

## ABSTRACT

“Between the Mainstream and the Alternative”: An Ethnographic analysis of Social Capital and the Politics of Difference in the Jamaican Rock Music Scene

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This thesis argues that the exchange of social differences is at the foundation of Jamaicans’ assessment of the value of their local music. I conducted critical ethnography in Kingston, Jamaica between August 2013 and October 2015 with the use of participant observation and interviews to decipher how members of the rock music scene negotiated the music economy. I deduced that perceptions of socio-economic and socio-cultural capital tied to colonialism and creolisation were used to maintain local music’s authenticity and ostracise elements that were considered inauthentic. Rock music was deemed by the mainstream audience as inauthentic to the local way of life while reggae and dancehall were viewed as the authentic expressions. I theorise that *nation music* is musical expressions which Jamaicans accept as indigenous to their culture and supports Black Nationalism even though these sounds have partly descended from White European traditions. I describe the rock music scene as a liminoid unit which expressed its ambiguity between the dominant conventions of mainstream and the oppositional sounds of alternative music scene. Its *fringe-dwelling* solidified the interconnectedness of the scene’s members and motivated a *communitas* of rock and the creation of their *safe place* as shelter from local prejudices. However, this safe place was not entirely tolerant of differences in race/colour, class, gender and sexuality. I also assessed the Jamaican *hustla* philosophy as used by musicians in the rock scene to traverse unequal cultural and economic capital of the music industry. The musicians accessed the informal creative economy for support as the formal business sector ignored the group. Thus, earning capital in the larger music community was contingent on embodying, objectifying and institutionalising approved symbols of authenticity.

Keywords: capital; rock music; Jamaica; critical ethnography; authenticity; hustla; difference; mainstream, safe place; Black Nationalism; fringe-dwelling.