

SAMPLE ESSAY 1**What is meant by “globalisation” in contemporary discourses, and how can we rethink globalisation through world popular music?**

This essay will examine the changing definition of globalisation and how it has been defined in contemporary discourses. Popular music has allowed us to rethink globalisation and the impact that it has had on culture. Globalisation is often viewed as a ‘catchword’ (Garrett, 2010:417). Its meaning is vague and elusive, which means it is consequently open to flexible interpretations. However, traditionally, globalisation is classified as ‘the intensification of world-wide social relationships which link distant places in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa’ (Giddens 1990:64). Thus, globalisation generally refers to the increasing inter-connectedness of our global society, which affects our everyday life. Globalisation has allowed popular music to permeate several cultures and has thus led to a large shift in culture. It has brought about many variations and interpretation of popular culture, while world popular music has contributed to the ever-changing cultural scene.

Globalisation, in contemporary discourses, has been closely linked with capitalism. It could be argued that the term is used in place of capitalism, but the two are essentially the same. Neoliberalism is the modern phase of capitalism, which grew out from the Fordist era and has been established on a global scale since the 1970s. Neoliberalism encompasses ideology, governance, and policy (Taylor 2016:4), meaning that its function is more than economic; it is an ideological system that has become intensely rooted in cultures around the world, but with local interpretations of the dominant capitalist culture. Neo-liberalist Adam Smith introduced the idea of *laissez faire* (O’Byrne, 2016), an approach that asserts the importance of a free competitive market, which in turn ‘maximises individual choice’ and ‘emphasizes the need to keep state regulation to a minimum’ (Scott and Marshall, 2009). In theory, this means that the market should be able to flow freely in all economic and social aspects and therefore gain maximum profit. However, neo-liberal agendas show that gross inequalities are built into the global capitalist economy (Giddens, 2009:216). Neoliberalism is essentially a modernised form of capitalism as it still enforces and encourages the large gap between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Therefore, neoliberal capitalism has become established on a global scale aiding the interests and representing ‘the ways of thinking and feeling of “the transnational capitalist class” ... within civil society’ (McGuigan 2016:20). This steady presence of capitalism in global society has accordingly led to cultural artefacts representing and favouring the interests of the dominant capitalist class, thus meaning that culture has become commodified and homogenised. It could be argued that the music industry is another mechanism used by capitalists to spread hegemonic ideology and keep members of society subdued and distracted from real world problems. This commodification of culture, specifically music, has ‘led towards a stifling of creativity’ (Krüger Bridge, 2018:104).

It could be argued that global culture, more specifically music, has become homogenised because of the ‘influence of the omnipresent American culture’ (Sifianou, 2013:87). American culture is perhaps the most dominant and influential; indeed, American values, ideals and entertainment have been spread globally. The American music industry is perhaps the most prevailing in the world, with companies like Sony Music having global links and international labels within their roster, the most popular artists, for example Beyoncé and Britney Spears, being signed to one of their many labels (Sony Music UK, 2017). Their near-monopoly over popular music means that large American companies have the power to dictate what music is popularized as they have

connections all over the world. Globalisation and the advancement of modern technology has allowed this to happen on a larger global scale.

The commodification of culture closely links with Adorno and Horkheimer's (1944) idea that culture has become an industry, as every aspect of culture and art has been turned into a consumer product and shaped by the logic of capitalist rationality. The culture industry aims to sell and profit from all aspects of culture. Culture is no longer about what is genuinely good but whatever sells the best; it has become a commodified product of the economic relations of production. Popular music, in particular, has become 'depthless and little more than glossy appearance and superficial illusion' (Krüger Bridge, 2018:116). An example of this is Marshmello's and Selena Gomez's, 'Wolves' (SelenaGomezVevo, 2017), which sounds like every other mainstream pop song: the style is formulaic, recycled and has cliché lyrics. Producers know that this type of music sells well, which is why the same type of music is constantly produced. Music is no longer a product of creativity but a way to create profit.

Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) also argued that the culture industry employs a ruling class ideology, and popular culture is designed to keep members of society docile and distracted from real social issues. Their theory can be applied to popular music. Here, it can be claimed that musicians are no longer just musicians, but they have become global brands and, arguably, tools used by capitalists to keep members of society passive and uniformed of real problems. For example, Selena Gomez privatising her Instagram has had more mainstream media coverage (Devoe, 2017; O'Malley, 2017) than the slave trade that is happening in Libya. This shows that although globalisation is meant to be increasing the interconnectedness of our world, members of society are still "in the dark" about huge social injustices happening around the world. The mainstream media dictate what information is being presented, and the music industry is just another mechanism used by capitalists to keep members of society submissive and their attention diverted from real problems. Thus, globalisation has also meant that musical artists are now more than just musicians; they are global brands with fans spread across the globe. For example, Rihanna is not only an 8-time Grammy award winner but she is also a business mogul with an extremely successful beauty line and clothing partnership with Puma (Cartner-Morley, 2017). The expansion of her brand has meant that her influence has permeated several cultural industries, which shows that musicians are no longer just musicians. Musicians today are globalized brands with a worldwide following; music artists are commodified products in our neoliberalized capitalist society.

Globalisation has allowed culture to transcend national borders, and 'it has now become increasingly possible to lift cultural meanings out of their original societal contexts and transplant them to other societies' (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000:27). Individuals today have access to different cultures, built eclectic identities and consume global culture through the advancement of modern technology and the internet. Giddens (1990) describes this turn toward individualism as 'reflexivity', which refers to the 'constant monitoring and revision of beliefs and practices in the light of changing circumstance' (Mellor, 1993:114). Individuals are constantly changing, depending on what they're exposed to, all driven by globalisation, with cultural practices and different types of music being easily and constantly accessible. An example of this is the popularisation of K-Pop in Western countries. Psy's 'Gangnam Style' (officialpsy, 2013) became the first ever YouTube video to surpass one billion views, so this 2012 hit opened the door for more Korean artists to enter the US-dominated music industry (Cardew, 2013). The most recent one is BTS's debut as the first Korean act to perform at the American Music Awards 2017 (BTS Videos, 2017). BTS is

one of the most popular Korean boy band nowadays; they were awarded the Choice International Artist at the 2017 Teen Choice Awards and the Top Social Artist award at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards (American Music Awards, 2017). The success of this group shows that music today transcends national borders and that K-Pop can compete and thrive on a global scale.

Globalisation has also allowed culture to transcend national borders, and collaborations between artists from different countries means that societies are exposed to different styles of music. Individuals can adopt what feels most in tune with their identity. Robertson (1992) coins the term 'glocalisation', which means that individuals 'borrow' products or artefacts from the wider, dominant culture but amend them to fit their own local culture. This is apparent in the popularization of two Puerto Rican artists' song *Despacito* by Luis Fonsi's and Daddy Yankee (LuisFonsiVevo, 2017). Using Canadian artist Justin Bieber's remix, the song has been described as the song of the year and currently has 4.4 billion views (plus counting) on YouTube (Spangler, 2017). The Americanisation of a song makes it more appealing to a wider audience as the sound does not steer far from what the mainstream audience is used to.

Whilst globalisation has allowed different types of music to be available and consumed globally, it has also brought about cultural appropriation in popular western music. Cultural appropriation, in this context, 'is treated as problematic on the basis that is equated with the illegitimate taking of cultural goods' (Heyd, 2003:38). Taking music styles and cultural imagery from ethnic minority groups has been seen as a continuation of European colonialism. In addition, in terms of music, it is seen as inauthentic, as some music styles like the blues were used by African Americans to express the injustices and suffering they experienced during slavery and perpetrated by white people. Thereby a white musician's style of blues will lack this type of experience, therefore making the music appear to be inauthentic. In current popular music, Katy Perry is the face of cultural appropriation and has been criticized repeatedly for disrespecting cultural imagery and perpetuating racial stereotypes in her music videos and performances. Her, what have often been scorned as, mediocre songs are often accompanied by offensive music videos. For example, her performance of 'Unconditionally' at the 2013 AMAs shows her donning 'yellow face', playing up the stereotypes of Asian women. Perry received criticism that her performance was 'ethno-confused... and presented her viewers with a one-dimensional Eastern fantasy...' (Clifton, 2014) for depicting an orientalist and fetishized representation of Asian women.

On the contrary, it is not just white artists who are "guilty" of cultural appropriation, as people from other ethnic groups also appropriate another culture. For example, Trinidadian and Dominican female rapper Cardi B's 'Bodak Yellow' (Cardi B, 2017) music video perpetrates a 'Western-constructed fantasy of the Middle East, which is often hedonistic, ultra-luxurious and overly sexualized' (Al-Khatahtbeh, 2017). In the video, Cardi is dressed in a traditional abaya and headscarf, with scenes of her face being half covered. Her stereotypical, orientalist image of Middle-Eastern people is contributing to a fixed idea of Middle Easterners. Artists like Perry and Cardi are profiting from using stereotyped tropes of culture, with the consequence that its members become negatively labelled. For example, the long history of Islamophobia against Muslim people in the media since 9/11 has meant that Muslims were treated as pariahs, but musical artists still benefit from Islamic imagery without their livelihood being affected. Harmful stereotypes of cultures have been an existing factor in most popular music, and the interconnectedness of our world has allowed these stereotypes to permeate several cultures.

In conclusion, globalisation is defined as the increasing interconnectedness of our global society and world music is a mechanism which not only unites us, but also creates separateness and problems. Globalisation, in contemporary discourses, is another term for capitalism, and the presence of neoliberal capitalism has meant that culture has become commodified, while large music corporations dictate what music is popularised. However, globalisation has also allowed members of society to discover different types of music and to build eclectic identities from the cultures available to them. With the advancement of modern technology and the internet, this cultural interchange and interconnectedness has become increasingly easier. Music has transcended national borders but has also resulted in cultures becoming accessories to musical artists, thus normalising cultural appropriation. Arguably, popular music legitimises cultural differences and perpetuates hegemonic capitalist ideals. Overall, whilst globalisation has brought about many negative effects within the global music industry, it has also exposed members of society to different types of music and cultures.

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