremacy Quarter Finals.**

Figure 5 (below): **The B-boy in red (left-hand side of image) has just been 'dissed' by the B-boy in front of him, who offered to shake hands with his opponent but instead went into a handstand, much to the delight of the crowd.** *Images taken from the Bodyrock 2003 video, produced by Floorwork Productions.*

From these two examples, the locking exhibition and the Battle for Supremacy, we can see that there are a variety of different types of performances and dance moves involved in the dance element of Hip-Hop. However, these performances have an important aspect in common: flows of communication.

Flows of communication highlight the way participants interact at a performance and are distinct from dialogues in process (which take place across time and space and center around Hip-Hop's characteristics). The most easily identifiable flow of communication takes place between dancers, who interact with one another and structure their battling moves according to what the other dancers do (see Figure 6). Dancers interact with the DJ – B-bboying is first and foremost a dance that is performed to music, and a good dancer will engage with what the DJ is playing and use his or her body to highlight musical features.

The DJ watches the dancers and selects music to play based on the style of dance performed (battle music being different to music played for locking showcases, for example). Dancers also have a relationship with the MC, who introduces dancers to the audience and orchestrates the battle (by saying how many rounds are left). The MC communicates with the DJ, signalling when to start and stop the music, and both MC and DJ have a relationship with the audience. The MC will encourage a crowd to 'make some noise' for particular performers or moves, and the DJ plays music that he or she knows the crowd will recognise and enjoy. A different flow of communication occurs between dancers and audience – as discussed above, the audience is expected to distinguish a good move from a poorly-executed one and members are encouraged to be very vocal with their support or criticism, and as a battle progresses dancers attempt moves of increasing difficulty in an effort to gain maximum vocal support. There is also a flow of communication *between* audience members, as at a battle the audience often includes members of the crews of the competing dancers, so when a dancer from a particular crew is performing that crew will be extremely vocal in their support.

FLOWS OF COMMUNICATION AT BODYROCK 2003

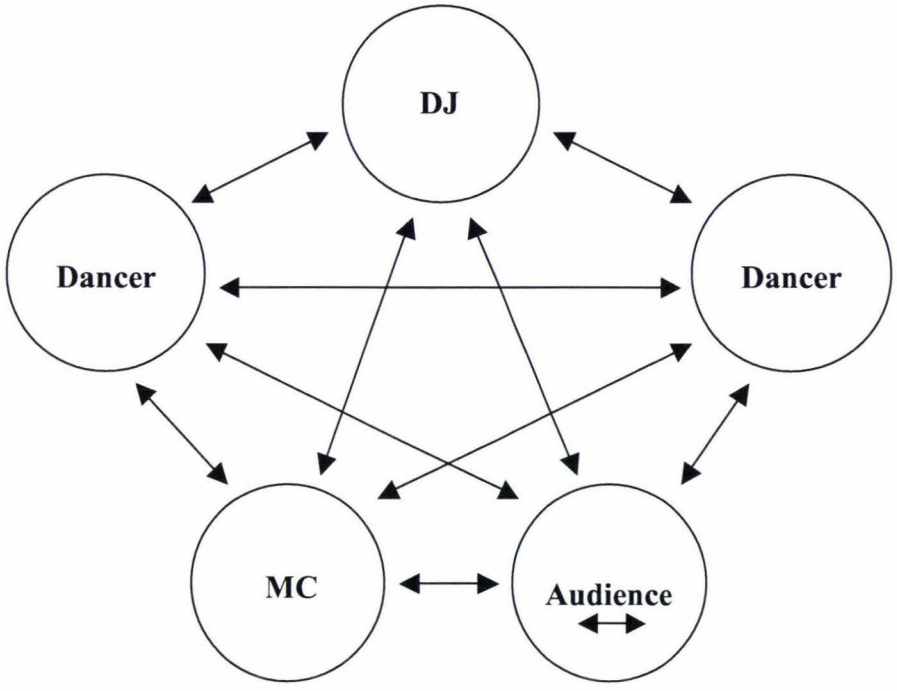


Figure 6: **Flows of Communication at Bodyrock 2003**

Performance events are not entities bound in time or space, as I have shown, and they often feed back into performances of the everyday. For instance, when organising battles for the 2003 Bodyrock event Tweek sought opinions from users of the discussion forum hosted by Hiphopnz.com prior to the event to gauge who the audience wanted to see battle. We have seen how the event itself encompassed a number of the dialogues in process, and that the performance did not end when the two-day event ended. Discussion often carries on after an event, especially online, where the day after Bodyrock, Hip-Hop enthusiasts were discussing their favourite aspects of the event, who they thought should have won the Supremacy Battle and what they'd like to see at the next event. In the next section I will explore how Hiphopnz.com provides a space for the Hip-Hop community to appear as such to itself, and look at some of the different dialogues that occur in its online discussion forum.

3.2 HIPHOPNZ.COM

So far I have shown how live performance events bring a community into being, providing a platform for members of the Hip-Hop community to come together, enact their imagined Hip-Hop identities and "rejoice in the knowledge of an identity not only possessed but also shared with others" (Small, 1998:65). Here I want to suggest that another site, www.hiphopnz.com, also provides a platform for individual members of the Hip-Hop community to gather, exchange ideas and information and gain a sense of belonging to a wider group of people. This site is not a physical one, but it does exist and is accessed regularly by people who buy music, go to live events and are often practising Hip-Hop artists. This online community is what Appadurai has called a "community of sentiment" (1996:8), and is made up of a group of people who collectively experience Hip-Hop through an electronic medium and refer to themselves as an "online Hip-Hop community".

Like Bodyrock, Hiphopnz.com is a website run by Hip-Hop heads for Hip-Hop heads. Prodigal, his partner Aria, and Hessian (who runs the discussion forums from a server in Indiana, U.S.A.) began the site in 2000, although the concept was first developed a couple of years before that in an internet chat room:

> me and a few others started an irc channel on the Undernet chat network called #hiphopnz where we used to have text battles and talk allot of shit really :).
>
> We started the site initially as there was a lack of in-depth coverage on Aotearoa hiphop online. phunkrepublic[27] was mostly focused on the welli scene and tama wises site (hip-hop.co.nz) was really the only site looking at hiphop from a national perspective. Our main goal is to showcase the amazing amount of local talent we have out there in all 4 elements, now we are focusing on giving up and coming people a place to get their stuff out there to a local / international audience.
>
> Now im also trying to focus on media coverage of hip hop events as well , allot of gigs don't get well advertised and those that do get any media attention don't get the coverage they deserve. The site has gotten pretty big now and we couldn't have done it without the submissions and support we have received from the hip hop community.
>
> Email, 28 February 2002

3.2.1 A PLATFORM TO CONNECT

Since its inception, Hiphopnz.com has evolved into a multifaceted, interactive site with over 3,300 registered members. The site contains an event calendar, an image gallery, an audio page featuring recordings from various MC battles held around the country "as

[27] A now-defunct website that was nominated for Best Website at the 2001 B-net Music Awards.

well as the sound click pages of some of our users", an "Aotearoa Battle History" page which lists past MC and DJ battles, a synchronic (real time) chat room, a comprehensive discussion forum (which only registered members can participate in, although discussions are able to be viewed by the general public), an Aotearoa Hip-Hop Timeline from 1979-present, a discography of Aotearoa Hip-Hop (which includes links to labels and artists' sites), and a page of local and international links. There is also a section featuring interviews with local and international artists and reviews and articles written by members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. One of the discussion forums contains the latest Hip-Hop news (and part of this news involves reporting when Hip-Hop is featured in print, radio and television news media in Aotearoa), and I have found the site to be an invaluable resource for keeping up with current events in Aotearoa Hip-Hop. Prodigal hopes the site will evolve into an online magazine, and sees a bright future for online Hip-Hop:

> I think it's going to blow up, the internet is a medium that I think allot of people are still getting there heads around. We get e-mails / hits from all around the world plus anyone can access the site at any time anywhere. This gives huge exposure and able to get to a audience that more traditional forms of media (TV / radio / magazines) have been unable to reach. It also gives heads a great chance to network , I (and many others) have been lucky enough to meet some dope people though the site that I previously would not have had contact with.
>
> We have guys like sirvere, ali, dlt that visit the site and post on the discussion forums right along side bedroom mc's/dj/breakers and Graff heads without the net these "connections" would never be possible.
>
> Email, 28 February 2002

The "connections" that Prodigal refers to are a vital part of the Hip-Hop community, and Hiphopnz.com fulfils an important function by providing a permanent (if intangible) site for members of the Hip-Hop community to meet between, during, and in the absence of live events. Writing about a musical community that exists solely online, René Lysloff suggests that cultural forms emerge out of the materials at hand:

> ... if representation exists in the absence of "the real thing," then it is representation, or simulation, that constitutes the stuff of culture. As Turkle notes, we are becoming "increasingly comfortable with substituting representations of reality for the real" (1997:23). Indeed, we communicate with one another by telephone or e-mail. The music we listen to is recorded in a studio and played back on our stereo systems, and much of what we see of the world is brought to us through broadcast or videotaped television. In other words, an increasing amount of our day-to-day experiences are mediated rather than "live". New technologies create virtual and hyper-real experiences that are at times indistinguishable from the real or are impossible to find in real-world contexts. Sometimes called

> the Disney effect, such simulated environments and mediated social interactions are becoming central to our lives. However, despite the fact that we may be experiencing radically new forms of social interaction as a result of media technologies, the *quality* of these social interactions still depends on the humans that give rise to them (see Escobar 1999).
>
> (Lysloff, 2003:237)

Hiphopnz.com is an important platform for people to connect on a daily basis, and registered members often admit to being "addicted" to the discussion forums, which they visit repeatedly throughout the day. Members use the discussion boards to express their identification with Hip-Hop culture and actively debate ongoing dialogues within the Hip-Hop community about what it means to 'be' Hip-Hop. Hiphopnz.com also provides a space where real events can be advertised, discussed and evaluated in a way that would probably not occur in a real-world context. The example given earlier of the way in which Tweek assessed the wants of the audience for Bodyrock is not something that I have seen occur anywhere but online. It also provides a good illustration of how Hiphopnz.com is not a bounded entity, as online discussions feed back into performances of the everyday and influence live events. However, online debates are not always productive or intelligent – as Lysloff notes, "the *quality* of these social interactions still depends on the humans that give rise to them" (2003:237). Some members seem to derive pleasure from insulting and provoking (or 'disrespecting') other members on the site; others use the forums to air views and argue points that they may never have the courage to voice anywhere but online. Nevertheless I have read some extremely informative and educated discussions about the characteristics identified in Figure 1, and the forums at Hiphopnz.com have taught me much about Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa, possibly more than what I could have learnt by participation and observation at live events alone.

In the remainder of this section I will examine how members make use of the most popular (or "addictive", as members often call it) feature of Hiphopnz.com, the discussion forums. This will show how discussions contribute to ongoing dialogues within the Hip-Hop community about some of the less visible characteristics of Hip-Hop outlined in Figure 1.

3.2.2 'GENERAL DISCUSSION'

The discussion forum on Hiphopnz.com is divided into seven sections dedicated to discussion around specific topics (see Figure 7 for the Administrative, General Discussion, News/Events/Information topic areas, and Figure 8 for Open Mic/Battle Boards, Audio and Producers Forums, Elemental Discussion and Miscellaneous discussion).

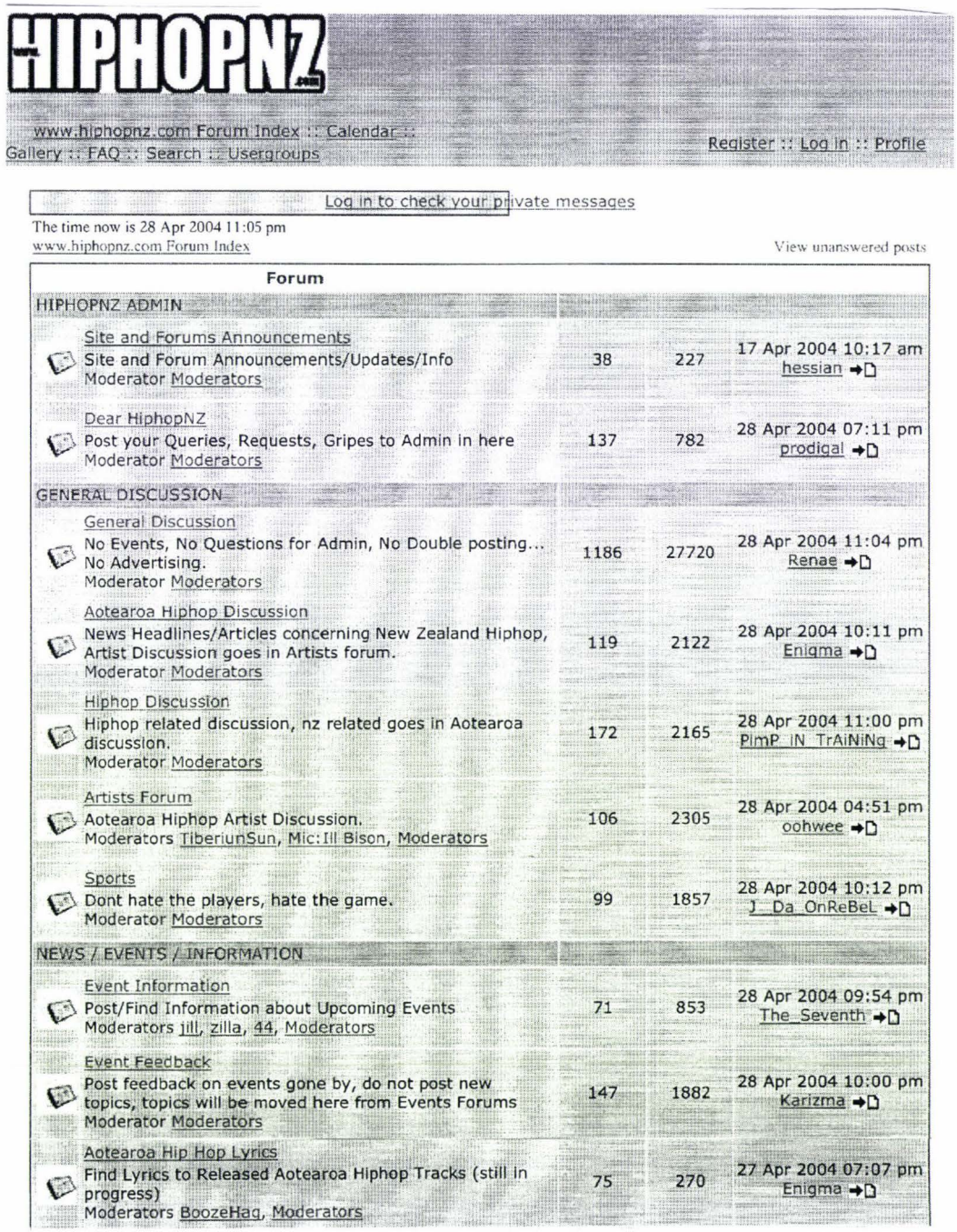
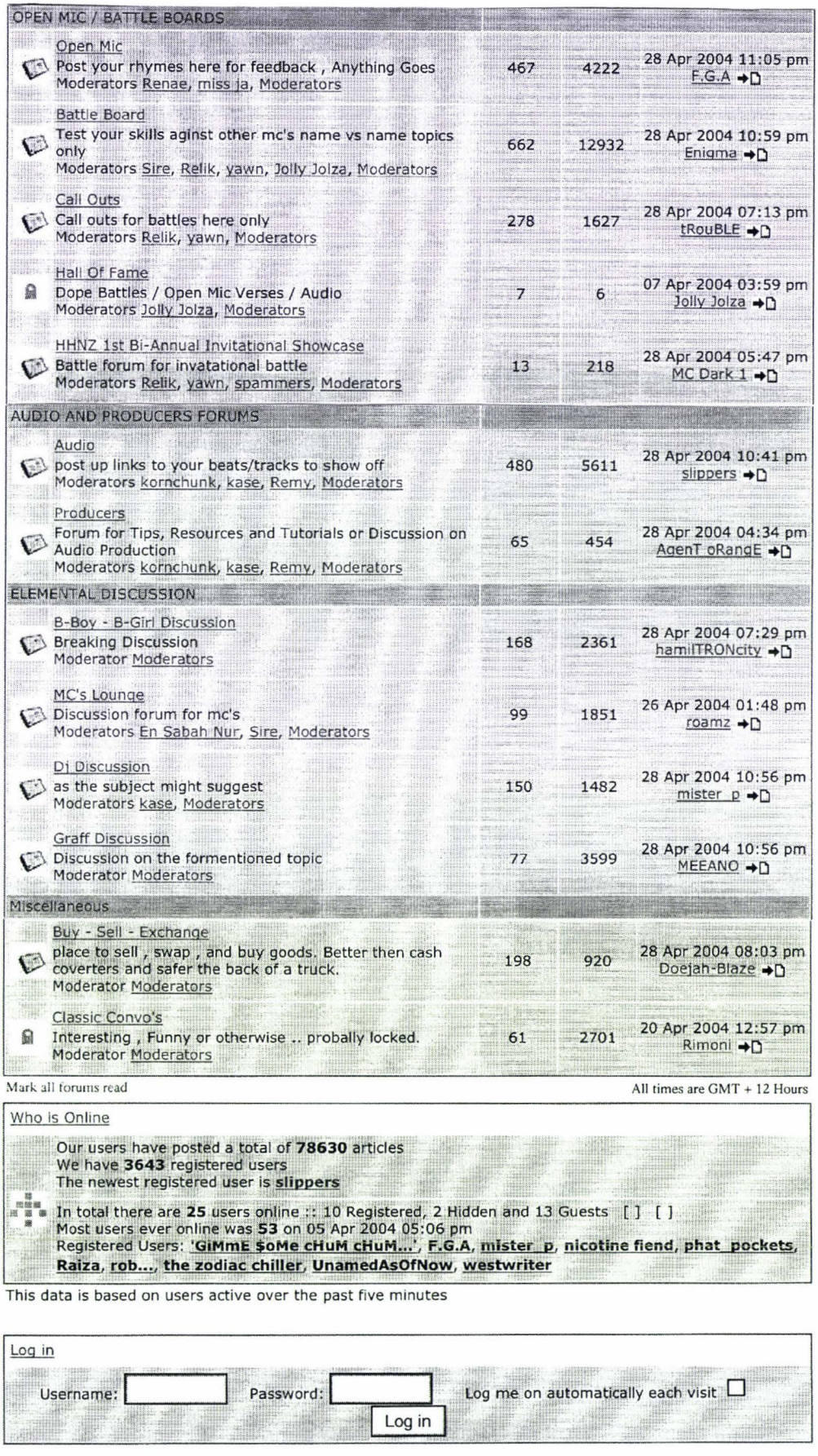


Figure 7: **Hiphopnz.com Forum Index (first half).**
Source: www.hiphopnz.com/forums/index.php



OPEN MIC / BATTLE BOARDS			
Open Mic Post your rhymes here for feedback , Anything Goes Moderators Renae, miss ja, Moderators	467	4222	28 Apr 2004 11:05 pm F.G.A
Battle Board Test your skills aginst other mc's name vs name topics only Moderators Sire, Relik, yawn, Jolly Jolza, Moderators	662	12932	28 Apr 2004 10:59 pm Enigma
Call Outs Call outs for battles here only Moderators Relik, yawn, Moderators	278	1627	28 Apr 2004 07:13 pm tRouBLE
Hall Of Fame Dope Battles / Open Mic Verses / Audio Moderators Jolly Jolza, Moderators	7	6	07 Apr 2004 03:59 pm Jolly Jolza
HHNZ 1st Bi-Annual Invitational Showcase Battle forum for invatational battle Moderators Relik, yawn, spammers, Moderators	13	218	28 Apr 2004 05:47 pm MC Dark 1
AUDIO AND PRODUCERS FORUMS			
Audio post up links to your beats/tracks to show off Moderators kornchunk, kase, Remy, Moderators	480	5611	28 Apr 2004 10:41 pm slippers
Producers Forum for Tips, Resources and Tutorials or Discussion on Audio Production Moderators kornchunk, kase, Remy, Moderators	65	454	28 Apr 2004 04:34 pm AgenT oRangE
ELEMENTAL DISCUSSION			
B-Boy - B-Girl Discussion Breaking Discussion Moderator Moderators	168	2361	28 Apr 2004 07:29 pm hamiITRONcity
MC's Lounge Discussion forum for mc's Moderators En Sabah Nur, Sire, Moderators	99	1851	26 Apr 2004 01:48 pm roamz
Dj Discussion as the subject might suggest Moderators kase, Moderators	150	1482	28 Apr 2004 10:56 pm mister_p
Graff Discussion Discussion on the formentioned topic Moderator Moderators	77	3599	28 Apr 2004 10:56 pm MEEANO
Miscellaneous			
Buy - Sell - Exchange place to sell , swap , and buy goods. Better then cash coverters and safer the back of a truck. Moderator Moderators	198	920	28 Apr 2004 08:03 pm Doejah-Blaze
Classic Convo's Interesting , Funny or otherwise .. probally locked. Moderator Moderators	61	2701	20 Apr 2004 12:57 pm Rimoni

Mark all forums read — All times are GMT + 12 Hours

Who is Online

Our users have posted a total of **78630** articles
We have **3643** registered users
The newest registered user is **slippers**

In total there are **25** users online :: 10 Registered, 2 Hidden and 13 Guests [ ] [ ]
Most users ever online was **53** on 05 Apr 2004 05:06 pm
Registered Users: **'GiMmE $oMe cHuM cHuM...'**, **F.G.A**, **mister_p**, **nicotine fiend**, **phat_pockets**, **Raiza**, **rob...**, **the zodiac chiller**, **UnamedAsOfNow**, **westwriter**

This data is based on users active over the past five minutes

Log in

Username: Password: Log me on automatically each visit

Log in

Figure 8: **Hiphopnz.com Forum Index (second half).**
Source: www.hiphopnz.com/forums/index.php

How these forums are used by members of the Hip-Hop community is an interesting phenomenon to observe. Obviously people access the site on an individual basis, but I have seen members grouped around computers in internet cafés and in houses, checking out the forums and making suggestions for replies or starting a new discussion thread. During the 2001 Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit I noticed people at the event making regular posts to the forum describing what was going on for the benefit of members unable to make it, often from internet cafés or computers provided by hostels and backpackers, and indeed this was how I was able to experience the 2002 and 2003 Summits (which, unfortunately, I was unable to attend). In 2003 P-Money and Scribe used the forum to recruit extras for the music video accompanying the hit song "Stand Up", ensuring that the video contains actual members of the Hip-Hop community rather than paid actors, just like a real event. Dawn Raid Entertainment uses the site regularly to advertise forthcoming CD releases and events, and the recent Boost Mobile Hook Up National Tour (featuring performances by Scribe, Mareko, DJ Sir-Vere, the Deceptikonz, Adeaze, Ill Semantics, Frontline, S.A.S. and local support in each town) provides another good example of the relationship between lived experience and online discussions. Similar to Bodyrock, the Tour was advertised online, and prior to the individual events members expressed their excitement about the Tour, discussed ticket costs and where tickets could be obtained, who they were going with and their expectations of what events would be like in their various hometowns across the country. As the Tour progressed, Jillski started a thread in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop Discussion forum titled "Dawn Raid Hookup Tour Progress Report Diary. Your Comments", where audience members and performers were able to post their comments and thoughts about the events after the fact. A number of members used this opportunity to review and critique the events, making suggestions for possible improvement and revealing much about audience desires, expectations and roles at Hip-Hop events.

The discussion forums also provide a good source for assessing the demographics of the online Aotearoa Hip-Hop community, as members are interested in one another and frequently ask questions about ethnicity, gender, age, location, occupation, level of involvement with Hip-Hop, favourite artists, favourite song, how they came to find Hiphopnz.com, and so on. Online battles are a popular section of the site, and I find these text-based battles, which have strict rules and voting procedures, fascinating and

markedly different from live MC battles. This virtual community features a multitude of opportunities for further research; next I move on to examine one of the ways in which *authenticity* in dance has been debated online.

3.2.3 DEBATING AUTHENTICITY ONLINE

In my earlier discussion about localisation in dance, I noted that it is the *experience* that is localised rather than the dance form itself. This means that Hip-Hop's historical trope is expressed differently in dance than it is Hip-Hop's other elements, and tends to manifest in *knowledge* and *respect* rather than the more visible signifiers of clothing or language use (although Chapter Five provides an example of history in performance at the 2001 Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit). Indeed, knowledge of and respect for the history of B-boying/B-girling is an essential marker of an *authentic* Hip-Hop dancer. This knowledge is not something that is easily worn or visibly expressed, but it is still an important component of dance. I never saw a dance event that could be described as an 'inauthentic' Hip-Hop performance – it's either Hip-Hop or it's something else – and the boundaries of what authentic Hip-Hop dance is (and is not) are often debated online. Tweek in particular is very passionate about this topic, and in March 2003 noticed a woman not involved in the Hip-Hop community advertising dance workshops as "Hip-Hop dancing". Tweek sent her an email querying her use of the term 'Hip-Hop' to advertise her dance classes, which were, in fact, a form of popular jazz dancing (see Appendix 3 for a copy of the email and the reply Tweek received). In her email, Tweek challenged the co-ordinator of the 'Hip-Hop workshops' (Libby Calder, Director of Pump It Up Studies) on a number of levels. First, she pointed out that "the dancing that you do, has nothing to do with any of the elements of hip hop … it has nothing to do with emceeing, dj'ing, graffiti art or breaking … so why have you chosen to use the name of this culture for the dance you are teaching?". She went on to question Ms Calder's *knowledge* of Hip-Hop's history, implying that such knowledge is essential for an authentic Hip-Hop dancer:

> … do you know who made up your dance? Do you know exactly where it came from and when it began? Do you know the founders of your dance?? I know my history, I know where the culture of hip hop was born and I know what this culture consists of. I know when this dance started and I know who the people were that created this dance that I do … I know that what I do (breaking) is true hip hop dancing. Why are you calling this hip hop when it does not have anything to do with hip hop? Just because you dance to music that might have rap in it, doesn't mean that it is hip hop.

Tweek also charged Ms Calder with not supporting or participating in any Hip-Hop events, showing that face-to-face contact and active involvement in the Hip-Hop community is another essential component of authentic Hip-Hop dancing. She concluded her email by asking Ms Calder to consider calling her workshops by another name, as "Hip hop is something that is part of you, and inside you, not just a "name"." The reply Tweek received was very formal and only responded to Tweek's request to change the name of the workshops, completely missing the point and purpose of Tweek's challenge. "I appreciate your concerns but I believe they are not valid," wrote Ms Calder. "The reason this is so is the fact that you have no legal entitlement to the brand "Hip Hop"," and Ms Calder went on to detail the ways in which a 'brand name' can be protected (through registered trademark). Tweek posted the email she sent, and the reply she received, into the B-boy/B-girl section of Hiphopnz.com's discussion forums. The post generated much debate about what is and is not Hip-Hop, showing that the opinions of members are wide and diverse. The majority agreed with Tweek and fully supported her efforts to address common misconceptions about Hip-Hop and to stand up for what she believes in. Mark Thomson's reply was perhaps the most eloquent of this nature:

> no doubt, always stand up for what you believe in, and if boundaries aren't set for what is accepted within this culture, it will self destruct. some of us may choose different avenues of appreciation or participation within this culture and within it's varying and diverse artforms, but i'm sure those of us that grew as it grew, understand the need for strong responses and challenges you made to that ignorant lady. no one should 'look' for a 'spokesperson', we should all be prepared to 'speak' even if we're not called on.
>
> 3 April 2003

Not everyone agreed with this perspective, and others answered with comments like "well I'm in the Hip-Hop community and I don't give a fuck if she calls her dance classes 'hiphop gangsta poplock baddest dance shizzle ma nizzle'," (a reply that still amuses me). What I found most significant about this debate was the way that members used this online environment to actively engage with a topic that they may have shied away from in other circumstances. I have no doubt that the conversation would have been very different had it involved these members of the online Hip-Hop community sitting in a room and debating the issue in a face-to-face conversation.

Finally, this discussion illustrates that Hiphopnz.com provides an important forum where members of the Hip-Hop community can gather and share opinions about what it means to 'be' Hip-Hop that spill over into events and performances of the everyday.

3.3 Summary

This chapter has explored how performances of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa are used as 'platforms to connect' people, reinforcing the reality of a largely imagined community. It has illustrated the importance of performance to the Hip-Hop community; it is through performance that this community is brought into being, and it is at performances that the key characteristics of Hip-Hop culture (notably *authenticity*, *community*, *education*, *empowerment*, *history*, *knowledge*, *originality*, *representation*, *respect*, *style* and *skill* – see Figure 1) are explored, affirmed, and celebrated (Small, 1998:183).

I also looked at performance as dialogue in this chapter by examining two different sites; Bodyrock 2003 and Hiphopnz.com. An analysis of Bodyrock 2003 revealed how the characteristics listed above are embodied through live performance, highlighted the flows of communication that occur at events, and showed that an event is not an entity bounded in time; dialogues often carry on after the event has ended, particularly online at the next site of analysis, Hiphopnz.com. The focus on dance raised an interesting point about localisation. Unlike rap or graffiti art, dance form does not undergo significant transformations in form as it is practised in different parts of the world; it is the *experience* rather than the style that is localised. In this chapter I argued that Hiphopnz.com is a site that enables members of the Hip-Hop community to gather and gain a sense of belonging to a wider group, and although it is not an event it provides an important space for members to meet between, during, and in the absence of live events. It also facilitates discussions about what it means to 'be' Hip-Hop that would probably not occur in a real-world context. Although drastically different, these two sites are used both as an act of affirmation of community and as vehicles for members of that community to explore and embody their Hip-Hop identities (Small, 1998:95).

Chapter Four

When you think of females in hip hop you automatically switch to one of a couple of stereotypical hip hop options:

1 /The Size 8 model, paid to parade expensive, skimpy clothing by the pool whilst sipping champagne in a rappers video
2 /The groupie wearing the "Hip Hop Clothes" that only really wants to be "where the party's at", waiting all night to "talk/get with the rapper"
3 /The gangsta bitch who actually really appreciates rapping and rappers as long as they're 2Pac or some thug who "needs a ride or die bitch"

But always undervalued, and (dare I say it) ignored are the 'real female hip hop heads', the women who participate, perform, organise, support and love the four elements of: graffiti, turntablism, B boyin and emceeing, encompassed under the subculture called hip hop.

(Spexone, 2002:100)

Negotiating Gender in Aotearoa Hip-Hop

One of the passions that has driven this thesis is to understand the "harmful disconnect" (Toth, 2003:52) encapsulated in the above quote by one of my key informants, Spex. These lines form the opening paragraph of an article she wrote for *Pulp* magazine entitled "Ladies First" which, in the spirit of Queen Latifah (1989) and Nancy Guevara (1996), foregrounds women's participation in Hip-Hop culture through the voices of some of Aotearoa's key 'female Hip-Hop heads'. The first stereotype Spex lists (the skimpily-dressed "Size 8 model ... in a rappers video") is one that we, as consumers of popular music, can all recognise: a large number of the rap videos we are exposed to (which are primarily from the US) feature scantily clad women as sexual objects. Examples of this aren't hard to find – just watch any music channel for half an hour[28] – and one of the most graphic in recent times is US rapper 50 Cent's video "P.I.M.P". This video (which had to be re-shot for screening in the United Kingdom because its imagery was deemed too sexually explicit) features topless women, two scantily-clad women in dog collars being 'walked' on leashes by a female pimp, and sees guest rapper Snoop Dogg make a backhand-slap gesture toward the camera while saying "I'm bout to show you how my pimp hand is way strong" (Winslow, 2003; Devine,

[28] It should be noted that rap videos are not alone in portraying women as objects of male sexual possession, and most popular music videos perpetuate this stereotype.

2003). The song's violently misogynous lyrics prompted Aotearoa rapper Jody Lloyd to write a letter to the *Listener* criticising the warm Māori welcome 50 Cent received during his trip to Auckland in December 2003:

> **Why the welcome?**
> A Māori welcome is perhaps one of the biggest signs of respect one could receive when visiting Aotearoa. It seems that local iwi went all out to make rapper 50 Cent feel welcome. Why? Is he a role model? *No.* Is he respectable? *No.*
>
> You only have to read a few lyrics from his recent hit "P.I.M.P." to come to such a conclusion: "I don't know what you heard about me, But a bitch can't get a dollar out of me, No Cadillac, no perms, you can't see, That I'm a motherf---ing P-I-M-P, I holla at a hoe til I got a bitch confused, She on Payless, me I got on gator shoes ..."
>
> I can also see the situation from a whole 'nother angle, where such an event could change the recipient. But 50 Cent is 27 years old; if he was going to change, it would have happened long ago, perhaps when he almost died from being shot nine times.
>
> I am not a hip-hop-hating, doddery, narrow-minded old fart; I am a local male rapper. 50 Cent is appalling and should not have been treated like a king.
>
> **Jody Lloyd (Dark Tower)**

Even rappers who don't follow the 'gangsta' style that 50 Cent epitomises often portray women as sexual objects. The lyrics to Outkast's "The Way You Move" could be loosely interpreted as a celebration of the female form[29], but the video follows the standard male fantasy (quite literally – the song is framed within a fantasy that rapper Big Boi lapses into upon taking his car into an all-female mechanic's workshop) and features gorgeous, scantily-clad women attending to him. Female rappers also perpetuate this sexist imagery, with artists like Lil' Kim asserting their right to express sexual desire and control their own bodies, and Missy Elliott, one of my favourite rappers who is not a stereotypical Size 8 model, is often accompanied by such women in her video dance routines (although to her credit she often reassures her audience that it's alright to "keep your clothes on", and she encourages women to do their thing but "stay ahead of the game").

I have been a fan of Hip-Hop for years (the bop was extremely popular in my hometown of Levin during the mid-1980s), and for a while my main point of contact

[29] The chorus being "I love the way you (ie women) move", and in one of the verses Big Boi raps "Specially the big girl, big girls need love too no discrimination in this world". Interestingly, the only big woman featured in the video clip is fully clothed, in marked contrast to the slim women who are not.

with Hip-Hop was through the music videos I saw on television. With the resurgence in popularity of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa during the 1990s came tours and concerts by local artists, and in attending events I was struck by the stark contrast (what Tricia Rose might call a 'rupture') between the image of Hip-Hop that was presented to me via television and Hip-Hop as a lived experience. The men did not rap about bitches and hoe's, and the women I met at Hip-Hop events were strong and assertive and could not be cast into roles as sexual objects: instead they supported, performed at and organised events and had a big influence on the production of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. I have found the complex interweaving of what seems on the surface to be misogynous and sexist images with emancipatory practices very challenging and this chapter will address, though not necessarily resolve, these issues.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first will discuss the difference between rap and Hip-Hop and provide a brief overview of the influence of the music industry on the development of rap. The second will explore how gender is negotiated in Aotearoa Hip-Hop, focusing on the characteristics of *respect* and *skill* outlined in Figure 1.

4.1 Rap: A Kid Gone Off the Rails

As I have said previously, a rap song is just the tip of the cultural iceberg that is Hip-Hop, but due to the phenomenal global commercial success of rap music many people have come to view rap as synonymous with Hip-Hop. Furthermore, the popularity of gangsta or reality rap and its prominence in the media (both on television in the form of music videos and in print media as the subject of controversy and debate – c.f. Aldridge, 2000; Casimir, 2001; and McLeod, 2001) means that a particular image of rap has formed in the collective psyche of mainstream Aotearoa. Many of those involved with the Hip-Hop community in Aotearoa feel that the stereotypes perpetuated by gangsta rap are "merely a false imagery when compared to Hip-Hop generated at the underground/grassroots level" (Saw, 2002:13). A number of the people I spoke with lay the blame for this false imagery at the door of the music industry which, as D-Fresh explains (a Palmerston North-based member of Wellington's Step Kingz who, at the time of this interview, co-ordinated weekly Hip-Hop workshops in Highbury), was pivotal in creating the rap scene:

> *Lorena:* What's the difference between rap and Hip-Hop?
> *D-Fresh:* They [record companies] have taken the MC out of the Hip-Hop scene and they've made a rap scene ... they've taken the heart, the artistic element of MCing, and made another scene, so if you had a big circle like this *(draws a circle in the air)* the rap scene would kind of cross out here *(draws another, smaller circle intersecting with the first)* ... you know the four elements, so the MC and rap scene comes out into another bubble. Everyone in the Hip-Hop scene knows that, that you can't separate the two, but it's unfortunate, it's kind of like a ... it's like out of a family, sometimes you have one kid that goes off the rails.
> *Lorena:* How did it get there?
> *D-Fresh:* Record company promotion ... Well, you know, sex sells. You got millions of, you know, sex-hungry men out there who are just ... overcome with an insatiable appetite for more sex ... man, that whole rap scene, it's just pffff, boobs and butts, you know? That's all it is. It's all about fantasy.
> Personal communication, 10 April 2001

The rap scene wasn't always 'off the rails', however, and only particular kinds of rap and rappers are all about 'boobs and butts'. Examining how the music industry has shaped the development of rap is important, because it brings into focus how rap came to be Hip-Hop's most visible signifier and reveals the social and economic factors (including the consumer demand D-Fresh alludes to above) contributing to the sexual imagery in US rap music and videos.

Greg Dimitriadis (2001) has traced Hip-Hop's evolution from live performance to mediated narrative, noting a number of definitive moments, brought about largely by record companies and/or producers, which had profound impacts on Hip-Hop culture. The rise of rap as a profitable commodity form overshadowed Hip-Hop's other elements and brought the issue of sexism to the fore, as the most popular type of rap to sell contained sexist behaviours and lyrics, reflecting pre-existing and deeply misogynist cultural discourses and the popular "cock rock"[30] ethic (Dimitriadis, 2001:24). As music video became a prevalent part of rap during the late 1980s so too did the display of women's bodies. Music videos are an integral marketing tool for record companies, and simultaneously function as entertainment and as advertisements for a product. Research has shown that sex can sell (Berry, 1994:184), and music videos, like other advertisements, often use women's bodies to sell the product (Roberts, 1996:xi).

[30] "By 'cock rock' we mean music making in which performance is an explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality. ... Cock rock performers are aggressive, dominating, and boastful, and they constantly seek to remind the audience of their prowess, their control" (Firth and McRobbie, 1990:374, cited in Dimitriadis, 2001:24-25).

The sexual politics and imagery of rap in the United States is an extremely complex issue that is not easily resolved. Tricia Rose provides a comprehensive treatise on the subject in *Black Noise*, and her work has been seminal in shaping the approach to the topic that subsequent authors have taken. Rap's sexual politics has been the focus of much debate[31] (c.f. Berry, 1994; Dimitriadis, 2001; hooks, 1994; Latifah, 1999; Leito 2001; Perry, 1995; Stapleton, 1998; and Zemke-White, 2000), and that it forms part of the assessment component for University courses on Hip-Hop offered in Aotearoa (Dr Vernon Andrews teaches a paper on American Hip-Hop culture at Canterbury University, and rap is a large component of an undergraduate music paper at Victoria University) and around the world (The W.E.B Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, 2003), is an indication of the importance of this subject. My focus, however, is on how gender is negotiated in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community, which I discuss below.

4.2 Gender and Hip-Hop in Aotearoa

As discussed in Chapters Two and Five, one of the primary ways in which Hip-Hop culture was transmitted to Aotearoa in the early 1980s was via mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996), and music videos still play a major role in mediating Hip-Hop to our shores today[32]. However, the videos we see on our screens are usually of the type described above – the commodified, sexualised products of the music industry – rather than of underground or independent artists such as KRS-ONE. Members of the Hip-Hop community in Aotearoa, although they may enjoy watching the latest videos of their favourite artists, as a whole have not emulated the misogyny of US gangsta rap, as my own research and those of others (Zemke-White, 2000; Bennett, 2002) has shown. A real contradiction then develops between the televised image of Hip-Hop and what it is in actual practice in Aotearoa, and this section explores some of the reasons behind this disjuncture.

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[31] And the absence of such debate from contemporary writings on Hip-Hop can be just as revealing as its presence.

[32] According to *A Measure of Culture: Cultural Experiences and Cultural Spending in New Zealand (2003)*, a report by Statistics New Zealand and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 79% of 15-24 year olds in Aotearoa watch popular music videos on television, and research by Kirsten Zemke-White has shown that rap videos are an important component of televised music shows and "Mai Time", a youth-oriented television programme aimed at promoting Māori awareness and pride (2000:181-201).

4.2.1 AOTEAROA: A SPACE OUTSIDE MARKET FORCES?

In June 2001, rappers, music executives, academics and black leaders convened at a Hip-Hop Summit in New York (organised by Russell Simmons) to discuss how to uplift the negative image of rap (Reuters, 2001). Artists and record label producers voiced support for parental advisory guidelines on promotional materials, advertisements and CD covers (Reuters, 2001), and Summit participants also planned to initiate a Hip-Hop Mentoring Programme, which would include "residential and social environment enhancement, private educational tutoring and political empowerment of the Hip-Hop community" (Leito, 2001). "We realise how much power we have, and we are prepared to use it in a positive way," said Sean "P-Diddy" Coombs (Reuters, 2001). Reviewing the Summit, *Black Woman Today* columnist Rafer Leito applauded the decision to "take back responsibility" through the Mentoring Programme, but criticised the gathering as "yet another squandered opportunity to do something truly revolutionary: deal seriously with gender issues" (Leito, 2001). The central problem in rap, Leito asserts, is content – content which relies too heavily on the marketing of black women's bodies – and the most effective tool for change in rap content is not more prominent warning labels (Leito, 2001). Instead, Leito argues that the answer lies in the way artists rap about sex, drugs or violence (their "intellectual reach") and in the way the music industry chooses to present these issues to us. "Explicit content is not new to Black music," writes Leito:

> Like it or not, Lil' Kim can trace her roots to Josephine Baker as well as Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, who sang blues alluding to lesbian liaisons. In fact, the conflict between blues and the Baptist tradition anticipated the current crisis in rap versus the "responsible" elements in Black America. Today's content becomes dangerous (when) it is amplified by media saturation, a reality we didn't face in Baker's or Rainey's day.
>
> Now, every crack and crevice of our lives, public and private, is saturated with media selling us images of ourselves. Tightly controlled distribution, explicit content and visual images inform psyches like never before. So, as Tricia Rose advised, we must create space "outside the market forces" to begin seriously dealing with the gender question.
>
> Market forces are the joint efforts of moneyed interests to contain Black American culture, economics and politics. As a result, increasingly, hip-hop isn't ours. The individual wealth of these anonymous "Big Willy" makes rappers look like beggars. Their images of us will be a catalyst for the struggle for alternative images.
>
> (Leito, 2001)

Could Aotearoa Hip-Hop meet the requirements for such a space? Certainly the majority of rap produced here does not contain sexist or misogynous imagery, and on the surface would appear to be free of the type of moneyed interests shaping U.S. rap.

During question time at the 2001 Women's Studies Association Conference in Christchurch, where Tweek and I presented a joint paper arguing that women in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community were active producers of culture rather than sexual objects, Tweek was asked whether Hip-Hop in Aotearoa had stayed more "pure" because of the lack of commercialism here:

> That does have a lot to do with it, but with the Hip-Hop scene in other countries as well you're only seeing the negative side. They have a culture that is exactly like the culture that we have in New Zealand. They have a Hip-Hop community that thinks the way we think.
>
> 2 July 2001

In his Masters thesis, Edgar Bennett explores whether the music industry produces Hip-Hop culture in Auckland or whether the culture produces the industry. Examining whether urban-Polynesians are capable of producing Hip-Hop culture, he concludes that although the music industry does try to manage and manipulate the creative activities of artists such as Che Fu, DLT and Dawn Raid Entertainment, the creative processes which produce Hip-Hop culture lie with the artists[33] (2002:65, 80). However, he points out that although the industry does not produce Hip-Hop in Auckland, major music labels often seek partnerships with the independent labels who do produce Hip-Hop in order to secure continued profit (2002:99).

I think that given the relative freedom rap artists have to construct their own narratives, Hip-Hop in Aotearoa could be seen as a space outside market forces (for the moment, anyway) that provides an opportunity for a meaningful discussion about gender. Zemke-White has stated that the local rap scene is not in favour of the misogynous and sexist image of rap and has made an effort to emulate rap's potential for the advancement of women (Zemke-White, 2000:257). Here I will look at some of the reasons why the Hip-Hop community is not in favour of rap's sexism.

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[33] This could be due in part to criticism producers of the 1994 *Proud* compilation (which featured South Auckland rap, reggae, soul and traditional music) received from prominent members of the Hip-Hop community. Tony Mitchell has documented how, in producing the compilation, producer Alan Jansson (of Second Nature, the Aotearoa branch of Sydney-based Volition records) had to coach and encourage artists into using Polynesian musical traditions: "...I've had to turn around and tell them to get the Polynesian drum thing happening, and we forced Pacifican Descendants to bring the ukulele into it" (Jansson, cited in Mitchell, 1996b:254). Philip Fuemana, manager of the Proud tour and member of the Otara Millionaires Club (OMC), saw this as "a form of reverse cultural imperialism which implanted indigenous musical notions for commercial motives", and said: "White guys sabotaged the whole thing – hardly any of the bands were happy with the finished product. The Pacifican Descendants hated that version of "Pass It Over". But it was a case of people taking over because they thought they knew better than the band" (Fuemana, cited in Mitchell, 1996b:255).

4.2.2 R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

As outlined in Figure 1, *respect* is one of the defining characteristics of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. In finding out what it means to them (to paraphrase Aretha Franklin), I discovered that respect is a key area for negotiating gender in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. I also found that different understandings and interpretations of respect inform practice in different ways for men and women. For men, respect seems to be modelled on traditional Polynesian values. Women, on the other hand, talk of respect in terms of respecting 'self' and skill, as will be shown next.

One of the reasons behind Aotearoa rap's oft-noted absence of sexism is the fusion of Māori and Polynesian values with the values of Hip-Hop culture. Bennett (2002), Zemke-White (2000 and 2001) and Mitchell (1996a, 1996b and 2001) have all shown how artists in Aotearoa engage with and use Hip-Hop as a vehicle to express their cultural identities:

> ... (Dean) Hapeta and other Maori and Pacific Islander rappers and musicians have attempted in convincing fashion to substitute Maori and Polynesian cultural expressions for the black American context of hip hop, while borrowing freely from the U.S. musical styles of the genre. (And it is an indication of the strong position traditionally held by women in Maori and Pacific Islander societies that the misogynist aspects of much U.S. hard-core rap are totally absent from its Maori and Pacific Islander appropriations.) The result is a further syncretization of an already syncretic form, but one capable of having strong musical, political and cultural resonances in Aotearoa.
>
> (Mitchell, 2001:295)

This idea was reiterated by a number of men I spoke with in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. Ringo Kid, an 'old school' B-boy and the driving force behind Christchurch-based independent label Footnote Records, said:

> I'd like to think we're re-defining hip-hop cultural values by infusing it with traditional polynesian values like dignity, respect, hospitality and even spirituality. If you were to determine hip-hop cultural values by what we're exposed to through the mainstream media it would be guns, drugs, gangs, cars, bitches, and money all that materialist bullshit and I don't want my kids thinking thats what its about. I know there is a conscious element and there always has been but the powers that be aren't interested in promoting it, guess there's no money in it. So we have to do it ourselves starting with us as individuals, then our families, then our communities, then the general public then finally globally.
>
> Email, 21 June 2001

Bennett (2002) also received similar responses from men about the value of women in Polynesian society. Many of his respondents claimed that women were not treated in a sexist or derogatory way "for if similar words were to be uttered it would be seen as disrespecting women close to their lives, mothers, aunties, sisters and nieces. Furthermore to have negative connotations directed towards women and have family members attend (live performances) would be seen as dishonourable" (Bennett, 2002:70-71).

In contrast to the male perspective, some of the women I spoke with located respect on a more personal level, talking in terms of respectability and respect of self rather than traditional Māori values. At the aforementioned Women's Studies Association Conference, Tweek and I screened and discussed two video clips – *Lady Marmalade* featuring Lil' Kim, Christina Aguilera, Eve and Pink, and DLT's *I'm Your MC* – to demonstrate the dramatic difference between U.S. and Aotearoa videos (admittedly the song *Lady Marmalade* was part of the soundtrack for the movie *Moulin Rouge*, which is about a courtesan). Tweek spoke at length on the relationship between respect and the type of clothing B-girls in Aotearoa wear which, although stylish and in the latest fashion, is also practical:

> I've been in the Hip-Hop scene for about five years now and the whole time that I've been in the scene I've never once seen a female Hip-Hop representative dressing tarty. We try and wear, you know, look respectable and wear as many clothes as we can. We don't like our stomachs hanging out and our boobs flopping all over the place and whatnot, we like to look respectable and, you know, wear clothes. I've never come across a girl in the Hip-Hop scene in New Zealand that dresses the way you just saw those women dressing on there because it's just ... it's not ... you're not gonna get respected like that. You're gonna get respected because of your skills.
> *Question from audience: That's what it comes down to, isn't it, respect.*
> Yes very much so. And that's what you find with New Zealand Hip-Hop. If you put yourself out there like that, as a sex object, people are gonna attack you because that's not what Hip-Hop's about. They don't wanna see a girl up on stage showing her bodily parts, they wanna see what kind of skills that she's got, they wanna see what she can do.
>
> 2 June 2001

This emphasis on skill is an important point that requires a section of its own, and I will return to this issue shortly. What I want to do here is share how Tweek's comment about girls showing their bodily parts came back to me after an event at the second Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit held in Auckland later that year. The Saturday Night Jam featured the national finals of the ITFs (which P-Money won for the third year in a row)

and performances by Che Fu and the Krates and international guests Tha Liks. I left the Jam a couple of songs into Tha Liks's performance[34] so missed the actual drama, but had it recounted to me so many times the next day that it feels as if I had seen it myself. Apparently for one of their songs Tha Liks called for some B-girls to get up on stage to dance while they performed, and a couple of girls in tight, revealing clothing jumped up on stage and started shaking their thangs to the music the way you would in a nightclub. Some way into the song the MC noticed how the girls were dancing and called the music to a halt, saying something along the lines of "Yo, get these hoe's off stage, I want some *real* B-girls up here!". This got a thunderous response from the audience, illustrating that Hip-Hop heads do indeed want to see "real B-girls" and what they can do. I asked Spex (one of the many people who related the tale to me) if she'd performed, and she said she would have but she was sitting in the upstairs area and wouldn't have made it to the stage in time, and that a B-girl from a Rotorua crew got up and *represented* to a wildly enthusiastic crowd.

Respect for women, whether it be from a male or female perspective, helps shape the content and imagery of Aotearoa rap videos, which are noticeably different from their U.S. counterparts in that they do not feature women as sex objects. Videos accompanying songs such as DLT's "I'm Your MC" (featuring New York MC Sage and Canadian MC Gravity, from his 2000 album *Altruism*) and Scribe's "Dreaming" (from his 2003 album *The Crusader*) show women as B-girls or rappers or supportive family members and friends rather than scantily clad 'eye candy' [35]. There could be more pragmatic reasons for the lack of Size 8 models, though, as I found when I asked Mark Thomson his opinion on the subject:

> *Lorena:* US Hip-Hop/rap videos tend to portray women as sex objects, whereas NZ Hip-Hop videos don't do this. Why not?
> *Mark Thomson:* Cause we don't have those kind of video budgets. Oscar Kightly on TV3's new sports show on Saturday night has two strippers from Showgirls in a spa pool with him – what's that got to do with Rugby? Nothing, but it's socially and politically acceptable in this country. But put them dancing

[34] I'd been on my feet for about sixteen hours by that stage and was exhausted.

[35] Although the latest video from South Auckland battle rappers the Deceptikonz accompanying their hit "Stop, Drop and Roll" marks an interesting shift in visual aesthetics for Aotearoa Hip-Hop. The video, which is set in a boot camp and sees members of the Deceptikonz dressed in combat gear yelling at new recruits, somewhat awkwardly juxtaposes these images with scenes that feature the rappers (still in combat gear) surrounded by women in a dance-club situation. The video is not sexist by any means (the women are clothed and we aren't subjected to close-ups of butts or breasts), and neither is the song, but it may indicate a new trend in the marketing of rap as the commercial success of Dawn Raid Entertainment (which the Deceptikonz is signed to) goes from strength to strength.

> in a rap video, and people will try to castrate the director and the artists. But just wait, if there's women willing to strip for cash, there's women willing to shake their ass in front of a camera for cash, too.
>
> Email, 7 May 2002

Mark was the only person to respond in this manner, and most of the responses I received were consistent with the following from DJ Fu, member of Palmerston North crew D'Cypher and Director of the now-defunct Butta Aotearoa clothing range. In answering the same question, Fu again pointed to the respect given to women in Māori society:

> yeah two totally different perspectives on women between nz and u.s. i think its cos of the way women are held in indigenous cultures. if you look at māori and pacific whanaus there mothers and grandmothers are always held in high respect. being that the majority of heads are non-white this carries over and when early hip hop started in nz no one talked about how much of a pimp they were like they did in early u.s. hip hop, therefore the foundations were laid by the first nz groups. now that you've got a whole new generation comin thru who dont know the early groups things might change, be interesting to see what up in like five years. more guys than girls i guess most things there are always more guys than girls doing it, not just hip hop just society in general place more emphasis on guys sports. i mean look at politics, theres more guy mp's. hip hop is just a reflection of society. females are always encouraged to participate and i think most peeps dont know it but i think they see them more as a novelty, like where you have a little kid who is djing or breaking or whateva. its like cool. take sports, girls and guys never compete against each other yet in hip hop they are expected too. now if you had as many females as males involved i think females wouldn't be as encouraged to participate, but that'll never happen. myself, i believe that there are no where near enough females participating. but i also believe that you shouldn't get props just because your a female involved. if you put in the time like the rest of us thats cool.
>
> Email, 14 September 2001

Fu touches on a number of interesting issues in his reply, including a possible shift in imagery in the videos of newer rap artists, and he recognises that the lack of women participating in Hip-Hop is a reflection of society as a whole. He also makes an important point about respect, that it shouldn't be automatically given to females on the basis of gender alone, but is something that needs to be earned. This is a pivotal issue that I will address in the next section on skill.

4.2.3 SKILL, CONFIDENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

Skill is another of the defining characteristics of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa (see Figure 1). Being skilful in your chosen element requires a combination of practice, ability, creativity and talent, and one of the primary ways to earn respect within the Hip-

Hop community is through skill[36]. The comments above from Tweek and DJ Fu both emphasise the importance of skill and make the fundamental point that being a female in Hip-Hop will not automatically earn respect. As Anton Carter, aka MC Antsman and Pacific Arts Advisor for Creative New Zealand, put it, "Skills will get you respect no matter (what) your gender" (Spexone, 2002:101). This is significantly different from Hip-Hop in Sydney, Australia, where Ian Maxwell found that women won respect by adopting specifically masculine embodiments and becoming tomboys (2003:34).

The value placed on skill does have implications for women's involvement as performers in Hip-Hop culture. Skill is best assessed through performance, and whether it be for a mediated narrative (such as a CD, video, or even a wall or train for graffiti) or a live situation, performing requires confidence. I have seen crowds go wild when a B-girl or female MC takes the stage, but getting to that stage (in the physical and emotional sense) is often a more difficult journey for women than it is men. Hip-Hop has long been a predominantly masculine space, and women in Aotearoa face the same sort of gender-specific problems that Rose has identified as barriers to women's participation in rap in the United States, including the huge amount of confidence it takes to excel in a male-dominated industry (1994a:57-58). In her study of breakers in Palmerston North in the mid-1980s, Tania Kopytko noted that although there was a small group of female dancers, they had to remain consistently good or else they became the subjects of derision or jest:

> There was a strong element of male ownership of the form. Many of the older boys (sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds) were very aware of dance in general being associated with women or as an activity for "poofters" (men with effeminate characteristics). Certainly they regarded ballet in this way. One breakdancer preferred to call breakdance "New Zealand's fastest growing *sport*". He also regarded "breaking" as more macho than "bopping". This was interesting because female breakdancers mainly "bopped", as few had the arm and upper body strength to manage the floor moves. Boys generally develop this through their play and sports while girls are discouraged from these activities because they are culturally regarded as unfeminine. By staying male-dominated, breakdance continued to fit into the traditional stereotypes of male and female in New Zealand society, particularly working-class stereotypes.
>
> (Kopytko, 1986:22-23)

[36] It should be noted that skill alone, like gender, is not always enough to earn respect. For example, a dancer who can perform all 'the right' moves won't earn respect if s/he has no respect for Hip-Hop, and an MC with negative, derogatory or disrespectful lyrics will not win respect no matter how technically proficient s/he may be. Skill is another example of the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of Hip-Hop culture.

Although cultural perceptions of femininity have changed in Aotearoa since the 1980s, Hip-Hop remains a highly competitive culture, and it can be intimidating for a woman to go to a DJ, MC or B-boy battle and be expected to pit her skills against men. "Women are easier targets, they don't have macho posturing to hide behind, so they have to bring it with raw skills, knowledge and dedication, and nothing less, to be taken seriously," writes Spex in her "Ladies First" article (2002:101). Battling can be especially difficult in the case of breaking, because men and women often have quite different styles of dance due to their physical abilities (having said that, though, I have seen some incredible power moves pulled off by B-girls that demonstrate strength and dexterity). As DJ Fu points out above, women are not expected to compete against men in sports, but they are in Hip-Hop culture, and that can deter a lot of women from performing in public spaces. Another deterrent could be the immediate response given from a crowd in a live performance situation – as discussed in Chapter Three, a Hip-Hop audience is very vocal in its support for performers, and if a performer was to "choke" (as Eminem's character Rabbit did during his first MC battle in the film *8 Mile*) the audience can be very unforgiving (although less so in the case of a female performer, in my experience).

Having the confidence to get up and perform seems to be a key factor for women's involvement in Hip-Hop in Aotearoa. Spex has interviewed and written about a number of Aotearoa's key female Hip-Hop practitioners, and her articles usually touch on this very issue. For example, Teremoana Rapley, one of the pioneer women involved in Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, said to Spex that she doesn't see gender as a barrier to participation in Hip-Hop, as "(t)here are just as many bedroom rappers that are female as there are male, it all comes down to what you are prepared to get up and do in front of others" (Spex, 2001:34). Auckland-based graffiti artist Diva has similar views:

> Being a female in the scene isn't something I focus on too much. I'd like to think people would look at your work and effort, not by what sex you are, but on the art itself. I know it is intimidating and people really focus on you because there aren't many females getting up. But it's slowly changing and if there's anything I'd like to get out of what I do, is that I can encourage other females not to be afraid of stepping out and trying something you want to. People will always give you heaps especially the female ones but you just have to look beyond that and keep going ... If you can build up the confidence to step out and try graffiti, being a female doesn't affect you in any way! Gender doesn't play a part in your ability to paint, it's your self-confidence that does. I really feel if guys started encouraging the girls a lot more than they have, you'd see a lot more female writers on walls. I know

> for myself it's quite a tough and scary road but with the right people around you who are going to help you out and be there to encourage you (no matter how wack your work might be at first) being a female can only be a positive thing – it brings a different approach to the styles and work that's already out there.
>
> (Diva, cited in Spex, 2002:13-15)

One way to gain respect is through skill, and one of the ways to assess skilfulness is through performance. Performing requires confidence, and confidence comes from the support and encouragement of the people around you and, eventually, from within. One of the reasons for the lack of female participation is that women are not as confident as men due in part to the competitive, male-dominated nature of Hip-Hop, which leads for women like Diva to call for more male support and encouragement. However, it does not automatically follow that more women will participate in Hip-Hop just because they have been encouraged to, and a number of men that I spoke to expressed frustration at the continued lack of female presence within the scene. After his presentation at the Combined Australia/New Zealand Musicology Conference held in Wellington in November 2003, Te Kupu pre-empted a question I've come to expect from audiences by posing one of his own: "Where are all the women? You tell me". He went on to talk about the difficulties in getting women to participate even when opportunities have been provided for them. This is something that DJ Sir-Vere, co-organiser of the annual Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit, has also experienced. Speaking to him before the 2002 Summit, I asked him about the inevitable "where are all the women?" question that is raised each year by (usually female) audience members at the discussion panel:

> *Sir-Vere*: Well it's interesting this year because we've invited some women to speak and they've declined.
> *Lorena*: Have they? Is that the 'tall poppy' syndrome? Maybe women don't like to get up in the limelight …
> *Sir-Vere*: Yeah, I don't know … I agree about the women issue, no doubt about it, but however you've got no control if people don't have the time … They've got good reasons too but I don't want to get into that. They come up with good reasons but I don't want to get into that.
>
> Personal communication, 29 August 2002

These comments highlight an important distinction between encouragement and empowerment. Encouragement is something that can be and is given to women (and men) in the Hip-Hop community. Empowerment, on the other hand, is something that

cannot be given but must instead come from within, like self-confidence. From a feminist perspective, empowerment would involve more than participation in the Hip-Hop scene; it would also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to participate (Rowlands, 1997:14). Empowerment also comes when people have a secure sense of self, and believe in their own ability to construct and take responsibility for their actions (Rowland-Serdar, 1997:215). My perception, based on my research, is that the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community is making a conscious effort to encourage women's involvement in the four elements of MCing, DJing B-girling and graffiti art. I myself received nothing but encouragement and support in my own journey into Hip-Hop. Respect still needs to be earned, and is not automatically awarded to female participants purely on the basis of gender. Once it is earned, though, women can be confident that it is based on skill, which leads to an increased self-confidence and perception that they are not only entitled to participate, but are good at what they do as well.

Before I go on to conclude this chapter by showing the important contributions of women in producing Aotearoa Hip-Hop culture, I will address an interesting side issue raised by respect for women. As mentioned above, Aotearoa rap videos are dramatically different from the majority of their U.S. counterparts, demonstrating respect for women and also posing a challenge to negative stereotypes of Māori as a people.

4.2.4 HIP-HOP AND THE "ONCE WERE WARRIORS" STEREOTYPE

The positive images portrayed in Aotearoa rap videos are vastly different to the negative stereotypes generated by movies such as "Once Were Warriors", as was pointed out to me at the 7th Conference of the IASPM Australia-New Zealand branch, held in September 2001 in Sydney, Australia. I presented a paper at the conference about the difference between U.S. and Aotearoa rap videos, and during question time was asked why I hadn't addressed the issue of domestic violence in relation to Hip-Hop. Somewhat surprised, I asked why I should have. "Well, surely you've seen *Once Were Warriors*?" was the response. *Once Were Warriors*, a novel by Alan Duff (Duff, 1990) produced as a film by Lee Tamahori in 1994, depicts Auckland's urban decay and the hardships of life for a poverty-stricken urban Māori family. Featuring an alcoholic husband (Jake the Muss) who beats his wife (Beth Heke), this film has become a

powerful stereotypic media trope of Māori family life in contemporary urban society in Aotearoa (Drummond, 2001:1). In hindsight I shouldn't have been surprised at the question, as domestic violence is a problem in Aotearoa (and not just for Māori), and the famed *Wild Style* CD cover even features an advertisement for the U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline. However, as I mentioned earlier, the women I met were all strong and assertive and I never once heard, not even in jest, violent or derogatory comments directed towards women during my research. I took this issue to some of my participants to see whether I should look at domestic violence in relation to Hip-Hop, and received some interesting responses. Te Kupu said that Hip-Hop was not devoid of society's goods and evils, but wanted to know whether any of the other conference presenters had considered domestic violence in discussing musical components of youth culture (they hadn't). Tweek's response was typically blunt:

> What the heck does once were warriors have to do with hip hop? There is domestic violence in everything and everywhere but it doesn't play an actual part in hip hop ... Can I put this on hiphopnz.com????? I'll be keen to find out what others think about it!
>
> Email, 3 October 2001

I received a thoughtful response from Phem, a graffiti writer and B-girl (and also Spex's sister) from Christchurch, which is worth quoting at length:

> Not only is he (the questioner) classing one whole nation into a group of violent people, but he has to go and pull the Hip Hop culture in it as well. Once Were Warriors depicted a type of violence common in some cases and generally speaking one of the worst there could be. And no doubt that type of thing can and has happened, but sure enough when that film went international the first thing that people would think when they saw a Māori or Pacific Islander was that the indigenous people of New Zealand were wife beating, beer guzzling, and a lower class, group of people who weren't smart enough to hold down a job. This is the exact thing that we had to deal with when we were overseas and people from other countries first met us.
>
> Yes I think that violence is an issue in New Zealand, but I think it is wide spread. In other words I think that it happens in every culture not just with Māori and Pacific Islanders.
>
> No I don't think that this should be included in your thesis on Hip Hop, it has no relevance in the culture. Hip Hop is about finding your true self, it's about one love not at all about violence and hating. Well not in the New Zealand culture of Hip Hop. Hip Hop culture is a positive thing and in some ways a motivation to get out of that violent trip. IE: Breakdancing battles to settle beef instead of physical contact.
>
> This guy I think is misguided to the fullest and obviously needs more contact with people and our New Zealand culture. (Maybe he's holding a grudge cos' they lost the b.ball game!)
>
> Nah but seriously I honesty believe that Hip Hop is a positive culture especially for the youth. I know of some kids who have been beaten up in the streets and been like lets take this to the breaking floor. I have experienced that for myself and have lost the battle but won the war. All and all inspiring me to do better and work harder. Constantly trying to strive away from the negative slant that people who don't know continually try to apply to Hip hop is a daily battle

> and one that inspires me to hold strong the truth. I think that is why the alot of people who are hip hop heads are also christians because it is uplifting and self-motivating.
>
> Email, 3 October 2001

4.3 Women Producing Culture

The Aotearoa Hip-Hop community, like the larger society of Aotearoa, is made up of roughly equal amounts of men and women, and again like larger society there is a disparity in the types of roles members of the community take on. Looking at the people who perform and practice the four elements of Hip-Hop, we can see that the public arena has been and is still a largely male-dominated space. However, involvement in the community is not limited to those who practice the four elements, and not all roles entail public performance. Even at a public performance there are more actors involved than the ones we see on stage: the audience and the people behind the scenes are just as important to the success of the event as are the people performing. The absence of women performing Hip-Hop (and their presence in texts as sexual objects) are important areas to address, but if we widen our gaze to encompass their presence in other areas – as supporters, organisers, and fans of Hip-Hop – the role of women in producing culture becomes more visible. In the next section I take my cue from Spex and focus on two of the many women I met who participate, perform, organise, support and love the four elements of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa.

4.3.1 TWEEK

> "I love Hip-Hop and I know that when I'm older I'll be able to look back and be happy with the contribution I made in helping to keep Hip-Hop alive.... we all play our part in some way and I believe that in many ways I've played my part!"
>
> (Tweek, 2002)

Tweek, co-founder and manager of Wellington's Step Kingz crew, is one of Aotearoa's most prominent B-girls. A 28-year-old mother of three and full-time Youth Communications Co-ordinator for the Wellington City Council, Tweek has been described as the best B-girl in the country, and was even featured as "B-girl of the Month" on a leading American B-girl website in November 2000 (East Melrah Design, 2000). With her husband Swerv1 (founder and president of Wellington's Step Kingz

and one of Aotearoa's pioneering B-boys), Tweek organises a number of key performances in Aotearoa Hip-Hop's calendar of events. These include Bboyz Delight, In Da Mix, Bodyrock and the dance component of the annual Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit. Tweek runs workshops here and overseas (on 15 August 2003 she ran two at the All Stars Academy Centre in Sydney on her way to a Youth and Graffiti Conference in Brisbane), was involved with the 2003 RESPECT hip.hop.aotearoa exhibition at the Dowse in Lower Hutt, and recently traveled to Los Angeles with Swerv to attend an international B-boy Summit and make contacts with some of America's pioneers of Hip-Hop.

Before she got into Hip-Hop, Tweek's perception of it was shaped by what she saw on television: "... all this West-side, gangsta, females shaking their bodily parts on video clips, that's what I saw Hip-Hop as being. It wasn't until I got introduced to the actual Hip-Hop scene that I began to discover what Hip-Hop really was" (personal communication, 2 June 2001). Tweek started out as an MC for a Christian crew called Strange Tongues (who I saw perform at The Stomach in Palmerston North around 1996), but they disbanded in the mid-to-late 1990s. Not long after that, Swerv (then her boyfriend) introduced her to the Wellington underground Hip-Hop scene, and with his support and encouragement she started B-girling and educating herself about the history and culture of Hip-Hop.

As a B-girl and a female, one of Tweek's goals is to encourage other females to have the confidence to become involved in the Hip-Hop scene:

> I believe that there are so many girls with potential and one of my goals is to help them find that potential and ability. I've run free workshops in which I teach young girls wanting to get into bgirling the basic foundations of the dance and also a bit of history on the culture of Hip-Hop. I believe this is important coz it gives them a better understanding and appreciation for what they are doing. Having the knowledge has definitely been something that has helped me to appreciate and love Hip-Hop more and I think that that's an important thing. I don't believe that you can love something if you do not know anything about it.
>
> (Tweek, 2002)

Although skill is an important element of Hip-Hop, Tweek says being a B-girl involves more than skill. "It's about having the right mentality also, if you don't have that then

you are lacking what it really means to be a B-girl, it's not just about being able to pull off all the dope moves, it's way deeper than that ... it's hard to explain that feeling but if you're a B-girl or B-boy and you get to that place, you'll know what I'm talking about" (Tweek, 2002). She also says that there is a lot of support for B-girls in Aotearoa:

> All females who are involved in the Hip-Hop scene here in New Zealand get mad respect from the Hip-Hop community provided they don't have a negative attitude. There is a lot of support here for females in Hip-Hop. I don't know what it is like in other countries but here in New Zealand, the scene is really positive and everyone supports you and gives you props for representing.
>
> (Tweek, cited in East Melrah Design, 2000)

Hip-Hop has infiltrated every aspect of Tweek's life and (at the risk of sounding romantic) to me she is an embodiment of KRS-One's oft-quoted lyric "Hip-Hop is something you live". She has organised dozens of Hip-Hop events and workshops, given lectures about what Hip-Hop culture is (and is not) and participated in Hip-Hop discussion panels, often on a voluntary basis. Her current position at the Wellington City Council enables her to reach and educate even more people about Hip-Hop culture, and as part of her commitment to her faith she founded a Christian B-girl crew called the Angel Allstars in 2001. Although she has since left the crew, the Angel Allstars are still going strong, and Tweek is currently in the process of establishing a monthly newsletter for Christian Hip-Hop heads around the country. Her family is also involved in Hip-Hop – her husband, teenage step-children Khan and Jahnelle and young son Jeremiah are all members of the Step Kingz, and Jahnelle was also one of the original members of the Angel Allstars.

> To me Hip-Hop means a way of life. It's something you live and breathe on a daily basis. Hip-Hop to me is a way of communicating my thoughts and skills to those within and outside of Hip-Hop. It's a way of expressing myself through a positive means whether it be dj'ing, mceeing, bgirling or writing, Hip-Hop is an expression of your thoughts.
>
> (Tweek, cited in East Melrah Design, 2000)

4.3.2 SPEX

> "There is not one day when I'm not thinking about something pertaining to Hip-Hop. It helps that all my friends and family are all involved in hip hop too. Hip-Hop has given me a confidence I have never known with anything else. I've always been a loud mouth but it was all really a front for being not shy but just not that confident. Hip-Hop has changed that! It has also given me the confidence to know I can stay committed to something and still have the love and enjoyment for it that I had when I first started."
>
> Personal communication, 16 October 2001

Spex has been an active member of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community since the mid 1990s, when Aotearoa experienced its 'second wave' of Hip-Hop. She is a member of one of the country's top aerosol artist crews, Triple S ('Style So Sick') and is a former member of Wellington's Time Bandits Crew. 28-year-old Spex is currently employed as a researcher for "The Next – an impression of Hip-Hop expression", a project that is developing an educational resource based around Hip-Hop culture for youth workers in Aotearoa[37]. Before commencing work as a researcher for The Next, Spex was a youth worker at Mirimar Community Centre in Wellington and has worked extensively with young people living in the lower socio-economic areas of Wellington's eastern suburbs (The*Next, 2004). Spex's mother is also a youth worker, and in 2003 they were joint recipients of a Community Employment Group social entrepreneurship grant[38], which enabled them to take a two-month trip to New York, Los Angeles, Hawai'i and American Samoa to discover why young Polynesians are so drawn to Hip-Hop culture (Fahy, 2003).

Spex first discovered Hip-Hop in Christchurch, but when she started there weren't any other females involved in the community, "so I learnt from the guys and passed on the

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[37] "The aim of the project is to develop an innovative approach for engaging young people/rangatahi in exploring social justice and global issues through Hip-Hop. … The idea for a hip hop resource originally came out of conversations with youth workers. Many youth workers are concerned about the Americanisation of culture in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly in terms of violence, racism, "gang banging", drugs, loss of cultural identity etc, and the impact that this is having on groups of marginalised young people/rangatahi. This common misinterpretation of a legitimate place for hip hop culture within broader New Zealand culture raises issues about the lack of understanding that many adults and young people/rangatahi have about the genre, and of the positive contribution that hip hop culture has and is making to the lives of young people/rangatahi and their communities both locally and globally." (The*Next, 2004).

[38] At the time of writing, National MP Katherine Rich questioned the funding, saying that "there are greater youth priorities, in my view, than sending someone halfway across the world to study hip-hop" (Claridge, 18 March 2004). This caused much media interest nationally and internationally, and has been the subject of fierce debate on Hiphopnz.com. The funding body responsible for allocating this grant is currently under investigation by the New Zealand Government, illustrating the real-life consequences that can result from negative media portrayals of Hip-Hop.

skills to my sisters, helping to create a supportive network" (Spexone, 2002:100). Spex's parents took her to her first ever Hip-Hop gig, and her earliest memory of Hip-Hop is also a family one: "1984 going for a family reunion up in Auckland when I was about 9 or 10 and watching my uncles walking around with their pieces of lino under their arms hearing my Nana saying to them "ae get on da floor and do the fing on da head, ia see good aye?" Always makes me smile! She was soooooooo proud!" (Dee, 2002). Spex started her journey into Hip-Hop as a DJ:

> I wanted to be the first women DJ to enter the DMC (cos that's all we knew about down in Christchurch). It was real hard but I learnt how scratch and mix and back to backs. I don't practise that much anymore but I can still do a lil something! I then tried out emceeing and was in a crew with Pause, Daneja and myself being Syn Tactics. I loved emceeing, I still do! My cousin (Scribe) and myself tried to start up a crew, but I thought he was wack! (Shame on me now hahaha). In our crew Syn Tactics we wanted to be like a hip hop crew and move around the elements whilst on stage. Only problem was that only Pause could break, even though he was teaching me and we didn't know how to graff. Pause taught me how to break but it wasn't until I got to Wellington that I learnt how to bboy/bgirl properly! I learnt how to pop and some hits from Pause but haven't really been working too hard on that lately. Learnt heaps from Kos. Learnt lockin from a japanese dude named Dajun and have just kept learning. Don't really do all the elements of hip hop just wanted to learn a bit from all of them to really appreciate. Damn it's hard work to excel. Hard work! That is the reason that I wanted to try the elements. Just to know and appreciate everything!
>
> Email, 16 October 2001

In 1996 Spex moved to Wellington, where she met Tweek and some other women who were also "being proactive, taking the mic, can, floor and tables, honing skills and truly rocking their chosen art form of expression" (Spexone, 2002). In 1998 she spent some time back in Christchurch, where she hooked up with her sister Phem and friend Kid and co-founded Sheelahroc, a crew of B-girls, MCs and graffiti artists (Spexone, 2002:100).

As well as being a performer, Spex has helped co-ordinate and organise Hip-Hop events in and around Wellington, and she is also a freelance writer. Spex has written numerous articles about Hip-Hop for magazines like *Back2Basics, Pulp* and Australian-based *Out For Fame*, and the majority of her articles focus on documenting the female contribution to Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. She has interviewed and written about Teremoana Rapley, Tweek, Auckland graffiti artists Diva and Jillski, MCs Nemesis and Lucia, turntablists P Lee and Phaze, not to mention a number of prominent male members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. Spex, along with Sheelahroc and her sister Phem, also took part in an exhibition of art and music held in 2002 at the Waikato Museum of

Art and History called "Dolly Mix (W)rapper: Contemporary Art by Women of Samoan Descent" (Wilson, 2002).

> *Lorena:* What do you love most about Hip-Hop?
> *Spex:* That all my family and friends are closely involved in what I love. They have my back. All the people that I look up to in the Hip-Hop world are people that I can talk to. Not like the commercial world where you can only send letters hope that they reply. I love that fact that the people that I love most in this world are all a part of the hip hop culture some way or another. I love how we can have a connection to someone from anywhere in the world. I love that this culture started in the ghetto! I love how we can run an event and charge nothing on the door! I love how families can be a part of the Hip-Hop culture. I love how you can be white, black, green, yellow, purple with pink polka-dots and still be involved in Hip-Hop, and you can be Muslim, Christian, Buddah, Mormon and still be a part of it too! And most of all I love that to be good you have to have skill, talent and individualism! You don't have to be a barbie or ken for that matter to be a part of Hip-Hop.
>
> Email, 16 October 2001

4.4 Summary

Gender is not an easy issue to negotiate in Aotearoa Hip-Hop. It is marked by contradictions which the Hip-Hop community as a whole is trying to resolve in a progressive way. The negative image of rap, brought about largely by commercial imperatives, has acted as a catalyst for the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community, as can be seen in the efforts of members to actively resist this image by incorporating the key values of *respect* and *skill* into the performance and production of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa. Earning respect through skill has the potential to be an empowering process for women in Hip-Hop, and has indeed resulted in women like Tweek and Spex playing active roles in the (re)production and maintenance of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. However, as the commercial success of Aotearoa Hip-Hop continues to rise the scene here may no longer occupy a space outside market forces, which will result in a change in the form and content of rap in particular to meet consumer and record company demands.

Chapter Five

Without your roots you'd be a jandal without its sole.
- Donald McNulty, Nesian Mystic, as cited in Bex, 2003.

Me titiro whakamuri tatou
Kia mohio ai
Me pehea haere ki mua

We should look backwards
So that we can determine
How to go forwards

Jandals with Soles: History and Hip-Hop in Aotearoa

In researching Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa, I came to understand that history is an important component of Aotearoa Hip-Hop that is used and experienced in specific ways. Two recent studies of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa have noted similarities between the Māori concept of whakapapa (genealogy) and the distinctive historical trope that appears in Aotearoa Hip-Hop (c.f. Bennett, 2002 and Zemke-White, 2000). In this chapter I examine the idea that the concept of whakapapa has influenced the way Hip-Hop has been glocalised in Aotearoa, enabling members of the Hip-Hop community to know their roots and become "jandals with soles".

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first will address why history is so important to the Hip-Hop community in Aotearoa and how whakapapa may have contributed to this distinctive historical trope. I will then go on to examine three cultural texts ("Hip-Hop 1-0 Muthafucken 1" by Mark Thomson, *Back2Basics* magazine and Te Kupu's *Ngātahi – Know the Links*) and four performances from the 2000 and 2001 Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summits in an effort to understand some of the ways in which artists use history in the (re)production and performance of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa.

5.1 The Importance of History

I gained a sense of the importance of history in Hip-Hop very early in my research, and in a way this chapter retraces my own journey into Hip-Hop. I began my fieldwork by asking members of the Hip-Hop community what a good starting place would be for me to learn about Hip-Hop, and the answer was invariably "learn the history". The following excerpt, taken from a talk Tweek gave to a group of around 300 Māori and Polynesian youth interested in Hip-Hop at the Hosanna World Outreach Centre in Taita, Lower Hutt, encapsulates the advice I was given about learning Hip-Hop's history:

> One last thing that I really wanna encourage you is that if you are getting into Hip-Hop, please, do you research and learn about ... learn a little bit of the history about what you're gonna be doing because it'll help you to appreciate it much more. How can you love something if you don't know where it comes from, if you don't know how it began, and if you haven't schooled yourself up on it? You can't love something if you haven't done that.
>
> 5 May 2001

This comment illustrates the depth of Tweek's emotional involvement with Hip-Hop and the kind of commitment she expects from young MCs, DJs, B-boys/B-girls and graffiti artists. It is not necessary to be familiar with Hip-Hop's history in order to enjoy a good beat or lyric, but as Tweek points out, a knowledge of its history helps in understanding and appreciating Hip-Hop. This is further illustrated by a quote from a lecture given by KRS-ONE entitled "The Fundamentals of Hip-Hop", where he said:

> Many people admire HipHop but not everyone can interpret HipHop. This takes a certain sight, and many people are simply too afraid to go where HipHop originates from.
>
> (KRS-ONE, 2001)

A rap song or piece of graffiti art is just the tip of the cultural iceberg that is Hip-Hop, and to engage with and interpret Hip-Hop, a knowledge of its history is essential. The importance of this kind of knowledge was reinforced to me during a conversation with a DJ about Hip-Hop's history. We had been talking about the recently released movie *Scratch*, which is a history of DJing, and got into a broader discussion about the origins and evolution of Hip-Hop. Having just read Bill Brewston and Frank Broughton's *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life* (1999), as well as the usual suspects (Chuck D, 1998; Hager, 1984; Berman, 1994; Chalfant and Prigoff, 1987; Perkins, 1996; Scott, 1985; Rose, 1994a), I jumped at the chance to discuss Hip-Hop's history, but after some time

noticed that I was doing most of the talking. Not wanting to seem like a 'know-it-all' and feeling a bit self-conscious, I came to a halt, saying "but surely you know all this already". "Yes," he said, smiling. "I just wanted to see if *you* knew it too."

The importance of knowing Hip-Hop's history is something practitioners and scholars alike recognise, and most academic and journalistic writings on Hip-Hop locate it within its historical point of origin: the postindustrial urban decay of 1970s New York City (Rose, 1996). Here I will explore some of the less visible reasons that could lend to an understanding of why Aotearoa Hip-Hop has such a distinctive historical trope.

5.1.1 "REAL HIP-HOP": HISTORY AND REVERENCE IN POPULAR MUSIC

Knowledge of history is not something unique to Hip-Hop culture. It is often the case that fans of a particular musical genre (such as punk, jazz or country) will be well-versed in that genre's history, particularly if that genre is being practiced outside its country of origin. It is also common for musicians to mimetically reproduce the soundscapes of their chosen genre. These practices can contribute to notions of *authenticity*, providing a way for musicians and fans to demonstrate their level of engagement with the music and justify their appropriation of it.

Drawing on research carried out by Pico Iyer (1988), Appadurai has discussed "the uncanny Philippine affinity for American popular music", where "somehow Philippine renditions of American popular songs are both more widespread in the Philippines, and more disturbingly faithful to their originals, than they are in the United States today" (1996:29). Appadurai calls this "nostalgia without memory", as Filipinos look back to a history they never lost from a world not their own, a world brought to them by American missionary activity and the "political rape" of the Philippines (1996:30). Investigating the influence that black American GI's had on black Liverpudlians in England during the Second World War, Jacqueline Brown has noted a broad understanding of Liverpool's musical history and "an unwavering reverence of black America for its musical contributions to black Liverpool" (1998:304). Nostalgia and reverence are tropes I have noticed in my own experience playing the bagpipes (which I consider to be a form of popular music as it is produced and performed in the present).

There is a large pipe band community in Aotearoa and when I was actively involved in the scene there were more pipe bands here than in Scotland, the home of the bagpipe. Tradition is a strong theme throughout the pipe band community, and in my early years of playing there was widespread disapproval (amongst the older generation) of pipers who played "mickey mouse" tunes (songs from popular culture adapted to fit the bagpipe scale, or featuring non-traditional embellishments such as slurs). The pipe band community was very conservative, although this is changing as members travel to Scotland to witness the latest innovations and trends, resulting in pipers in Aotearoa having more artistic and creative freedom. Nevertheless there remains a noticeable nostalgia for and reverence of tradition, Scotland and Scottish pipers. I have even met tourists and immigrants from Scotland who still charge us with conservatism and of being "more Scottish than the Scottish".

I was very interested to note similar nostalgic sentiments being expressed by members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. April Henderson has documented how "you hear many Sāmoan hip hop performers talking about *real hip hop* and getting back to the four elements, DJing, MCing, breakdancing and graffiti artistry, that constitute it. The *real hip hop* they want to get back/forward to is the hip hop started in the parks and recreation centres of New York City as an alternative to street violence" (1999:113). This longing for Hip-Hop's early New York days (what Appadurai might call 'nostalgia without memory') was echoed by Tweek in an interview on hiphopnz.com:

> *Spex:* If you could be anyone in the Hip-Hop realm who would it be and why?
> *Tweek:* Damn I would love to be an old skool bboy/bgirl in those block parties that used to happen in the Bronx back in the days. I have always wondered what it felt like to be part of what it was back then and knowing what it was like to get down when bboying was at its truest and purest form. It's all changed now and things have evolved but I'd like to go back to those days and experience what it was like!
>
> (Tweek, cited in Spexone, 2002)

The following quote from Kerb, an accomplished graffiti artist, talented battle DJ and one of Aotearoa's pioneers of Hip-Hop who visited New York in 1994, is also revealing:

> I always dreamed of making a journey to New York, and just visiting the Mecca of Hip Hop, to see what I could learn or reaffirm things about Hip Hop that I held true. I went to New York in '94. It was kind of disappointing. B-boying was basically dead, Graff was just pretty much tagging and street bombing … Hip Hop culture wasn't obvious in the street

> ... I realised that my crew and I were on the right track, and that we might even have more of a clue than a lot of the people that I had met in New York. They seemed pretty clueless about Hip Hop in general.
>
> (Kerb, cited in Khmer, 2001)

This comment illustrates a reverence of New York and the disappointment Kerb felt when he discovered Hip-Hop was not as prominent there as he had imagined. Perhaps what he was looking for had evolved into something that no longer resembled what he "held true" about Hip-Hop? Innovations and new inventions for bagpipes certainly happen faster in Scotland than they do here, so it may be possible that the same could be the case for Hip-Hop in New York. Kerb's realisation that his crew "might even have more of a clue" than people in New York also suggests to me that artists here may be quite conservative in their approach to Hip-Hop, possibly drawing the charge of being "more Hip-Hop than Hip-Hop", a topic I will return to later. Kerb returned to New York in 1997 but made a point of visiting during an important event – the 20th anniversary of the Rock Steady Crew, one of Hip-Hop's pioneering groups:

> I found a lot more people who were from around the world that were like-minded, as opposed to a lot of the locals in New York City who were pretty clueless about the events. A lot of them didn't even know what Rock Steady Crew was. They were pretty much all caught up in the Puff Daddy image that was going on, and no one really cared about B-boying or anything like that.
>
> (Kerb, cited in Khmer, 2001)

King Kapisi had a similar experience during a two-month trip to New York and Europe in mid-2003. In an appearance on "MO' Show" (a television series about Hip-Hop hosted by Otiz Frizzell and Mark Williams) in November 2003, Kapisi said that the average Hip-Hop fan in Aotearoa seemed to know more about Hip-Hop's history than people did in the home of Hip-Hop. This is quite likely a common feature of cultural traditions that are imported into new geographical locations, and indeed Maxwell has shown that white rappers in Sydney "research" Hip-Hop's history and use their knowledge as a way to establish authenticity and defend their appropriation of Hip-Hop (2003:52). However it has often been noted that in Aotearoa, Māori and Polynesians are already "minorities with authority", and in an earlier interview Kapisi said something that made me think that perhaps there are factors other than nostalgia, reverence or authenticity that could account for the strong emphasis on history:

> We can trace our roots right back to our grandparents on the islands, so I think we have a more direct cultural link and awareness. That's the difference with Polynesians as opposed to Black Americans, who are more displaced. That's not to say they have no self-knowledge, maybe just a little less than your average brown-faced New Zealander. New Zealand is a very culturally aware place, and the music reflects that.
>
> (King Kapisi, cited in Bojsen-Moller, 2000:26)

Aotearoa is a very culturally aware place, and scholars such as Kopytko (1986), Scott (1985), Zemke-White (2000), Mitchell (1996a, 1996b and 2001) and Bennett (2002) were quick to note the similarities between the protocols of Hip-Hop culture and Māori and Polynesian cultural traditions. Next I will look at the idea that Hip-Hop's historical trope has been embraced by Māori and Polynesian youth due to the pre-existing cultural concept of whakapapa.

5.1.2 HIP-HOP AND WHAKAPAPA

Hip-Hop is not the first musical style to be enthusiastically adopted by Māori and Polynesian youth in Aotearoa. In fact, cultural borrowing is not a new phenomena to the Pacific (Moulin, 1996), and neither is the idea of "songs as history" (Thomas, 1992). A number of academics have sought an answer to why Māori and Polynesian youth are so drawn to Hip-Hop, and Zemke-White has suggested that one of the reasons could be because there is a cultural resemblance between the protocols of rap and Polynesian oral traditions, in particular themes of place, genealogy, history, identity and community (2000:308). This is not a connection that Hip-Hop artists themselves have made, and prominent Hip-Hop artist DLT has criticised Zemke-White for being 'too romantic', arguing that many young Polynesians do not know about their own culture so have no basis for comparison. However, as Zemke-White has pointed out, cultural borrowing is seldom indiscriminate and usually entails the borrowing of musical elements that are already compatible with the host system (2000:309).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus could help in understanding why this is not a correlation that Hip-Hop artists have consciously made. Habitus provides the basic grid towards "ways of perceiving, knowing and appreciating the world" (Fowler, 1996:10) that are acquired during a person's early years, and which are "determined by a complex of social factors such as class, education and gender" (Toynbee, 2003:107). Habitus is deeply inscribed within us and "leads us unconsciously to certain tastes, dispositions,

orientations, and is reflected in the reproduction of specific kinds of cultural activity" (Ridler, 2003:9). Regardless of whether Māori and Polynesian youth are aware of the cultural practices of their ancestors, I think it could be the case that whakapapa, a pervasive concept in contemporary Aotearoa society, has had an influence on the way in which Māori and Polynesian youth have appropriated the historical trope of Hip-Hop.

Whakapapa means "to place in layers, lay one upon another" (Williams, 2001:259), and the term is used to "describe both the recitation in proper order of genealogies, and also to name the genealogies" (Himona, 2003). The concept of whakapapa is not limited to human genealogies, but can also be applied to words (etymology), ideas (for example tracing the history of Marxism) and beliefs (such as the Christian story of Creation). The visualisation of whakapapa is of building layer by layer upon the past towards the present, and on into the future (Himona, 2003). The idea of moving from the past into the present and on to the future is reflected in the Māori proverb cited in the epigraph to this chapter, and also in the following quote:

> (Māori are) continually advancing and looking from where we came and at the same time looking towards where we're going to. So we are *tu taha ke ai*, walking with both eyes fully aware of what is in the past, what is in the present and what lies ahead in the future, guided by the past.
>
> (Huata, as cited in Bishop, 1996:94-95).

No-one I spoke with connected the concept of whakapapa with the reasons for Aotearoa Hip-Hop's distinctive historical trope, but I heard strong echoes of these sentiments expressed in their words and ideas, as will be seen in the next section. Te Kupu was the first person to use whakapapa in reference to Hip-Hop, which he did at the 1999 IASPM Conference held in Sydney, Australia. There he recited his song "Autahi" (released in 2000 on his solo album *Ko Te Matakahi Kupu*), which lays out his personal "whakapapa Hip-Hop" (Hapeta, 1999). Kirsten Zemke-White, while not specifically discussing whakapapa, has compared the naming practices of rap (citing who you are and where you are from, or your 'whakapapa Hip-Hop') to the structure of a mihi (greeting), the purpose of which is to "acknowledge and weave together the past, present and future" (2000). In his Masters thesis *Scratching the Surface: Hip-Hop and the social construction of Auckland's urban-Polynesian youth identities*, Edgar Bennett (2002) picks up on this idea in his examination of some of the ways in which Hip-Hop is used to connect ancient Polynesia to contemporary society. Discussing the use of karakia and Pasifikan soundscapes in the works of DLT, Che Fu and Urban Pacifika, Bennett

interprets their opening addresses "as contemporary whakapapa in which customary protocols have been re-worked to fit within the capitalist structure of music making that is shortening the breadth of such formalities" (2002:74). I believe Hip-Hop in Aotearoa does act as a form of contemporary whakapapa, building layers from the past into the present and on into the future, and in the next section I will offer some examples of how this is achieved.

5.2 (Re)producing History

When Aotearoa Hip-Hop artists narrate their histories, several themes often emerge in their discourse. The first is an emphasis on knowing the origins of Hip-Hop. Another is knowing and respecting the people involved in establishing a home for Hip-Hop here, half a world away from its point of origin. The third is an educational theme, where Hip-Hop artists call for us to know our own personal and political histories, as well as Hip-Hop's creation myths. In this section I will look at how these themes are used in the (re)production of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa through an analysis of three different cultural texts (an article written for www.hiphopnz.com, Aotearoa's only dedicated Hip-Hop magazine, *Back2Basics*, and Te Kupu's rapumentary *Ngātahi – Know The Links*) and selected rap artists. But, first I will revisit my observation of conservatism in Aotearoa Hip-Hop.

It is widely recognised that knowledge of Hip-Hop's narrative is important, but the ways that it is used to inform practice is not an homogenous activity throughout Aotearoa. During an interview with a graffiti artist, we started talking about the role of history in the practice of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, and I asked him what he thought of the large emphasis placed on knowing Hip-Hop's origins. He was of the opinion that history has reached dogma status in Aotearoa and is actually holding a lot of people back. He said people from New York and Germany come here, see graffiti and say, "It's straight out of New York, nothing new here, but what's it doing here?". He also thought that some of the recordings coming out of Aotearoa at the moment sounded really dated, and could have just as easily have been released ten years ago as now. He does believe that history has its place and that it is important to know the roots of what you're participating in, but he felt that a dogmatic adherence to tradition can impede creativity and originality (ironically, two of the key characteristics of Hip-Hop culture – see Figure

1) and can make a scene stagnate. This confirmed my impression that Hip-Hop in Aotearoa can sometimes be quite conservative and, like the pipe band community, more supportive of the kind of Hip-Hop that works within the boundaries defined by history and tradition. This is something Ian Maxwell also noticed when talking to graffiti artists in Sydney, Australia, who had "assiduously studied" Cooper and Chalfant's *Subway Art*:

> Cultural material accessed at a distance like this carries with it both the distorting effects of the mediation itself and the tendency of the relatively isolated interpreters of that material toward reification: to perhaps overinvest in their interpretation, immobilizing that material as a cultural essence rather than a snapshot of cultural process, a synchronic sliver of illusory coherence plucked out of the less stable diachronic flow of history. (Maxwell, 2001:260).

There are some elements within Hip-Hop that tend towards more conservatism than others, including dance (as discussed in Chapter Three) and graffiti art, as alluded to above. Having said that, though, the majority of Hip-Hop produced in Aotearoa is extremely innovative and constantly pushes the boundaries of Hip-Hop. This tension between history, tradition, creativity and originality is yet another example of the contradictions inherent within Hip-Hop culture.

5.2.1 "HIP-HOP 1-0 MUTHAFUCKEN 1"

In 1996 Tricia Rose wrote, "Even as today's rappers revise and redirect rap music, most understand themselves as working out of a tradition of style, attitude and form which has critical and primary roots in New York City in the 1970s" (Rose, 1996:427). I had a number of opportunities to hear members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community recount the origins of Hip-Hop throughout my fieldwork, and found that their accounts almost always touched on Hip-Hop's "critical and primary roots". "Hip Hop 1-0 muthafucken 1", an article written by Mark Thomson and published on Hiphopnz.com, provides a good example of the kind of narrative one could expect to hear from members of the Hip-Hop community:

> Hip-Hop started in the Bronx, one of the 5 illustrious boroughs of New York in the early 70's. A name coined by Afrika Bambaataa – who was the foundation member of the Universal Zulu Nation (an association created to keep local kids away from gangs, drugs and crime) – Hip derives from the Swahili word 'Hippie' which means 'To be aware of'. 'Hop' was slang at the time for movement – E.g: 'hop to it'. In essence, together it reads 'to be aware of the movement'. The movement was that of subtle revolution, in which poor kids from ghetto housing complexes would have an avenue

> toward success of their own. Originally comprised of four main elements, Hip-Hop was created as follows.
>
> Icons Kool Herc, Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash and Grand Wizard DJ Theodore would take their turntables out into the parks – powered off street lights or trails of extension cords – throwing block parties for the local teens to come to have fun. Poets and spoken word artists influenced heavily by Gil Scott Heron and The Last Poets would recite vocals over the top of the DJs spinning instrumentals. Emceeing was birthed.
>
> Graffiti was a 'sport' in the late 60's and throughout the 70's where artists would try to get their 'names' as famous as possible by writing on every train that went through every borough in the city. This was called going 'All-City' and was the epitome of street fame for the time. Taki 183 was the originator of this sport that was later called 'tagging'. Graffiti is called the 'written word' of the movement, Emceeing is said to be the 'spoken word' of the movement.
>
> The breakbeat is the essence of all Hip-Hop music – and later the key element in birthing electronic musics like Drum'n'Bass, House, Techno, Jungle, ambient and even modern day pop music.
>
> "You can break a beat down easily. Everything works around a 4/4 beat. The DJs would break the beats from funk and soul music down on the turntables taking just the best parts of each song and looping them over and over," says Ice T around the formation of the 'break' and 'break dancing'. "Then the local kids would dance to the breaks, they'd let the music flow through them and move freely. It was something spiritual. And that's how break dancing started." Without the aid of a turntable or other beat making instrument, youths would make break-beat sounds with their mouths vocal chords called a Beatbox and often deemed the 5th element of Hip-Hop.
>
> (Thomson, 2003)

This version of Hip-Hop's creation myth does not correspond to the chronology and evolution of Hip-Hop (ie, graffiti first, followed by DJs, B-boys and finally MCs) presented by scholars such as Hager (1984), Cross (1993) and Rose (1994a). Thomson does cover the "birth" of each element and makes reference to the socioeconomic context (the "illustrious" Bronx) from which Hip-Hop arose. The title of the article (reminiscent of Robert Thompson's 1986 article "Hip Hop 101") positions it as a kind of elementary course in Hip-Hop, informing readers that the information it contains is of fundamental importance. This article suggests that the origins of Hip-Hop, including who was involved in its creation and how it came about, are important themes in discourses of Hip-Hop's history in Aotearoa.

5.2.2 BACK2BASICS

Back2Basics was founded by Sen Thong (aka Khmer) and Brett Wagner (aka Omega B), two key players in the Wellington Hip-Hop community, who set up a charitable trust to publish this free magazine. All those involved in the production of the magazine, from advertising to illustration to writing, are active members of the Hip-Hop community who volunteer their time and skills to make it happen. The first issue of the magazine, which was launched at the 2001 Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit in Auckland, focuses on the history of Hip-Hop and contains interviews with some of the pioneers of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, including DLT, SirVere, Robsta (Dam Native), Te Kupu, DJ Raw, Slave (Mark Williams), Upper Hutt Posse, Kosmo, Merk, Swerv, Kerb, Teremoana Rapley, Rhys B, and it even contains an interview with one of the members of the Rock Steady Crew, Ken Swift, who was in the country for the Summit. The cover of the magazine features Hip-Hop tickets and flyers from the early 1980s (see Figure 9), and inside the magazine are photographs from the early days of Hip-Hop, including a centrespread of work by pioneer graffiti artists. Khmer explains why the first issue was dedicated to the history of hip-hop in his editorial:

> This first issue is based on our history; how we learnt about Hip Hop. Being the first issue I thought it would be fitting to start our magazine off with how it all began. These are some of the people that put the real hard work in. Discovering a new culture and delivering it to us, the newer generation in a well rounded and inviting package. Without these people, would we know what Hip Hop truly is? These are the superstars of Aotearoa, being given little or limited information they crafted a unique identity out of a culture that was being sent to all corners of the world. Something that we can't take for granted. Although we couldn't trace all the people we wanted to with our limited time frame, we have full intention on finding them and getting their stories on how Hip Hop arrived on their doorsteps and swept their hearts. Words cannot express the amount of respect that must be given to these people. They truly are local heroes ... Well now it's time for you to learn about our past and look towards our future. Enjoy our limited edition issue of Aotearoa's first Hip Hop Magazine, BACK2BASICS.
>
> (Khmer, 2001:1)

Kerb, whom I mentioned earlier, was interviewed in *Back2Basics* and was asked how important he thought having knowledge of hip-hop was:

> *Khmer:* How important do you think having knowledge of Hip Hop is?
> *Kerb:* If you don't know the history and respect of all the people that came before you, that laid down all of the hard work just so you could have your little bit of fame you might get at the moment, learn it. Even in our own country we have our own pioneers, people that were getting dissed for doing Hip Hop and sticking with it. If these people just said, "stuff it" back

> in the day, we probably wouldn't have hip hop now. It would probably just be MC's and nothing else. Everyone wants to be a Rapper; everyone wants to be a star and even though it's the most popular music on the planet at the moment. If you don't know your past, then you can't go forward.
>
> (Kerb, cited in Khmer, 2001:40)

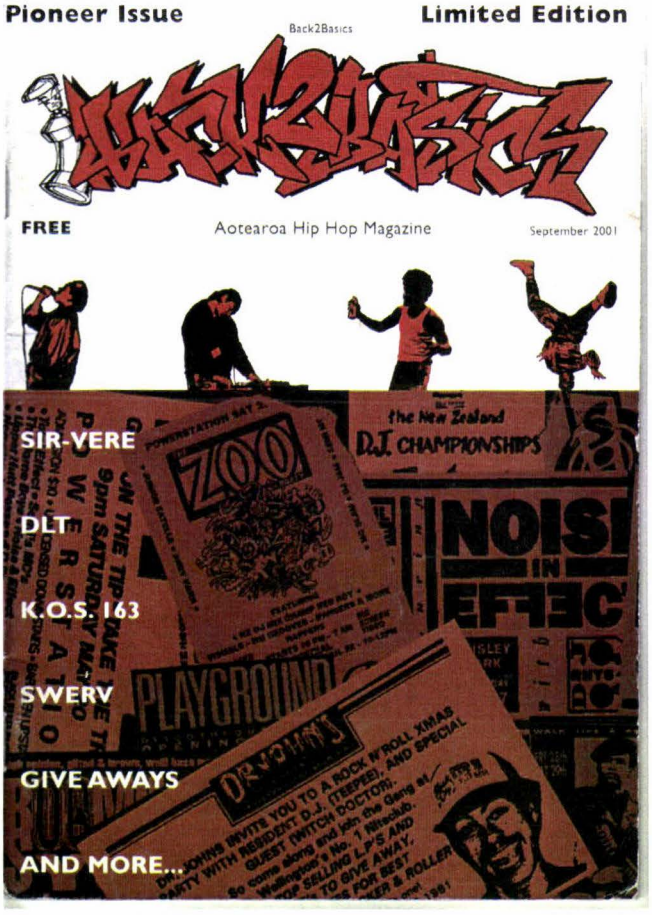

Figure 9: **Back2Basics magazine cover.**

What interested me about these comments was that both people mentioned the importance of knowing the past in order to move into the future, which, as discussed above, is part of the visualisation of whakapapa. Another point to note is Kerb's comment about *respect*, which is a key characteristic of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. Respect needs to be given to the pioneers of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, but it is not something given unconditionally, nor is it guaranteed for life. Respect needs to be earned, not only by past activities but also by current attitudes and behaviours. This is

best illustrated by a post Hip-Hop historian and graffiti artist Jillski recently made on www.hiphopnz.com:

> respect isn't guaranteed for life. example if u are a fan of a performer for years + one day u contact them and tell them how much their music meant to you bla bla bla, + their response, instead of being humbled or taking the time out to write u an email back thats more than one sentence saying 'oh yeah might see ya round then' and they dont give a shit. Then why should u respect them really. If the old ones don't respect the youth then they can't expect to be respected by the youth.

The narratives in *Back2Basics* also point to the pivotal role played by the media in disseminating Hip-Hop to Aotearoa. Television, video, film, vinyl, cassette tapes and magazines formed the primary vehicle through which youth around the country accessed Hip-Hop in the 1980s, and the importance of the media (and mediascapes – c.f. Appadurai, 1996) in the cultural transmission of Hip-Hop to Aotearoa has been discussed by Kopytko (1986), Henderson (1999) and Zemke-White (2000). Each of the people interviewed in *Back2Basics* made some mention of a movie, magazine article or television programme they had seen that inspired them to start B-boying or tagging (dance and graffiti being the first elements to become popular in Aotearoa). Kerb's response to the question "What first got you into Hip-Hop?" illustrates the influence of the media on youth in Aotearoa and that dance and graffiti also brought with it new modes of dress and language (Kopytko, 1986:22):

> The first time I saw the dance form (of Hip-Hop) was from a friend of mine who went to a Catholic School, a mostly Polynesian school. He came over one morning and was showing me these body waves and stuff, I didn't know what the hell he was doing. He was telling me it was called the 'Bob', and I said, "the Bob?" and he said, "yeah because Bob Marley invented it, it came from Jamaica". There was all this misinformation[39]. That was the first time I saw anyone ever do any kind of street dance. Then not long after that *That's Incredible* came on television, it featured a battle between Dynamic Rockers and another crew, which was the first real footage that anyone had seen of breaking. The guys in the video had pink hair, baggy Arabian pants and vests. We thought that's how breakers dress. It sparked off breaking instantly, like the next day people were breaking all over the country. Back then people used to dress like that, wear big baggy aeroplane pants, put streaks through their hair, have mullets and make little vests. That's what we thought B-boying was. It wasn't until we saw *Beat Street* that we realised that you could rock fat Puma tracksuits ... The first time I ever

[39] Tania Kopytko suggests that breaking came to Aotearoa via Western Sāmoa (by way of neighbouring American Sāmoa and before that the U.S.A.), a suggestion that other accounts have confirmed (c.f. Scott, 1985; Henderson, 1999; Zemke-White, 2000). Apparently the term 'bop' came about as a mispronunciation of the term 'popping', a style of dance popular in the 1970s. "In the Samoan language there is little discrimination in the pronunciation of "b" and "p", with the "b" sound generally favoured. Hence, "bopping" entering the New Zealand breakdance terminology" (Kopytko, 1986:21).

> saw any kind of Graffiti was basically from *Beat Street*, on the record cover that came before we got the movie. My friend Vinnie brought around the record cover, on the front it had photos from the movie. It had the whole car that Ramo was painting. I didn't really understand what the hell he was doing, I just thought they were nuts, but that was the first time I ever saw any kind of Graffiti. But I used to draw Hip Hop before that. Breaking and stuff inspired me. I used to just go home and just draw breakers. I was sort of already doing it before I even knew what it was. It wasn't until about a year later we saw *Style Wars*; it came to screen on Channel One. We found out more about the culture because they explained all the different elements during the documentary, it made things a bit clearer and we realised that *Beat Street* was kind of whack in some sense. It was really more Hollywood, than actual facts. This blew up Graffiti across the country, and the next day everyone was tagging and going out with a can of paint and ruining anything that they could see.
>
> (Kerb, cited in Khmer, 2001:37-38)

Back2Basics demonstrates a prevailing historical theme in Aotearoa Hip-Hop: *knowledge* of (and *respect* for) the people who helped establish a home for Hip-Hop on our shores. It also *educates* those who may be unfamiliar with the history of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, and shows that the past is indeed forever present in the present.

5.2.3 NGĀTAHI – KNOW THE LINKS

The works of Te Kupu are often cited as examples of the successful blending of Māori traditions with Hip-Hop. Te Kupu is one of the pioneers of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa – founding member, lead rapper and manager of Upper Hutt Posse, one of the country's first and most prominent rap groups, he is a self-described writer, poet, rapper, DJ, producer, programmer, musician and video artist. He has directed, edited and produced a number of Upper Hutt Posse's 15 music videos and in 2000 recorded, produced and released a solo album (*Ko Te Matakahi Kupu – the words which penetrate*) in English and Māori. Te Kupu has travelled the world performing and collaborating with Hip-Hop artists from a variety of countries, spoken at academic conferences about Aotearoa Hip-Hop, and is currently working on a four-part rapumentary entitled *Ngātahi – Know The Links* (for a fuller biography see Mitchell (2001) or www.tekupu.com).

Ngātahi – Know The Links (released as "Parts 1 & 2" in 2003 by Kia Kaha Productions), which Te Kupu filmed, directed, edited and produced, is a "global rapumentary" that portrays Hip-Hop as a political movement for indigenous and oppressed peoples worldwide. A 'conscious' rapper, Te Kupu has often addressed issues of racism and

colonialism in his songs, and *Ngātahi* continues that tradition as he travels the world and meets people from Detroit, New York, Washington, Paris, Cuba, Colombia, Jamaica, Australia and Aotearoa who, despite language barriers, share common experiences of oppression and discrimination. "Ngātahi", explains Te Kupu on the commentary track, means "linking up the struggles", and this rapumentary places Aotearoa within the global context of protest and struggle for indigenous rights and justice. The film uses history to frame its content, again affirming the relevance of the past to the present and highlighting the importance of locating any culture (including Hip-Hop) in its historical, social and political context.

Effectively a history lesson from a 'bottom-up' perspective, the section on Aotearoa provides a good example of the kinds of political issues Te Kupu regards as important for us to know in order to build from the past into the present and on to the future. His narrative encompasses the colonisation of this country, the 1835 Declaration of Independence, the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and a history of the tino rangatiratanga movement. *Ngātahi* features interviews held at Waitangi with lawyer Moana Jackson and activist Tame Iti, and in the commentary Te Kupu discusses the issue of racism in Aotearoa and the importance of land to Māori. Woven into this section is also a history of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, which features images of and interviews with some of our Hip-Hop pioneers, including Swerv1, Kosmo, the Footsouljahs, Lost Tribe and Native Sons. Te Kupu's commentary acknowledges the influence of the U.S.A. on Hip-Hop here but also emphasises Aotearoa's roots and unique sound, saying "Hip-Hop's well alive in Aotearoa". There is also a revelatory moment as Te Kupu explains how he did not grow up speaking Māori but became interested in learning when he started listening to Bob Marley and conscious music, which kept repeating the mantra "know your roots, know your roots". The section concludes with Te Kupu reciting "Ka whawhai tonu matou, ake, ake, ake", an oft-quoted phrase meaning "We will fight on forever, ever and ever"[40].

[40] Originally used by Māori leader Rewi Maniapoto in 1864 during the attack on Orakau Pa by British forces, where 300 Māori held off 2,000 British troops for three days. "Under heavy fire, with a little food and no water, they held out against five assaults. When General Cameron invited them to surrender honourably he received the reply, "Heoi ano! Ka whawhai tonu matou. Ake. Ake. Ake". (Enough! We will fight on. Forever. Forever. Forever.) Then the general offered to free the women. A woman answered that they would fight beside the men" (Anonymous. 2004). The story of Rewi Maniapoto and the siege of Orakau Pa was later turned into a film, *Rewi's Last Stand* (1940). Also used in Upper Hutt Posse's 1988 hit "E Tu", this phrase has come to symbolise the struggle of the tino rangatiratanga movement. Ranginui Walker also titled his 1990 work on the history and development of Māori *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End.*

5.2.4 POLITICS IN AOTEAROA RAP: BECOMING 'JANDALS WITH SOLES'

Political and post-colonial themes are common in Aotearoa rap, as has been documented by Mitchell (2001), Zemke-White (2000, 2001) and Bennett (2002). Che Fu and King Kapisi are two artists who often recall past events into their works. For example, Che Fu's song "Fade Away" from his 2002 album *Navigator* makes reference to the Māori battalion that fought in World War II, and King Kapisi's new clothing line reclaims the word "Overstayer", a term popular in the 1970s that referred to people of Polynesian descent residing in Aotearoa without current visas who were subject to invasive dawn raids by police. King Kapisi in particular has received criticism for addressing issues of colonisation and missionary activity in his first album, *Savage Thoughts*: "A lot of people say to me 'Why do you talk about that shit, it's in the past and gone' but then I say 'If there's no cats like me telling you what happened in the past, everyone's going to forget'," (Scott, 2000:3). In discussing how artists like King Kapisi and the group Lost Tribe use their songs to advocate for "urban-Polynesians to engage in the pedagogic ways of their ethnic cultures" (2002:70), Bennett makes a compelling argument for viewing Hip-Hop as a means for Māori and Polynesian youth to discover not only their personal histories, but also to rediscover and connect with their ethnic identities as well. I can corroborate this flow-on effect in my own research and agree with Bennett that such an emphasis on knowledge of Hip-Hop's history, in combination with the kind of political and personal histories Hip-Hop artists call for us to know, does empower people to seek out their own histories and become "jandals with soles".

5.3 Performing History: Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit 2000 and 2001

The first and second Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summits, held in Christchurch and Auckland respectively, provide excellent sites for examining how history is used in the (re)production and performance of Hip-Hop culture. Co-ordinated and directed by Philip Bell (aka DJ Sir-Vere) and Alistair Toto, the philosophy and aim of the annual Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit is to celebrate New Zealand Hip-Hop culture, and the event receives funding from a variety of organisations including Creative New Zealand, Mai FM, the Auckland City Council and The Edge Community Arts Programme (and

other corporate sponsors). Here I will briefly discuss four events that illustrate the importance and place of history in Aotearoa Hip-Hop: a breaking workshop held at the 2000 Summit, and the Panel Discussion, Disrupt the System and All Star Jam held during the 2001 Summit.

5.3.1 BREAKING WORKSHOP – 2000 AOTEAROA HIP-HOP SUMMIT

The inaugural Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit took place from Wednesday 5 to Saturday 8 July 2000 in Christchurch. Most events took place at the Lumiere Theatre, which is located in Christchurch's Cathedral Square, with only the aerosol art exhibition (Disrupt the System) and Panel Discussion being held in other locations. The 2000 Summit consisted of a series of workshops on Hip-Hop's four elements, battles and performances, and concluded with a Panel Discussion and basketball game (held at Hagley Community College). Each of the workshops I attended started with a history lesson, which included the history and development of each element overseas and within Aotearoa. For example, the breaking workshop, which was hosted by Tweek, Swerv, Tekneek, Infamous and Pause, taught me that 'breaking' is a term that encompasses a number of dance styles (popping, locking, toprock, uprock, power moves, and so on), and I learnt not only the whakapapa of each style, including the people involved in their creation and development, but also how these styles were transmitted to Aotearoa. Some of the key movies associated with bringing Hip-Hop to our shores, including *Wild Style* and *Style Wars*, were also screened as part of the Summit.

5.3.2 PANEL DISCUSSION – 2001 AOTEAROA HIP-HOP SUMMIT

The 2001 Summit was quite different from the first, being noticeably more professional in its organisation and execution, and featured less workshops and more formal performances and exhibitions. This Summit, held in Aotea Square in central Auckland, officially opened on Thursday 13 September with a powhiri (welcome ceremony) welcoming international and local manuhiri (visitors) into the Aotea Centre, and comprised of three days of performances, exhibitions and the national final of the ITF (International Turntable Federation) battle. The Panel Discussion was, for me, one of the highlights of the 2001 Summit, and provides a good example of history in action.

Moderated by Anton Carter (MC Antsman and Arts Advisor for Creative New Zealand), the Panel featured local guest speakers such as Te Kupu, DLT, Dawn Raid founders Brotha D and YDNA, and international guests Ken Swift (Rock Steady Crew) and J-Ro from Tha Liks (Steve Rifkind, CEO of New York's Loud Records, and other members of Tha Liks were also scheduled to speak but had been delayed due to the attack on the World Trade Centre). Each speaker brought a different set of experiences and opinions to the Panel, which was reflected in the wide range of issues discussed, but two themes were common throughout all of the talks – history and the music industry. Te Kupu spoke first, reciting his 'whakapapa Hip-Hop' before going on to recall some stories of Aotearoa Hip-Hop's early years and moving on to issues important to him today; racism and the music industry. Ken Swift was introduced next, and he also started by giving his own personal Hip-Hop history and describing what life was like for a young Puerto Rican kid growing up in the housing projects of New York in the 1970s. He spoke at length about the history and development of B-boying in New York, and also discussed the music industry and the experiences the Rock Steady Crew had in traveling around the world. J-Ro from Tha Liks similarly began by providing some background information about himself and how he began writing rhymes (his mother, as punishment for getting into trouble at school, made him write out and memorise the lyrics to "Rapper's Delight"). Brotha D and YDNA spoke briefly about how and why they founded Dawn Raid, and DLT's talk, also brief, included his whakapapa Hip-Hop and opinions on the music industry. The Panel concluded by taking questions from the floor, most of which focused on the business aspect of Hip-Hop (perhaps not surprising, as the Panel was advertised as featuring key topics like "Artist Management, Distribution, Promotions, A&R and Publishing"). Of relevance here is the fact that all speakers articulated their personal Hip-Hop histories – who they were and where they were from – before going on to share more about the history of Hip-Hop or to discuss contemporary issues.

5.3.3 DISRUPT THE SYSTEM – 2001 AOTEAROA HIP-HOP SUMMIT

Disrupt the System, an important component of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit, is an all-day Aerosol Art Exhibition co-ordinated by Elliot O'Donnell (aka Askew). "Disrupt the System's main objective is to bring aerosol art to the forefront of Aotearoa's modern art scene, promoting a serious and professional approach to this artform … We

want to make a departure from the "mindless tagger" stereotype," said Askew of the event (NZ Hip Hop Limited, 2001:9). In 2001 Disrupt the System was held in Aotea Square on Saturday 15 September, where between 8.30am and 4.30 pm over 40 graffiti artists from Germany, Australia, Auckland, Wellington, New Plymouth and Christchurch collaboratively produced a 2-metre high, 80-metre long piece of art. Most of the paint was provided by Disrupt the System, but artists brought their own variously-sized nozzles, and some even wore gloves and facemasks to guard against spills and fumes. Each artist has a distinctive style, and I observed a number of local artists incorporating traditional Māori and Sāmoan designs into their pieces. The piece in Figure 10, produced by artist DT, caught my attention early in the day when he was sketching out on his section of the wall. The end product is approximately 2 metres tall and is a good illustration of how artists can use a contemporary medium – graffiti – to bring the past into the present.

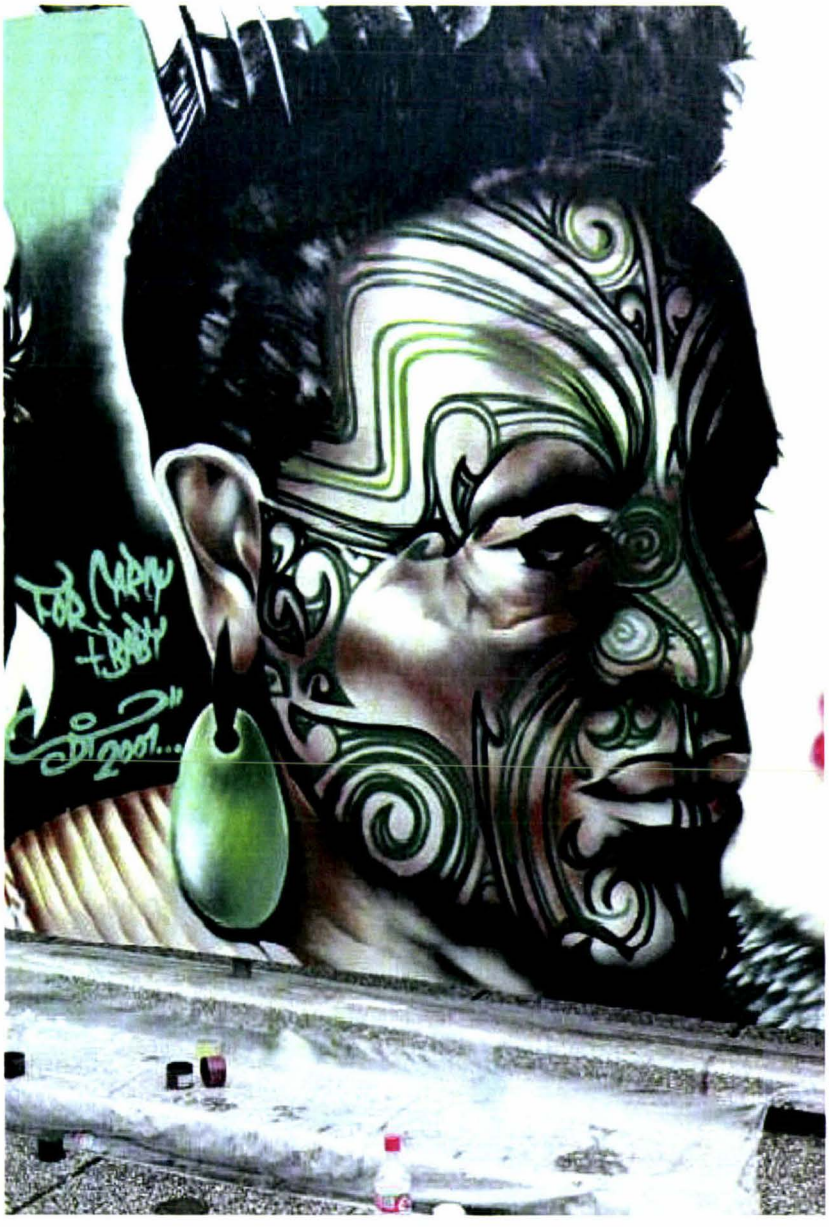

Figure 10: **Graffiti art by DT, painted during the 2001 Disrupt the System Aerosol Art Exhibition, Aotea Square, Auckland.** *Photo: Lorena Gibson*

5.3.4 ALL STAR JAM – 2001 AOTEAROA HIP-HOP SUMMIT

An illustration of history in performance is provided by the Time Bandits Crew[41], which orchestrated a routine based on Hip-Hop's history for the Friday night Smokefree All Star Jam. This routine wasn't alone in including references to the past, but it was the only one I was able to witness in practice before the event[42]. After the Panel Discussion on Friday, the Time Bandits held a dress-rehearsal of the routine at the venue (the NZI room in the Aotea Centre) prior to the evening's performance. As they went through their routine, which involved bringing out and modeling 'old school' items such as extra-wide shoelaces and a ghetto blaster, they paused to discuss whether the audience would understand their *intent* in showing these pieces of Hip-Hop's history. It was obviously important for the audience to 'get it', so during the performance later that evening I positioned myself in the midst of the audience in front of the stage. The crowd loved the routine, especially the popping and locking showcases and the exhibition of fast 'old school' footwork by Ken Swift (who became an honorary member of the Time Bandits), and when it came time for the 'old school' paraphernalia to be brought out the exclamations I heard around me confirmed that the audience not only 'got it' but appreciated their efforts as well. I shared the audience's reception with the Time Bandits later that evening, and they were gratified to hear that their history lesson was well-received.

5.4 Summary

A central trope of Hip-Hop culture is history, and the emphasis on knowing who you are and where you are from has resulted in Hip-Hop scenes from around the world forging their own historical narratives, based on negotiations between Hip-Hop's origins and local praxis. "Hip-hop practices also become vehicles for reconstructing the "roots" of local histories ... In the process, "glocalization" takes place as local activities interact with the global form of rap and particular histories of different geographical scenes are constructed" (Mitchell, 2001:32). This chapter has suggested that the cultural

[41] Now the Step Kingz. At the 2001 Summit the members of the Time Bandits Crew that I met were Swerv, Tweek, Kerb, Spex, Juice, Future, D-Fresh, Drex, Khanage, Truce, Creka and Ken Swift (please note this is not a complete list of all members, and the lineup for the current Step Kingz is different again).

[42] I spent most of my time at the 2001 Summit with members of the Time Bandits Crew, who seemed interested in what I was doing and were happy to answer my questions and allow me to 'tag along'.

concept of whakapapa has played a pivotal role in the way Hip-Hop's historical trope has been glocalised in Aotearoa. Examinations of some important cultural texts have revealed echoes of the Māori proverb cited in the epigraph to this chapter, leading me to believe that Hip-Hop in Aotearoa does act as a form of contemporary whakapapa that empowers people to connect with their past, providing the soles for the jandals that Donald McNulty talks of in the other epigraph to this chapter. An analysis of the kinds of historical knowledge (re)produced in Aotearoa Hip-Hop has been provided, showing that Hip-Hop artists in Aotearoa call for us to know not only our own personal histories and Hip-Hop's creation myths, but also the political history of Aotearoa. Indeed, once Aotearoa Hip-Hop's distinctive historical trope has been recognised its pervasiveness can be seen everywhere – in King Kapisi's "Overstayer" clothing range, Scribe's current hit song "Remember", in Dawn Raid Entertainment's name. Dialogues in process within Aotearoa Hip-Hop affirm that the past exists forever in the present, and Hip-Hop's historical trope provides a space for youth to learn about their own personal and political histories, enabling them to join King Kapisi as he goes "stomping" in his "big Islander jandals" ("Stomping", *2nd Round Testament*, 2003).

Chapter Six

We don't like Hip-Hop, oh no
We love it, yeah
- 3 The Hard Way, "Hip Hop Holiday", *Old School Prankstas* (1994)

We can not stop now,
New Zealand Hip-Hop stand the fuck up
We got it locked down
I'm ready to rock, ready to roll
I am ready to go
Y'all ready to flow?
Just let me know y'all...
- Scribe, "Stand Up", *The Crusader* (2003)

Conclusion

I began this research with the aim of understanding what Hip-Hop meant to those "extra effort" Hip-Hop heads involved in the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community. I had an idea of *why* they participated in Hip-Hop, which is reflected in the title of this thesis, and my conversations with various Hip-Hop artists and fans confirmed this. Other studies of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa have addressed why Māori and Polynesian youth in particular have been drawn to rap and Hip-Hop, and my point of departure from this literature has been to look more closely at the *people* and *processes* involved in creating this unique version of Aotearoa Hip-Hop. To do this, I let the people involved in the Hip-Hop community dictate my direction. By participating in and observing at Hip-Hop events and joining the online Aotearoa Hip-Hop community, I was able to identify twelve key characteristics of Hip-Hop culture that are constantly discussed, negotiated and contested in ongoing dialogues within the Hip-Hop community. I also found that members of the Hip-Hop community felt that Hip-Hop's elements of dance and graffiti art have often been overlooked in favour of rap in discussions on Hip-Hop, so in my research I made a concerted effort to examine performances and cultural texts rather than commercial recorded rap music.

I found that what Hip-Hop means to members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community is as diverse and varied as the members themselves. For the people who gave so generously of their time and knowledge to teach me about Hip-Hop, it truly is a way of

life; it is something they *do* on a daily basis, something they *feel*, something that shapes their thoughts, actions, and interactions with other people. When I first met Kosmo, one of the pioneers of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, at the 2000 Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit, he said something to me that I only recently came to understand: "I *am* Hip-Hop". Not everyone involved in the Hip-Hop community "lives for" that culture, but for the majority of people who practice one or more our the four elements of B-boying/B-girling, DJing, MCing and graffiti art, or who actively support and encourage Hip-Hop in other ways, Hip-Hop means a particular way of being in the world.

Having identified twelve key characteristics of Hip-Hop, and having decided to adopt a performative approach, the bulk of this thesis looks at how these characteristics are embodied in the (re)production and performance of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. Chapter Three, which takes performance as its focus, shows that it is through performance that the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community appears as such to itself. The Aotearoa Hip-Hop community is largely an imagined one that comes into being when members of that community can gather, explore their sense of selves as B-boys or B-girls or graffiti artists or DJs or MCs or dedicated fans of Hip-Hop, and rejoice in the knowledge of an identity shared with others. By analysing two different sites – Bodyrock 2003 and Hiphopnz.com – I have shown how the characteristics of *education*, *knowledge*, *history*, *respect*, *skill*, *style*, *originality*, *empowerment* and *authenticity* are embodied through performances at events and online. Choosing to focus on dance for part of this analysis revealed that glocalisation of Hip-Hop culture does not always involve a significant transformation in style or form. In Aotearoa, dance is localised because it is performed by local actors in local contexts, rather than by the alterations in form that are audible within the soundscapes of rap. Hiphopnz.com, which provides the gathering space for Aotearoa's online Hip-Hop community, is a fruitful site for examining how the characteristics of Hip-Hop are debated and explored in online discussions. Hiphopnz.com fulfils an important function in that it provides a permanent site for members of the Hip-Hop community to meet between, during and in the absence of live events, and I would argue that the types of conversations conducted in the site's popular discussion forums would not take place in other circumstances. I have also shown that dialogues embodied at live events often feed into online discussions and inform everyday performances.

The characteristics of *respect*, *skill* and *empowerment* come under closer examination in Chapter Four, where I explore the "harmful disconnect" that exists between media portrayals of women as sex objects, and actual lived experiences of women in Aotearoa Hip-Hop. Analysing gender in Aotearoa Hip-Hop reveals that respect and skill are incredibly complex issues that are negotiated differently by men and women. However, one commonality is that respect needs to be earned through skill and is not awarded on the basis of gender alone. This can be extremely empowering for women, as when they do earn respect they are confident in the knowledge that they have done so through hard work and skill, and that they are not tokens or novelty items encouraged solely for the sake of obtaining more female participation. I have also pointed out that if we widen our gaze to encompass all facets of a performance, including audience members and the people who organise and run events, we will begin to see that women do occupy important roles in the (re)production of Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa.

Chapter Five, which discusses the importance of history to Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa, explores the characteristics of *history*, *knowledge*, *respect* and *education*. I identified a strong emphasis on knowing history in dialogues within the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community, an emphasis that I have suggested has been influenced by the cultural concept of whakapapa to result in a distinctively strong historical trope in Aotearoa Hip-Hop. An analysis of history in the performance and (re)production of Hip-Hop culture revealed that the kinds of histories Aotearoa Hip-Hop artists call for us to know, which are both personal and political. I believe this historical trope is a very empowering one that can lead not only Māori and Polynesian youth, but all members of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community, to rediscover and take pride in their own whakapapa, providing them with 'soles for their jandals', to paraphrase Nesian Mystic's Donald McNulty.

To conclude, this thesis has shown that Hip-Hop culture is vibrant and multi-faceted, full of contradictions and complexities, and is a fascinating subject of study that raises two new questions for every one that is answered. It has also shown that it is the *people* involved in Hip-Hop that make it the distinctive and unique version of Aotearoa Hip-Hop that it is.

Hutia te rito o te harakeke

Kei hea te Kōmako e kō?

Kī mai ki ahau,

He aha te mea nui o tēnei ao?

Māku e kī atu,

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

Pull out the centre stalk of the flax bush[43]

And where will the bellbird sing?

If you ask me,

What is the most important thing in this world?

I say to you,

It is people, it is people, it is people.

[43] The central stalk of the flax bush is its heart, its source of new growth. Pulling out the central stalk will cause the flax bush to die.

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Appendix 1: Hip-Hop events attended with an "anthropological attitude"

Date	Event	Details
5-8 July 2000	Inaugural Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit	Attended the country's first Summit, held in Christchurch, where I made 'first contact' with potential informants
10 Nov 2000	King Kapisi concert	King Kapisi performed at The Albert in Palmerston North to promote his debut album, *Savage Thoughts*
Nov 2000	Prizegiving Ceremony for Te Waananga o Aotearoa	D-Fresh asked me if I wanted to film this event because Palmerston North's Floor Force Crew were going to be performing as part of the celebrations
2001	Hip-Hop workshops	Attended Tuesday night Hip-Hop workshops run by D-Fresh at Te Manga Wai in Highbury, Palmerston North (possibly the same place and even people that anthropologist Tania Kopytko studied in 1986)
March 2001	Breakdancing classes	Attended breakdancing lessons at Victoria University, Wellington, run by a guy called Matt (who I later discovered was not part of the Aotearoa Hip-Hop community)
5 May 2001	Hip-Hop performance evening	Tweek invited me to film an evening of Hip-Hop at the Hosanna World Outreach Centre in Taita, Lower Hutt, where her Bgirl crew the Angel Allstars were having their debut performance
10 May 2001	Wellington DJ Battle 2001	Held at the Drink Lab in Wellington, DJ Goosh taking the title
27 July 2001	Southern Regional ITF (International Turntable Federation) Competition	Held at Indigo in Wellington. 1st place went to Alphabet Head, 2nd to The Abbott, 3rd to Goosh and 4th to Kerb
July 2001	Wellington Heat Urban Beat	All-ages gig held at the Viva Youth Centre, Cuba Mall, and featuring City Mission Breakers, Time Bandits Crew, Capital Punishment, Warriors for Christ, DJs Rhys B, Kerb and Alphabet Head, and 3-on-3 bboy battles

25 August 2001	Southern Regional DMC (Disco Mix Club) Competition	Held at Studio 9 in Wellington. 1st place went to Alphabet Head, 2nd to Phatmospheric, 3rd to Goosh, 4th to DJ CXL, 5th to Cork Collins and 6th to Kerb
13-15 Sept 2001	Aotearoa Hip-Hop Summit	Attended the second Summit held in Aotea Square, central Auckland.
21 Sept 2001	Bomb the Space workshop	Co-ordinated a Hip-Hop workshop at The Space in Newtown, Wellington
6 Feb 2002	One Love Concert	Afternoon concert at New Brighton Pier, Christchurch, where King Kapisi performed
23 Feb 2002	Sheelahroc and Verse 2 concert	Afternoon concert at New Brighton Pier, Christchurch
Late Feb 2002	Che Fu and Sheelahroc, Orientation	Attended the University of Canterbury's Orientation gig, which featured Hip-Hop
27 Feb 2002	*Ngātahi* screened at the University of Canterbury	Attended the screening of Te Kupu's rapumentary *Ngātahi* at the Ngaio Marsh Theatre as part of the Orientation festivities. Dean also spoke at the screening
2 March 2002	Scratch Perverts (UK), Deceptikonz, DJ Raw, DJ Shan and Scribe gig	Held at The Church in Christchurch. Attended the gig as a reviewer courtesy of *The Package*
15 April 2002	Slide show and presentation by Jim Prigoff, co-author of *Spraycan Art*	Attended "The Museum of the Streets – Murals and Spraycan Art from Around the World", a colour slide show of great wall art from around the world, narrated by renowned photographer and public art historian JIM PRIGOFF. Event presented by Disruptiv artists collective
18 June 2002	Graffiti tour of Christchurch	Was taken on a graffiti tour of Christchurch by MC4Higher
July-Oct 2002	AMST 219 - Hip-Hop culture	Enrolled in a paper on Hip-Hop culture, taught by Dr Vernon Andrews of the American Studies Department at Canterbury University
18-19 Jan 2003	BodyRock	Attended BodyRock in Wellington
31 January 2003	RESPECT hip.hop.aotearoa	Attended the opening of the RESPECT exhibition at the Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt

Appendix 2: Questionnaires emailed to research participants

Questionnaire 1 sent 20 June 2001

Below are 15 questions that I would like your opinion on for inclusion in my MA thesis on Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. If you would like your answers to remain anonymous, please let me know and I will ensure your name is not mentioned if I quote you in my thesis. However if you do want your answers to be recognised I will give you full credit for any quotes that I use. Thanks for your time!

1. When did you first hear about Hip-Hop?

2. What was the first thing you heard about it?

3. How did you hear about it?

4. What got you into Hip-Hop?

5. Which element were/are you most involved in?

6. What was the bop, and why was it called that?

7. What was the general public's reaction to the bop when it first hit our shores?

8. What kind of people do you think the bop most appealed to (ie age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic group, etc), and why?

9. Can you remember if there was anything happening at the time (ie an election or rugby tour or anything) that may have influenced people to embrace Hip-Hop when it arrived here?

10. Tell me what Hip-Hop meant to you when you first discovered it - how did it change your views, attitudes, life?

11. How has Hip-Hop continued to influence your life?

12. How was the bop (and Hip-Hop in general) here different from the bop (& h-h) anywhere else?

13. Where does Hip-Hop come from?

14. Now you get to talk ... I'm interested in hearing any stories/memories/opinions you might like to share with me about how the bop came to Aotearoa and what happened when it got here.

15. This is where you add the question/s you think I should have asked but didn't, and then answer them :)

Questionnaire 2 sent 5 May 2002

Hip-Hop in Aotearoa/New Zealand Questionnaire

Below are 10 questions that I would like your opinion on for inclusion in my MA thesis on Hip-Hop culture in Aotearoa. If you would like your answers to remain anonymous, please let me know and I will ensure your name is not mentioned if I quote you in my thesis. However if you do want your answers to be recognised I will give you full credit for any quotes that I use. Thanks for your time!

General questions:

1. When you first got in to Hip-Hop, what appealed to you most about it?
2. Which element(s) do you participate most in, and why?
3. Why do you think Hip-Hop is so popular in Aotearoa/New Zealand?
4. What does the term 'Hip-Hop culture' mean to you?

Questions about ethnicity or 'race':

5. How do you think Hip-Hop has affected Maori/Polynesian identity (and vice versa)?
6. Some Maori and Samoan elders have said that Hip-Hop is destroying traditional culture – what do you think?
7. According to record companies, the biggest consumers of Hip-Hop music are white people, although the people making the music are generally not white (with a few exceptions). Why do you think this is so?

Politics question:

8. There has been a lot of debate in the academic world about whether Hip-Hop is an agent of social change (ie used as a tool to educate and motivate people), or whether it just reinforces the status quo. What are your thoughts on the politics of Hip-Hop in Aotearoa/New Zealand?

Questions about the media:

9. US Hip-Hop/rap videos tend to portray women as sex objects, whereas NZ Hip-Hop videos don't do this. Why not?
10. Do you think the mass media in New Zealand (not including music magazines) portrays Hip-Hop as a positive or negative thing? Why?

Appendix 3: Tweek's emails about 'Hip-Hop dancing'

(posted on hiphopnz.com 3 April 2003)

For those that wanted to see what I wrote ... here it is ... I agree that I come across pretty hard but that's just me ... it urks me when I see stuff like this happening all the time.

Dear Libby,

I couldn't help but notice in the front of Zeal that you are taking dance classes. However, the thing that concerns me is the fact that you are calling your classes "hip hop" dancing classes. Do you actually know anything about hip hop? If not, why are you calling your dancing hip hop? Firstly, the dancing that you do, has nothing to do with any of the elements of hip hop .... it has nothing to do with emeeing, dj'ing, graffiti art or breaking ..... so why have you chosen to use the name of this culture for the dance you are teaching?

As someone who is part of the hip hop community, a breaker and someone who runs hip hop events on a regular basis, I find it very offensive that you are using "hip hop" to describe the dancing you do. I also know that other people in the hip hop community will not appreciate it either.

I challenge you with this ..... do you know who made up your dance? Do you know exactly where it came from and where it began? Do you know the founders of your dance?? I know my history, I know where the culture of hip hop was born and I know what this culture consists of. I know when this dance started and I know who the people were that created this dance that I do .... I know that what I do (breaking) is true hip hop dancing ... Why are you calling this hip hop when it does not have anything to do with hip hop? Just because you dance to music that might have rap in it, doesn't mean that it is hip hop .... just because dancers from america come here and teach that it is hip hop doesn't mean it's hip hop .... As far as I know .... your dancing was only given the name "hip hop dancing" in the last 7 or 8 years ..... before that, it was called other things.

If you are not teaching "breaking" the true hip hop dance, then you are not teaching hip hop ..... so ..... you should do yourself a favour and stop calling your workshops hip hop because they are not. You may be able to get away with it with your students and people who do not know about hip hop but people in the hip hop community, like myself, will find it offensive that you are taking the name of something we love and are very passionate about and slapping it on your dance. Don't get me wrong, I am not dissing your dancing, in fact I enjoy watching it on most occasions but I don't see how you think it's okay to call it hip hop when it's not. If what you are doing is hip hop, then why don't you ever perform at or support hip hop events? Hip hop is a culture, it is not just a "trend" .... there are people out there who are truly passionate about hip hop culture, they live it and they breathe it .... what involvement do you have in hip hop culture if any?

Well that's it from me, I know this may come across as harsh but I am speaking as someone who loves this culture, and the dance form that I practice and participate in .... as someone who has put years into what I do and who is protective of the culture I love and what I believe in, I am asking you to consider calling your workshops something else. Hip hop is something that is part of you, and inside you, not just a "name".

peace
Bgirl Joella Wright a.k.a. Bgirl Tweek

(posted on hiphopnz.com 2 April 2003)

Okay check out this email I got from this girl who is taking dancing workshops but is calling them "hip hop dancing" workshops .... anyway .... I've seen this girl dance many times and she is far from doing anything that even comes close to bboying .... she is in fact a jazz dancer .... Anyway .... I wrote her an email and challenged her about the fact that she was advertising her workshops as "hip hop" and here's what she wrote back ... what a crack up alright!

"Thank you Joella for your comments,

You have obviously taken issue with the "branding" of my dance classes and style as "Hip Hop".

I appreciate your concerns but I believe they are not valid. The reason this is so is the fact that you have no legal entitlement to the brand "Hip Hop".

One of the main legal ways of protecting a brand is by trademark registration. The requirements of the current Trade Marks Act 1953 mean that in the right circumstances the shapes of packaging, colours, sounds and the more conventional words and logos may be registered as trade marks. This amounts to recognition by the legal system that all of these things can function as brands.

As you have not personally registered the brand name "Hip Hop" through due process under the New Zealand judicial system you have no entitlement to a legal basis for your argument. If you were to do this through the appropriate legal channels you would be entitled to validate your argument with your own style and brand of "Hip Hop". However, this is not the case; and in consultation with the Trade Marks Register I see that "Hip Hop" is currently unregistered. Therefore "Hip Hop" is open to interpretation by the individual. I have interpreted this under my own style and influences – and therefore I am entitled to incorporate this style into my classes and teaching.

If you were to register "Hip Hop" as your brand by registration under the Trade Marks Act 1953 you may encounter some difficulties. The common theme is that if you 'hang your hat' on a brand, which is too commonplace, too descriptive, too much like other brands already in the market, a court is much less likely to listen to an argument from your business that someone else should be stopped from using the same kind of words, picture or package.

I now consider this matter closed and dealt with. If you have any further concerns or queries please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,
Libby Calder
Director, Pump it up Studios"

Don't it just make ya wanna strangle someone??..... now if this doesn't tick you off..... then you need some seriously skooling up on hip hop culture and what it's truly about..... this is just one of the many people out there, taking the name of something that we all love and slapping it on something they do without even knowing what it is, what it means, where it came from etc..... Anyway.... these are the sorts of people .... that we should be standing up to and setting straight on issues like this..... if you are not a bboy or a bgirl, then you are not "hip hop dancing" because bboying/bgirling is the true hip hop dance form.

anyway ..... just wanted to get your thoughts on this....

peace,
TWEEK